



Exploring Transformational Leadership and Technology on UK Executives' Work-Life Balance

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**Exploring Transformational Leadership and Technology on UK Executives'
Work-Life Balance**

Florence Chiwetu

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2026

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
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4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy, and ethics approval has been granted for all research studies in the thesis, as shown in the table below.

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEO	Chief Executive Officers
GAI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
MITDs	Mobile Information Technology Devices
NHS	National Health Service
PEOU	Perceived Ease of Use
PU	Perceived Usefulness
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
TPH	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
WLB	Work Life Balance
WLC	Worklife Conflict
EHS	Electronic Health Records

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Abstract

This study investigated the complex interrelationship between transformational leadership, technology use, and work-life balance (WLB) among executives in the health and social care sector in England and Wales. While extensive research had examined how leaders could support employees' WLB, there remained a notable gap in understanding how executives themselves navigated these challenges, particularly in the context of unprecedented changes in work patterns and accelerated technology adoption following the COVID-19 pandemic. Guided by Spillover theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this qualitative research employed an interpretivist philosophy and case study strategy. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with nineteen executives in the health and social care sector and analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that executives experienced WLB in diverse ways, with three distinct orientations emerging: balance achievers, balance sceptics, and those who viewed WLB as a dynamic process. Key challenges identified included blurred boundaries between work and personal life, extended work hours, and work-related stress, with technology significantly exacerbating boundary blurring and contributing to constant connectivity. To navigate these challenges, executives employed various coping mechanisms including professional boundary-setting, temporal autonomy, communication management, psychological adaptation, and reliance on structural supports. The research identified four transformational leadership approaches that effectively addressed WLB issues: human-centric leadership emphasizing empathy and psychological safety; empowerment-focused leadership fostering autonomy and trust; inclusive leadership encouraging collaboration and transparent communication; and developmental leadership balancing performance expectations with wellbeing considerations. These approaches contributed to creating psychologically safe environments that facilitated work-life integration.

The study revealed technology's dual role as both facilitator and disruptor of WLB. While digital tools enhanced efficiency and flexibility, they also contributed to boundary erosion and technostress. Successful executives implemented strategic approaches to technology use, including setting clear boundaries around digital availability, automating routine tasks, and leveraging digital tools for flexible working arrangements. Demographic factors influencing executives' technology use for WLB included age, gender, and professional roles, though individual skill levels and attitudes toward technology were found to be more influential than chronological age. Transformational leadership qualities particularly adaptability, openness to learning, and a focus on empowering team members were associated with more effective technology integration for WLB across demographic categories.

Based on these findings, the study offered recommendations for executives, organizations, and the health and social care sector. These included cultivating transformational leadership qualities, implementing strategic boundary management, leveraging technology purposefully, building robust support networks, practicing self-awareness, developing WLB-supportive leadership programs, creating clear technology use policies, providing comprehensive training, implementing flexible working policies, and addressing structural staffing shortages in the sector. This research contributed to a more holistic understanding of executive WLB in the digital age, emphasizing the interconnected nature of leadership approaches, technology use, and organizational contexts in shaping work-life experiences. The findings suggested that improving executive WLB required attention to multiple levels of

influence, from individual strategies and leadership development to organizational policies and broader societal attitudes toward work and wellbeing

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The contemporary world of work has undergone profound transformation in recent decades, reshaping how individuals and organisations operate across sectors. At the centre of this evolution lies the rapid advancement of technology, which has redefined not only the skills and competencies required in the modern economy but also the nature, timing, and spatial boundaries of work (Suryanto *et al.*, 2019). Alongside digitalisation, globalisation and intensified competition have placed mounting demands on organisations and their leaders to remain agile, innovative, and responsive in a constantly changing environment. These pressures have increasingly blurred the distinction between work and personal life, creating persistent challenges for maintaining equilibrium between professional and non-professional roles (Guest, 2002; Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

These developments are particularly visible in the health and social care sector, which operates within complex systems characterised by high workloads, constant service demands, and the moral imperative of public service delivery. The sector's 24-hour operational model, workforce shortages, and accountability requirements create distinctive leadership pressures that heighten the risk of work-life imbalance. The National Health Service (NHS) Confederation (2023) reports approximately 124,000 vacancies across NHS England, with executives and senior leaders often required to work extended hours to maintain service continuity and performance. The resulting strain underscores the broader issue that work demands are increasingly dominating other vital aspects of life, affecting wellbeing, family relationships, and social participation (Adisa *et al.*, 2021).

While digital tools have undoubtedly enhanced the capacity for rapid decision-making, coordination, and remote management, they have also facilitated a culture of continuous connectivity, where executives feel obliged to respond instantly to emerging issues (Suryanto *et al.*, 2019). This connectivity can erode psychological detachment from work, diminishing opportunities for recovery and personal engagement. Consequently, questions surrounding the sustainability of work patterns

in the digital era have gained increasing prominence across both research and practice, particularly in people-centred sectors such as health and social care (Gribben & Semple, 2021a).

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The concept of work-life balance (WLB) has therefore become central to discussions of modern employment (Suryanto *et al.*, 2019; Nagy, 2020; Adisa *et al.*, 2021). Scholars highlight that WLB is beyond a matter of time allocation but an ongoing negotiation of boundaries and identities that support personal wellbeing and organisational effectiveness (Guest, 2002; Haar *et al.*, 2014). Within high-pressure environments like health and social care, the ability of executives to achieve WLB has far-reaching implications. Their wellbeing influences decision quality, leadership effectiveness, and the overall health of organisational culture (Allen *et al.*, 2013; Karimi *et al.*, 2023).

As such, leadership has emerged as a key determinant of WLB. A substantial body of research demonstrates that effective leadership can help employees manage uncertainty and enhance wellbeing (Karimi *et al.*, 2023; Han *et al.*, 2024). Leaders who demonstrate supportive behaviours and foster positive organisational cultures can create conditions conducive to healthy work-life integration. Among various leadership paradigms, transformational leadership has attracted particular attention for its capacity to inspire, motivate, and empower followers toward collective goals. As conceptualised by Bass and Avolio (1997), transformational leadership encompasses four dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Leaders who embody these characteristics foster

commitment, innovation, and engagement among followers while aligning individual and organisational aspirations.

However, for executives themselves, embodying transformational leadership can present paradoxical challenges. The same qualities that enable them to inspire and support others may simultaneously increase their personal workloads and emotional strain. In health and social care, where leaders are often driven by a strong sense of responsibility and empathy, the boundary between professional dedication and personal wellbeing can become particularly fragile (Adisa *et al.*, 2021). Understanding how transformational leaders manage their own WLB therefore offers valuable insight into sustainable leadership practices within such mission-driven settings.

The digitalisation of work has further intensified these challenges. Digital innovations have transformed how leaders communicate, access information, and manage complex systems (Nam, 2014; Jackson *et al.*, 2020). Tools such as telehealth platforms, digital dashboards, and remote management systems have become integral to modern healthcare administration. These technologies can enhance flexibility and enable better coordination, allowing executives to manage responsibilities more efficiently. Yet they also expand the reach of work into personal spaces, fostering conditions that challenge the separation of roles (Nagy, 2020; Vyas, 2022). Technology thus functions as both a facilitator and a disruptor of WLB, depending on how it is integrated and managed.

In this context, exploring how transformational leadership behaviour interact with technology use to influence WLB among executives in England and Wales' health and social care sector is both timely and essential. The study is situated within the broader transformation of leadership in the digital age, where the capacity to integrate technological tools effectively while safeguarding personal wellbeing has become a defining characteristic of sustainable executive leadership.

1.2 Focus and Context

The focus and context of the investigation carried out as part of the proposed research project can be specified from two perspectives. On the one hand, in terms of the industry/sector context studied, this research project will focus on the health and social care sector. The selection of the health and social care sector as the focus of this

research is underpinned by several compelling theoretical and practical justifications that extend beyond the researcher's professional network. Firstly, the sector presents unique WLB challenges due to its 24/7 operational nature, high-stress environment, and critical responsibility for public welfare. These characteristics make it an ideal context for examining how executives navigate work-life boundaries while maintaining organizational effectiveness. Secondly, the sector has experienced unprecedented technological transformation, particularly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, making it a rich environment for studying the intersection of leadership, technology adoption, and WLB. The rapid shift to digital health solutions and remote working practices during the pandemic has created new challenges and opportunities for executive leadership in the sector.

Thirdly, the sector's chronic understaffing and resource constraints have created additional pressures on executives to maintain service delivery while managing their own WLB. The National Health Service (NHS) Confederation (2023) reports that workforce shortages remain one of the most critical challenges facing the UK's health and social care system, with approximately 124,000 vacancies across NHS England alone. These staffing pressures directly impact executive workload and their ability to maintain WLB. Furthermore, the sector's public service ethos and accountability requirements create unique demands on executive leadership that may not be present in other industries. These sector-specific characteristics provide an optimal context for examining how transformational leadership behaviour and technology use influence WLB in a high-pressure, resource-constrained environment.

Furthermore, the proposed research project assumes that the effects of transformational leadership on WLB, as well as the role of technology usage, are likely to be context-dependent. In other words, the national values, culture, and norms can be reasonably expected to influence the extent to which transformational leadership can affect WLB and to the extent to which technology impacts this relationship. This perspective also draws on the notion that senior executives tend to be more advanced in age and less technology savvy relative to the younger generation (Nam, 2014). To investigate this phenomenon, the proposed research will contextualise the research to focus on top executives in England and Wales. The researcher's professional networking contacts have influenced the selection of this region, which is expected to

ease the data collection process by allowing access to the target population. As a result, the proposed research project was carried out in England and Wales.

The researcher's professional networking contacts within this sector facilitated access to the target population, but this practical consideration is secondary to the sector's theoretical significance for the study's aims. The health and social care sector's complex interplay of operational demands, technological transformation, and public service responsibilities makes it an ideal setting for generating insights that may inform both theory and practice in executive WLB.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

This study is particularly timely and significant for several compelling reasons. First, the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally transformed work patterns and accelerated technology adoption among executives (Kniffin *et al.*, 2021; Baert *et al.*, 2020), creating an urgent need to understand how leaders can effectively leverage technology while maintaining healthy work-life boundaries. The health and social care sector, in particular, has faced unprecedented pressures (Temsah *et al.*, 2020; Wei *et al.*, 2020), making it a critical context for examining these dynamics.

Second, while extensive research exists on how leaders can support their employees' WLB (Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021; Karimi *et al.*, 2023), there is a notable gap in understanding how leaders themselves navigate these challenges (Griffith-Echito, 2019; Nagy, 2020). This oversight is concerning given that executive burnout and poor WLB can have cascading effects throughout organizations, impacting decision-making quality, organizational culture, and ultimately, business performance (Haar *et al.*, 2021; Wolor *et al.*, 2020). Recent studies indicate that approximately 60-70% of executives report significant WLB challenges (Mazurkiewicz and Germain, 2020; Flaig *et al.*, 2020), yet this demographic remains understudied in academic literature.

Third, the intersection of transformational leadership, technology use, and WLB presents a unique theoretical opportunity. While these concepts have been studied independently (Banks, 2018; Raja and Soundarapandian, 2022), their interaction - particularly how transformational leadership behaviour might influence technology adoption patterns and subsequent WLB outcomes - remains poorly understood (Jackson *et al.*, 2020; Nagy, 2020). This knowledge gap limits our ability to develop

effective interventions and support mechanisms for executives, particularly in an era where technology-enabled work is increasingly prevalent (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020).

Finally, from a practical standpoint, this research addresses pressing challenges faced by UK organizations, particularly in the health and social care sector. With the sector facing critical staffing shortages and increasing demands (Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2020), understanding how executives can maintain their effectiveness while preserving their wellbeing is crucial for organizational sustainability. The findings could inform the development of executive development programs, technology adoption strategies, and organizational policies that better support leader wellbeing and effectiveness (Ghasabeh, 2020; Karimi *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, as organisations continue to navigate post-pandemic work arrangements, insights into how transformational leaders leverage technology for WLB could prove invaluable for developing sustainable leadership practices (Han *et al.*, 2024).

1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do executives in England and Wales experience work-life balance within the context of the health and social care sector?
2. In what ways do executives employ transformational leadership strategies to address work-life balance challenges?
3. How do transformational leaders' use of technology, shaped by demographic factors such as age, gender, and professional role, facilitate or hinder their work-life balance?

1.5 Aim and Objectives

The study aims to explore the interplay of transformational leaders, technology and WLB among executives in England and Wales. Specific objectives are to:

- a. explore the WLB experience of executives in England and Wales;
- b. assess how executives in England and Wales deploy transformational leadership strategies to address WLB issues; and
- c. analyse how transformational leaders leverage technology, and how this is shaped by demographic factors, to achieve WLB in England and Wales.

1.6 Research Motivation

My motivation for this research stems from both professional observations and academic interests in the intersection of leadership, technology, and WLB. As a researcher interested in organizational behaviour, I have witnessed firsthand how the health and social care sector in the UK has faced unprecedented challenges, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The strain on executives in this sector has been especially notable, as they navigate the complex demands of organizational leadership while attempting to maintain their own WLB.

The choice to focus on transformational leadership and technology use is driven by my observation of a critical gap in current research. While much attention has been paid to how leaders can help their subordinates achieve WLB, comparatively little research examines how leaders themselves manage these challenges. This oversight is particularly striking given the increasing pressures on executives in the digital age, where technology can both enable and complicate the achievement of WLB.

Furthermore, my interest in the health and social care sector is motivated by its vital role in society and the unique pressures faced by its leaders. The sector's chronic understaffing, increased demand for services, and the need for rapid technological adaptation make it an ideal context for examining how transformational leadership and technology use interact with WLB. Through this research, I aim to contribute meaningful insights that can help executives in this crucial sector better navigate their professional and personal lives while maintaining effective leadership practices. The decision to focus on the UK context is not merely one of convenience but is rooted in the nation's distinctive challenges in healthcare leadership and digital transformation. The NHS and social care system's ongoing struggles with workforce retention, technological modernization, and leadership development make this research particularly timely and relevant for both academic understanding and practical application.

1.7 Research Contribution

This research contributes new insights into the under-explored intersection of transformational leadership, technology usage, and WLB specifically among executives in England and Wales. While prior studies have examined these concepts separately or in partial combination, a comprehensive exploration integrating all three elements is lacking. By investigating how transformational leadership behaviour

influence executives' ability to achieve WLB and how technology moderates this relationship, the research promises to yield valuable theoretical and practical implications. On the theoretical front, the findings can refine and extend existing concepts around spillover theory and the technology acceptance model within the context of executive leadership and work-life integration. The conceptual model developed can provide a novel perspective on the boundary conditions and facilitating mechanisms through which transformational leadership nurtures WLB, with technology acting as an enabler or barrier. This integrated view can enrich scholarly understanding of how personal, organizational, and technological factors coalesce to shape work-life experiences at the executive level.

From a practical standpoint, the research insights can guide organizations and HR professionals in cultivating leadership development programs that emphasize transformational competencies synergistically with technology adoption strategies. This can empower executives to proactively manage their work-life boundaries through effective technological tools and transformational mindsets. Moreover, by examining potential demographic differences, the study can generate recommendations tailored to specific executive profiles. Overall, the research holds promise for generating actionable insights to promote sustainable work-life integration among the UK's executive workforce, fostering organizational effectiveness and employee well-being concurrently.

1.8 Originality of the Study

Originality is a defining criterion against which doctoral research is judged, requiring candidates to demonstrate a genuine and identifiable contribution to knowledge rather than a restatement of existing understanding. Phillips and Pugh (1994) provide one of the most widely used frameworks for assessing this contribution, proposing a set of criteria that can be grouped into three broad categories, summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Originality Criteria

Category	Criteria
Research	Carrying out empirical work not previously undertaken; continuing a previously original piece of work; pursuing a research area not yet examined; undertaking a study originally proposed by a senior colleague

Technique	Applying a known technique to a new context; synthesising material in a way not done before; using cross-disciplinary methodologies; coordinating several research strands not previously combined
------------------	--

Evidence	Generating new empirical data; offering a new interpretation of existing material; conducting a cross-country comparison; bringing new evidence to bear on an established issue
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Source: Adapted from Phillips and Pugh (1994)

While Phillips and Pugh's (1994) framework is widely applied across disciplines, Guetzkow et al. (2004) offer a complementary perspective specific to the social sciences, identifying seven dimensions along which originality is typically assessed by peer reviewers: original topic, approach, theory, method, data, results, and research conducted in an understudied area. Together, these two frameworks provide a robust basis for evaluating this study's contribution.

Against Phillips and Pugh's (1994) criteria, the present study satisfies several. From the *research* category, it pursues a research area not yet substantively examined: while WLB scholarship has extensively considered how leaders support followers' WLB, comparatively little attention has been paid to how leaders manage their own (Griffith-Echito, 2019; Nagy, 2020). From the *technique* category, the study synthesises literatures from transformational leadership, technology adoption, and WLB, that have largely developed independently of one another, and applies established theoretical frameworks (spillover theory and TAM) in combination, a pairing not previously used to examine executive WLB. From the *evidence* category, it generates new empirical data through engagement with executives in the health and social care in England and Wales that has not been previously studied through this lens.

Against Guetzkow et al.'s (2004) dimensions, the study can similarly be located within at least three: it addresses an *understudied area* (leaders' own WLB, rather than their role in supporting others'), it adopts an *original approach* (the integrated spillover theory–TAM lens), and it focuses on an *original topic* in its specific attention to demographic variation in executives' technology-mediated WLB strategies. Taken together, these criteria substantiate the claim that this research extends, rather than simply restates, existing knowledge in the fields of leadership, technology adoption, and work-life balance.

1.9 Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, each logically building on the previous to guide the reader from conceptual grounding to empirical insights and practical implications. Chapter One introduces the study by establishing the background, presenting the aim and objectives, and defining the focus and context. It also outlines the justification for undertaking the research, highlighting both practical and theoretical gaps, and details the researcher's motivation for exploring this area. The contribution of the study is articulated, emphasizing its relevance to leadership studies, organisational practice, and technological innovation. The chapter concludes with a brief outline of the thesis structure.

Chapter two provided a comprehensive literature review. It explored the construct of WLB, tracing its origin, unpacking key terminologies, offering definitions and conceptual frameworks, and identifying strategies for achieving balance. It also discusses relevant dimensions and antecedents of WLB. The chapter then shifts to leadership theory, particularly the concept and dimensions of transformational leadership, including how such leaders experience WLB. The chapter also reviewed literature on the role of technology in the modern workplace, with specific focus on mobile technologies, generative AI, and the technology–WLB paradox. This discussion was situated within the social care sector, leading into a focus on how transformational leaders use technology to support WLB. The chapter concluded with a conceptual model that integrates the main constructs. Chapter Three established the theoretical framework of the study introducing spillover theory and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Finally, the chapter offers a synthesis of both theories, providing an integrated lens through which the findings are later interpreted.

Chapter four outlined the research methodology. It started with an overview of existing methodologies in the field and reaffirms the research objectives. The chapter presents the philosophical underpinnings of the study, including the research philosophy and underlying assumptions. A detailed research design is then presented, covering the approach, method, strategy, and time horizon. Further sections explain the sampling process, data collection, and approaches to ensuring reliability and validity. The chapter also outlines the data analysis strategy and discusses relevant ethical considerations. It concluded with a summary of the methodological framework.

Chapter five is dedicated to the presentation of findings based on data collected from transformational leaders in the UK health and social care sector. It begins with participant information and then explores diverse perceptions of WLB, key challenges to WLB, followed by coping mechanisms including professional boundaries, communication management, psychological adaptation, and structural supports. The findings further outline factors influencing WLB. The chapter also presents transformational leadership strategies for WLB and concludes with an in-depth presentation of how leaders use technology as well as demographic differences in technology use based on age, gender, and professional roles.

Chapter Six covers discussion of the findings, interpreting them through the lenses of Spillover Theory and TAM. It revisits the WLB experiences of executives in the health and social care sector, discussing their perceptions, challenges, and coping strategies. It then interprets how transformational leadership strategies including human-centric, empowerment-focused, inclusive, and developmental leadership support WLB in practice. The chapter critically evaluates how transformational leaders deploy technology strategically and the challenges they encounter, and interprets demographic differences in technology adoption and use. It concludes with a reflection on the theoretical implications of the findings, particularly in refining existing models, and outlines the practical implications for leadership and organisational policy.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by summarising the key findings and drawing general conclusions. It offers practical recommendations for transformational leaders, organisations, and the broader health and social care sector. The chapter also acknowledges the limitations of the study and proposes areas for future research, particularly regarding the evolving role of digital leadership in the post-pandemic era.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section explores the conceptual and empirical perspectives on the key constructs examined in the research namely, the use of WLB, transformational leadership, and technology. The analysis of this body of research is structured under these three main concepts, with individual sections starting with the discussion of the definition and conceptualisation of the respective terms based on the body of literature reviewed. The chapter also includes an empirical review of extant literature providing insights into the findings of previous studies.

2.1 Exploring the Worklife Balance Construct

In this section, the origin of WLB, conceptualisation of WLB, antecedents of WLB are discussed in this section.

2.1.1 Brief Origin of WLB

Authors have traced the origins of WLB to the 70s in the UK and mid-80s in the USA (Naithani, 2010; Pendleton, *et al.*, 2021; Thilagavathy and Geetha, 2021). There were also arguments that the 1936 Jarrow march had a WLB underlining. The march canvassed for “8 hours work, 8 hours play, 8 hours rest and 8 bob a day” which essentially speaks to the core notion of WLB. However, this claim has not garnered sufficient scholarly support. Before the 1970s, work and family were typically considered separate spheres (Naithani, 2010). The aftermath of World War II (1939-1945) led to a significant increase in the female workforce in various organizations, resulting in a more diverse workforce (Cannizzo *et al.*, 2019; Naithani, 2010). This shift in gender division was attributed to advancements in technology and computerization, which reduced the advantage of physical strength in work.

The industrial revolution witnessed prolonged working hours in the United Kingdom, with labourers enduring arduous schedules of 14 to 16 hours per day, six days a week, resulting in considerable social and health costs, particularly for children (Raja & Stein, 2014). A parallel scenario unfolded in the USA, where workers faced up to 100 hours per week, exposing them to severe health and safety risks. Responding to mounting pressure from labour advocates, the United States officially amended the Fair Labour Standards Act, establishing a maximum of 40 hours of work per week.

Initially addressing the concerns of women with children, WLB policies gained traction in the 1980s during the Women's Liberation Movement, advocating for flexible work schedules and maternity leave (Harrington, 2007; Akanji, 2012). By the 1990s, the focus expanded to encompass individuals of all marital statuses and genders, with or without children, reflecting a more inclusive approach (Naithani, 2010). Juliet Schor's 1991 book, "The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure," propelled the term into wider recognition.

Pioneering scholars, including Lotte Bailyn, Rhona and Robert Rapoport in the 1960s, Joe Pleck, James Levine, and Rosabeth Moss Kanter in the 1970s, played pivotal roles in advancing the WLB movement through their research (Harrington, 2007). In the 1980s, initiatives such as Catalyst, funded by Exxon, Work/Family Directions founded by Fran Rodgers, and the Boston University Centre for Work and Family, supported by corporate members, emerged as key contributors to developing WLB in the corporate world (Harrington, 2007).

2.1.2 Deconstructing the WLB terminologies

Perspectives and approaches to conceptualizing WLB are as diverse as the scholars who have studied it, often influenced by their unique viewpoints. This variability has led to descriptions of WLB as a "chameleon characteristic" (Lockwood, 2003) and a "protean term" (Ojo *et al.*, 2014), highlighting its context-dependent nature (Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2021) and the individual's perspective (Lockwood, 2003). For, Al-Saidi (2015) WLB is more of a dazzling than a fundamental term because there is not clear consensus regarding its meaning. This position is not farfetched as evidence from the literature suggest that definitions of WLB have also evolved over time, knowledge, and across disciplines (Naithani, 2010) and may sometimes overlap (Lockwood, 2003).

Perhaps a good place to start is to deconstruct and examine the various concepts embedded in the term WLB. The first concept is that of 'work' which relates to various professional and personal activities individuals engage in to sustain a livelihood and pursue personal interests (Bahn *et al.*, 2020). Generally, work can be classified as paid and unpaid (Ganiyu *et al.*, 2017; Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). The need for distinction was well accentuated in Guest (2002) especially in the context of WLB research. This is not farfetched as the concept of work has different meanings to different individuals. For emphasis and contextualisation, this research focuses on paid or professional

work. Some scholars argue that the concept of work extends beyond the professional space to include for example caregiving, household chores and other personal non-professional obligations (Adisa, Adekoya, *et al.*, 2021; Adisa, Aiyenitaju, *et al.*, 2021; Hubbard, 2016; Keyrouz, 2020; Kossek *et al.*, 2018). These can be classified under unpaid work, which in the context of WLB research, falls within the purview of “life” (T. Mordi *et al.*, 2023). Prevailing notions are that there is some flexibility in juggling the demands of professional and non-professional obligations without a significant spillover for working individuals (Aiyenitaju, *et al.*, 2021).

The second concept involves defining the scope of “life.” Recent scholarship, including Adisa *et al.* (2017) and Caringal-Go *et al.* (2022), expressed concerns about past studies limiting the “life” aspect to family roles, excluding other non-work responsibilities. This perspective is observed in industries across the globe, with organizations in Nigeria (Adisa *et al.*, 2016), Malaysia (Jayasingam *et al.*, 2021), Ghana (Darko-Asumadu *et al.*, 2018), and others (Rashmi & Kataria, 2021) often disregarding non-work roles beyond family obligations, particularly childcare.

While the focus on family roles was valid in the context of increased women's participation and dual roles management (T. Liu *et al.*, 2021), recent changes in workplace demographics, such as an aging population, single parents, childless couples, and workers with health issues (Nasimiyu & Egessa, 2021; Sheppard, 2016), necessitate a more inclusive perspective.

The evolving demographics and societal changes mentioned indicate a need for the social care sector to adopt a more inclusive perspective that accommodates diverse family structures, life circumstances, and individual needs (Ratnesh *et al.*, 2019). Traditionally, the focus on family roles in social care was primarily geared towards supporting women who juggled caregiving responsibilities alongside employment (Akinbode & Akinbode, 2017). However, with the emergence of diverse family compositions such as single-parent households, childless couples, and individuals with health issues, the notion of balancing work and life becomes more complex and multifaceted within the social care sector (Olaniyan *et al.*, 2022). For the social care sector, embracing inclusivity means recognizing and accommodating the diverse life circumstances and responsibilities of its workforce (Ratnesh *et al.*, 2019; Tunji-Olayeni *et al.*, 2017). This could involve implementing flexible work arrangements, providing

support for caregivers, offering assistance programs for employees with health issues or disabilities, and promoting a culture of understanding and acceptance (Marc *et al.*, 2023). Wilson (2021) expressed that by acknowledging the various life challenges that workers may face, the social care sector can create a more supportive and conducive environment for all employees to thrive

Additionally, considering the 'life' to balance with the nature of the role in the social care sector entails acknowledging the emotional and psychological toll that the job can take on caregivers (Wilson, 2021). Social care workers often deal with demanding and emotionally taxing situations, which can impact their overall well-being and WLB (Akinbode & Akinbode, 2017). Therefore, it becomes essential for organizations within the social care sector to prioritize employee well-being, provide adequate support systems, and promote self-care practices among their workforce. Adisa *et al.* (2017) argues for expanding the scope of life beyond family roles to accommodate other non-work responsibilities. To address this, there are submissions recommending the inclusion of 'private' in the term life (Chigeda *et al.*, 2022; Emre & De Spiegeleare, 2021; Györfy *et al.*, 2023; Leppäkumpua & Sivunen, 2023), aiming to capture a broader range of non-work domains and promote a more holistic understanding of WLB.

The third concept is 'balance' in the context of WLB. Although Guest (2002) considered achieving balance a myth, some authors recognise individuals' high and equal involvement in work and family/social affairs (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003; Kirchmeyer, 2000). This would involve not only physical but also psychological involvement (Tunji-Olayeni *et al.*, 2017). This perspective has been criticised for not considering individual's values. In other words, employees that prioritise work over family/private life will consider equal involvement across the two domains as imbalance and vice versa (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

A second perspective of balance supported by scholars such as Carlson and Frone (2003) commonly characterize balance by the existence of role enrichment and the absence of role conflict. However, this definition has faced scrutiny due to the acknowledgment that individuals might encounter mild conflict without a complete absence of balance (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Moreover, the nature of certain occupations may not inherently involve role enrichment, yet individuals can still

perceive a sense of balance. Conflict and enrichment are fundamental concepts in the work-family domain, but it's crucial to distinguish them from the overarching idea of balance, as highlighted by Wayne *et al.* (2017).

Meanwhile, authors (e.g., Wayne *et al.*, 2017, 2020) offered a different perspective on achieving balance which involves a holistic assessment of one's effectiveness by merging work and family responsibilities (Wayne *et al.*, 2017). Some researchers have focused on satisfaction with balance (Wayne *et al.*, 2020), while others emphasize effectiveness in both roles (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). The definitions of balance often incorporate satisfaction and effectiveness, suggesting that these are two primary ways to define global balance, although some caution against combining these elements (Hirschi *et al.*, 2019).

2.1.3 Definitions and Conceptualisation of WLB

WLB emerged as a key consideration in response to the growing burnout among employees in various industries (Rashmi and Kataria, 2021; Raja and Soundarapandian, 2022). Essentially, the concept describes the need to balance work and non-work commitments to achieve optimal levels of employees' satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Gagnano *et al.*, 2020). Despite the widely acknowledged need for promoting WLB and the inclusion of work-life policies in the HRM repertoire of virtually all organisations, the conceptualisation and perception of WLB are not consistent across different contexts and individuals (Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2021; Gagnano *et al.*, 2020).

Table 2.1 details some of the various attempts at conceptualizing WLB. One of the earliest conceptualizations of WLB was offered by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who defined it as work-life conflict. Later, Greenhaus *et al.* (2003) presented a different perspective, defining WLB as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in and satisfied with their work and family roles. This definition has gained wide usage in WLB literature (Stankevičienė *et al.*, 2021; Tunji-Olayeni *et al.*, 2017). However, for Frone (2003) it simply meant the absence of conflict between the two domains which is close to the conceptualisation of Greenhaus and Beutell (1985). However, because of the increasing proportion of female workers in the labour market, the Department for Education and Employment (2000) also provided a comprehensive definition of WLB, emphasizing that it's not just about women juggling home and family but also

adjusting working patterns to accommodate everyone's needs, considering factors like age, race, and gender.

Another intriguing perspective of WLB proposed by Felstead *et al.* (2002) who approached WLB from the institutional and cultural dynamics in relation to time and spaces. They defined WLB in terms of the interplay between the institutional and cultural aspects of time and space in both work and non-work domains. In societies where income is primarily generated and distributed through labour, this relationship becomes crucial. Their definition suggests that achieving WLB involves understanding and managing the complex dynamics between the structured settings and temporal aspects associated with work and non-work activities. It emphasizes that the concept goes beyond individual preferences and extends to the broader societal contexts where work and income play central roles in shaping people's lives.

In the social care sector, where the provision of care is deeply intertwined with societal structures and norms, understanding these dynamics is crucial (Olaniyan *et al.*, 2022). Caregivers often navigate complex systems while balancing their professional responsibilities with personal commitments (Wilson, 2021). The imperative thus as highlighted by Felstead *et al.* (2002) acknowledging the broader societal influences on WLB. This way, organizations can better support caregivers in managing these challenges. Aligning with Felstead *et al.*'s (2002) entails not only considering individual preferences but also recognizing and addressing the broader societal factors that shape caregivers' experiences and well-being. This is also consistent with the position of more recent studies exploring the WLB experience of social care workers (Marc *et al.*, 2023; Olaniyan *et al.*, 2022; Wilson, 2021).

Nwagbara (2020) also tried to simply define WLB as balancing social and work roles. From a regulatory perspective, Hirschi *et al.* (2019) saw WLB as the successful joint pursuit of work and family goals, while Yu *et al.* (2017) described it as an independent construct representing a balance between work and family matters, but Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) argue for a more complex view. They propose that WLB encompasses time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance (Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw, 2003), which is more inclusive but exclusively focuses on family (Rashmi & Kataria, 2021). There are also scholars who advocate for reconciliation of both roles

(Stankevičienė *et al.*, 2021) while emerging notions are tilting towards integration (Adisa *et al.*, 2017; Shabir & Gani, 2020; Stankevičienė *et al.*, 2021).

Table 2.1: Selected Definitions of Work-life balance

S/N	Authors	Definitions
1.	(Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p.77)	“a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect”
2.	(Clark, 2000, p.349)	“Satisfaction and good functioning at work and home with a minimum of role conflict”
3.	(Felstead <i>et al.</i> , 2002, p.56)	“as the relationship between the institutional and cultural times and spaces of work and non-work in societies where income is predominantly generated and distributed through labour markets.”
4.	(Lockwood, 2003, p.3)	“From the employee’s viewpoint is the dilemma of managing work obligations and personal/family responsibilities and from the employer viewpoint: the challenge of creating a supportive company culture where employees can focus on their jobs while at work.”
5.	(Greenhaus <i>et al.</i> , 2003, p.513)	“the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role.”
6.	(Frone, 2003, p.145)	“Lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles.”
7.	(Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007, p.458)	“accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains”

Source: Author’s Compilation (2023)

The review of various conceptualizations of WLB underscores its significance in maintaining a balance in life, impacting both individual well-being and organizational outcomes (Emre & De Spiegeleare, 2021). However, in today's fast-paced economy, achieving WLB is often challenging, as suggested by Vyas (2022), it is a complex concept that requires support at multiple levels, including the personal, workplace, and national levels. In addition, the dynamic nature of work and the diversity of today's workforce require a more inclusive and adaptable understanding of WLB that goes beyond traditional family-focused definitions. Achieving a genuine WLB remains a complex challenge, but it is crucial for the overall well-being of employees (Agosti *et al.*, 2017; Hasan *et al.*, 2020) and the success of organizations (Kurnia & Widigdo, 2021; Stankevičienė *et al.*, 2021).

In addition, discussions surrounding WLB face challenges in conceptualization and validity. Rashmi and Kataria's (2021) point out limitations, while debates about its relevance persist. Contentious issues include defining the scope of "life" in WLB (whether it includes community, friends, or just family), incorporating non-waged work in discussions, questioning the accuracy of the term "balance" as an analogy, and determining the range of employees covered by WLB policies (Warren, 2021). These complexities underscore the ongoing and complex nature of discussions around WLB. Having reviewed the divergent conceptualisations above, and noting the absence of a single, universally accepted definition of WLB (Lockwood, 2003; Al-Saidi, 2015), this study advances a synthesised working definition rather than adopting one definition from the literature. This definition draws on the engagement-and-satisfaction emphasis of Greenhaus et al. (2003), the structural and temporal dimensions highlighted by Felstead et al. (2002), and the holistic, multi-domain effectiveness perspective of Wayne et al. (2017, 2020), integrating these strands into a single conceptualisation:

"Work-life balance is the harmonious integration of professional responsibilities and personal pursuits, characterized by a dynamic equilibrium that prioritizes individual well-being and fulfilment across multiple dimensions. It encompasses the effective management of time, energy, and resources to achieve optimal performance in both work and non-work domains, while fostering a supportive environment that recognizes and accommodates the diverse needs and aspirations of individuals."

This inclusive perspective acknowledges the evolving nature of work, embracing flexibility, autonomy, and adaptability as essential components of a balanced lifestyle. Achieving genuine WLB requires collaborative efforts at the personal, organizational, and societal levels, promoting resilience, satisfaction, and sustainable productivity among employees, thereby contributing to the overall success and vitality of organizations and communities. This definition acknowledges the complexity of WLB in today's fast-paced economy, emphasizing the need for support at multiple levels and a more inclusive understanding that goes beyond traditional family-focused definitions. It underscores the importance of individual well-being, flexibility, and adaptability in achieving genuine WLB, while also recognizing the broader societal and organizational implications of this equilibrium. WLB does not however occur by accident nor in isolation. A significant body of research have dedicated efforts to

exploring the various predictors of WLB. The subsequent sub-section details the antecedents of WLB.

2.1.4 Strategies for achieving WLB

Mordi *et al.* (2023) identified three key strategies for work-family balance. Individual initiatives involve seeking support from family, friends, and spirituality. Organizational provisions include flexible work arrangements and apprenticeships. Government contributions encompass childcare support, adult care homes, student loans, after-school programs, apprenticeships, universal credit, and housing benefits. These strategies collectively address the challenges individuals face in managing work and family responsibilities, emphasizing the roles of personal initiatives, workplace practices, and governmental support in enhancing overall well-being and life enrichment. Kibriya *et al.* (2021) like Mordi *et al.* (2023) emphasised a religious dimension as a strategy for achieving WLB among Pakistani women. In addition, the study identified reliance on support systems, time and stress management, determining priorities, and task crafting as other strategies. There are other evidences especially in African context supporting the role of religion in WLB (Hasan & Muafi, 2023).

Leppäkumpua and Sivunen (2023) prioritised communication as a strategy. Their study presented some controversial and paradoxical findings in their study of boundary management amongst journalists. On one hand, they suggest that communication through after-hours work-related channels (ATB communication) provides numerous opportunities for journalists and their relational contacts to engage in boundary management practices. However, the paradox arises when the same finding indicates that refraining from after-hours communication is essential for achieving a balance between work and life. Bhat *et al.* (2023) explored telecommuting's influence on WLB. Their study showed that telecommuting from home had a beneficial effect on the job engagement of telecommuters and individuals who worked from home demonstrated increased concentration levels, devotion, and vitality.

Caringal-Go *et al.* (2022) investigated the WLB strategies of telecommuting employees during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, employing a qualitative approach with an online survey of 112 participants. The study revealed prevalent strategies falling into three categories: physical (involving time, task, and workspace management), cognitive (encompassing health-related practices and flexible attitudes

toward work, leisure, and rest), and relational (focusing on family time and maintaining virtual connections with colleagues). These findings shed light on the diverse approaches employees adopt to navigate the challenges of balancing professional and personal demands in the context of remote work during the pandemic. Mahfouz (2020) delved into the stressors faced by school administrators and the coping mechanisms they employ. The study revealed that administrators often resort to spending time with family and friends or pursuing hobbies outside of work as coping strategies. However, despite these efforts, they experience negative emotions. Notably, administrators reported a reluctance to engage in self-care practices and expressed feelings of guilt when taking quality relaxation time. This suggests a complex relationship between coping strategies, emotional well-being, and perceived guilt among school administrators dealing with stress.

Annor (2014) investigated the perspectives of employed parents in Ghana. Notably, the study revealed lack of support system from the government and organisations. Hence, employees deployed individual initiatives including relying extensively on immediate and extended family relatives, house helpers and informal sources of support at the workplace in managing the dual demands of work and family roles. The outcome of Sok *et al.*'s (2014) study suggest that a supportive culture, expressed in flexible work-home arrangements, can enhance positive spillover from the work domain to the home domain and diminish negative spillover. This strategy is proposed to improve the work-home interface in a bid to attract and retain valued managers.

Akanji (2012) revealed an interesting perspective in Nigeria. The study showed that Nigerian employees tend to nurture the idea that WLC is a way of life. To cope with WLC they employee conflict suppression rather than try to eradicate or reduce the WLB issues. Furthermore, the study showed no inclination among the employees to adopt problem-solving approach in managing WLB issues. However, Edralin (2012) found three strategies used mainly by female entrepreneurs to integrate work and life demands. Majorly, they engage in stress reducing activities, locate their businesses close by, and plan work and household chores ahead of time.

Hsieh and Eggers (2010) studied the strategies adopted by lodging managers. Their study found strategies including planning, scheduling, and organizing better, role support from inside and outside role set, prioritizing activities, integrating roles, boundary management, changing attitudes toward roles, and developing self and own interests. Similarly, Haddon and Hede's (2009) study of practising lawyers in Australia,

using a qualitative methodology, found the following strategies: use of technology, managing boundaries, engaging in leisure activities, support, flexibility boundary management, technology, leisure activities, flexibility, and support. They also identified cognitive strategies (acceptance, humour, and positive reappraisal) and behavioural strategies (planning and organising).

2.1.5 Exploring Some Dimensions of Worklife Balance

Work-life balance encompasses various dimensions that contribute to an individual's overall well-being and satisfaction with their work and personal life. These dimensions are interconnected and can vary depending on individual preferences, lifestyle, and career stage. Some common dimensions of WLB include:

2.1.5.1 Time Management

Time management is widely recognized as a crucial aspect of achieving WLB, involving the efficient allocation of time between work-related responsibilities and personal activities (Ali *et al.*, 2023; Opatha & Perera, 2017; Uddin, 2021). Opatha and Perera (2017) found that time management is positively related to WLB. They noted that the ability of employees to engage in time management to meet the demands of work and personal activities results in balance. Kibriya *et al.* (2021) found that time management was one of the coping mechanisms Pakistani women used to manage professional and personal responsibilities.

Meanwhile, some scholars have critiqued traditional approach to time management due to its tendency to focus solely on efficiency and productivity metrics, often overlooking the qualitative aspects of work and personal life (Aeon *et al.*, 2021; Terefe *et al.*, 2023). The emphasis on strict scheduling and task prioritization may inadvertently contribute to a rigid, inflexible approach to time allocation, neglecting the need for spontaneity, creativity, and leisure (Moore & Tenney, 2012). Additionally, the pressure to optimize every minute of the day can exacerbate feelings of guilt or inadequacy when individuals struggle to meet unrealistic productivity standards (Moore & Tenney, 2012). Moreover, the emphasis on individual responsibility for time management overlooks systemic factors that influence an individual's ability to allocate time effectively. Workplace cultures that prioritize long hours and constant availability, for example, can undermine employees' efforts to establish work-life boundaries and manage their time in a sustainable manner (Gautam & Singh, 2017). Nonetheless,

WLB studies have applied time management as a predictor of WLB (Ali *et al.*, 2023; Gautam & Singh, 2017; Kibriya *et al.*, 2021a; Opatha & Perera, 2017; Uddin, 2021)

2.1.5.2 Workload and Job Demands

Workload and job demands have been explored in the context of WLB (Ma *et al.*, 2021). According to Bakker *et al.* (2005, p.170), job demands are “physical, social, or organizational characteristics of a job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain psychological and physiological costs”. Scholars argue that workload and job demands play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' ability to achieve WLB. Effectively managing workload is essential for balancing the demands of work with personal responsibilities (Gribben & Semple, 2021; Nizam & Kam, 2018). Extensive research has highlighted the detrimental effects of excessive work demands, such as long hours and high levels of stress, on individuals' well-being and overall WLB (Craig & Sawrikar, 2009; Thompson, 2008). Moreover, unchecked workload can contribute to burnout (Duxbury & Smart, 2010; Kossek *et al.*, 2018), decreased job satisfaction, and diminished performance (Banks, 2018), further exacerbating the imbalance between work and personal life (Deng *et al.*, 2022; Gautam & Singh, 2017; Harb & Keyrouz, 2022). Ugwu *et al.* (2017) established that work-role overload and job stress significantly predicted work-life and work interference with family conflict. Bouwmeester *et al.* (2021) also observed an increase in negative WLB experiences of millennial consultants attributed to the intensified pressures from work at strategy houses. In this sense, the extent to which executives are able to manage workload and the demands of the job determines the level of WLB they would experience.

2.1.5.3 Stress levels

The level of stress is an indicator of WLB. Sok *et al.* (2014) identified time-based stress and strain-based stress as major classes of stress in the work and life spheres. Extant studies have linked the level of stress to workloads and job demands (Bharathi & Mala, 2016; Mwathi & Nzulwa, 2019; Rosnani *et al.*, 2012) while studying WLB. For example, Prabhashani and Ratnayaka (2017) observed that the demands of the health care sector for example significantly increase stress levels leading to worklife imbalance. Ali *et al.* (2023) also documented a similar experience among nurses in the Klang valley. The social care sector is also not exempted from stressors. Mac *et al.* (2023) showed how social care workers experienced fatigue and imbalance leading to stress

and conflicts. Olaniyan *et al.* (2021) found that employees in child support services were looking for alternatives considering the stress involved in the job and how it intertwined with their private lives. This is a major deviation from the findings of Kalliath *et al.* (2020), despite the demands and challenges of social work practice, social workers find fulfilment and satisfaction in their work. In context, the level of stress executives' feel is an indication of their WLB. In this sense, executives experiencing lower stress levels have better WLB experience and vice versa.

2.1.5.4 Flexibility and Autonomy

Flexibility and autonomy in the workplace are essential components of achieving WLB. Research consistently demonstrates that having control over one's work schedule and the flexibility to manage both work and personal commitments positively impacts employee well-being and job satisfaction (Nagy, 2020). According to Adisa *et al.* (2021), at the base of WLB is the ability to exercise some level of flexibility concerning how, where, and when employees work. Flexibility in this context relates to the “when” of work, that is, flexible working hours such that the employees can largely decide when they commence and end work for the day. An aspect of “where” also incorporates the concept of telecommuting (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). Based on this, flexibility can relate to having some form of autonomy and control over work and non-work roles. Flexibility enables individuals to tailor their work hours, location, and arrangements to align with their personal needs and preferences, whether it be attending to family obligations, pursuing hobbies, or engaging in self-care activities. With the role of technology, this flexibility however appears to be blurring the boundaries between professional and personal spheres making it harder to achieve WLB (Nagy, 2020). The dilemma here is determining the point where the flexibility and autonomy technology offers moves from being an enabler or disruptor of balance (Nagy, 2020).

2.1.5.5 Physical and Mental Well-being

According to Bjärntoft *et al.* (2020), wellbeing is an integral part of WLB. Within WLB discourse, wellbeing has garnered significant attention (Akinbode & Akinbode, 2017; Althammer *et al.*, 2021; Ninaus *et al.*, 2021). Substantial evidence also points to a significant link between wellbeing and WLB (Ali *et al.*, 2023; Bella, 2023; Farradinna *et al.*, 2019; Sok *et al.*, 2014). Interestingly, (Haaniy & Sareena, 2023) argued that when organisations are talking about the WLB, they are technically referring to the

overall wellbeing of their employees. Along that line, scholars have explored the role of spillovers on wellbeing. For example, Sok *et al.* (2014) showed how negative spillovers from work or home can have a detrimental effect on wellbeing and vice versa. Farradinna *et al.* (2019) on the other hand argued that a good WLB can improve well-being. This explains why Farradinna *et al.* (2019) impressed that prioritizing well-being is paramount for striving to achieve WLB, as it is directly linked to their ability to manage the demands of both their professional and personal lives effectively (Deng *et al.*, 2022).

2.1.6 Antecedents of work-life balance

There is significant body of literature on the determinants of WLB in academic literature (Guest, 2002; Imtiaz & Hossain, 2019). Interestingly, a bulk of studies have been found to focus their attention on the determinants of WLB for women (Akter, 2013; Bella, 2023; Bharathi & Mala, 2016; Haaniy & Sareena, 2023; Kumar & Krupanandhan, 2019) and this is understandable considering the changes in labour market dynamics showing increased participation of women in the workforce. Meanwhile, Guest (2002) provided a broad classification of determinants of WLB: organisational and individual factors which has served as a basic framework for many studies in the exploration of determinants and (Wong *et al.*, 2021) identified three dimensions: intrapersonal (health condition, feelings at work, personal time use), relational (satisfaction with supervisors, colleagues, peer influences, family relationships, and community and social factors (work place policies, societal influences, job characteristics). However, Guest's (2002) framework guided the review in this section.

On the individual front, studies have examined demographics dimensions such as gender, and age. For example, Griffith-Echito (2019) and Zakaria and Omar (2016) reported no statistically significant differences in the WLB based on gender, marital status, number of dependents, and age, which is similar to the findings of Kara *et al.* (2018) who found no difference in the quality of life of hotel workers based on gender and income. This was also supported in the work of Lembrechts *et al.* (2015) who found no significant effect for age and gender. Meanwhile, Kara *et al.* (2018) reported that gender and income moderated the interaction between transformational leadership and quality of work life. Similarly, Liu *et al.* (2021) noted how gender account for variance in perception and experience of WLB, further reinforced in

Oyewobi *et al.* (2022) and Ghanbaripour *et al.* (2023). In addition, Imtiaz and Hossain (2019) found that gender predicted WLB. They reported more off-balance for men compared to men consistent with Mordi *et al.* (2023). These results emphasise the context-dependent nature of the WLB perceptions, revealing that its antecedents are likely to vary depending on context. Bharathi and Mala (2016) also identified individual factors such as regular exercises and fitness schedule, yoga and meditation, balanced diet as well as good sleep and involvement in the hobbies as determining factors of WLB.

There has also been exploration into how technology use can predict WLB (Middleton, 2008). For example, Raja and Soundarapandian (2022) showed how technology positively influences the WLB of IT employees. This resonates with the findings of Murphy and Doherty (2011) on senior managers in Europe, First Psychology Scotland (2015) on citizens across diverse demography in Scotland; Gopinathan *et al.* (2020) among ICT workers, Duan *et al.* (2021) on digital workers in Australia; Bardoel and Drago (2016) and Zaresani and Scott (2020) on physicians in Australia. On the flipside, there are various studies that have documented the negative effect of technology on WLB (Mikolajczyk *et al.*, 2023; Mordi *et al.*, 2023; Thulasimani *et al.*, 2010)

From an organisational perspective, various studies have examined the possible determinants of WLB. The focus of Yang and Islam (2021) was on job-related stress and workplace support. Job stress occurs due to a discrepancy between the employee's needs and expectations and the demands and conditions of work to the point of jeopardizing the employee's wellbeing (Yang & Islam, 2021). On the other hand, workplace support encompasses any form of assistance, help, or resources provided within the workplace (Yang & Islam, 2021). This support can come from various sources such as colleagues, supervisors, organizational policies, or any other elements within the work environment. The authors found that job stress negatively impacts WLB, and workplace support (particularly, family supportive organizational policies) positively influenced WLB. This was supported in Bella (2023). Similarly, Prabhashani and Ratnayaka (2017) supported the notion that supervisory and work family policies positively influences WLB.

The effect of work load and long working hours on WLB has been well documented in research (Adisa *et al.*, 2016; Ali *et al.*, 2023; Tunji-Olayeni *et al.*, 2017). Although,

Rosnani *et al.* (2012) contexts the applicability in the public sector. However, aligning the mainstream literature, deeply ingrained in the fabrics of many organisations is the pursuit of bottom line leading to the demands for irregular hours from the employees. In a bid to satisfy the employers as an “ideal worker” (Mladenović & Krstić, 2021) employees tend to prioritise their commitment to work more than other responsibilities (Ojo *et al.*, 2014; Thompson, 2008). In some industries such as construction, authors like Tunji-Olayeni *et al.* (2017) have documented high occurrence of occupational hazards and adversarial nature of the industry as determinants of WLB. In the healthcare industry organisational factors such job characteristics (overtime hours, work overload) and organisational support (physician support and co-worker supports) as determinants of WLB (Lembrechts *et al.*, 2015). Reward schemes were also found to significant determine WLB in Malaysia (Nizam & Kam, 2018)

According to Stankevičienė *et al.* (2021) work culture determines WLB. In this context, work culture is synonymous to organisational culture which is a product of the organisation’s strategic intent and values work culture. This work culture encompasses temporal, operational, and supportive supervision dimensions as suggested in Bailyn (1997). Their findings suggests that a family-friendly culture can support WLB and vice-versa. Ratnesh *et al.*’s (2019) cross-cultural review of Asian countries found a wide range of convergence and divergence in the determinants of WLB across contexts. Although job satisfaction, flexible working hours and social support stood out across all contexts.

Work flexibility has stood out significantly in the academic literature, especially with the acceleration of technology as a major determinant of WLB. This notion has garnered significant scholarly support (Bella, 2023; Bjärntoft *et al.*, 2020; Ferdous *et al.*, 2021; Keyrouz, 2020; Nizam & Kam, 2018; Rashmi & Kataria, 2021). Remote working or telecommuting (Adisa *et al.*, 2017; Fenner & Renn, 2010; García-Salirrosas *et al.*, 2023; Vyas, 2022; Watermeyer *et al.*, 2023) in particular have received considerable attention as reshaping WLB. Other work flexibility dimensions include flexi time (Bella, 2023; Khateeb, 2021), part time (Nasimiyu & Egessa, 2021; Nizam & Kam, 2018; Shabir & Gani, 2020), job sharing (Kurnia & Widigdo, 2021; Mwathi & Nzulwa, 2019; Opatha & Perera, 2017), compressed work schedules (Ali *et al.*, 2023; Sok *et al.*, 2014).

In summary, the antecedents of WLB have been extensively explored in the literature, with a particular focus on individual and organizational factors. On the individual front, demographic dimensions like gender and age have been examined, revealing varying results. Technology use, both positive and negative, has been studied as a predictor of WLB, emphasizing its dual impact. Organisational perspectives highlight the role of job-related stress, workplace support, and work culture in influencing WLB. Workload, long working hours, and industry-specific challenges also contribute to the WLB discourse. The pursuit of bottom-line goals and industry demands can lead to irregular working hours, impacting WLB. Reward schemes, work flexibility, and transformational leadership are identified as significant organizational determinants. Work flexibility, especially remote working, emerges as a prominent theme with considerable scholarly attention. The cultural context and cross-cultural variations are acknowledged, underscoring the importance of understanding WLB within specific organizational and regional frameworks.

2.2 Leadership and Leadership Styles

Leadership plays a central and indispensable role in shaping the direction, functioning, and transformative initiatives of an organization (Deng *et al.*, 2022). Kort (2008) defined leadership as leader-follower relations with an emphasis on social influence. This definition captures the ability of an individual (the leader) to exert influence on others (followers) within a social context. This influence is not based solely on formal authority but can also stem from personal qualities, expertise, and communication skills (Kaur Bagga *et al.*, 2023). Konopaske *et al.* (2008) argued that leadership's foremost priority is creating significant and meaningful impact on the attainment of challenges objectives and the work environment. The key feature of leaders by their definition is the ability to achieve this feat by deploying their influential ability and capitalising on the organisation's environmental dynamics (Nugroho *et al.*, 2020). This definition underscores leadership as a dynamic and adaptive process that requires a keen understanding of the organizational context. It highlights the leader's role in using influence strategically to shape the environment and contribute meaningfully to the achievement of challenging goals within the organization. Wardani and Eliyana (2020) described leadership as the skill of guiding subordinates toward shared goals, emphasizing the influential aspect of leaders. Furthermore, the notion that leadership

is closely linked to the ability to bring about and manage change reflects the dynamic nature of effective leadership in contemporary organizational contexts.

In this sense, leadership style captures the approach to influencing subordinates. It includes the dispositions, behaviours, and skills deployed based on the values, interests and organisational goals being pursued (Kara *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, Stoner (1996) described it as an array of behaviour patterns adopted by leaders in the process of directing and influencing workers.

Over the years studies have explored various leadership styles. Prominent ones include transactional leadership (Bass *et al.*, 1987), transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), participative leadership, autocratic leadership and laissez-faire leadership (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020). Based on empirical evidence, each style has its usefulness and limitations. Leadership scholars have also concluded that there is no one best way to lead as different situations tend to require a different leadership style. As such, scholars argue for a mix and dynamism in leadership styles (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020; Konopaske *et al.*, 2008).

Nonetheless, transformational leadership has been considered to be one of the most influential leadership styles as opposed to other conventional leadership styles such as transactional leadership (Banks, 2018; Karimi *et al.*, 2023) and “has been the dominant focus of contemporary leadership research” (Hammond *et al.*, 2015). Over the past four decades, transformational leadership has attracted much scholarly interest (Apoi and Binti, 2019).

2.2.1 Conceptualising Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership construct emerged in 1978 in the book authored by Mc Gregor's Burn on “Leadership”. The term was developed in a political context (Kaur Bagga *et al.*, 2023). The construct was subsequently developed by Bass *et al.* (1985) as the transformational leadership theory (Çağla *et al.*, 2016). Burns was interested in the characteristics of two leadership styles: transactional and transformational. He argued that transactional leadership emphasizes clarifying goals, work standards, and using incentives for task completion, appealing to followers' self-interest. Leaders in this style resist change, aiming to maintain the status quo. The focus is on structured transactions and rewards, in contrast to transformational leadership, which inspires positive change and goes beyond self-interest. (Bass *et al.*, 1987; Bass & Avolio, 1997) According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders on the other hand, motivates

followers by appealing to higher ideals and values. Yukl (1989) also defined transformational leadership as, “the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organization members and building commitment for the organization’s mission or objectives” (p.204). Bass (1999) defined transformational leadership using their core characteristics: idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration. Empathy, risk-taking, the value of group identification, relationship development, kindness, and goal articulation are all characteristics of transformational leadership (Chandrasekara, 2019). Suryanto *et al.* (2019) noted that using this approach, followers' perspectives, values, and concerns are elevated to encompass not only individual growth but also a broader sense of responsibility and contribution to the collective well-being of the organization and society.

Banks (2018) described it as a style focused on inspiring followers to achieve their greatest potential by forged conviction and a commitment that extends beyond the conventional limits of job functions. The term "forged conviction" in this context can imply a deliberate and strong creation of deeply held beliefs and commitment. According to Dwivedi *et al.* (2020) it is founded on the principles of “reciprocal invigoration” which implies a dynamic and mutually beneficial relationship. For Bastari *et al.* (2020), the core emphasis of transformational leadership is the growth of their subordinate which includes personal and professional development, with the goal of enabling individuals to reach their full capabilities. Transformational leadership also involves delegation of authority and involvement in decision-making (Adhyke *et al.*, 2023). Brown *et al.* (2019) portrayed transformational leaders as individuals who engage in thoughtful and well-informed decision-making with a focus on the overall benefit of the team or organization. Silva (2017) asserts that they also work to ensure that their followers know how to achieve organisational objectives.

A sense of transformational leadership denotes a multifaceted approach that prioritizes shared values and needs over followers' values and needs and inspires them to go above and beyond expectations (Charoensukmongkol & Puyod, 2021; Lo *et al.*, 2009). According to Apoi and Binti (2019), transformational leaders are those who particularly encourage employees to "go the extra mile" at work by boosting workplace morale and motivation. This process ultimately benefits both employees and their organization (Adhyke *et al.*, 2023). Thamrin (2012) asserts that a company

facing pressures for renewal and transformation can be driven to achieve exceptional performance through transformational leadership. Transformational leadership aims to nurture environments that foster innovation and creativity. Schmitz *et al.* (2023) contested conventional notion about transformational leadership being largely a bottom-up process. They argued that transformational leadership combines strong bottom-up processes (staff development, innovative thinking, empowerment) and supportive top-down activities (leading by example, vision). Table 2.2 offers various perspectives on transformational leadership cutting across contexts.

Table 2.2: Perspectives on Transformational leadership

s/n	Authors	Conceptualisations
1.	(Yukl, 1989)	“the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organization members and building commitment for the organization’s mission or objectives” (p.204).
2.	(Bass & Avolio, 1994)	“is the process whereby a leader goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group, as well as encourages followers to do the same to achieve performance beyond expectations.”
3.	(Bass, 1999)	“Transformational leadership refers to the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration.”
4.	(Banks, 2018)	“Leadership style that focused on the inspiration of followers to achieve their greatest potential by forged conviction beyond job function set points.”
5.	Dwivedi <i>et al.</i> (2020)	“It is founded on the principles of “reciprocal invigoration” which implies a dynamic and mutually beneficial relationship between the leader and the subordinates.”
6.	(Ruloff & Petko, 2021)	“Transformational leadership is a combination of strong bottom-up processes and supportive top-down activities”
7.	(Żywiłek <i>et al.</i> , 2022)	“Transformational leadership is meant as that leadership style that transforms their followers’ self-concept by explaining the compelling vision of the organization. This leadership is meant as the leadership style which inspirationally motivates, is idealized by followers, and gives intellectual stimulation to the employees to think critically, expand their personal goals and surpass formal processes.”

Source: Author’s Compilation (2023)

Hoch *et al.* (2018) criticised transformational leadership for not explicitly addressing and lacking a moral dimension. Based on this, some more nuanced models of leadership emphasising ethical and value-based behaviours were developed and have been increasingly studied Dinh *et al.* (2014). These new leadership models include authentic, ethical, and servant leadership (Deng *et al.*, 2022). However, there are scholars that have argued that transformational leaders exhibit ethical and moral behaviours (Aronson, 2001; M. Brown *et al.*, 2019; Groves & LaRocca, 2010). Transformational leadership is associated with the moral and ethical orientation of the leader, reflecting a tendency to prioritize what is deemed "morally right" and to safeguard the rights and dignities of individuals. Leaders adopting a transformational style are recognized for demonstrating elevated perceived integrity, as evidenced in studies such as Aronson (2004). Additionally, they exhibit greater levels of moral development, as identified by research conducted by (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999), and engage in more ethical behaviour, as corroborated by findings in studies like those conducted by Aronson (2004) and Brown and Treviño (2006). Furthermore, Deng *et al.* (2022) argued that these new models are empirically redundant as they tend to be highly related to long standing models like transformational leadership. The authors hence cautioned against the possibility of risking concept proliferation which they argued has theoretical and practical implications.

Beyond conceptualisations, there is substantial evidence regarding the effect of transformational leadership on quality of work life (Banks, 2018; Hammond *et al.*, 2015; Kara *et al.*, 2018), employee well-being (Kuoppala *et al.*, 2008) and efficiency (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020), employee voice and relational identification (Adhyke *et al.*, 2023) innovative work behaviours (Karimi *et al.*, 2023), employee creativity and adaptiveness (Żywiłek *et al.*, 2022), employee performance (Nugroho *et al.*, 2020) and organisational commitment (Peng *et al.*, 2019; Purnomo and Novalia, 2019), job satisfaction (Rahmawati and Tobing, 2019; Suryanto *et al.*, 2019) and WLB (Zakaria and Omar, 2016; Banks, 2018; Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021). Most of the emphasis in extant literature has been on the effect of transformational leadership on employee or organisational outcomes. These studies have however largely ignored the how the leadership style affects the WLB of the executives themselves.

In summary, this section highlights transformational leadership as a dynamic and influential style that shapes organizational direction and foster personal and

professional growth. Originating from Burns (1978) and developed by Bass (1985), it inspires followers beyond job limits, emphasizing deep convictions and reciprocal invigoration. This leadership style aligns with ethical behaviour, perceived integrity, and moral development. Its impact spans various aspects, including WLB, but limited attention has been given to its effect on executives. Transformational leaders are inclined to embrace digital technologies, fostering innovation and organizational effectiveness (Banks, 2018; Deng *et al.*, 2022; Schmitz *et al.*, 2023)

2.2.2 Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

According to pundits, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration are consistent characteristics of transformational leadership in the literature (Chowdhury, 2014; Gathungu *et al.*, 2015; Çağla *et al.*, 2016; Brown *et al.*, 2019). Zakaria and Omar (2016) impressed that while these dimensions may be unique, they are not mutually exclusive but rather interrelated. Leaders at all levels teams, departments, divisions, and the overall organization can exhibit these transformational leadership characteristics. Such leaders have a clear vision and are motivating, courageous, adventurous, and reflective.

2.2.2.1 Idealised influence

Idealized influence is a crucial dimension of transformational leadership, often explored in the literature for its impact on organizational behaviour and outcomes. This charismatic aspect of leadership is characterized by leaders serving as role models and earning the respect, trust, and admiration of their followers. It involves the leader being perceived as a source of inspiration and embodying the values and principles that followers find desirable.

Research by Çağla *et al.* (2016) emphasizes idealized influence as a key component of transformational leadership, highlighting its role in fostering follower commitment and engagement. The leader, through idealized influence, becomes a symbol of what followers aspire to be, creating a positive and motivating influence on organizational culture. Zakaria and Omar (2016) describe idealized influence as a process where leaders instil pride, faith, and respect in their followers. This emotional connection helps build a sense of collective identity and shared purpose within the organization. Gao and Bai (2011) delve into the notion that idealized influence involves leaders

prioritizing followers' needs over their own. This selflessness contributes to building strong follower-leader relationships and loyalty. However, scholars also recognize that while idealized influence, particularly in the form of charisma, is appealing, it may not independently transform organizational culture (Gathungu *et al.*, 2015). It is often seen as part of a broader set of transformational leadership behaviours that collectively contribute to organizational success although, Samad (2012) found that it had the strongest influence on organisational performance compared to the other dimensions.

2.2.2.2 Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation is a crucial facet of transformational leadership, contributing significantly to organizational motivation, commitment, and overall effectiveness. This leadership style, as highlighted by Sheehan *et al.* (2020), is characterized by leaders who seek to inspire and motivate subordinates through their actions and communication. The emphasis is on creating a work environment where individuals are not just motivated but also find a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in their tasks.

Suryanto *et al.* (2019) elaborated on how inspirational motivation manifests in leaders who act in ways that stimulate and elevate the motivation of those around them. This motivation is often a result of leaders instilling a profound sense of purpose and significance in the work for their followers. Tanner (2018) noted that leaders employing inspirational motivation effectively communicate high expectations and convey the organizational purpose using clear methods and symbols. Research suggests that inspirational motivation is a potent force in fostering a positive organizational climate. By setting high expectations, leaders encourage followers to strive for excellence and contribute to the attainment of organizational goals. The communication of a compelling vision and purpose not only motivates individuals but also cultivates a shared sense of direction and identity within the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Moreover, inspirational motivation is linked to increased employee engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction. A study by Avolio *et al.* (2004) found that transformational leadership, including inspirational motivation, positively influences employee outcomes, leading to a more dedicated and motivated workforce.

2.2.2.3 Individualised consideration

Individualized consideration underscores the leader's commitment to recognizing and addressing the unique needs of each subordinate. This personalised approach is fundamental in fostering a supportive and growth-oriented work environment. As Suryanto *et al.* (2019) note, leaders embodying individualized consideration often adopt roles akin to coaches or mentors, emphasizing a relational and personalized leadership style. The concept of individualized consideration aligns with the broader transformational leadership framework, which emphasizes the importance of leaders going beyond transactional exchanges and demonstrating genuine care for their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In this context, leaders actively seek to understand the aspirations, strengths, and developmental needs of individual team members. By doing so, they can tailor their leadership strategies to accommodate diverse individual needs, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness of the team. Bakker *et al.* (2022) found that leaders who demonstrate individualized consideration contribute to increased employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance. Moreover, this approach is associated with higher levels of trust and commitment from employees (Amin *et al.*, 2018; Banks, 2018).

2.2.2.4 Intellectual stimulation

Intellectual stimulation, a core element of transformational leadership, revolves around the leader's role in fostering a culture of creativity, critical thinking, and innovation within the team. Suryanto *et al.* (2019) emphasize that this dimension involves the leader's efforts to spur subordinates' creative and innovative abilities, ultimately enhancing overall productivity. Leaders who engage in intellectual stimulation actively encourage their team members to think differently and consider alternative perspectives. This approach aligns with the broader transformational leadership framework, which prioritizes the development and utilization of intellectual capabilities within the team (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to Zakaria and Omar (2016), intellectual stimulation encompasses the leader's emphasis on followers thinking in new ways and using reasoning before taking action. This highlights the cognitive aspect of leadership, encouraging individuals to go beyond routine thinking and explore innovative solutions to challenges. Sheehan *et al.* (2020) found that leaders who promote intellectual stimulation contribute to higher levels of creativity and innovation among their team members. This creativity is crucial for organizations

seeking to adapt to changing environments, solve complex problems, and remain competitive. Similarly, Tanner (2018) emphasizing the leader's role in promoting creative problem-solving through intellectual wrestling.

Moreover, intellectual stimulation has been associated with increased job satisfaction and engagement. A study by Vecchio (2000) revealed that employees who perceive their leaders as intellectually stimulating are more satisfied with their jobs and exhibit higher levels of engagement. This suggests that a workplace culture that encourages creative thinking and problem-solving contributes to positive employee experiences.

2.2.3 Transformational Leaders' Experience of Work life Balance

This section explores the WLB experience of transformational leaders across various contexts. For a more pervasive perspective, the role of transformational leaders on the WLB experience of their employee and themselves are explored. So far, findings have been mixed regarding the WLB experience of leaders depending on several factors, notably contexts, organisational configurations, and institutional dynamics. For example, Charoensukmongkol and Puyod (2021) confirmed the effect of transformational leadership on decreasing role ambiguity and enhancing the WLB of Filipino employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Banks (2018) found that transformational leadership predicted the WLB of hotel managers. Although, Griffith-Echito (2019) found no relationship between transformational leadership and the WLB of post-secondary school administrators.

Interestingly, the findings from the study of Mordi *et al.* (2023) indicate that academics in the UK experience issues around increased boundary permeability between work and nonwork domains and role overlap, which engender the transfer of negative rather than positive spillover experiences and exacerbate negative consequences to the well-being of academics. In another context, Mordi *et al.* (2023) showed how regardless of nationality, single student-working mothers experienced inter-role conflict, role ambiguity, role strain, role overload and external role pressures, leading to work-life imbalance. Narrowing down to gender, Adisa *et al.* (2021) explored the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on British women's domestic workload. The findings highlighted intensified domestic responsibilities, leading to uncontrolled role conflict. The structural and interactional roles assumed by women during lockdown, compounded by remote work, contributed to role congestion and conflict. The study underscores the challenges women face in maintaining role differentiation and managing work-life

dynamics during the pandemic, shedding light on the multifaceted impact of remote work on women's experiences and domestic roles. However, this sentiment is not shared across all studies. For example, Tunji-Olayeni *et al.* (2017) revealed that many of the female construction professionals experience WLC as a result of the demanding roles both at work and at home. However, at the same time, they held a positive disposition towards their WLC because of the scarcity of alternative job. This emphasises how environmental contexts can shape perception of WLB and how it is experienced. Similarly, Ojo *et al.* (2014) observed challenges faced by female students in balancing work, study, and social activities, leading to adverse effects such as missed lectures and increased stress. The findings highlight the difficulties these students encounter in managing multiple demands on their time and energy.

Bouwmeester *et al.* (2021) study focused on consultants, comparing those working 60 hours weekly in strategy houses with those working 50 hours in general management consulting firms. Despite generally positive perceptions of WLB in both contexts, an increase in negative WLB experiences was noted, particularly in strategy houses due to heightened work pressures. This suggests that longer work hours, especially in strategic roles, may compromise WLB perceptions among consultants.

Obimpeh's (2018) narrative analysis found that socio-cultural factors such as marriage, family stage, and reproductive processes were cardinal sources of competing for work-life demands on female administrators in public universities in Ghana. Haar *et al.* (2017) using the daily process approach documented the WLB experiences of 131 managers. Their study revealed linked family–work conflict experience on one day to job burnout the following day. This suggests that challenges or conflicts between family and work responsibilities contribute to increased job burnout among managers. They also found that family–work enrichment on one day positively influenced work engagement the following day, implying that positive experiences and enrichment in the family domain contribute to increased engagement in the work domain among managers.

Annor's (2014) qualitative study delved into the experiences of employed parents in Ghana juggling work and family responsibilities. The University of Ghana staff interviewed revealed prevalent conflicts in navigating the work–family interface. Factors contributing to this struggle included heavy job demands, inadequate remuneration, and the burden of parental and extended family responsibilities. The study underscores the profound negative impact these challenges have on individuals'

ability to effectively combine their roles at work and in the family, shedding light on the complex dynamics faced by employed parents in Ghana. Mordi *et al.* (2013) explored bank managers' WLB experience in Nigeria. They found significance variance is managers' perspectives and experience of WLB. Their study highlighted the role of cultural sensitivity in the appreciation and utilisation of WLB practices.

The research conducted by Murphy and Doherty (2011) underscores the significant influence of the economy on the promotion and adoption of WLB initiatives among managers. The findings highlight the subjective nature of measuring WLB, emphasising that personal circumstances play a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions. Notably, managers with caregiving responsibilities face evident WLC, but the study reveals that even childless managers experience challenges without a clear justification for addressing their needs. Moreover, the acceptance of long hours and presenteeism as integral to higher-level roles is identified as a prevalent norm in the professional landscape.

Thulasimani *et al.* (2010) study delves into the specific context of WLB among managers in garment units in Tamil Nadu, India. Employing a descriptive research design, the study gathers data from 480 managers through a questionnaire method. The results indicate that the WLB of managers in this industry is not entirely successful due to various factors, including current working hours, the working environment, increased product prices, workload, and decreased job security, particularly in times of economic recession. This is consistent with the work of Worrall and Cooper's (2007) that shed light on the working habits of managers in the UK, revealing that a significant percentage work beyond their contract hours. Their study emphasizes a pattern related to seniority, with directors working longer hours compared to junior managers. Despite acknowledging that they work more hours than desired, managers contribute a substantial amount of additional time to their employers, impacting their leisure and overall health. The study emphasises a disconnection between desired and actual working hours, reflecting the pervasive impact on managers' well-being and WLB.

Drew and Murtagh (2006) exploration identified the "long hours" culture as a prominent obstacle to achieving WLB, particularly in senior management roles. The study emphasises that flexible options, such as working from home, reduced hours, or flextime, are often deemed incompatible with holding high-ranking positions. Gender disparities are evident, with men tending to delegate family responsibilities, while women seek more flexible arrangements for family and quality-of-life reasons.

Importantly, both male and female managers in senior roles recognize the potential jeopardy to their careers associated with adopting WLB arrangements (Drew and Murtagh, 2006).

These studies collectively emphasize the multifaceted nature of WLB challenges faced by managers, influenced by economic conditions, societal expectations, and organizational structures. The findings underscore the necessity for tailored approaches in addressing these challenges and highlight the ongoing need for organizations to prioritize employee well-being.

2.3 The Evolving Landscape of Technology in the 21st Century Workplace

Technology is regarded as one of the major drivers of change in the world today. The rapid growth of technology has largely reshaped daily lives and how business is conducted globally (Juntunen, 2019; Rasool *et al.*, 2022). The rate and pace of globalisation have further accelerated the process and transition of the world economy to industry 4.0, where more emphasis is placed on technology (Shintri and Narasalagi, 2021). Reflecting on the historical development of WLB, technological advancement was seen to play a significant role in redistributing and balancing work advantages in relation to gender (S. Raja & Stein, 2014). The statement suggests that scholars attribute a noteworthy shift in gender roles to technological advancement and computerization (Mushfiqur *et al.*, 2018; S. Raja & Stein, 2014; Thilagavathy & Geetha, 2021). With the rise of technology, jobs that traditionally favoured physical strength, and thus predominantly benefited men, have diminished. As technology has become more prevalent in the workforce, the advantage that men might have had based on physical strength has been reduced (Cannizzo *et al.*, 2019; Naithani, 2010). This implies that the evolving nature of work, increasingly reliant on technological skills and cognitive abilities rather than physical prowess, has contributed to a more equitable distribution of opportunities between men and women in the workforce (Naithani, 2010).

Today, technology is integral to modern culture and permeates almost (if not all) aspects of human existence (Acilar, 2011). Shintri and Narasalagi (2021) buttressed the normality and inevitability in technology adaptation and how it influences conveyance, learning, thinking, and interaction. Similarly, Hubbard (2016) maintained how the infiltration of technology and its influence in different spheres of human work and personal lives. A survey carried out by First Psychology Scotland (2015) found a

widespread use of technology, particularly mobile technologies. This was corroborated in the work of Nagy (2020) noting the widespread use of digital technologies to coordinate various tasks simultaneously. Individuals rely on technology to schedule appointments, store important documentation, run business operations, communicate with others, and keep in touch. This reality accentuates the position of Pica and Kakiyama (2003, p.6) who argued that technology is “a topology whereby neither boundaries nor relations mark the difference between one place or another. Instead, boundaries come and go, allow leakage, or disappear altogether.” Technological transformation significantly alters the integration of work and personal time for employees. The pervasive presence of digital technology in our daily lives allows for increased efficiency and flexibility, enabling individuals to seamlessly incorporate work into their lifestyles and routines (Nagy, 2020). The ongoing digital transformations create a state of permanent connectivity, providing employees with the tools and accessibility to balance professional responsibilities with personal activities. This evolution in technology facilitates a more fluid and adaptive approach to the intersection of work and personal life, offering new possibilities for improved work-life integration (Linda and Fitria, 2016; Tanner, 2018; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020).

Generally, technology explains the automation of processes, functions, and operations (Oladele and Oyewole, 2020). It includes hardware, software, IT gadgets such as laptops, desktops, mobile technology, and IT software such as operating systems and applications (Fenner, 2010). Technology use can be in the form of providing information or inventing a machine, and the purpose of technology use is to ease the performance of an activity. The use of technology strives in an environment that supports innovation, and its diffusion among organisations depends largely on many facilitating factors, including but not limited to affordance, infrastructure, and know-how (Oladele and Oyewole, 2020).

The 21st century workspace has witnessed a surge in the deployment of technologies such as Artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, Internet of Things (IoT), big data, mobile computing, cognitive computing, digital platforms such as Zoom, GoogleMeets, LinkedIn, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts, UberConference, reshaping work dynamics (Duan *et al.*, 2021; Kaur Bagga *et al.*, 2023). The proliferation of technology has led to the widespread use of digital work as the “new normal” (Juntunen, 2019; Vyas, 2022). This was further accelerated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic

(Fabrellas, 2022; Marsh *et al.*, 2022; C. Mordi *et al.*, 2023), an experience which Mikolajczyk *et al.* (2023) described as the “work from home experiment”.

Shintri and Narasalagi (2021) noted the accelerated growth in the deployment of technology in the workplace and argued that technology impacts both work environments and individuals on a personal level. On the professional front, the integration of technology in the workplace often leads to increased productivity, as tasks can be completed more swiftly and with a higher degree of accuracy (Marsh *et al.*, 2022; L. Wang & Xie, 2023). Conversely, the impact of technology extends beyond the workplace and touches on the personal well-being of individuals (C. Mordi *et al.*, 2023). Shintri and Narasalagi (2021) suggest that technology's influence on the personal front is notable in its effects on intellectual and mental well-being. The constant use and exposure to technology, especially in the form of digital devices and online interactions, may have implications for individuals' cognitive functions, intellectual engagement, and overall mental health. The technology use dynamics in the context of WLB will be discussed more extensively in subsequent sections.

Notably one of the most talked about technologies especially in the workplace and in WLB discourse is the pervasiveness of mobile technologies (Fabrellas, 2022; Nagy, 2020). The subsequent subsection delves into the discussion of mobile technologies.

2.3.1 The Rise of Mobile Technology in the Workplace

There is a significant consensus (as noted in the earlier section) that the rapid advancement of technology is reshaping the way society communicates (Nagy, 2020; Samsudin *et al.*, 2020). Meanwhile and particularly, the progression of mobile technologies has brought about a revolutionary shift in global social interactions and work patterns (Duan *et al.*, 2021; Lediga & Ngoepe, 2016). The commercial introduction of the Apple Newton MessagePad in 1993 and the Palm Pilot in 1996 marked the initial foray of mobile devices into the market. The Palm Pilot, with its word editing, database, and spreadsheet capabilities, quickly gained popularity among academics and business professionals, surpassing the Newton. However, according to Persson and Nouri (2018), it was not until the release of the iPhone in 2007 that mobile devices gained widespread popularity among younger individuals and adults. Since then, digital transformation has continued to reshape society, interaction, and work, with mobile technologies becoming an integral part of daily life (Persson & Nouri,

2018; Tams *et al.*, 2020). The pervasive use of mobile technologies, including for work purposes is well noted in the literature (Al-Saidi, 2015; Currie & Eveline, 2011; Fazili & Khan, 2017; First Psychology Scotland, 2015; Hubbard, 2016; Kusairi *et al.*, 2022; Middleton, 2008; Nagy, 2020; Sarker *et al.*, 2012) and is attributed to their ability to offer flexibility (Kusairi *et al.*, 2022), autonomy (Fabrellas, 2022; Fazili & Khan, 2017), interactivity (Duan *et al.*, 2021), and teamwork (Moylan, 2008; Sung *et al.*, 2015). Handheld devices, whether provided by organizations or personally owned, have fundamentally transformed the way employees/executives manage their WLB. Meanwhile, a recurring and significant benefit is the flexibility afforded by mobile technology, empowering executives to control the speed, location, and time of day at which they engage in their professional responsibilities (Fazili & Khan, 2017; Middleton, 2008). This is consistent with border theory's proposition of flexibility and permeability (Adisa *et al.*, 2017; Clark, 2000).

Features like portability, social networking, context awareness, and individualism make mobile technologies stand out compared to desktop PCs (Criollo-C *et al.*, 2021; Koo & Vizer, 2019; Persson & Nouri, 2018; Stamp *et al.*, 2014). As highlighted by Bernacki *et al.* (2020), mobile devices, encompassing tablets, phones, and wearables like smartwatches and fitness trackers, and laptops dominate the digital technology space. Recent statistics, as reported by Empe *et al.* (2020), indicate that over 7 billion people globally use mobile phones, with more than 25 billion mobile apps downloaded (Samsudin *et al.*, 2020), underscoring the widespread use and relevance of mobile technology in the contemporary age.

However, as noted by Lediga and Ngoepe (2016), the effectiveness of technologies is not guaranteed unless they are used efficiently. This suggests that the mere presence of technologies does not guarantee their effectiveness in promoting WLB for executives. Instead, their impact hinges on how efficiently and purposefully executives utilize these technologies. Nonetheless, there are concerns about the technology use and its effect on WLB of employees (Duan *et al.*, 2021; Duxbury & Smart, 2010; Fazili & Khan, 2017; R. V. Raja & Soundarapandian, 2022) and executives (Mikolajczyk *et al.*, 2023; Nagy, 2020; Rafnsdóttir & Stefánsson, 2014). This thesis' particular interest in mobile technologies is well grounded and was accentuated by Duxbury and Smart (2010, p.269) noting that "mobile technologies are of special interest to researchers seeking to understand the balance between work and personal-life as they have been linked to a fundamental shift in how the boundaries between work and home are

constructed in Western societies.” The proliferation of mobile technology has fostered an “always-on culture,” blurring the boundaries between work and personal life. This perpetual connectivity challenges traditional distinctions, leading to increased stress and diminished well-being (Ma *et al.*, 2021; Ninaus *et al.*, 2021; Tammelin & Alakärppä, 2021; Tennakoon, 2021). Employees struggle to disengage from work, impacting their ability to allocate time for personal pursuits (Tennakoon, 2021). Moreover, the expectation of constant availability fosters a sense of obligation beyond regular hours, hindering opportunities for relaxation. This border blurring undermines WLB and exacerbates burnout. The next subsection explores the paradox of technology use highlighting the “mixed-blessing” (Mikolajczyk *et al.*, 2023) nature of technology.

2.3.2 Generative AI (GAI) in the contemporary workplace

GAI represents a transformative force in the contemporary workplace, reshaping the dynamics of work and life for executives and employees alike (Cardon *et al.*, 2023; Farrelly & Baker, 2023). Generative AI is a technology that allows users generate texts, sounds, images, animations, and other types of data based on a variety of inputs (Farrelly & Baker, 2023; Lepcha, 2023). These contents are meant to be close to human-generated contents (Aguinis *et al.*, 2024; Farrelly & Baker, 2023). Notable examples are ChatGPT, Gemini, and BingAI (Dogru *et al.*, 2023; Lozie *et al.*, 2024). In recent years, technology giants like Google, Meta, and Adobe, have launched several GAIs for different tasks. As organizations increasingly adopt GAI technologies, understanding its implications for WLB has become a critical area of inquiry (Aguinis *et al.*, 2024; Kakkad & Suresh, 2023). Advocates (Al Naqbi *et al.*, 2024; Lepcha, 2023) of GAI have emphasised their influence on cost reduction, increased revenue streams, efficiency, optimisation of operations.

Meanwhile, Cardon *et al.* (2023) and Kakkad and Suresh (2023) observed the mixed reactions of employees regarding the role of GAI. While some held the notion that it was good for society, others perceive it to do more harm. This accentuates the mainstream notion in existing literature about the complex relationship between GAI and WLB, highlighting both opportunities and challenges (Al Naqbi *et al.*, 2024; Doanh *et al.*, 2023; Kakkad & Suresh, 2023; Lozie *et al.*, 2024; Rožman *et al.*, 2023; Wach *et al.*, 2023). For example, research by Rožman *et al.* (2023) examined the role of intelligent automation systems, including GAI, in reducing employees' workload and

stress levels. The study found that GAI-enabled automation could alleviate repetitive tasks, freeing up time for employees to engage in non-work activities and achieve a better balance between work and life. Scholars supporting GAI have highlighted potential benefits of GAIs in the workplace including automation of routine tasks (e.g. email management, data analysis) (Wach *et al.*, 2023), facilitating flexible work arrangements by enabling remote collaboration and communication and enhancing decision-making and problem-solving capabilities, thereby reducing cognitive load and stress levels among employees (Doanh *et al.*, 2023; Rožman *et al.*, 2022).

Conversely, other studies have raised concerns about the potential negative consequences of GAI adoption on WLB. Cramarenco *et al.* (2023) supports the harmful side of GAI when they found a mismatch between the deployment of AI tools and their wellbeing, whereas the influence was positive in terms of employee efficiency. Research by Bondanini *et al.* (2020) highlighted the risk of technostress associated with constant connectivity and information overload resulting from GAI-enabled tools. Executives and employees may experience difficulty disconnecting from work, leading to blurred boundaries between professional and personal life domains (Kakkad & Suresh, 2023). In addition, as GAI continues to automate tasks traditionally performed by humans, executives may experience heightened anxiety about the future of their roles and the need to continuously upskill to remain competitive in the workforce (Wach *et al.*, 2023). Empirical evidence thus shows that while GAI technologies hold the potential to enhance productivity, efficiency, and flexibility in the workplace, they also pose challenges related to technostress, work intrusion, and boundary management. This is similar to the broader notion about the role of technology in general on WLB. However, aligning with Lozie *et al.* (2024), there appears to be a significant dearth in literature exploring the experience of executives and employees in using GAI in the workplace.

2.3.3 The Paradox of Technology Use and Worklife Balance

One of the major issues regarding technology in the WLB discourse is its effect of recrafting spatial and temporal dynamics of workers (employees and employers) (Nagy, 2020). This concern has given rise to the advocacy of boundary management (Duan *et al.*, 2021; Fleck *et al.*, 2019; Nagy, 2020). Sarker *et al.* (2012) found three perspectives on the use of technology and WLB. The first perspective was the compartmentalized perspective reflecting those who have a clear boundary between

work and personal life and as such view mobile technologies as another tool to get their work done efficiently, but do not voluntarily use mobile devices for work purposes after hours. They tend to manually disable certain functions of mobile devices. The second perspective is the overlapping perspective reflecting those who view work as a necessary aspect of a fulfilling life. However, they are keen to limit the importance of work to avoid being totally swamped by it, or to prevent it hijacking their life goals. The third perspective is the encompassing perspective reflecting individuals who do not see boundaries that separate work and personal life and often embrace the positives that work brings to their non-work life. They prioritize work over personal and family commitments, filling their personal life with their hectic, often self-defined work schedules. Integration (as opposed to separation) of the work and personal life domains seems to be natural for these individuals. There are numerous studies that have studied the technology and WLB interaction across different contexts and times (Al-Saidi, 2015; Bardoel & Drago, 2016; Currie & Eveline, 2011; Duan *et al.*, 2021; Duxbury & Smart, 2010; Jackson *et al.*, 2020; Mikolajczyk *et al.*, 2023; Moylan, 2008; Nagy, 2020; Nam, 2014; Raja & Soundarapandian, 2022; Rasool *et al.*, 2022; Shintri & Narasalagi, 2021). These studies provide the basis for understanding the paradoxical nature of technology.

On the one hand, pundits in the field of technology and behavioural aspects had warned years ago that advances in technology would lead to the threat of an intense overworking culture (Gopinathan *et al.*, 2020). Based on this notion, some of the scholars argue that the growth of technology blurs the boundaries between work and life roles (Jackson *et al.*, 2020; Nagy, 2020). Mordi *et al.* (2023) showed that ICTs reinforced gendered work-family boundaries and generated more negative work-life/family spillover for women than for men. Stephens *et al.* (2007) reported how technology had done more damage than good to the WLB of professionals. This corroborates the work of Fenner (2010) who acknowledged the negative effect of technology-assisted supplemental work on WLB, though they noted that deploying time management strategies could help cushion the effect. Currie and Eveline (2011) found that academics use metaphors like "invasion" and "intrusion" to describe the impact of e-technologies on their homes. This signifies the perceived encroachment of work into personal spaces, prompting a need for clear boundaries between work and family life. The metaphors highlight the challenges academics face in maintaining

a separation between professional and personal spheres due to the influence of electronic technologies. Thulasimani (2010) linked the major reason for work life imbalance among garment managers in India to technology. They argued that use of technology has blurred the work-home boundary. The concern of these authors were mainly in how technology was abused (Adisa *et al.*, 2017; Drew & Murtagh, 2006) led to overwork (Tams *et al.*, 2020) by blurring the work-life border (Marsh *et al.*, 2022).

On the other hand, some studies found that technology has positively influenced WLB (Raja & Soundarapandian, 2022; Shintri & Narasalagi, 2021). Most of these studies have cited the flexibility that telework, for example, affords (Hubbard, 2016). Notably, while the survey carried out by First Psychology Scotland (2015) acknowledged the widespread notion that technology is interruptive, their findings showed that close to 60% were satisfied with their WLB despite using digital technology for longer periods, in wide range of scenarios and beyond their work hours. Gopinathan *et al.* (2020) studied the co-evolution of technology and WLB to understand how they intermix. Their findings point at a positive relationship between technology use, particularly systems quality and service quality on the WLB of employees in ICT sectors. Their study emphasised the role of technology is achieving a balanced and healthy society. Similarly, Nam (2014) found that the employees' perception of flexibility and permeability with regard to the balance of work and life spheres is shaped by technology. In addition, the study found that technology determines the type of WLB experienced by individuals. In tandem, a more recent study of female executives also supports the positive role technology plays in assisting them in meeting the demands of work and family simultaneously (Nagy, 2020). Duan *et al.* (2021) also showed that the use of digital technologies improved coordination and knowledge sharing between individuals, leading to better WLB and improved job performance. While the use of digital technologies was found to have the potential to improve communication and decision making, it did not significantly influence WLB. Zaresani and Scott (2020) found that physicians who used digital health technology were more likely to report respectively higher job satisfaction and good work–life balance, compared with the physicians who did not use it.

Bardoel and Drago (2016) controlled for diverse factors that can influence WLB to ascertain how the quality of IT services was linked to positive WLB. They found a positive correlation between the quality of IT services and WLB of physicians in

Australia. In the same vein, Hubbard's (2016) study of women in education's WLB through the use of technology highlighted the impactful and helpful role technology played in achieving WLB, particularly for women in instructional faculty. Along the same line of thought, Murphy and Doherty (2011) found that long hours and presenteeism were inherent expectations from senior manager roles in Europe. However, the authors found that senior managers used technology to manage presenteeism.

Recognising the controversy regarding the use of technology and WLB, some authors have also inferred that technology is neutral and the use determines the outcome. For example, Oladele and Oyewole (2020) argued that technology can be pervasive and/or destructive. Nam (2014, p.1017) also said that: "technology use shapes an individual's perception of flexibility and permeability regarding the balance between work and life spheres. Technology use determines an individual's type of WLB. Technology use affects the individual's resulting experience as a consequence of work-life infiltration." In tandem, Raja and Soundarapandian (2022) argued that the deployment of digital technology in organisations influences dimensions (e.g. permeability), types (e.g. integration or segmentation), and consequences (e.g. job stress or satisfaction) of WLB. For Adisa *et al.* (2017), the use of mobile information technology devices (MITDs) among employees in the UK was a double-edged sword such that it has the potential to improve WLB and could also be detrimental if not managed properly.

This paradoxical outcome has sparked a special interest in the relationship between technology and WLB (Adisa *et al.*, 2017; Currie & Eveline, 2011; Jackson *et al.*, 2020; Nagy, 2020; Shin & Enoh, 2020) including in social care (Marc *et al.*, 2023; Olaniyan *et al.*, 2022). Within the sector, where the demands of the job often involve high levels of emotional labour, irregular working hours, and significant responsibility for vulnerable individuals, the impact of technology on WLB can be especially pronounced (Wilson, 2021). According to Olaniyan *et al.* (2022), social care professionals and executives, including those working in child support services, may experience unique challenges in managing their WLB due to the nature of their work. For instance, the use of technology in social care, such as electronic health records and communication platforms, can offer opportunities for improving service delivery, enhancing communication among team members, and accessing resources more efficiently

(Whitfield & Hamblin, 2022). However, it can also lead to an "always-on" culture (Ninaus *et al.*, 2021), where professionals and executives feel pressure to be constantly available and responsive to work-related matters, blurring the boundaries between work and personal life. Moreover, the nature of social care work often involves face-to-face interactions, empathy, and building rapport with clients (Kaihlainen *et al.*, 2023). The increasing reliance on technology in social care may raise concerns about the potential dehumanization of services (Rolewicz, 2020) and the loss of personal connection with service users, which can impact job satisfaction and overall well-being for social care professionals (Marc *et al.*, 2023).

These illustrations aligns with the position of Currie and Eveline (2011), Oladele and Oyewole (2020), Raja and Soundarapandian (2022), and Wang and Xie (2023) that technology appears to be a double-edged sword where its impact varies depending on the type of work considered, presenting both opportunities and challenges to WLB. This is consistent with the analogy of the hammer where it is likely to consider technology neutral, and the outcome depends on its use. The relevance of this thesis is to explore the specific pathways through which UK executives use technologies to segment and integrate work and personal life. This follows the argument of Golden and Geisler (2007) and Hubbard (2016) that the use of technology to integrate and segment work and personal lives differ greatly and is largely contextual.

2.3.4 Technology Usage in Social Care Sector

Technology has become increasingly integral to the social care sector, transforming the way services are delivered and experienced (Lapão, 2018), particularly within children's social care in the UK (Hamblin, 2022; Knight & Hunter, 2013). Whitfield and Hamblin (2022) delineate five key areas where technology is utilized in social care: monitoring (e.g., telehealth, telemedicine), organization and record-keeping, data collection and analysis (e.g., AI), connection (e.g., smartphones, communication apps like Zoom and WhatsApp), and communication platforms. This digitalization of social care processes has been anticipated to enhance efficiency, productivity, and the quality-of-care services by facilitating better information flow, accessibility, and availability (Kaihlainen *et al.*, 2023).

However, despite the evident benefits, social care lags behind healthcare in terms of digital adoption, as noted by Rolewicz (2020) and (Bengoa, n.d.). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated technology adoption across various sectors, including

social care, yet normalizing digital practices remains a challenge. Kaihlanen *et al.*'s (2023) study found that social care professionals and managers alike identified both positive and negative impacts of technology integration. Their findings highlight the positive effects to include accelerated work processes, reduced workloads, and continuous learning opportunities. However, challenges such as the complexity of information systems, increased workload due to duplicated tasks, and insufficient training time have also been highlighted (Bengoa, n.d.).

Specifically, in children's social care, technology holds immense potential to improve service delivery and enhance the lives of service users. Digital tools offer opportunities for communication, independent living promotion, and improved care coordination (Knight & Hunter, 2013). For instance, digital platforms facilitate collaboration among professionals, streamline administrative tasks, and enable better monitoring of cases. However, concerns persist regarding data security, confidentiality, and the exacerbation of existing inequalities (Whitfield & Hamblin, 2022).

One significant aspect of technology's impact on social care is its effect on the relationship between professionals and service users. While digital tools enhance efficiency and access to information, they also pose challenges in maintaining privacy and fostering meaningful human connections (Knight & Hunter, 2013; Okkonen *et al.*, 2019; Vuori *et al.*, 2019). The risk of depersonalization in digital interactions and the potential dehumanization of services are pressing concerns (Whitfield & Hamblin, 2022).

Despite these challenges, technological advancements have brought about significant improvements in efficiency and care coordination within the social care industry (Lapão, 2018; Okkonen *et al.*, 2019). Digital information systems and electronic health records (EHRs) facilitate seamless communication between providers, leading to better collaboration and thorough care planning. Additionally, mobile apps and internet portals empower users and carers with real-time access to data, appointment scheduling, and prescription reminders, promoting self-management and reducing unnecessary hospital visits (Whitfield & Hamblin, 2022).

2.3.5 Transformational Leaders' Technology Use and Worklife Balance

The interaction of technology and transformational leadership has also been documented in the literature (Linda and Fitria, 2016; Tanner, 2018; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020). Samad (2012) noted how transformational leaders leverage technology to

pursue innovation at work. Seyal (2015) emphasised how transformational leaders are more inclined to technology adoption for carrying out tasks. Likewise, Ghasabeh (2020) noted how transformational leadership contribute significantly to the effective use of information technology which influences the effectiveness of the organisation. Meanwhile, not so many works were found to explore the role of technology on WLB of executives. In the context, there is some evidence that transformational leaders are more inclined to embrace, adopt and integrate digital technologies. This was supported in the studies of Petko *et al.* (2015) and Schmitz *et al.* (2023). They found that institutions whose leaders exhibited behaviour of transformational leadership were the most successful in implementing reforms and integrating technology. Nagy's (2020) study on digital technology and WLB of women executives noted that digital technology creates an illusion of balance for female managers in organisations who use mobile technology. The study findings suggests that the use of mobile technology, particularly by women executives, reinforces certain stereotypes. Despite the appearance of empowered, self-disciplined women who can manage work through mobile devices, the underlying gender inequality in organizations and society remains unchanged. The flexibility and control offered by these devices may create an illusion of manageable boundaries, but it is noted that work demands are intensifying and expanding. The statement implies that women executives may not be receiving sufficient support, both from their organizations and the broader societal context. Invariably, while technology provides a façade of empowerment, the reality is that women continue to face challenges related to gender inequality, and the purported benefits of flexibility and control may not translate into meaningful improvements in their overall working conditions or organizational status. Drew and Murtagh (2006) also studied attitude of male and female senior managers towards WLB. Their study found excessive and inappropriate use of technology by managers resulting in work life imbalance. They showed how technology increased the practice of 'presenteeism' for managers. In addition, the study accentuated the challenge of achieving WLB particularly for female senior managers.

More recently, Mikolajczyk, *et al.* (2023) found that the use of digital technology, in the context of remote work could results in work-life imbalance for executives. Based on this, they suggested adopting digital hygiene. Digital hygiene involves adopting best practices to maintain a healthy online presence, emphasizing a mindful approach to online behaviour and achieving a balance between digital and offline activities. It also

includes proactive measures to safeguard digital identity, privacy, and security (Mikolajczyk *et al.*, 2023). The responsibility for maintaining digital hygiene lies both with the employee and the employer. While employees are primarily accountable for their individual online behaviours and habits, employers also play a crucial role in fostering a supportive environment conducive to healthy digital practices. Employers can implement policies and guidelines that promote WLB, such as designated offline hours or digital detox initiatives, to mitigate the negative impacts of excessive screen time on employee well-being.

2.4 Research Gaps Emerging from the Literature

Following the extensive review of extant literature, the study notes some gaps. First, at the conceptual level, the persistent absence of consensus on what constitutes WLB remains unresolved. Scholars have described the construct as a "chameleon characteristic" (Lockwood, 2003) and a "protean term" (Ojo *et al.*, 2014), while Al-Saidi (2015) goes further to suggest that WLB is more dazzling than settled given how little agreement exists on its meaning. Bouwmeester *et al.* (2021) and Gragnano *et al.* (2020) similarly note that conceptualisation and perception of WLB vary considerably across contexts and individuals despite its widespread adoption in HRM practice. This conceptual instability, evident across Table 2.1, supports the integrative working definition proposed earlier in this chapter and signals that studies relying on a single, narrow conceptualisation risk overlooking dimensions of the construct relevant to specific occupational groups such as executives in social care.

A second and more pressing gap concerns whose WLB has actually been studied. The review of transformational leadership confirms that a considerable body of work addresses how leaders support and shape the WLB of their followers (Charoensukmongkol and Puyod, 2021; Karimi *et al.*, 2023; Schmitz *et al.*, 2023). Far less attention has been paid to how leaders themselves experience and manage their own WLB (Griffith-Echito, 2019; Nagy, 2020), an omission Chapter One flagged as central to the study's rationale. The point is reinforced here by the relative thinness of empirical material on leaders' own WLB compared with the volume on follower focused WLB, and by evidence that executive burnout carries cascading consequences for organisational culture and performance (Haar *et al.*, 2021; Wolor *et al.*, 2020), with up to 60 to 70 percent of executives reporting significant WLB difficulty (Mazurkiewicz and Germain, 2020; Flaig *et al.*, 2020).

A third gap sits at the intersection of technology and leadership. The review identified a clear paradox in which technology both enables and disrupts WLB (Nagy, 2020), alongside separate bodies of work on transformational leadership, technology adoption, and WLB (Banks, 2018; Raja and Soundarapandian, 2022; Jackson et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2020). Yet how transformational leadership behaviour shapes technology use, and how that use affects WLB outcomes for leaders specifically, remains largely unexamined, particularly within the social care sector where caregiving structures intensify these pressures (Olaniyan et al., 2022; Wilson, 2021; Marc et al., 2023).

2.5 Conceptual Model

Figure 1 depicts the interaction among the variables of the study. The schematic diagram shows that executives exhibiting intellectual stimulation, idealised influence, individualised consideration, and inspirational motivation can influence their WLB experiences. Within this interaction, the diagram also shows the technology uses of executive mediating the interaction between transformational leadership behaviour and WLB. The use of technology can act as a positive or negative influence on WLB. Meanwhile Executives' use of technology will depend on demographics characteristics such age, gender, and education.

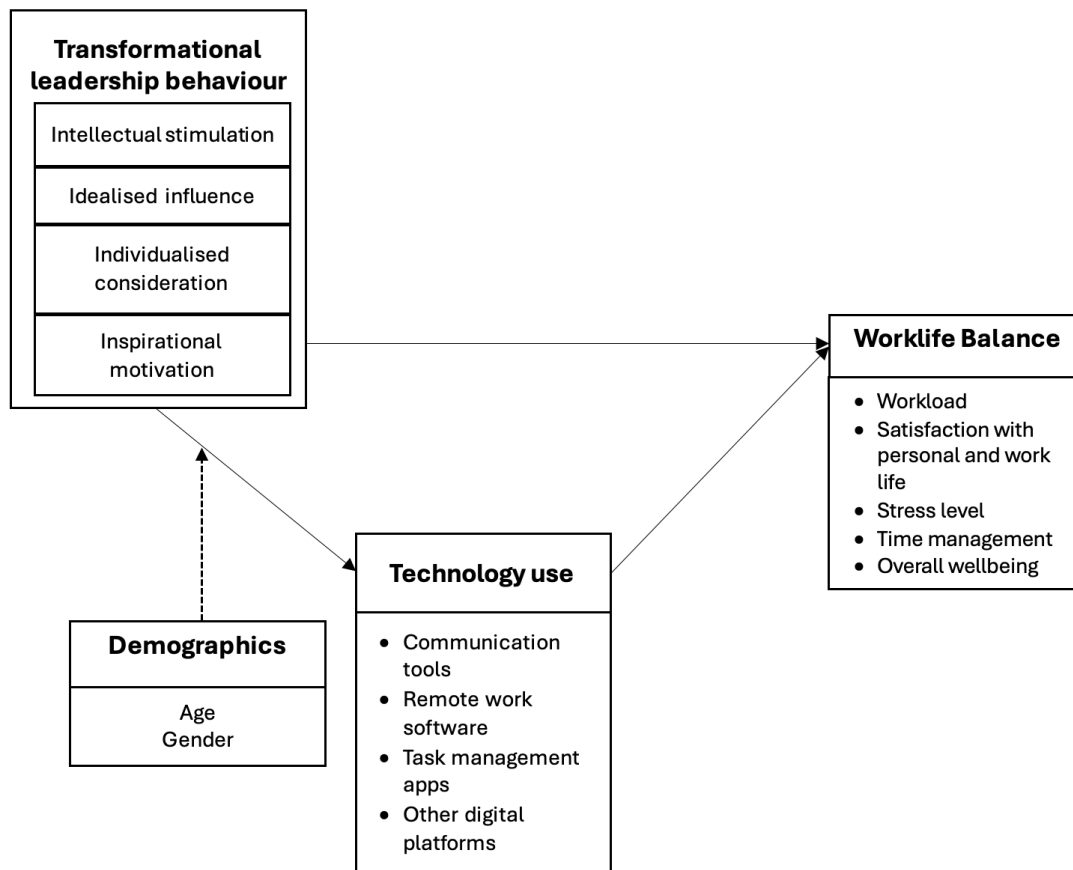


Figure 2.1: Conceptual model

Source: Author (2024)

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the interconnected themes of WLB, leadership, and technology in the contemporary workplace, with a specific focus on the social care sector. It lays the groundwork for the subsequent empirical review by synthesizing key concepts, theories, and empirical findings, setting the stage for further exploration and analysis in the subsequent chapters. The chapter began by tracing the origins of WLB and deconstructing its various terminologies, providing definitions and conceptualizations to establish a foundation for understanding. Strategies for achieving WLB are explored, emphasizing the importance of balancing work-related tasks with personal activities to maintain well-being. The chapter then delves into leadership theories, particularly focusing on transformational leadership and its dimensions, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. The discussion extends to

how transformational leaders experience WLB, highlighting the need for leaders to effectively manage their own WLB while inspiring their teams to do the same.

Subsequently, the chapter explored the evolving landscape of technology in the 21st-century workplace, with a specific focus on the rise of mobile technology and generative artificial intelligence (GAI). It addresses the paradox of technology use and WLB, acknowledging both the benefits and challenges posed by technology integration in professional and personal spheres. Drawing attention to the social care sector, the chapter examined technology usage within this domain, highlighting its transformative potential and current challenges. It explores how transformational leaders utilize technology to enhance WLB, considering the implications for service delivery and organizational effectiveness.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter reviews two prominent theories applied in the discourse of WLB and technology use. These theories are the spillover theory and technology acceptance model (TAM). Spillover theory provides valuable insights into how experiences and emotions from one domain of life, such as work, spill over into another domain, such as personal life, impacting overall WLB. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding how transformational leadership behaviours in the workplace may influence executives' experiences and perceptions of WLB beyond office hours.

Similarly, TAM offers a theoretical lens to examine the factors influencing individuals' acceptance and adoption of technology, which is integral to understanding how executives leverage technology to manage their WLB. By exploring the factors that affect executives' attitudes and perceptions toward technology use, TAM provides insights into how transformational leaders utilize technology to facilitate WLB initiatives. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for investigating the complex dynamics between transformational leadership, technology use, and WLB among executives in the UK.

3.1 Spillover Theory

Spillover theory is deeply rooted in organisational role theories (Arzu *et al.*, 2022). Within discussions on WLB, the spillover theory has emerged as one of the most frequently referenced theories to elucidate the interrelations between work and family (Lakshmypriya & Krishna, 2016; Liu *et al.*, 2020; Mordi *et al.*, 2023; Suter & Kowalski, 2021; Wayne *et al.*, 2017). Terms such as similarity, generalization, extension, continuation, isomorphism, congruence, and familiarity have been employed in the discourse to depict the spillover effect (Khateeb, 2021). Although, Khateeb (2021) credited the original model to the work of Wilensky in 1960, several discussions on the theory emerged in the 70s with notable contributions from Pleck (1977), Kanter (1977), and Staines (1980). Kanter (1977) sought to dispel the "myth of separate worlds," challenging the notion that work and family roles exist independently. Pleck (1977), in alignment with Kanter's propositions, investigated the components of the role system by analysing the roles of males and females at work and at home. Pleck (1977) explored the interconnection among these roles, positing that an individual's

engagement in one sphere (either home or work) influences their involvement in the other (either work or home). This approach aimed to emphasize the interdependence and interconnectedness of work and family roles, moving away from the perception of these domains as isolated and distinct.

Following this, Staines (1980) expanded on this hypothesis in his review titled "Spillover Versus Compensation: A Review of the Literature on the Relationship Between Work and Nonwork." Staines' work suggested that the connections between work and family roles entail both positive and negative consequences. Staines (1980) played a key role in popularizing the foundational assumptions of spillover theory (Naithani, 2010).

According to Hill *et al.* (2003), spillover theory delineates the conditions that lead to either positive or negative spillover between the microwork system and the family microsystem. It explores various interactions between work and family life (Mordi *et al.*, 2023; Radó *et al.*, 2016). Edwards and Rothbard (2000) explained that at the core of the spillover theory is the belief that an individual's emotional and behavioural state is often transferred between the work and family spheres and vice versa. The theory contends that work and nonwork domains exert mutual influences, resulting in similarities (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Edwards and Rothbard (2000) further articulated these similarities in terms of values (the importance attributed to work and family endeavours), work and family affect (satisfaction and mood), skills, and overt behaviours.

Within the framework of spillover theory, two distinct perspectives emerge: instrumental and affective work-family spillover. Affective spillover involves the transmission of diffuse moods or enduring attitudes from work to home. On the other hand, instrumental spillover occurs when individuals convey values, skills, and behaviours cultivated in one domain (work or home) to the other (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). This dual perspective captures the dynamic interplay between the work and family spheres, providing a nuanced understanding of how individuals transfer various aspects of their professional and personal lives between these domains. In addition, according to Wayne *et al.* (2017), spillover approaches encompass cross-domain processes and take into account the direction of transmission, whether from work to family or vice versa. In essence, the spillover theory acknowledges a bi-directional relationship (Schüttengruber *et al.*, 2023), signifying that spillovers can occur from work to home and conversely (Staines, 1980).

The basic tenets of spillover theory share some similarities with other theories such as the segmentation theory and work-enrichment model. Particularly, all theories recognise that the work and home domains are distinct. However, according to Kreiner *et al.* (2009) and Mordi *et al.* (2023), the fundamental assumptions of spillover theory is in sharp contrast to the segmentation theory which suggests that the sphere of work and life are inherently distinct and do not exert influence on the other. Debunking this notion, spillover supports the idea of inseparability of work and life domains though they have distinct settings with varied features and responsibilities. Shintri and Narasalagi (2021) also argued that spillover differs from the work-enrichment model in the sense that the latter argues that the experience from either domain improves the quality of life in the other. Underlying this notion is the positive spillover effect. On the contrary, spillover theory underscores the concept of indicative similarity, where the outcomes of behavioural transmission between work and family domains (isomorphism) can manifest positively or negatively (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Mordi *et al.* (2023) even argued that both effects can co-exist. Naithani (2010) noted that the nature of these spillovers is contingent on specific conditions related to time and space. Furthermore, Staines (1980) acknowledged that the behaviours and emotions encountered at work extend beyond the physical and temporal confines of the workplace and infiltrate the home environment. The spillover theory argues that there are two types of spillover: positive and negative (Sok *et al.*, 2014; Staines, 1980). These types of spillovers will be discussed in the light of the bi-directional nature of the spillover.

3.1.1 Positive Spillover

Positive spillover entails that favourable aspects experienced in the workplace can enhance life at home and vice versa. This is what Schüttengruber *et al.* (2023) regarded as interdomain facilitation. Relative to negative spillover, the discourse on positive spillovers is quite limited (Elf *et al.*, 2019; Lakshmypriya & Krishna, 2016). From the work to family perspective, the concept of work-family enrichment which refers to the idea that positive experiences and resources from one domain (either work or family) can spill over into the other, leading to positive outcomes in both areas can be applied (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). The work-family enrichment theory suggests that when certain conditions are met, such as having work flexibility, social support, and

autonomy, individuals can experience positive emotional and behavioural transmissions between their work and family life (Poelmans *et al.*, 2008).

In the context of work-family enrichment, factors like work flexibility are highlighted as essential in facilitating the integration of various aspects of life across time and space. Work flexibility allows individuals to better balance their work and family responsibilities, leading to positive spillovers. Positive spillovers mean that the benefits or positive experiences from one domain (work or family) can enhance the well-being and satisfaction in the other domain. From the family-to-work perspective, perceived support from family and maintaining good health can result in positive spillover from the family domain to the work domain. This implies that having a supportive family and good health can contribute to a positive work experience (Zhang *et al.*, 2020)..

García-Salirrosas *et al.* (2023) established a positive and significant relationship between positive spillover and job satisfaction in remote work and mediated the effect of family-supportive supervisory behaviours on job satisfaction. Sirgy *et al.* (2020) found positive and significant bi-directional relationship between positive spillover and domain satisfaction. Interestingly, Lee *et al.* (2021) found that the effect of positive spillover on depression was U-shaped suggesting that both very low and very high levels of positive spillover may be associated with an increased risk of depressive mood. Kopperud *et al.*'s (2020) research on Norwegian employees in the financial service industry linked positive spillover to lower voluntary employee turnover intentions, indicating that increased positive spillover correlated with decreased turnover intentions. Conversely, lower positive spillover was associated with higher voluntary turnover intentions. Farradinna *et al.* (2019) established a positive association between positive spillover and the psychological well-being of female academics. Poelmans *et al.* (2008) attributed positive spillover to several benefits for individuals and organizations, including reduced stress, improved physical and mental well-being, heightened commitment, enhanced employee motivation, increased competencies, and elevated job satisfaction. Recent studies further validate the positive effects of spillover.

Summarily, these studies underscore positive spillover's positive impact on job satisfaction, reduced turnover intentions, and enhanced psychological well-being. However, the U-shaped relationship found by Lee *et al.* (2021) suggests caution, indicating potential risks at both very low and very high levels of positive spillover. Nonetheless, positive spillover is largely associated with multiple benefits, including

reduced stress and improved overall well-being for individuals and organizations (Poelmans *et al.*, 2008; Farradinna *et al.*, 2019; Kopperud *et al.*, 2020).

3.1.2 Negative Spillover

Negative spillover signifies that having restricted resources to manage multiple roles in both work and personal domains can mutually result in stress and strain (D. W. Lee *et al.*, 2021). Schüttengruber *et al.* (2023) termed this as interdomain conflict. Clark (2000) contends that work tends to interfere more with life than vice versa, resulting in negative spillover. This refers to conflicts between work and non-work domains, often manifesting as various forms of interference or conflict resulting from the pursuit of goals, demands, and tasks (Schüttengruber *et al.*, 2023). The inconsistency resulting from such pursuits leads to worklife conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In terms of spillover direction, work-family spillover occurs when work pressures negatively impact family roles (Ozdemir, 2023), while family-work spillover occurs when family pressures negatively affect work (Mordi *et al.*, 2023; Sok *et al.*, 2014). Factors such as work overload (Fung *et al.*, 2021), unfavourable schedules (Suter & Kowalski, 2021), and emotional job demands contribute to negative work-life spillover, while family issues (Arzu *et al.*, 2022; Sok *et al.*, 2014), illness, and lack of spousal support contribute to negative family-work spillover (García-Salirrosas *et al.*, 2023; D. W. Lee *et al.*, 2021). Negative spillover is linked to adverse outcomes, with studies associating it with depressive moods (García-Salirrosas *et al.*, 2023) job exhaustion and psychological stress, marriage dissatisfaction (Kinnunen *et al.*, 2006), high burnouts (Leung, 2011) and increased voluntary turnover intentions among employees (Kopperud *et al.*, 2020). Notably, Sirgy *et al.* (2020) conducted a bi-directional study of negative spillover and domain satisfaction. They found that negative family-work spillover had a significant negative effect on domain satisfaction and subjective well-being. In the same way, negative work-family spillover also had a significant negative effect on domain satisfaction and subjective wellbeing.

3.1.3 Criticisms of Spillover Theory

Despite the widespread use of spillover due to three specific shortcomings that are directly relevant to this study. First, the theory lacks specificity regarding the mechanisms through which work and family domains interact. It identifies that spillover occurs without adequately explaining the causal processes or boundary conditions

that determine its direction and magnitude (Guest, 2002). This matters for the present research because understanding precisely how and under what circumstances, is central to the study's aims. Second, as noted by Clark (2000), spillover theory's focus on bi-directional influence between work and home introduces complexity that makes it difficult to isolate particular variables, such as technology adoption behaviours, as distinct contributors to WLB outcomes. Third, and most pertinently, the classical formulation of spillover theory does not account for the mediating role of individuals' attitudes toward the tools or practices that carry experiences from one domain to another. In a context where digital technologies function as the primary conduit through which work permeates personal life, this omission is significant: the theory can describe the spillover but cannot explain why some executives experience technology as boundary-eroding while others find it boundary-enabling (Guest, 2002). In response, supporters have argued that its generalisation characteristics makes it suitable for exploratory research (Mordi *et al.*, 2023; Staines, 1980). Critics argue that it lacks specificity and warrants a more in-depth examination of its reasons, causes, and consequences. The challenge of time has been a prominent issue within the spillover theory framework. For instance, the time factor proved significant in the spillover between the private and professional lives of female academics, with implications for social capital dynamics (Bianchi *et al.*, 2000). Spillover theory, at its core, suggests a mutual shaping relationship between employees and their environments, introducing complexities that render achieving work/life balance a formidable challenge (Clark, 2000, p.748).

Furthermore, the classical formulation of the spillover theory, particularly as developed by Staines in 1980, did not explicitly acknowledge the role of technology. Traditional spillover theory primarily focuses on the interplay between work and family roles and how experiences in one domain can spill over into the other, impacting an individual's overall well-being and satisfaction. The original theory doesn't delve into the specific role of technology in mediating these spillover effects. This is where TAM becomes particularly valuable as a complementary framework. By foregrounding individuals' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use, TAM provides the attitudinal mechanism that spillover theory lacks, enabling the present study to move beyond establishing that technology-mediated spillover occurs and instead to illuminate the conditions under which executives' attitudes toward digital tools shape whether that spillover is experienced positively or negatively.

However, contemporary discussions and applications of WLB, including spillover theory, often consider the influence of technology on the work-life interface. With the advent of digital technologies and the increasing prevalence of remote work, researchers and practitioners have explored how technologies like smartphones, email, and other communication tools contribute to the dynamics of WLB.

3.1.4 Contextualising Spillover theory

In the context of transformational leadership and technology use among UK executives, positive spillover could signify that effective leadership practices and successful technology integration at work positively impact executives' personal lives, contributing to enhanced well-being, job satisfaction, and potentially WLB. Extant literature have explored the positive spillover effects of effective leadership practices and successful technology integration on executives' personal lives and overall well-being. For instance, research by García-Salirrosas *et al.* (2023) found a positive relationship between positive spillover and job satisfaction among executives in remote work settings. Similarly, Sirgy *et al.* (2020) identified a bi-directional relationship between positive spillover and domain satisfaction, suggesting that favourable experiences in one domain can enhance satisfaction in other domains. Moreover, studies like those conducted by Kopperud *et al.* (2020) and Farradinna *et al.* (2019) have highlighted the benefits of positive spillover, including reduced turnover intentions and enhanced psychological well-being, respectively. These findings underscore the importance of understanding how positive experiences at work, facilitated by transformational leadership and technology use, can contribute to executives' overall life satisfaction and well-being.

Conversely, negative spillover might indicate that challenges or stressors related to technology use or leadership responsibilities at work negatively affect executives' personal lives. This could lead to adverse outcomes such as increased stress, burnout, or even impact the executives' overall life satisfaction. This aligns with extant studies that identified factors such as work overload, unfavourable schedules, and emotional job demands as contributors to negative work-life spillover (Fung *et al.*, 2021; Suter & Kowalski, 2021). Similarly, family issues, illness, and lack of spousal support have been linked to negative family-work spillover (Arzu *et al.*, 2022; García-Salirrosas *et al.*, 2023).

Studies by Lee *et al.* (2021) and Leung (2011) have associated negative spillover with depressive moods, psychological stress, and burnout among executives. Furthermore, research by Sirgy *et al.* (2020) has demonstrated the detrimental effects of negative spillover on domain satisfaction and subjective well-being, highlighting the importance of mitigating factors that contribute to negative spillover in the workplace. Understanding the dynamics of spillover is crucial for comprehending the holistic effects of transformational leadership and technology use on executives' work and personal domains. It offers a nuanced perspective, considering the reciprocal influences between leadership practices, technology adoption, and the overall well-being of executives in the UK.

3.2 Technology Acceptance Model

TAM is one of the most widely used theory in explaining the acceptance and use of technology (Kamal *et al.*, 2020; Marangunić & Granić, 2015; Sagnier *et al.*, 2020). The theory has found wide application in education (Granić & Marangunić, 2019; Kemp *et al.*, 2019), healthcare (Holden & Karsh, 2010), ehealth (Kalayou *et al.*, 2020), library (Rafique *et al.*, 2020), elearning (Alfadda & Mahdi, 2021; Pal & Vanijja, 2020; Sukendro *et al.*, 2020), public sector (Palumbo, 2020), telemedicine (Kamal *et al.*, 2020), and virtual and augmented reality (Sagnier *et al.*, 2020), and information systems (Chau, 1996) among others. It has also been used to explain remote work or telecommuting (Irawanto *et al.*, 2021; Palumbo, 2020).

The theory is credited to the seminal work of Davis (1986) with empirical validations in 1989 (Q. Ma & Liu, 2011). Fundamentally, the theory drew largely on the Theory of Reason Action (TRA) developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPH) (Ajzen, 1985). Although TPH is also rooted in TRA as an improvement to the weakness of TRA (Granić & Marangunić, 2019; Marangunić & Granić, 2015). Kemp *et al.* (2019) even argued that TAM drew insights from diffusion of innovation theory, self-efficacy theory, expectancy theory, cost-benefit decision processes, and channel disposition model, although this claim has not been discussed much in the academic literature. Much of the emphasis has been on the TRA and TPH which are popular theories grounded in the fields of social psychology which sought to explain attitudes-behaviour relationship within human action. Based on that notion, Davis (1986) perceived that technology usage was a behaviour and developed the TAM. However, contrary to the TRA, the original TAM does not involve subjective

norms as an antecedent of the behavioural intention to embrace technology. The goal of TAM was "to provide an explanation of the determinants of computer acceptance that is general, capable of explaining user behaviour across a broad range of end-user computing technologies and user populations, while at the same time being both parsimonious and theoretically justified" [15, p. 985].

Davis' (1989) main argument was the acceptance and use of technology can be predicted by attitudes, internal beliefs, and intentions (Turner *et al.*, 2010). The original TAM assessed how three internal variables influenced the effective utilization of technology. These constructs were regarded as user motivation (Marangunić & Granić, 2015) and they comprised perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU) and attitude toward use (A) (Granić & Marangunić, 2019; Kalayou *et al.*, 2020; Sukendro *et al.*, 2020). The argument was that these constructs predicted behavioural intention to use (BI) (Malatji *et al.*, 2020; Turner *et al.*, 2010). Notably, BI served a dual role in the original TAM, functioning both as a dependent variable influenced by PEOU and PU, and as an independent variable when predicting actual usage (Turner *et al.*, 2010). PEOU relates to the degree to which an individual perceives that using a technology is effortless. PU relates to the subjective likelihood that an individual will perceive that using a technology will improve his/her work. Attitude toward use (A) refers to an individual's overall feelings, opinions, or affective response regarding the use of a particular technology. In context, a positive attitude toward use indicates a favourable perception of the technology, suggesting that the individual views it positively and is more likely to accept and use it (Malatji *et al.*, 2020). Davis argued that attitude was predicted by PEOU and PU and determined whether an individual will accept or reject a technology (Marangunić & Granić, 2015). However, the empirical validation of the model by Davis *et al.* (1989) did not support the full mediation of attitude in the interaction between PEOU, PU and actual usage, which led to the development of a parsimonious TAM that excluded the attitude construct from the model (Granić & Marangunić, 2019; Marangunić & Granić, 2015) and the inclusion of behavioural intention as a predictor of actual usage. This modification is credited to Venkatesh and Davis (1996)

Behavioural intention to use (BI) now commonly referred to as acceptance (Holden & Karsh, 2010), is the individual's expressed willingness or intention to use a specific technology in the future. It reflects the individual's subjective likelihood or willingness to adopt and use the technology based on their attitudes, perceptions of usefulness,

and perceived ease of use. Scholars have argued that high behavioural intention often correlates with a higher likelihood of actual technology adoption. This is consistent with the position of TRA (Marangunić & Granić, 2015).

Findings from numerous studies that have applied the TAM have consistently demonstrated that perceived usefulness stands out as the most robust predictor of the intention to use (Sagnier *et al.*, 2020). For example, a comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by King and He (2006) reported mean beta (β) for the perceived-usefulness-to-intention-to-use pathway was 0.50, with coefficients ranging from 0.14 to 0.88. This suggests a substantial and positive association between users' perceptions of a technology's usefulness and their intention to use it. In empirical studies conducted by King and He (2006), the perceived-ease-of-use-to-intention-to-use path yielded a mean beta (β) of 0.19. This pathway exhibits a comparatively weaker association compared to the perceived-usefulness-to-intention-to-use path. Across numerous studies, the path coefficients were consistently low, spanning a range from -0.04 to 0.72. However, the works of King and He (2006) and Ma and Liu (2011) suggests a lack of consensus with regards to the effect of perceived ease of use on the intention to use. Some studies, such as the one by Agarwal and Prasad (1997), assert a direct effect of perceived ease of use on intention to use. In contrast, other studies suggest that this effect is indirect, mediated by perceived usefulness, as observed in the classic work by Davis (1989).

In addition, Davis (1989) acknowledged that the perception of a subject towards a technology can be influenced by externalities. In this sense, the assumption is that PU and PEOU are actually mediators of the effect of external variables on the use of technology (Burton-Jones & Hubona, 2005; Marangunić & Granić, 2015). TAM however did not specify the external variables. Based on this assumption, scholars have taken the liberty to contextualise the external variables based on a specific tasks, technology, and user differences. For example, Oladele and Oyewole (2020) argued that perception of usefulness will vary depending on technical know-how and Kara *et al.* (2018) and Alfadda and Mahdi (2021) argued that demographic variances will explain perceived usefulness.

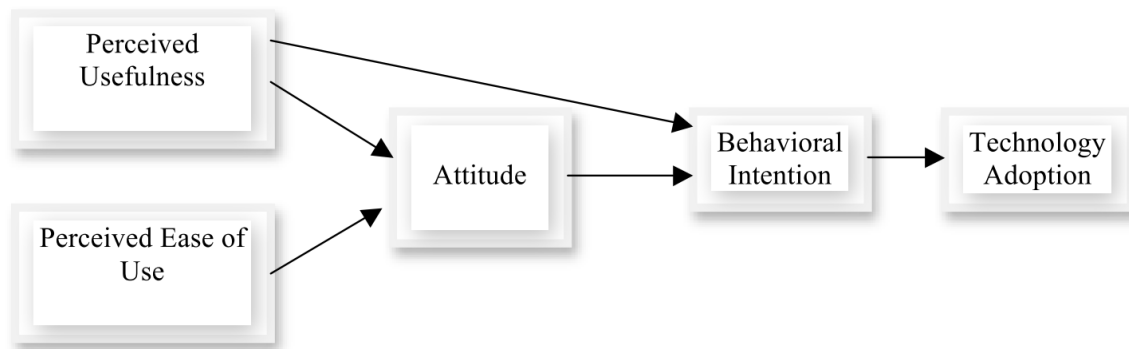


Figure 3.1: Technology Acceptance Model

3.2.1 Criticism of TAM

TAM has been subjected to several criticisms. One of the foremost is the simplicity of the model (Malatji *et al.*, 2020). For example, Kamal *et al.* (2020) argued that in the context of telemedicine, intention to use cannot be predicted by the few variables suggested in the original TAM, given the influence of intertwined and multiple social and behavioural factors not included in the model. Critics of TAM have also highlighted that in most studies, the behavioural intention to use a particular technology is more frequently measured than the actual usage (Holden & Karsh, 2010; Turner *et al.*, 2010), especially because the latter is difficult to measure (Holden & Karsh, 2010). This has raised some questions regarding the suitability of the model to test actual use (Oladele & Oyewole, 2020). Critics also argued that the original TAM lacked sufficient explanatory power. Notably, Oladele and Oyewole (2020) argued that the variables explained only 40-50% variance in technology use. King and He (2006) also queried that TAM is imperfect and there are wide variations in the predicted effects in various studies with different types of users and systems. As a result, since the introduction of TAM, there have been variations in a bid to increase TAM's predictive power (Malatji *et al.*, 2020; Marangunić & Granić, 2015; Sagnier *et al.*, 2020). Malatji *et al.* (2020, p.116) further criticised these variations as leading to theoretical havoc and uncertainty.

In 2000, Venkatesh and Davis developed TAM2, an updated version of the TAM, due to the TAM's limited explanatory power (Oladele & Oyewole, 2020). TAM2 proposes that users form perceptions about the usefulness of technology by mentally evaluating how well the technology aligns with their crucial work goals and the resulting

implications of executing tasks with that technology (Hoong *et al.*, 2017). In contrast to the initial TAM, TAM2 excluded the "attitude towards use" variable and incorporated novel elements (Oladele & Oyewole, 2020). These additions encompassed subjective norm, reflecting the impact of others on the user's choice to adopt or abstain from using the technology; image, representing the user's aspiration to uphold a positive reputation among peers; job relevance, indicating the applicability of the technology to the user's work; output quality, gauging the technology's proficiency in executing necessary tasks; and result demonstrability, focusing on the technology's ability to showcase tangible and measurable outcomes (Marangunić & Granić, 2015; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). The theory further argued that experience and voluntariness were moderators of the subjective norm. Invariably, the emphasis of this modification was on perceived usefulness due to the consistent findings that it was a major determinant of behavioural intention. This revised model aimed to capture a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping users' acceptance of technology, recognizing the significance of social and experiential aspects in addition to the perceived ease of use and usefulness (Lai, 2017). However, this version was also criticised for ignoring the determinants of perceived ease of use, which led to the development of TAM3.

TAM3 was subsequently developed by Venkatesh and Bala (2008), which combined the proposition of TAM2 and the determinants of perceived ease of use (Kemp *et al.*, 2019; Malatji *et al.*, 2020). Because of the inclusion of moderators in TAM2 and TAM3, which resulted in a more complex model, it is not suitable for this particular study (Lai, 2017). Meanwhile, despite these modifications to TAM, the fundamental principles and conceptual underpinnings of the model remained consistent (Lai, 2017).

3.2.2 Contextualising TAM

TAM is also relevant to this study in three major ways. First, transformational leaders are known for fostering a positive attitude toward change and innovation. TAM, with its emphasis on attitudes and perceptions, complements this study by examining how transformational leaders' attitudes toward technology affect their actual usage. Kaihlanen *et al.* (2023) for example explored the perception of social care professionals and executives on digitisation in the sector. Their findings showed that social care professionals and executives' use of technology will depend largely on their perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

Secondly, by exploring factors such as perceived usefulness and ease of use, the study can explore how technology contributes to or disrupts the WLB of these leaders. Samad (2012) noted how transformational leaders leverage technology to pursue innovation at work. Seyal (2015) also emphasised how transformational leaders are more inclined to technology adoption for carrying out tasks. Likewise, Ghasabeh (2020) noted how transformational leadership contribute significantly to the effective use of information technology which influences the effectiveness of the organisation. In the context of technology and WLB, Kaihlanen *et al.*'s (2023) study found that social care professionals and managers alike identified both positive and negative impacts of technology integration. Their findings highlight the positive effects to include accelerated work processes, reduced workloads, and continuous learning opportunities. However, challenges such as the complexity of information systems, increased workload due to duplicated tasks, and insufficient training time have also been highlighted (Bengoa, n.d.). Mikolajczyk *et al.* (2023) found that the use of digital technology, in the context of remote work resulted in work-life imbalance for executives.

Specifically, TAM can be used to explore how demographic factors among UK executives might influence their receptiveness and use of technology in achieving WLB. For example, Mordi *et al.* (2023) showed that ICTs reinforced gendered work-family boundaries and generated more negative work-life/family spillover for women than for men. In other words, TAM offers a relevant framework for exploring the technology acceptance and usage behaviours of transformational leaders in the context of WLB. It thus provides a systematic way to assess the perceptions and attitudes of these leaders toward technology, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the relationship between technology, leadership, and WLB. It is acknowledged that TAM was originally developed to explain acceptance of discrete, identifiable technologies, and that its core constructs of perceived usefulness and ease of use were designed as pre-adoption evaluative judgements. The current study does not centre on adoption of a single technology; rather, it examines executives' broader repertoire of digital tools used to manage work-life boundaries. TAM's application is therefore adapted accordingly: rather than assessing whether executives will adopt a given tool, the framework is used to understand the attitudinal orientations that shape how executives integrate technology into their leadership and boundary-management practices. This attitudinal function of TAM translates meaningfully to a multi-technology

context because executives' generalised orientation toward digital tools (whether they perceive them as enhancing or complicating their work and personal life) influences patterns of use across the digital ecosystem. The study thus draws on TAM's conceptual logic rather than its narrow operationalisation, consistent with broader applications of the framework in organisational and leadership contexts (Kaihlanen et al., 2023; Ghasabeh, 2020). Regarding the distinction between pre-usage and usage factors, the focus of this research on "how" executives use technology, rather than "whether" they adopt it, reflects an extension of TAM into practice-in-use, which is warranted by the established relationship between attitudinal acceptance and enacted usage behaviours (Pal & Vanijja, 2020). TAM's attitudinal constructs are therefore applied in this study not as gatekeeping measures of adoption intent, but as analytical lenses through which to interpret how executives' evaluative orientations toward digital tools shape the character and consequences of their technology use for WLB.

3.3 Synthesising Spillover Theory and Technology Acceptance

The intricacies of technology use and WLB underscores the need for more than a single theory to explore how transformational leaders and their use of technology influences WLB. Based on this, the theoretical framework for this study is based on the synthesis of spillover theory and TAM. This offers a comprehensive framework that bridges technology acceptance and its spillage into personal life. On the one hand, spillover theory, traditionally concerned with behavioural and emotional transfer between work and personal domains, merges seamlessly with TAM, which assesses attitudes toward technology adoption. Executives' positive/negative attitudes toward technology, as per TAM, serve as a catalyst for the integration of technology into their work practices. This integration, in turn, serves as the mechanism for spillover, as UK executives navigate the boundaries between their professional and personal lives. The combination of both theories thus portrays a more holistic picture, illustrating how the UK executives' acceptance and usage of technology directly impact their experiences beyond the workplace and elucidates the mechanisms through which technology adoption spills over into personal life (See Figure 3).

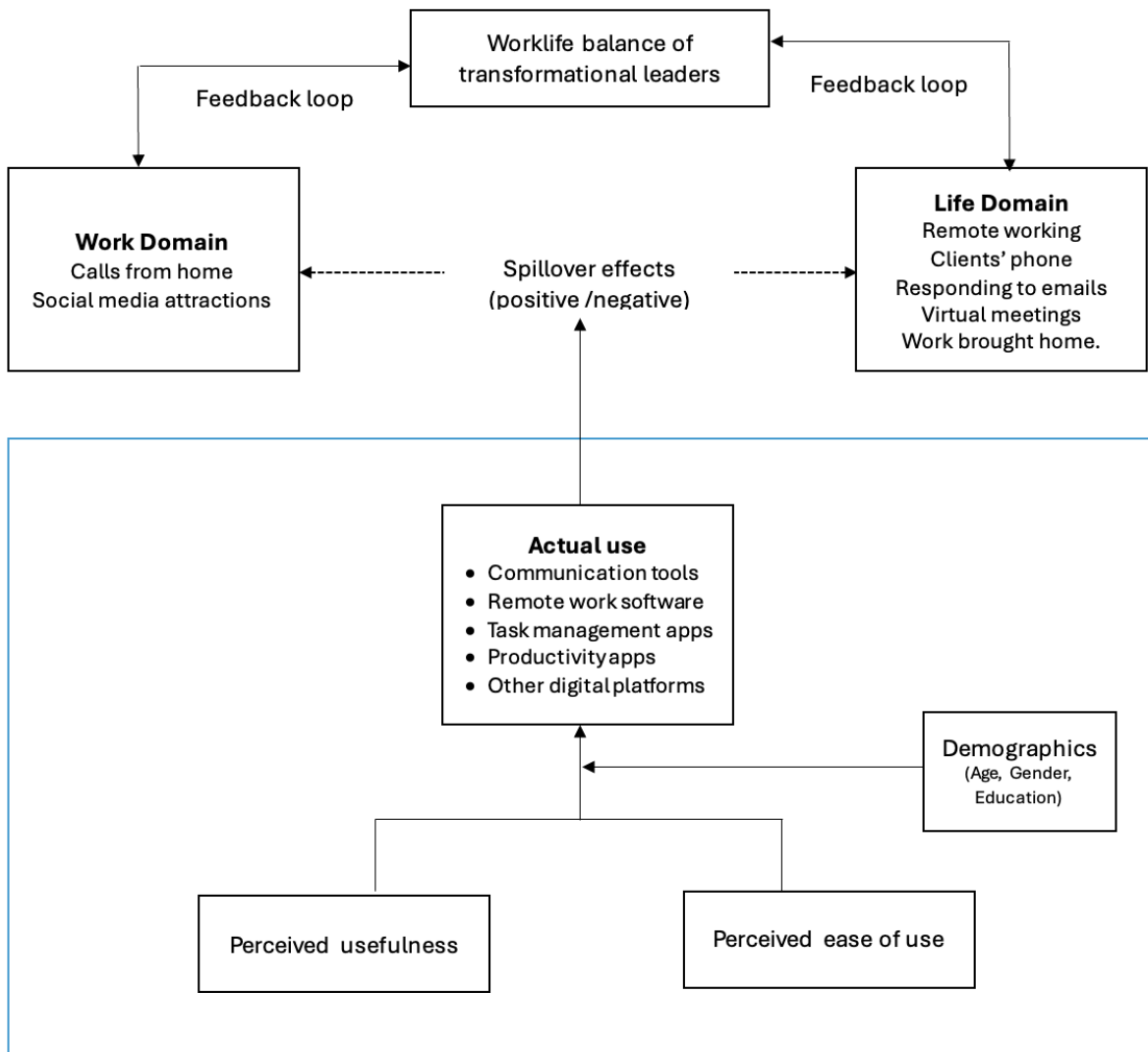


Figure 3.2: Theoretical Framework

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the theoretical framework underpinning the study, focusing on Spillover theory and the TAM. Spillover theory is introduced, encompassing both positive and negative spillover effects between work and personal life. The chapter discussed the implications of these spillover dynamics for executives' WLB, including their well-being and job satisfaction. Additionally, criticisms of spillover theory are explored, highlighting limitations and areas for further research.

TAM was introduced as a framework to understand executives' acceptance and use of technology in the workplace and at home. The key constructs of TAM, such as perceived usefulness and ease of use were examined and their relevance in the context of executives' technology adoption behaviours explored. Criticisms of TAM are also discussed, shedding light on potential drawbacks and challenges in applying the

model to complex organizational settings. Through a synthesis of spillover theory and TAM, the chapter laid the groundwork for understanding the interplay between technology use, leadership practices, and WLB among executives in the UK. This theoretical framework sets the stage for the empirical investigation undertaken in subsequent chapters, aiming to deepen insights into the relationship between technology, leadership, and WLB.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the underlying methodology for the study and the logic behind the choices. The research method is guided by the research onion framework proposed by Saunders *et al.* (2019). Sub-sections include a recap of the research objectives, and an overview of methodologies adopted in extant literature. The chapter also covers research design, including the philosophy, approach, strategy, methods, and time horizon. The method of data collection, reliability and validity of the research instruments, and method of data analysis are also captured within this chapter. Finally, ethical considerations are considered.

4.1 Overview of Existing Methodologies Employed

Table 4.1 provides an overview of selected journals focused on the study of WLB published between 2008 and 2023. The studies in the table can be broadly categorised into two major research paradigms: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research, represented by papers like Mikolajczyk *et al.* (2023), Mordi *et al.* (2023), and Bardoel and Drago (2016), typically employs inductive strategies such as case studies, semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis. These studies aim to explore and understand phenomena through rich, contextual narratives. On the other hand, quantitative research, as seen in studies by Hasan and Muafi (2023), Duan *et al.* (2021), and Thulasimani *et al.* (2010), adopts deductive approaches, utilizing surveys and questionnaires with larger sample sizes. Structural equation modelling, regression, and probit regression are commonly used analytical tools in quantitative studies, emphasizing statistical relationships and generalizability.

Some papers combined both qualitative and quantitative methods, indicating a mixed-methods approach. Notable examples include Currie and Eveline (2011) and Duxbury and Smart (2010), which use a combination of surveys, and interviews, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of WLB issues. The temporal aspect is addressed through the distinction between cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Cross-sectional studies, such as those by Mikolajczyk *et al.* (2023) and Sarker *et al.* (2012), capture data at a single point in time, while longitudinal studies, like those conducted by Bhat *et al.* (2023) and Haar *et al.* (2017), involved data collection over an extended period.

The table highlights the multidisciplinary and diverse nature of WLB research, showcasing a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The inclusion of varied approaches contributes to a holistic understanding of WLB. Still, there are opportunities for more in-depth exploration, particularly in technology's role and demographic influences on WLB. A qualitative methodology lends itself towards such exploration.

Table 4.1: Summary of methodology table

s/n	Authors	Method choice	Strategy	Approach	Sample	Data collection	Time horizon	Instrument	Analysis
1.	Mikolajczyk <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Qualitative	Survey	Inductive	13	Primary	Cross-sectional	Semi-structured interview	Thematic analysis
2.	Bhat <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Qualitative	-	-	1026	Secondary	Longitudinal	Literature	Bibliometric analysis
3.	Mordi <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Qualitative	Case studies	Inductive	30	Primary	Cross-sectional	Focus group	Thematic analysis
4.	Hasan and Muafi (2023)	Quantitative	Survey	Deductive	73	Primary	Cross-sectional	Questionnaire	Structural equation modelling
5.	Leppäkumpua and Sivunen (2023)	Qualitative	Case study	Inductive	32	Primary	Cross-sectional	Semi-structured interview	Thematic analysis
6.	Caringal-Go <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Qualitative	Survey	Inductive	112	Primary	Cross-sectional	Semi-structured interview	Thematic analysis
7.	Bouwmeester <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Qualitative	Case study	Inductive	20	Primary	Cross-sectional	Semi-structured interview	Thematic analysis
8.	Kibriya <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Qualitative	Case study	Inductive	16	Primary	Cross-sectional	Semi-structured interview	Thematic analysis
9.	Duan <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Quantitative	Survey	Deductive	237	Primary	Cross-sectional	Questionnaire	Structural equation modelling
10.	Mahfouz (2020)	Qualitative	Case study	Inductive	10	Primary	Cross-sectional	Semi-structured interview	Thematic analysis
11.	Nagy (2020)	Qualitative	Case study	Inductive	20	Primary	Cross-sectional	Semi-structured interview	Thematic analysis
12.	Gopinathan <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Quantitative	Survey	Deductive	78	Primary	Cross-sectional	Questionnaire	Structural equation modelling
13.	Zaresani and Scott (2020)	Quantitative	Survey	Deductive	7,043	Primary	Cross-sectional	Questionnaire	Probit regression

14.	Adisa <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Qualitative	Case study	Inductive	42	Primary	Cross-sectional	Semi-structured interview	Thematic analysis
15.	Haar <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Quantitative	Survey	Deductive	131	Secondary	Longitudinal	Dairy data	Regression/mediation analysis
16.	Bardoel and Drago (2016)	Quantitative	Survey	Deductive	11,140	Primary	Longitudinal	Panel survey	Regression
17.	Mor <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Qualitative	Case studies	Inductive	102	Primary	Cross-sectional	Interviews	Content analysis
18.	Sarker <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Qualitative	Survey	Inductive	21	Primary	Longitudinal	Interviews	Thematic analysis
19.	Currie and Eveline (2011)	Mixed	Survey	Not mentioned	44 (Q)/12(I)	Primary	Cross-sectional	Interviews and Questionnaire	Descriptive and Thematic analysis
20.	Thulasimani <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Quantitative	Survey	Deductive	480	Primary	Cross-sectional	Questionnaire	Descriptive and inferential
21.	Duxbury and Smart (2010)	Mixed method	Survey	Inductive	-	Primary	Longitudinal	Questionnaire and interviews	Descriptive and thematic analysis
22.	Middleton (2008)	Qualitative	Case study	Inductive	-	Secondary	Longitudinal	Documents	Document analysis
23.	Moylan (2008)	Quantitative	Survey	Deductive	30	Primary	Cross-sectional	Questionnaire	Descriptive

Source: Author's Compilation (2024)

4.2 Re-stating the Research Objectives

The study explores the impact of transformational leadership on the WLB of executives in the UK. It also investigates the role of technology in the relationship between transformational leadership and work-life balance. Specific objectives are to:

- a. explore the WLB experience of executives in England and Wales;
- b. assess how executives in England and Wales deploy transformational leadership strategies to address WLB issues; and
- c. analyse how transformational leaders leverage technology, and how this is shaped by demographic factors, to achieve WLB in England and Wales.

4.3 Philosophical Overview

In social sciences, a research paradigm serves as a foundational framework encompassing the fundamental assumptions, beliefs, and philosophical underpinnings guiding a researcher's approach to inquiry (Ugwu *et al.*, 2021). It provides a lens through which researchers perceive and interpret the world, shaping their understanding of reality, knowledge, and the research process (Yong *et al.*, 2021). A research paradigm acts as a cognitive structure, influencing the researcher's worldview and informing their decisions throughout the research journey.

Before delving into these paradigms, three fundamental assumptions shape the researcher's perspective and guide the approach to inquiry: axiology, epistemology, and ontology (Burke and Christensen, 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Axiology refers to the branch of philosophy that deals with values, including those of the researcher and the participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It encompasses the ethical considerations and the subjective judgments that influence the research process (Leavy, 2017). Axiological considerations involve questions about the researcher's values and potential biases, emphasising transparency and ethical conduct throughout the study. Ontology pertains to the nature of reality and existence. It explores questions about what is real, the nature of entities, and how they relate to each other (J. R. Burke & Christensen, 2014). Ontological assumptions underpin how researchers view the world and the phenomena they study whether they see reality as objective and external or believe in multiple, subjective realities (Ugwu *et al.*, 2021).

Epistemology deals with the nature and scope of knowledge (Ugwu *et al.*, 2021). It investigates how knowledge is acquired, validated, and the relationship between the

'knower and the known' (Otokiti, 2010). Epistemological assumptions guide researchers in selecting appropriate research methods and inform the criteria for establishing the validity and reliability of knowledge claims (Adetayo, 2011). For this study exploring the impact of transformational leadership on the WLB of executives in the UK, an epistemological stance is pivotal. The choice revolves around how knowledge about the phenomena of interest is conceptualised and pursued.

This epistemological stance emphasizes the importance of context, subjectivity, and understanding the lived experiences of individuals (Burke and Christensen, 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Through this lens, the study seeks to uncover how executives in the UK perceive and navigate WLB under the influence of technology, acknowledging the inherent subjectivity and contextuality of their interpretations. It invites a deeper exploration of the meaning-making processes (Novikov & Novikov, 2012) and the social dynamics in the digital age workplace.

4.3.1 Research Philosophy

A philosophy guides every research, and this study is no exception. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), research philosophy explains its theoretical underpinnings, capturing how the study's methodological elements are evaluated, research techniques are used, and data analysis will be carried out. Scholars have highlighted several philosophies, including positivism, pragmatism, critical realism, interpretivism and postmodernism (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Several research philosophies were considered, including positivism, pragmatism, postmodernism, and critical realism, each carrying distinctive assumptions about the nature of reality and the production of knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2019; Collis and Hussey, 2014). Positivism was rejected because its reliance on measurable, observable data is unsuited to exploring the subjective and contextual dimensions of executive WLB experience (Otokiti, 2010; Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Pragmatism, while flexible, did not align with the study's commitment to a coherent interpretivist lens (Burke & Christensen, 2014; Ugwu *et al.*, 2021). Critical realism, although attentive to underlying structures, retains a realist ontology that sits in tension with the constructivist orientation required here (Mora *et al.*, 2012; Tracy, 2013).. Postmodernism, while sharing interpretivism's scepticism of singular truths, was considered too focused on deconstructing dominant narratives rather than understanding how specific individuals make sense of their circumstances (Hassard,

1999; Mora *et al.*, 2012). Interpretivism was therefore selected as the most appropriate philosophical foundation for this study.

4.3.2 Underlying Philosophy

This study used the interpretive perspective because of the flexibility, subjective, and holistic assessment of executives' leading experience in a digital age. Saunders *et al.* (2019) define interpretivism as a philosophy that studies the subjective meanings and interpretations of individuals' experience and their social realities. In that sense, interpretivism is suitable for creating a new, richer, deeper understanding and explanation of social realities and context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interpretivism aligns with the study's objectives for several reasons. Firstly, it accommodates the exploration of executives' subjective experiences and the meanings they attach to transformational leadership strategies (Zaresani & Scott, 2020). It lends itself well to an in-depth understanding of individual perspectives (Mora *et al.*, 2012).

Moreover, interpretivism is adept at contextual exploration, a crucial aspect when studying social phenomena within their natural settings (Creswell, 2018; Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Contextual factors inherently influence the WLB of executives, and interpretivism facilitates the nuanced understanding of these factors within their specific environment. Furthermore, interpretivism aligns with the study's focus on the role of technology in the relationship between transformational leadership and WLB. It allows for examining how individuals interact with and interpret technology in their daily lives (Nagy, 2020).

In essence, interpretivism is justified by its congruence with the study's emphasis on exploring subjective experiences, understanding contextual factors, and utilizing qualitative methods to capture the richness of executives' WLB experiences in the digital age (Hubbard, 2016).

4.4 Research Design

The research design outlines the procedure for carrying out the research drawing from the research questions and objectives. This research drew on the research onion framework by Saunders *et al.* (2019) in structuring the methodological choices (See Figure 4.1).

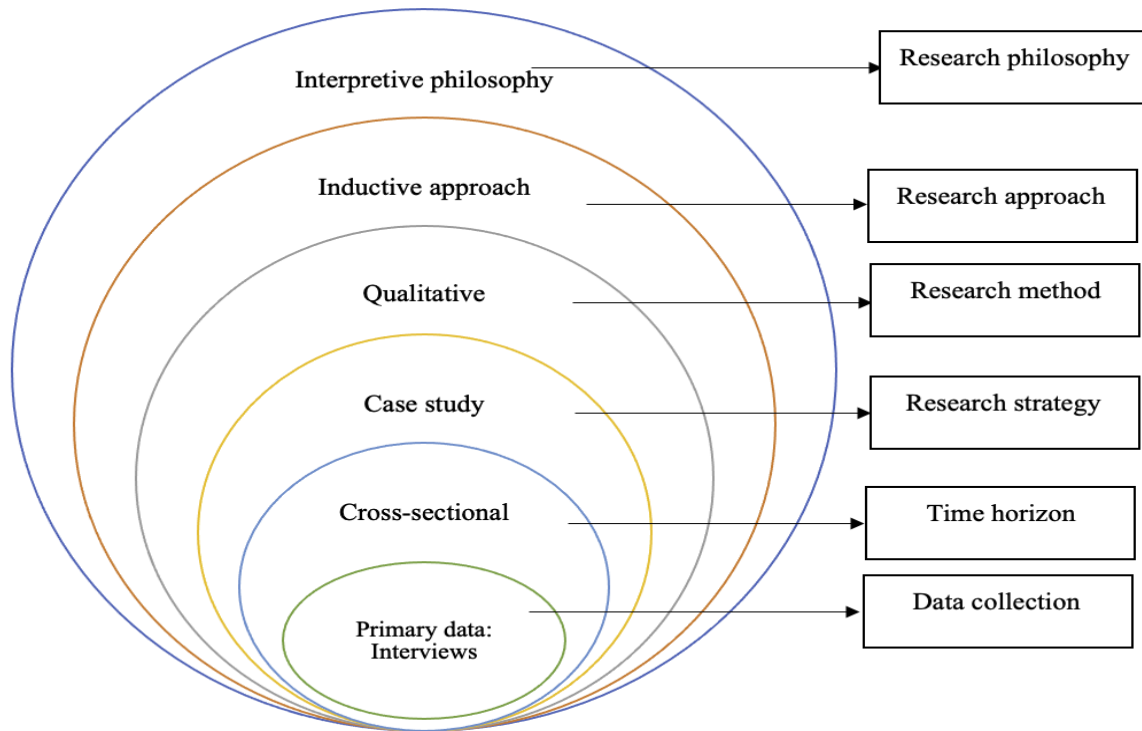


Figure 4.1: Research Onion

Source: Author, Adapted from Saunders *et al.* (2019)

4.4.1 Research Approach

Saunders *et al.* (2019) suggested the relevance of choosing a research approach that aligns with the study's overarching philosophy. This study considers the various research approach options. There are three primary approaches to conducting research: deductive, abductive, and inductive (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). A deductive approach, which tests pre-existing hypotheses through empirical data, was incompatible with the study's exploratory aims, since no established theoretical model predicted precisely how transformational leadership, technology use, and WLB would interact for executives in this sector. An abductive approach, which moves iteratively between data and theory, was considered but not adopted, as the study sought to remain data-driven throughout rather than returning repeatedly to theoretical propositions during analysis. The inductive approach was therefore adopted, enabling themes and interpretive frameworks to emerge organically from the experiences of participants rather than being imposed a priori.

The inductive approach was adopted for this study. Inductive reasoning is a bottom-up approach that involves deriving general principles or theories from specific

observations (Mohajan, 2018). It enabled the findings to emerge from UK executives' specific experiences and contexts, allowing themes and patterns to naturally surface. This approach mostly focuses on developing a theory; methodologically, an interpretive philosophy lends itself to an inductive approach (Tracy, 2013). What differentiates induction from deduction is how a hypothesis is applied to the investigation. Induction, on the one hand, is concerned with creating new ideas and possible generalisations (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). On the other hand, the deductive approach assesses the validity of theories or hypotheses (Otokiti, 2010). The logic of induction is to arrive at untested conclusions based on known premises, hence its suitability for this study (Yong *et al.*, 2021).

The inductive approach aligns with this study's aim to explore the WLB experiences of executives, understand how transformational leadership strategies are deployed in response to these experiences, and explore the role of technology. By starting with specific instances and gradually building towards broader generalisations (Novikov & Novikov, 2012), the inductive approach is well-suited for capturing the richness and diversity of executives' experiences in the digital age (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It allowed the study to be responsive to the unique contexts and perspectives of the participants (Leavy, 2017), fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics between transformational leadership, technology, and WLB. The flexibility of inductive reasoning accommodates the complexity of the research questions and encourages a more holistic exploration of the phenomena under investigation (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

4.4.2 Research Method

The underlying research philosophy, strategy, and the specific context and focus of the research inquiry influenced the choice of the most suitable research method. This study adopted a qualitative method. Qualitative research is a robust and well-established approach in the social sciences (Creswell, 2003; Taylor *et al.*, 2016; Leavy, 2017; Saunders *et al.*, 2019). According to Williams (2007), qualitative research is characterized as a "holistic approach" involving discovery, often described as an unfolding model. This approach takes place in a natural setting, allowing the researcher to immerse themselves deeply in the participants' actual experiences and develop a deeper understanding with a high level of detail (Taylor *et al.*, 2016). The emphasis on qualitative research suggests a departure from quantitative methods that

rely on numerical data and statistical analysis. Instead, qualitative research seeks to uncover the complexity of human experiences and social phenomena (Leavy, 2017), which is particularly relevant in studying subjective concepts such as WLB. By opting for a qualitative approach, the researcher aims to capture the depth and intricacies of judges' experiences in the context of their work and personal lives.

The qualitative method allowed the researcher to explore the participants' lived experiences to get deeper insights into their perspective of WLB and how transformational leadership behaviour allow them to navigate the dynamics of the work and non-work roles through the use of technology (Drew & Murtagh, 2006; Uddin, 2021). Therefore, a specific benefit of the qualitative research methods revolves around the depth of analysis derived from establishing a personal relationship with the participants, allowing for a closer examination of sensitive topics (Crano *et al.*, 2014). However, the main weakness of this approach revolves around the practical difficulties associated with the data collection process since it requires a considerable amount of time and effort from the researcher (Bernard, 2013). As a result, qualitative research methods often include only a limited number of participants, which effectively undermines the external validity and generalisability of the results (Punch, 2013). Nonetheless, qualitative methodologies are invaluable in generating robust insight about specific situations (Uddin, 2021), and as Jack and Anderson (2002, p.473) put it, the strength of qualitative research is in “its capacity to provide insights, rich details and thick descriptions”. Thus, for this study, qualitative research provided context-dependent explanations (Mushfiqur *et al.*, 2018; Nwagbara, 2020) about WLB and transformational leadership issues of executives in the UK.

4.4.3 Research Strategy

The research strategy was a case study of executives in the health and social care sector in Wales and England, UK. The case study approach allows for in-depth study of a particular context. It is a qualitative research method that allows researchers to delve deeply into the complexities and intricacies of a particular case, aiming to gain a holistic understanding and generate rich, context-specific insights (J. R. Burke & Christensen, 2014). The case study strategy is a popular approach within WLB research and has been applied in various WLB literature (Stella *et al.*, 2014; Lubbad and Adam-Bagley, 2021; Adisa *et al.*, 2022). One notable advantage of case studies is the ability to aid the unravelling of complex phenomena, extend the boundaries of

knowledge, or strengthen existing knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The contextual richness obtained through a case study can offer valuable insights that may not be captured through other research designs. However, case studies also have limitations (Yin, 2003). Generalisability is a concern since findings from a single case may not be applicable to broader populations.

Additionally, there is a potential for researcher bias, as the interpretation of data is influenced by the researcher's perspective (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Despite these limitations, the case study research strategy is particularly valuable in exploratory research, hypothesis generation, and situations where a deep understanding of a specific case is essential (J. R. Burke & Christensen, 2014). It is widely employed in fields such as psychology, sociology, business, and education, offering a qualitative lens through which researchers can unravel the complexities of real-world phenomena (J. R. Burke & Christensen, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

4.4.4 Time Horizon

This study is based on a cross-sectional time horizon. A cross-sectional time horizon is a research design that involves collecting data from a population or a sample at a single point in time (J. R. Burke & Christensen, 2014). Unlike longitudinal studies that observe changes over an extended period, cross-sectional studies provide a snapshot of a specific moment (Adetayo, 2011). This approach is particularly useful for gaining a contemporary understanding of a phenomenon, assessing prevalence, and examining relationships between variables at a specific point in time (Otokiti, 2010). One of the primary advantages of a cross-sectional time horizon is its efficiency in terms of time and resources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Researchers can collect data from participants or subjects in a relatively short timeframe, making it a cost-effective and timely method. This is especially beneficial when studying phenomena subject to rapid changes (J. R. Burke & Christensen, 2014), such as technology adoption.

However, the cross-sectional design has inherent limitations. It only captures a static view of the relationships between variables and cannot reveal causal relationships or changes over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, the temporal sequence of events is often crucial in understanding certain phenomena, and a cross-sectional design may overlook the dynamics involved in the development or evolution of a situation (Burke and Christensen, 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2019). In the context of the

impact of transformational leadership on the WLB of executives in the England and Wales, a cross-sectional time horizon provided a snapshot of the current state of affairs. It allowed for examining how executives were experiencing WLB in the digital age and the role of transformational leadership strategies in the current time.

4.5 Sample

Sampling is a practical and necessary approach in research when studying the entire population is not feasible. Kothari (2004) underscores the significance of sampling as a crucial aspect of research design. The inability to study the entire population may arise due to factors such as large population size, limited resources, or time constraints. In such cases, researchers use sampling methods to select a subset that reflects the diversity and characteristics of the larger population, allowing them to make meaningful inferences about the whole. Generally, there are two major forms of sampling: probability and non-probability sampling. In qualitative research, non-probability sampling is the most widely used as the notion behind qualitative research is not generalisation or representation (Darko-Asumadu *et al.*, 2018; Althammer *et al.*, 2021; Dousin *et al.*, 2021; Uddin, 2021).

In this regard, convenience and snowballing sampling techniques were used in this research. Convenience sampling involves selecting participants based on their accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). This method is chosen for its ease of implementation and is often used when practical considerations, such as time and resources, play a significant role. While convenient, this method may introduce a potential bias, as the sample may not fully represent the broader population. It's crucial to recognise that individuals who are easily accessible might share common characteristics, impacting the generalisability of the findings (Adetayo, 2011).

On the other hand, snowball sampling is a technique where existing participants refer or nominate others who may fit the criteria for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method is particularly useful when the population of interest is challenging to reach through traditional means and participants share networks or characteristics (Otokiti, 2010). Snowball sampling can be valuable for reaching individuals who might not be easily identified through other methods (Leavy, 2017). However, it may lead to a non-random sample, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings. Additionally,

there is a risk of creating a network bias, as participants within a certain social or professional circle may share similar perspectives (Collis and Hussey, 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

To address these issues, the study ensured transparency in reporting the sampling methods used in your research and the potential limitations associated with the chosen methods. Along this line, the study provided a detailed description of the characteristics of the study participants. This included information about how participants were initially identified (convenience sampling) and whether any specific networks or criteria influenced the selection process (snowball sampling) (Marczyk *et al.*, 2005). In addition, the researcher made efforts to diversify the initial participants to ensure a more varied network of referrals. During the interviews, the participants were encouraged to refer individuals who may have different perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, the study employed triangulation by comparing the findings with existing literature to enhance the robustness of the study.

To determine the sample size, data saturation was used. Data saturation is a key construct for evaluating the extent to which the studied sample of participants is large enough to draw meaningful conclusions (Taylor *et al.*, 2016). This construct refers to a theoretical point beyond which the inclusion of additional respondents does not result in novel findings derived from the interview (Cowling & Lawson, 2016). Although the theoretical plausibility of data saturation seems well-established in the existing research methods literature, its implications for the practical conduct of qualitative research remain questionable (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The main challenge arises from the fact that the achievement of data saturation can be assessed in retrospective terms only, hence preventing the researcher from defining the number of participants to be included in the study to achieve sufficient data saturation before the start of the study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). However, the existing body of empirical evidence provides useful guidance in this regard, implying that as few as six respondents may be sufficient to achieve data saturation (Tran *et al.*, 2016). Other authors went as high as 12 (Saunders *et al.*, 2018), highlighting the considerable variability in the recommendations depicted in this body of research.

For this research, two strategies were used to ensure satisfactory data saturation. First, the researcher's goal was to include 20 participants. This sample of participants

were selected using a multi-tier sampling strategy. For instance, the researcher employed purposive sampling, given the focus on executives based in the UK's Health and Social Care sector. After that, convenience sampling was employed by relying on the networking contacts of the researcher and easing the way of approaching the target population.

Additionally, by using snowballing sampling, the researcher relied on referrals provided by the initial contacts who might be a good fit for the research (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Secondly, the extent to which data saturation has been achieved was monitored on an ongoing basis, with the addition of each interview. This approach enabled the researcher to assess whether sufficient data saturation has already been achieved based on the extent to which novel themes and findings emerged from consequent interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Interestingly, data saturation was achieved on the fifteenth interview. Four additional interviews were then conducted to verify that data saturation had been achieved. To this end, the final sample for this study was nineteen as opposed to the initial goal of twenty participants.

The decision to cease recruitment at nineteen participants is consistent with the recommendations of Guest *et al.* (2006), who demonstrated that theoretical saturation in homogeneous samples can be reliably achieved within twelve to sixteen interviews. In this study, saturation was operationalised inductively. The researcher tracked the emergence of new codes and themes after each successive interview and observed that, from the fifteenth interview onward, no substantively novel categories were produced. The four confirmatory interviews provided an active test of this claim, following the principle that saturation should be demonstrated (Fusch and Ness, 2015). Across these final four interviews, participants echoed themes already identified in the earlier data without introducing analytically distinct categories. This iterative approach to saturation monitoring is consistent with established qualitative best practice (Saunders *et al.*, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2021).

The study drew exclusively on primary data collected through nineteen semi-structured interviews. No secondary documentary sources were used for analytic purposes. This single-method approach was a deliberate design choice consistent with the study's interpretivist epistemology, which foregrounds depth of understanding over breadth of verification. The aim was to access the lived, subjective experiences of executives in ways that documentary sources cannot provide. Semi-structured interviews are the dominant instrument in analogous qualitative studies of executive

WLB (see Table 4.1), and the analytic density of the data generated across nineteen interviews was sufficient to address all four research objectives in full

4.6 Data Collection

This research utilised qualitative semi-structured interviews to explore the impact of transformational leadership on the WLB of executives in England and Wales through technology. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research approach that balances structure and flexibility, allowing for a detailed and in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). In other words, semi-structured interviews provide a balance between a predefined set of questions and the flexibility to explore unanticipated insights. This approach allowed the participants to express their views freely while ensuring that key topics related to WLB policies and practices are covered. In context, semi-structured interviews provide a means to gather rich and context-specific information as the study intends to go beyond surface-level answers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As such, based on their initial responses, follow-up questions were elicited for more detailed information. This technique is valuable in qualitative research, especially when exploring subjective experiences and interpretations (Taylor *et al.*, 2016).

The interview protocol explored the WLB experience of executives in the UK and probe into how UK executives have deployed (or are deploying) transformational leadership strategies to address WLB issues. It also covered how transformational leaders leverage technology to achieve WLB in the UK and cross-examine possible demographic differences in transformational leaders' receptiveness and use of technology to achieve WLB. The researcher conduct the interviews via digital platforms like Microsoft Teams. Scouting for participants included personal contacts, LinkedIn, public events relevant to the target participants and social media platforms like WhatsApp groups. From initial interactions, a date for the interview was scheduled with the executives based on their preferred channel. A copy of the interview protocol was shared with the participants to prepare them for the interaction. Each interview lasted least between 40-60minutes. Given the possibility of needing further clarification, the participants were asked, "Is it okay to contact you for further clarifications if need be?". This question helped keep communication and contact open with the participants.

4.7 Reliability and Validity

For this study, the research instrument's validity was assessed through theoretical and practical approaches, with a focus on translational and representational validity. Face and content validity, subtypes of translational validity, was employed to ensure the interview questions align with the research aim (Marczyk *et al.*, 2005; Burke and Christensen, 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Face validity, although subjective, provided an initial assessment of the questions' appropriateness. Conversely, content validity ensured the interview questions comprehensively cover the investigative inquiries (Marczyk *et al.*, 2005). Expert reviews and opinions were sought to establish face and content validity.

Additionally, member checking, involving participants in the validation process by sharing key findings, contributed to the authenticity and accuracy of the collected data (Nwagbara, 2020). Data saturation also validates the study (Zozimo, 2016). As the interviews progressed, the concept of data saturation, where no new information emerges, indicated the depth and comprehensiveness of the data. This, in turn, enhanced the internal validity of the study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Peer debriefing - engaging with colleagues in similar research helped provide external perspectives, which further bolstered the credibility and validity of the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Reliability concerns was addressed using pilot testing. The test involved a small sample of participants to identify potential issues with the interview question wordings or interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari, 2004). The resulting feedback allowed for refinements to the interview guide, contributing to the consistency of data collection (Marczyk *et al.*, 2005). While qualitative research does not aim for replicability, the study emphasised transparency in design, methods, and analysis to reinforce the perception of rigour to improve reliability further. Furthermore, dependability challenges related to bias was explored, including interviewer bias, response bias, and participant bias (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Interviewer bias may arise from tone, nonverbal cues, or the interviewer's personal opinions (Marczyk *et al.*, 2005; Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Strategies were implemented to establish trust and credibility, ensuring data quality. Response bias was considered, recognising that interviewees might withhold information on sensitive topics (Patton, 2002). The researcher created a conducive environment for open discussions, minimizing the impact of response bias (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Participation bias, stemming from

individuals' reluctance to participate due to time commitments or cultural differences, is also acknowledged (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The study leveraged initial introductions from earlier participants to facilitate access.

4.8 Method of Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used for the data analysis. The thematic analysis allowed for a systematic examination of the main patterns emerging from qualitative data (Punch, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2012) suggest this technique is suitable for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Braun and Clarke (2012) recommended that six steps be followed in analysing qualitative data using thematic analysis (See Figure 4.2). Their framework is arguably one of the most widely used as it offers a clear and relatable framework for conducting thematic analysis (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Maguire & Delahunt, 2014). The first step involved familiarisation with the data by reading and re-reading the transcriptions, listening to the audio recordings, and jotting down initial thoughts.

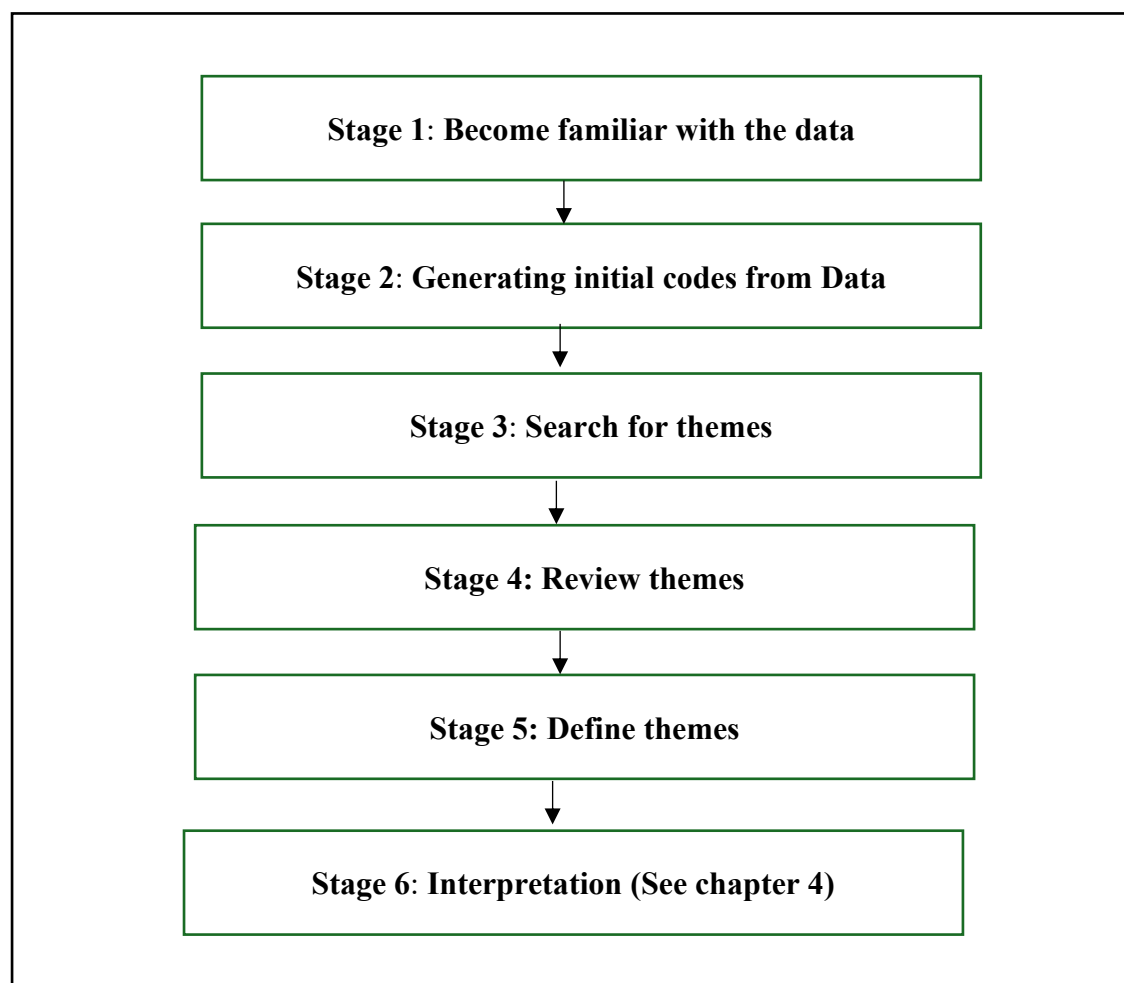


Figure 4.2: Data analysis procedure

Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2012)

The second step is generating initial codes from the data, which depends on the researcher's perspective or the research questions. For this study, the inductive and deductive thematic analysis approaches were adopted to cushion the weaknesses of each of the approaches. The inductive approach allowed the use of open coding, thereby emphasising data-based meanings. This means there were no pre-set codes. Elements of deduction was employed to ensure that the open-coded data were meaningful and connected to the research questions (Byrne, 2022). However, the study focused predominantly on inductive coding because deductively coded themes provide less rich descriptions of the overall data set (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Saunders *et al.*, 2019; Byrne, 2022).

The third step is identifying the themes from related codes. To do this, much of the focus was on the latent level, not the semantic level, because it looked beyond what has been said to identify underlying notions. The fourth step involved reviewing the themes by reading the data extracts for each theme and considering coherence. The fifth step involved defining and naming the themes. This step involved the “essence of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). The final step is writing the report. For clarity, the procedures for analysis at each stage are shown in Figure 4.2.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

The importance of adhering to ethical best practices in conducting an empirical research study can be highlighted from two different perspectives. On the one hand, this approach is consistent with the moral philosophy underpinning the fundamental goals of research studies, allowing for the enhancement of the current understanding of the studied phenomenon harmlessly. On the other hand, a practical benefit arising from the adherence to the ethical best practices can be found in the positive effect of this approach towards the respondents' willingness to take part in the research study and to provide truthful answers, thus enhancing the response rate as well as reliability and validity of the findings (Comstock, 2013).

This study considered seven major ethical considerations. The first element is informed consent, ensuring all participants fully understand the research process (Comstock, 2013). Essentially, this aspect of research ethics represents a fundamental precondition for ensuring that participants can assess the specific concerns associated with their participation. Adherence to this ethical consideration was ensured by providing detailed explanations about the purpose and process of the research during the initial contact with the participants. Prospective respondents were allowed to discuss concerns or questions directly with the researcher. Moreover, an informed consent form recapitulates the research study's key information that will be used before collecting primary data.

Secondly, voluntary participation is closely related to the informed consent discussed in the previous paragraph (Mustajoki and Mustajoki, 2017). During the data collection, all participants took part solely voluntarily, and no incentives were given to reward their participation. Drawing on the work of Bryman (2016), this approach enhances the reliability of the collected empirical evidence. The third element of ethical considerations included in the design of this research project revolved around ensuring confidentiality for the participants. The critical perspective outlined by Grobmo (2019) revealed that limited perception of own confidentiality in the context of a research study might discourage participants from providing truthful answers, compromising the data's reliability. Following the transcription of interview recordings, for example, each participant was allocated a pseudonym, so all personal information that could be used to tie the responses to specific individuals were removed.

The fourth ethical consideration relates to effective data protection. All data relating to the empirical results were stored on a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher. Moreover, the methodological approach and research design were subjected to an independent review by the university's ethics committee, ensuring the alignment with ethical best practices in an empirical research study (Comstock, 2013).

The fifth ethical consideration is beneficence. Beneficence refers to the obligation to actively promote the wellbeing of participants (Israel and Hay, 2006). In qualitative research involving executives, beneficence requires that the research process itself contributes positively to participants' experience, even if only by affording them a structured space for reflection on their professional lives (Omeihe and Harrison, 2024).

In this study, several design choices reflected this commitment. The semi-structured interview format was employed precisely because it gives participants the latitude to direct attention to the aspects of their WLB experience they find most salient. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams at times chosen by participants, minimising disruption to their working lives. At the close of each interview, participants were given the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about the study's aims and anticipated contributions, ensuring the interaction was reciprocal.

The sixth ethical consideration is non-maleficence. Non-maleficence refers to the duty to avoid causing harm to participants (Bryman, 2016; Omeihe and Harrison, 2024). In research of this kind, potential harms are not primarily physical but psychological and professional. Executives may feel uncomfortable disclosing tensions between their leadership role and their private lives or may be concerned that candid accounts of organisational pressure could have professional consequences if traced back to them. The study addressed non-maleficence through a number of procedural measures. As noted above, participant identities were protected through pseudonymisation and the removal of any personally identifiable information from transcripts. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty, up to the point of data analysis. Sensitive questions, for instance, those probing the emotional cost of leadership or the impact of WLB challenges on personal relationships, were approached with care, with the researcher prepared to redirect or pause the interview if participants showed signs of distress. The pilot testing of the interview guide prior to data collection served in part to identify questions with potential to cause discomfort, allowing for refinement before deployment with the main sample.

The seventh ethical consideration is fairness and justice, which concerns the equitable distribution of the burdens and benefits of research participation (Omeihe and Harrison, 2024). In qualitative research, justice-related questions often centre on who is invited to participate and who is excluded, and whether any groups bear disproportionate costs without commensurate benefit. The sampling strategy adopted in this study was designed with diversity in mind. While the research necessitated recruitment from within a professional network, deliberate efforts were made to ensure that referral chains extended beyond the researcher's immediate contacts, resulting in a sample that included variation in professional role, and organisational context. No

participant was asked to take on a disproportionate burden as interviews were time-limited (40–60 minutes), conducted remotely, and scheduled at participants' convenience. In terms of the benefits of participation, all participants were informed that the research findings would be disseminated in a form accessible to practitioners, including this thesis and intended journal publications, so that the insights generated by their contributions could return, in some form, to the professional community from which the sample was drawn. The study therefore sought to enact the principle of justice.

4.10 Chapter Summary

Chapter four provided an overview of the research methodology employed in this study, structured around the research onion model proposed by Saunders *et al.* (2019). The chapter commenced by restating the research objectives, which focused on exploring the WLB experiences of transformational leaders in the UK health and social care sector, examining the role of technology in shaping these experiences, and identifying demographic differences in technology usage. These objectives formed the foundation for the methodological decisions throughout the chapter. An overview of existing methodologies in related literature was presented, covering studies published between 2008 and 2023. These studies revealed a mix of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches, highlighting the richness and diversity of WLB research. Qualitative studies predominantly employed inductive strategies such as thematic analysis and case studies, whereas quantitative studies used deductive approaches including surveys and statistical modelling. This contextual review informed the choice of a qualitative methodology for the current study.

The research was situated within the health and social care sector in the UK, a context significantly shaped by post-pandemic realities. This sectoral focus underscored the need to understand how leadership and technology influenced WLB amid evolving work patterns. The study adopted an interpretivist philosophical stance, aligning with the aim of understanding participants' subjective experiences and meanings. An inductive approach was chosen to allow themes to emerge organically from the data, rather than being imposed a priori. A qualitative research method was deemed most appropriate, enabling an in-depth exploration of human experiences and the complexity of social phenomena. The research strategy was a case study of

executives, which allowed for a focused and context-sensitive investigation. A cross-sectional time horizon was adopted to capture a snapshot of participants' experiences at a particular moment in time.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, using convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Nineteen participants were interviewed, with data saturation achieved by the fifteenth interview. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-step process, was employed to analyse the data systematically and rigorously. To ensure reliability and validity, several strategies were used including pilot testing, member checking, and establishing content validity. Ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed, with all participants providing informed consent, and measures taken to ensure confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data security. Overall, the chapter established a strong methodological foundation for the study's empirical investigation.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretations of the results of the thematic analysis conducted to explore the impact of transformational leadership on the WLB of executives in the UK. The chapter is sectioned in line with the objectives of the study stated in the first chapter of the thesis. The chapter explores the perception of WLB, WLB challenges, coping mechanisms and factors that shape the WLB experiences of UK executives. In relation to the second objective, the chapter explored various transformational strategies UK executives deploy to achieve WLB. These strategies included human-centric leadership, empowerment-focused leadership, inclusive leadership, and developmental leadership. The chapter also presented the results on executives use technology to achieve WLB. Finally, the chapter examines the perceived demographic differences in the use of technology to achieve WLB. The demographic factors considered were age, gender, and professional roles.

5.1 Participants Information

The study engaged nineteen participants (19) who hold executive and senior professional positions predominantly within the healthcare and social care sectors in England and Wales. The demographic composition of the sample offers valuable contextual dimensions for examining transformational leadership approaches, technology utilisation, and WLB experiences among UK executives (See Table 5.1). The participants represent a relatively balanced distribution between public sector (n=10) and private sector (n=9) organisations, facilitating comparative analysis across differing institutional frameworks. As stated in the methodology chapter, the data information of the participants were protected using pseudonyms and their roles were excluded from the data presentation. The sample concentrates on healthcare and social services professionals, with representation from the National Health Service, social work departments, children's and adult social care services, educational institutions, and legal services as intended in the scope of the study. This concentration provides a distinctive professional context characterised by emotionally demanding work with vulnerable populations, potentially creating unique pressures on leadership practices and WLB dynamics.

Leadership tenure among participants varied considerably, ranging from two months to twenty-two years in current positions. Notably, nearly half the participants have occupied their current leadership roles for less than three years, likely reflecting recent organisational restructuring or career progression patterns within these sectors. This variation in leadership experience may illuminate differing approaches to WLB management and technology integration based on professional longevity and organisational familiarity.

Work arrangements showed a clear shift towards hybrid working models, with fifteen participants engaging in hybrid arrangements compared to only three in exclusively on-site roles. This predominance of hybrid working patterns across both public and private organisations reflects the contemporary transformation of professional environments following the pandemic period. Such arrangements hold particular significance for research examining how transformational leaders leverage technological tools to facilitate WLB.

The work schedules reported by participants reveal considerable diversity, with approximately half maintaining traditional full-time arrangements whilst others engage with variable or non-traditional schedules. Several participants specifically noted working beyond standard hours, potentially indicating work-life balance challenges that transformational leadership strategies might need to address. The demographic profile presents a participant cohort with rich diversity in leadership experience, organisational contexts, and working arrangements, thereby providing a suitable foundation for exploring the study's objectives regarding transformational leadership's impact on work-life balance in the digital age.

Table 5.1: Participants' Information

	Sector	Years in Current Position	Work Schedule	Work Arrangement	Key Responsibilities
Tina	Public	9 years	Tue-Fri, 9 AM - 6 PM	On-site	Immunology research, renal damage & myeloma patient care
Anita	Public	1.5 years	5 days/week	Hybrid	Managing Children and Families Team
John	Public	6 months	Mon-Thu	Hybrid	Overseeing children's and families' services
Ella	Private	5 years	8 AM - 5 PM	Hybrid	Reviewing fostering cases, advisory roles
Sarah	Public	<1 year	Variable	Hybrid	Child safeguarding, Section 47 inquiries
Sally	Public	8 years	5 days/week	On-site	Managing children and family legal cases
Israel	Private	6.5 years	Mon-Fri, 9 AM - 5 PM	Hybrid	Membership renewals, team management
Peace	Public	7 years	9:30 AM - 4:30 PM	Hybrid	Corporate occupational health advisory
Grace	Private	1 year, 3 months	Full-time	On-site	Managing 40+ staff, overseeing nursery operations
Lydia	Private	18 years	Variable	Flexible	Strategic planning, team leadership
Naomi	Private	2+ years	8:30 AM - 6:30 PM	Hybrid	Managing foster care services
Ruby	Private	6-7 months	Part-time	Hybrid	Overseeing start-up services
Clara	Private	22 years	Full-time	Hybrid	Running apprenticeship training company
Hazel	Private	1+ year	Hybrid	Hybrid	Marketing leadership in social care sector
Megan	Private	3 years	9 AM - 5 PM	Hybrid	Managing children's services
Sophie	Public	N/A	Hybrid	Hybrid	Supervising social workers
Jasmine	Public	2.5 years	Variable	Hybrid	Teaching, research, department leadership
Olivia	Private	1 year (7 years in similar roles)	9 AM - 5 PM (Flexible)	Hybrid	Marketing for a company managing 12 hospitals
Emma	Public	2 months, 3 days	Works past 5 PM	Hybrid	Leading a new health program

5.2 Perception of Work Life Balance

In relation to the first objective of the study, the analysis explored executives' perception of WLB mainly from the lens of its possibility. From the analysis, three distinct subthemes emerged from the data: (1) the experience of balance achievers, (2) the perspective of balance sceptics and (3) WLB as a dynamic and contextual process (See Figure 5.1). These subthemes collectively illustrate how executives conceptualise and experience WLB in their professional lives.

5.2.1 Balance Achievers

A subset of participants expressed satisfaction with their WLB, attributing their positive experiences to flexible work arrangements, structured schedules, and organisational support. They emphasized the ability to manage professional responsibilities alongside personal commitments, highlighting the role of autonomy in shaping their work patterns. One participant noted the advantage of part-time work in achieving balance:

"It's flexible, that makes it very easy... I'm working twice a week...I've got a very good work-life balance. I have a lot of time to spend with my family at the end of the day. As we don't finish too late, we've got a lot of time also as it's part-time, which gives me more time. So I feel like I've got time to pursue my other interests and hobbies and things like that." (Ruby)

Similarly, hybrid work models were viewed as instrumental in maintaining balance, allowing individuals to split their time between office and homework:

"It's reasonably good at the moment because I have got that flexibility to be able to work in the office and work at home." (Ella)

Another executive detailed how proactive planning and job flexibility allowed them to integrate family commitments with work responsibilities:

"I flex my time for my family, so if there's an event or something going on, I'm able to attend because of that flexibility. If I need to work a weekend, I will, but I make sure my schedule allows me to prioritise important family moments." (John)

Some participants viewed a structured approach as key to achieving balance, with clear boundaries set around work hours:

"Work is work and life is life. Try to plan ahead as much as you can. I work three days in the office and two days at home, but it changes depending on how busy the week is. I don't work weekends at all—I just don't want to give my weekends to work." (Olivia)

Another participant acknowledged that while their workload fluctuated, a combination of flexibility, proactive planning, and an accommodating organisational culture helped sustain a sense of balance:

"I think my work-life balance is quite good because I've managed to maintain that balance between what I do professionally and what I do personally." (Megan)

Despite achieving a degree of WLB, some participants revealed challenges in completely detaching from work. One participant described an internal struggle with fully disconnecting from professional duties:

"Work-life balance for me would be when you're at work, you're at work. When you're at home, you're at home—not working or thinking about work. I would say I am able to do it, but I don't like to switch off because something's always running through my head. If I really want to switch off, I can, but I choose not to. I'm just a worrier; I need to know that there's nothing going wrong and that I've done everything I need to do." (Grace)

Others shared how professional obligations often crept into personal time, with work responsibilities subtly blending into their daily lives:

"I check my WhatsApp and text messages at about 7:00 to see if anything non-urgent came in overnight. If it's not urgent, but they need me to know, they just send a message. So I'm happy with that arrangement. Then I help get my granddaughter ready for nursery, but my phone is always near me, just in case there are any issues with foster children. I try to be disciplined with emails and not do them out of hours, but sometimes it's unavoidable. If I have a critical report to write, I choose to do it on a Saturday morning when my family is resting so that I can focus." (Naomi)

Some participants also contrasted their current WLB experiences with previous roles, indicating how organisational expectations significantly shape perceptions of balance. One executive reflected on a previous corporate role that severely impacted their well-being:

"We've got a good work-life balance here, but my previous job was my first big corporate role, and the work-life balance was really bad. It was very stressful, with a lot of responsibility, targets, and weekend work. It was exhausting. In this role, there is more balance. My manager expects us to come into the office, but there is still some flexibility—at least for now." (Hazel)

For others, the flexibility of hybrid work arrangements was a defining factor in achieving balance:

"In terms of work-life balance, there is an opportunity to strike that balance through remote work. I go into the office once a week, and the remaining weeks I work from home. This hybrid model allows me to manage my time effectively." (Megan)

Several participants noted how the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped work culture, fostering greater flexibility and reducing the pressure of rigid work schedules. One executive reflected on how their WLB had significantly improved post-pandemic:

"Pre-COVID life was very different. I think life was more rushed. Post-COVID, things have been a little more laid-back. There's more flexibility and even work culture has changed to accommodate well-being." (Peace)

Another participant echoed this sentiment, describing how the pandemic accelerated positive cultural change within their organisation:

"Before COVID, we were expected to be in the office every day, and it was exhausting trying to juggle everything. Now, working from home a few days a week has become the norm. It's made a big difference to my stress levels and overall balance." (Jasmine)

Similarly, one manager observed how the shift to hybrid working enhanced team dynamics and personal productivity:

"The pandemic really made us rethink how we work. There's now an understanding that flexibility doesn't mean less productivity. In fact, it's made my team more motivated and allowed me to better manage my own time around family and work." (Sophie)

Overall, the findings suggest that WLB remains a dynamic and individualised experience. While flexibility, hybrid work arrangements, and proactive planning contribute positively, the challenge of mentally detaching from work persists for some executives. Additionally, organisational culture and past work experiences play a significant role in shaping perceptions of balance.

5.2.2 Balance Sceptics

For some executives, achieving WLB appears not just difficult but nearly impossible. A recurring sentiment among participants was that WLB is constrained by structural and occupational demands. One participant, Sarah starkly asserted, "there's really no work-life balance," particularly in roles involving crisis management and safeguarding responsibilities. This perspective demonstrates how certain professions inherently blur the boundaries between work and personal life, making balance a challenge beyond individual control. Some participants highlighted the unpredictable nature of their roles, making WLB a fluctuating and often unattainable goal. Anita shared that managing crises daily meant an inability to predict or control workloads:

"In my role, I think it's difficult to do it. It can be difficult to have a work-life balance because you're also managing crisis on a daily basis. So you don't know what's going to happen or what comes through. And you have to prioritise things. And sometimes

they end up working even after hours or even before hours... I think it's a work in progress. I do still think I'm spending more time working. In comparison to 'cause, it's the exhaustion as well. So after a long day's work and you, you're tired, so it leaves very little time for family and things like that." (Anita)

Similarly, Hazel described the pressures of a corporate role that left little room for personal time:

"There's been jobs like the previous job that I was in. It was my first sort of big corporate role and the work-life balance was really bad. It was really stressful, a lot of responsibility targets and I was working weekends, evenings. It was very stressful." (Hazel)

These accounts illustrate the pervasive nature of work encroaching into personal time, creating an ongoing struggle between professional obligations and personal well-being. Some participants framed WLB as an aspirational, rather than achievable, concept. Emma used a striking metaphor, describing WLB as a "Unicorn... not even attainable," suggesting that the idea of achieving perfect balance is unrealistic. Expanding on this, Emma questioned whether WLB should even be a goal:

"The thing that popped into my head was like doesn't exist. Work-life balance is, just doesn't exist. So my piece of advice would be not to make work-life balance the goal. Because you're not going to be able to achieve that. What I would say is the overall goal is mindfulness—that's the goal. And the way to get there is to be more organised in your life and be honest about what you can do versus what you can't do." (Emma)

This perspective shifts the conversation from striving for balance to prioritising self-awareness and intentionality in work-life decisions. Despite acknowledging external pressures, several participants recognised their own role in exacerbating work-life conflicts. Clara candidly admitted:

"I mean, I guess I would say there is no balance, however, because I'm the one in charge, that's what I do to myself. So it's not somebody else insisting there is no work-life balance or insisting that I work too much, it's all my own doing." (Clara)

This self-awareness introduces a paradox where participants recognise the detrimental effects of excessive work but simultaneously perpetuate these patterns. Jasmine, for example, acknowledged her struggle to disconnect from work, carrying her laptop everywhere and only taking one true holiday in three years:

"Some days I would feel exhausted, so I might just put just two or three hours. Other days I might put in 10 hours. I might put in 11 depending on how I feel They tend to merge quite a bit... my laptop follows me everywhere. In the past three years, I've only had one holiday a week on last August, when I didn't bring the laptop along..... I

keep promising myself. I will get better at [work-life balance]... It's a bit non-existent at the moment, but basically what I do need to get better [at]." (*Jasmine*)

Similarly, Grace, despite advocating for mental health awareness, admitted to struggling with work boundaries:

"I am a big advocate for, put your mental health first. Don't take your work home. You need to switch off if you're sick... Honestly, I don't sleep a lot, so if I'm awake until three AM, I will constantly be checking my emails up until 3:00 AM." (*Grace*)

This contradiction highlights the cognitive dissonance faced by executives who intellectually understand the importance of WLB but find it difficult to implement in practice. While many participants expressed resignation towards work-life imbalance, some acknowledged a growing awareness of the need for change. Jasmine, for example, noted that institutional leadership was beginning to support efforts to improve WLB, even if the change was slow and inconsistent. This emerging recognition suggests a shift from passive acceptance to a more proactive stance on achieving better balance.

The narratives presented reveal a complex interplay between occupational demands, personal choices, and evolving perceptions of WLB among UK executives. For some, WLB remains an elusive goal constrained by structural realities. Others view it as an unattainable ideal, advocating instead for mindfulness and self-awareness. Yet, there is an emerging recognition of self-imposed work patterns and a growing discourse on the need for change. These findings highlight the deeply ingrained nature of work-life imbalance while offering insights into potential pathways toward greater well-being in high-demand professional environments.

5.2.3 WLB as a Dynamic and Contextual Process

A key sub-theme that emerged from participants' perspectives was the fluid and dynamic nature of WLB. Rather than perceiving WLB as a fixed state or a definitive outcome, participants described it as an ongoing, evolving process of negotiation and adaptation. The findings suggest that WLB is not a destination to be reached but a continuous journey shaped by personal, professional, and contextual factors. Participants highlighted the necessity of flexibility in managing work and personal responsibilities. For many, balance was not about maintaining a strict demarcation between work and personal life but rather about adapting to varying demands while

ensuring well-being was not compromised. One participant emphasised the need for adaptability, stating:

"I think as I said... those moments where I am working crazy hours... it's not all the time. So now, to define that I am maintaining work-life balance means the ability to be able to work effectively... but also be efficient in what you're doing... while ensuring your well-being is not compromised." (Lydia)

This sentiment emphasises the view that WLB is highly situational and dependent on one's ability to adjust according to workload and personal circumstances. Participants in entrepreneurial roles, particularly those running small businesses, expressed that balance was contingent on business needs, requiring them to shift between intense work periods and moments of relative ease. One participant articulated this perspective:

"When you have your own business and it's only small, you have to do what's needed... if it needs me to work more in order to get things done, then I do. But if I'm able to work less because we're ticking along or it's not so busy, then I can as well." (Clara)

The findings further highlight the role of intentionality in maintaining balance. Some participants acknowledged the risk of being consumed by work, emphasizing that without deliberate effort, work demands could easily overshadow personal time. One participant noted:

"If you're not intentional about giving yourself time, you can end up working all times." (Anita)

This view reinforces the idea that WLB requires proactive decision-making and boundary-setting to prevent work from encroaching on personal life. Overall, the data suggest that executives and business owners in the UK navigate WLB through an ongoing process of adaptation, balancing professional responsibilities with personal well-being in a fluid and context-dependent manner.

The findings reveal that WLB among executives is a complex, individualised, and evolving experience influenced by structural, organisational, and personal factors. Three key perspectives emerged: balance achievers, balance sceptics, and those who view WLB as a dynamic process. Balance achievers credited flexible work arrangements, hybrid models, and structured schedules for enabling WLB, though challenges in mentally disconnecting from work persisted. Balance sceptics, on the other hand, perceived WLB as elusive or even unattainable due to occupational

demands, self-imposed work habits, and structural constraints. Some viewed WLB as an unrealistic goal, advocating instead for mindfulness and self-awareness in managing work-related pressures. A significant insight from the study is that WLB is not a fixed state but a fluid process requiring continuous negotiation. Participants highlighted adaptability as key, acknowledging that balance shifts over time depending on professional and personal demands. Intentionality in boundary-setting emerged as a crucial factor in sustaining well-being.

Overall, the findings suggest that achieving WLB requires a combination of organisational support, personal agency, and evolving workplace norms. Addressing structural barriers and fostering a culture that prioritises flexibility and well-being could enhance the work-life experiences of executives in demanding roles.

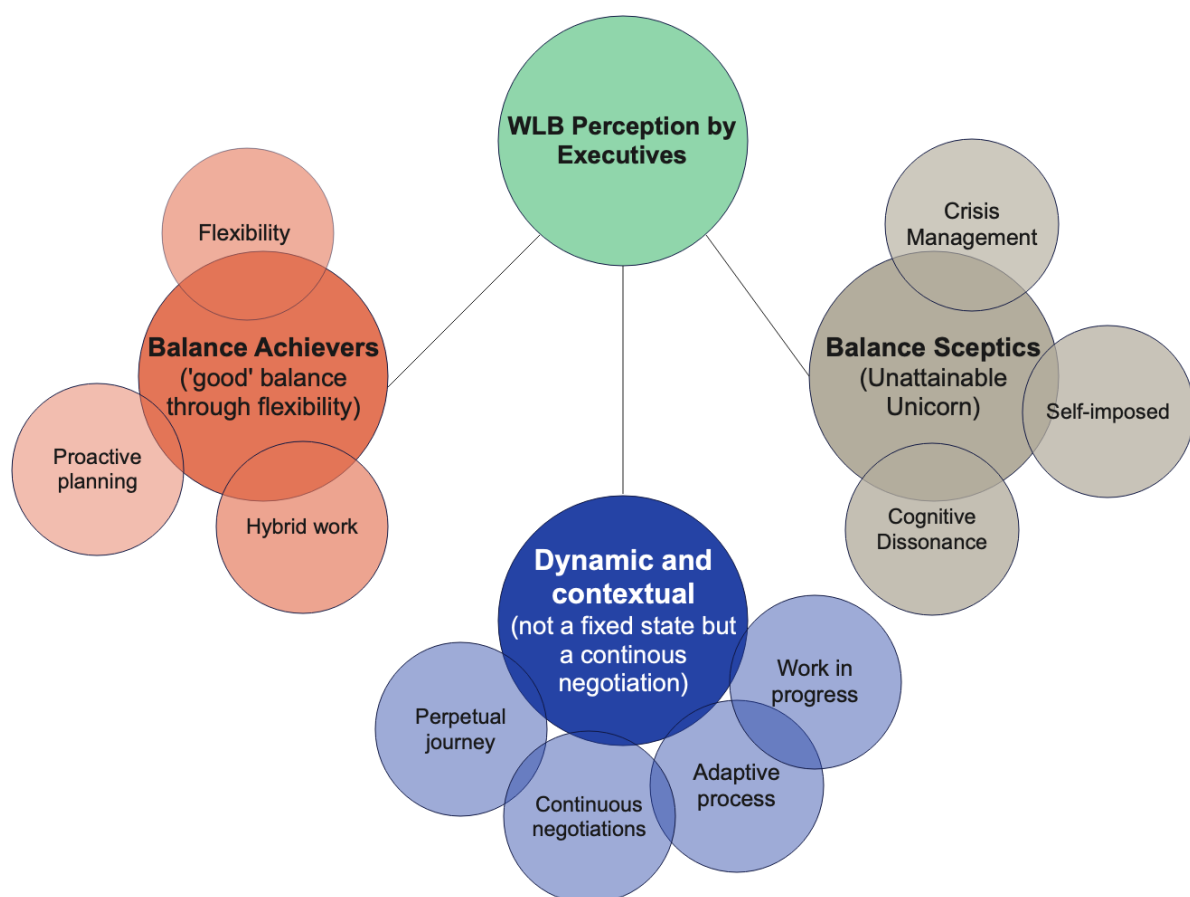


Figure 5.1: UK Executives' Perception of WLB

5.3 Work-Life Balance Challenges

This analysis delved into the WLB challenges experienced by executives across various sectors, revealing three interconnected themes that significantly impact employees' professional and personal experiences: blurred boundaries, extended work hours and work stress (See Figure 5.2).

5.3.1 Blurred Boundaries

Participants consistently reported a profound erosion of traditional work-life boundaries, particularly in remote and flexible work environments. The spatial and temporal distinctions between professional and personal spheres have become increasingly ambiguous. As Jasmine and Grace poignantly illustrated, technology has become an omnipresent companion, with work consistently intruding into personal spaces:

"My laptop follows me everywhere. In the past three years, I've only had one holiday a week on last August, when I didn't bring the laptop along." (Jasmine)

"I will always be checking the emails just in case there's anything important" (checking emails until 3 AM) (Grace)

"I can do exactly what I can do at work at home. So I don't need to be in the office... if we sat down in front of the telly, I've got my laptop, got my laptop. I'm normally doing something." (Clara)

Megan further articulated the psychological complexity of these blurred boundaries, describing the persistent anxiety and compulsive connectivity:

" Sometimes there's this difficulty to maintain boundaries. Not all the time, but we see that it's a problem which do affect people who do it from home, because you tend to be glued on a laptop way beyond your finishing time.....Despite having discussed about how I do manage, there are some instances where you can find yourself checking your devices... waiting from home can give you that level of anxiety because it's your home, it's your work environment as well." (Megan)

The findings reveal a significant erosion of traditional work-life boundaries, particularly in remote and flexible work environments. Participants described how work increasingly encroaches on personal time, facilitated by technology that blurs the distinction between professional and private life. Many reported feeling tethered to their devices, with laptops and smartphones becoming ever-present companions. The accounts of Jasmine and Grace illustrate this phenomenon, as they describe a continuous connection to work, even during holidays or late at night. This constant

connectivity fosters a sense of psychological strain, as seen in Megan's reflection on the difficulty of maintaining boundaries. The flexibility of working from home, while often seen as beneficial, also introduces challenges, such as compulsive checking of emails and an inability to mentally disengage from work. The home, once a space of relaxation, has become indistinguishable from the workplace, leading to heightened anxiety and an ever-present expectation of availability.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that while remote work offers convenience, it also creates conditions that encourage overwork and stress. Without clear spatial or temporal separations, executives struggled to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives.

5.3.2 Extended Work Hours

The research revealed a pervasive culture of extended working hours that transcends traditional employment contracts. Participants described highly variable and often excessive work schedules that routinely exceeded standard working hours. Some participants exemplified this variability:

"As much as this is what I think I might work quite a lot on the Saturday mornings and Sundays... but in the holidays, I will often take maybe more holiday than just the four weeks for year. Some days I would feel exhausted, so I might just put just two or three hours. Other days I might put in 10 hours. I might put in 11 depending on how I feel." (Clara)

"I'm supposed to the day officially ends at 5:00, but like last night I was working till about 7:30... sometimes I have to work a couple of extra hours"(Emma)

"Sometimes I can actually wake up at 2:00 in the morning purely because during the day I was not able to then complete a referral or complete a piece of work" (Sarah)

The extent of work hours expansion was particularly pronounced in management roles. One participant reported a directive from leadership that explicitly normalized excessive working hours, with a director stating that as a registered manager, one should expect *"the average working week to be between 60 and 70 hours"* (Naomi, CEO and Registered Manager). Moreover, participants like Tina highlighted how reduced workdays do not necessarily reduce workload but instead compress identical work responsibilities into fewer days, necessitating extended daily hours and strategic negotiations with management:

"I never really finish it 6:00 o'clock maybe because what I was doing nothing has really been taken away from me so it feels like I have to still do the same amount of work...I had to discuss that with my manager and see what was available... I used to work 9 to 5:00 o'clock with 30 minutes break so we increased it to 6 o'clock" (Tina)

Some participants also highlighted the cultural expectations surrounding long hours, particularly in high-performance environments. While formal policies may encourage work-life balance, the unspoken norms often suggested otherwise, with employees feeling pressure to remain at work longer than necessary:

"Executives—like I have had conversations with Adwa when she was at PwC—it's very clear about work-life balance, but then you get the side comments when you're going home, and people feel that they have to be there from 6:00 and be the last to leave. And the issues that brings in terms of mental health are quite concerning." (Ella)

Some participants described working at unconventional hours to manage workload, with Sarah noting the extreme measure of *"wake[ing] up at 2:00 in the morning purely because during the day I was not able to then complete a referral or complete a piece of work."* Another participant shared:

" At the at the moment and since I actually started my master's at Sheffield Hallam in 2022, I'll try to balance a little more in favour of work and less in favour of life, yes ... Last night, 9:30, we were still firing emails at each other... On holiday in Singapore, about lunchtime every day, I would take an hour, and during the hour, I [would work on] papers." (Jasmine)

These findings highlight a pervasive culture of extended working hours for executives. Participants reported significant variability in their work schedules, often working beyond standard hours to meet demands. While some executives exercised flexibility in their work hours, others experienced an implicit or explicit expectation to work excessively long days. Jasmine and Emma illustrated this variation, describing how their work hours fluctuated based on workload and personal circumstances, sometimes stretching late into the evening. In this sense, extended work hours appeared to be normalised for executives. Naomi shared a directive from leadership that framed a 60-to-70-hour workweek as standard for registered managers, underscoring the systemic nature of overwork in certain positions. Additionally, Tina revealed that reducing workdays did not alleviate workload but instead compressed the same responsibilities into fewer days, necessitating longer daily hours. This required strategic discussions with management to adjust schedules accordingly. Moreover, some participants resorted to working at unconventional hours to cope with their workload, as illustrated by Sarah's account of waking up at 2:00 AM to complete

tasks left unfinished during the day. These findings suggest a growing tension between workplace flexibility and excessive working hours, raising concerns about employee well-being and WLB.

Overall, these findings illustrate how extended work hours have become a normalised aspect of professional life, particularly for executives and senior professionals. While some individuals exercised flexibility in determining their schedules, others faced implicit or explicit expectations to work beyond standard hours. The normalisation of excessive workloads whether through cultural expectations, leadership directives, or compressed work schedules raises significant concerns about employee well-being, highlighting an ongoing tension between workplace flexibility and the risk of burnout.

5.3.3 Work-Related Stress

The consequences of blurred boundaries and extended work hours manifested significantly in heightened work-related stress. Physical and psychological toll were prominent narratives. Sophie described a work environment so intense that it resulted in physical manifestation of stress:

"I did not stop to the point that I think it even affected me having a problem in my lower back my waist... You will sit there from the whole day without even getting time to eat or even time for a break."

Participants like Hazel reflected on previous experiences of corporate environments characterised by "really bad" work-life balance, emphasising the cumulative impact of "a lot of responsibility, targets" and working "weekends, evenings."

"There's been jobs like the previous job that I was in. It was my first sort of big corporate role and the work life balance was really bad. It was really stressful, a lot of responsibility targets and I was working weekends, evenings. It was very stressful."
(Hazel)

Anita succinctly captured the human cost, noting that intense work leaves very little time for family: She shared that

"After a long day's work and you, you're tired, so it leaves very little time for family and things like that. [...] You can find yourself working all the time." (Anita)

The compounding effect of continuous high-stress work was evident in narratives of exhaustion, such as Israel's account of organisational strain during the lockdown period:

"During lockdown I felt we lost... we lost a team member just before lockdown happened... I was exhausted after that year of doing then one of the team were like they've got a job internally and then I was like I can't carry on like this" Israel

The findings reveal a profound impact of blurred boundaries and extended work hours on participants' well-being, with work-related stress emerging as a dominant concern. Both physical and psychological strain were recurring themes, with several participants describing exhaustion, health issues, and diminished personal time. Sophie's account highlights how an overwhelming workload led to physical manifestations of stress, including back pain and an inability to take breaks, illustrating the toll of prolonged sedentary work. Similarly, Hazel reflected on a previous corporate role where excessive responsibilities, targets, and long hours including weekends and evenings resulted in significant stress. These pressures were not only mentally taxing but also indicative of a work culture that prioritises performance over well-being. Beyond physical strain, participants reported emotional exhaustion and strained personal relationships. Anita captured this reality, noting that long work hours leave little time for family, contributing to a sense of perpetual busyness. This sentiment was echoed by Israel, who recounted how an intense workload, exacerbated by staff shortages during lockdown, led to severe burnout and an eventual decision to step away from their role.

Overall, these findings shed light on the complex, multifaceted challenges executives and managers face in maintaining WLB. The erosion of traditional work-life boundaries, particularly in remote and flexible work settings, has led to an always-on culture where employees struggle to disconnect from work. The omnipresence of technology has further reinforced this issue, fostering anxiety and making it difficult to maintain clear separations between professional and personal life. Extended work hours have become normalised, with participants reporting excessive workloads that often exceed standard contractual hours. Management expectations and compressed schedules have exacerbated this issue, forcing employees to work into the night or at unconventional hours. This culture of overwork not only reduces personal time but also increases stress levels. The cumulative effects of blurred boundaries and long hours

manifest in significant physical and psychological stress, leading to exhaustion, health issues, and strained personal relationships (See Figure 5.2).

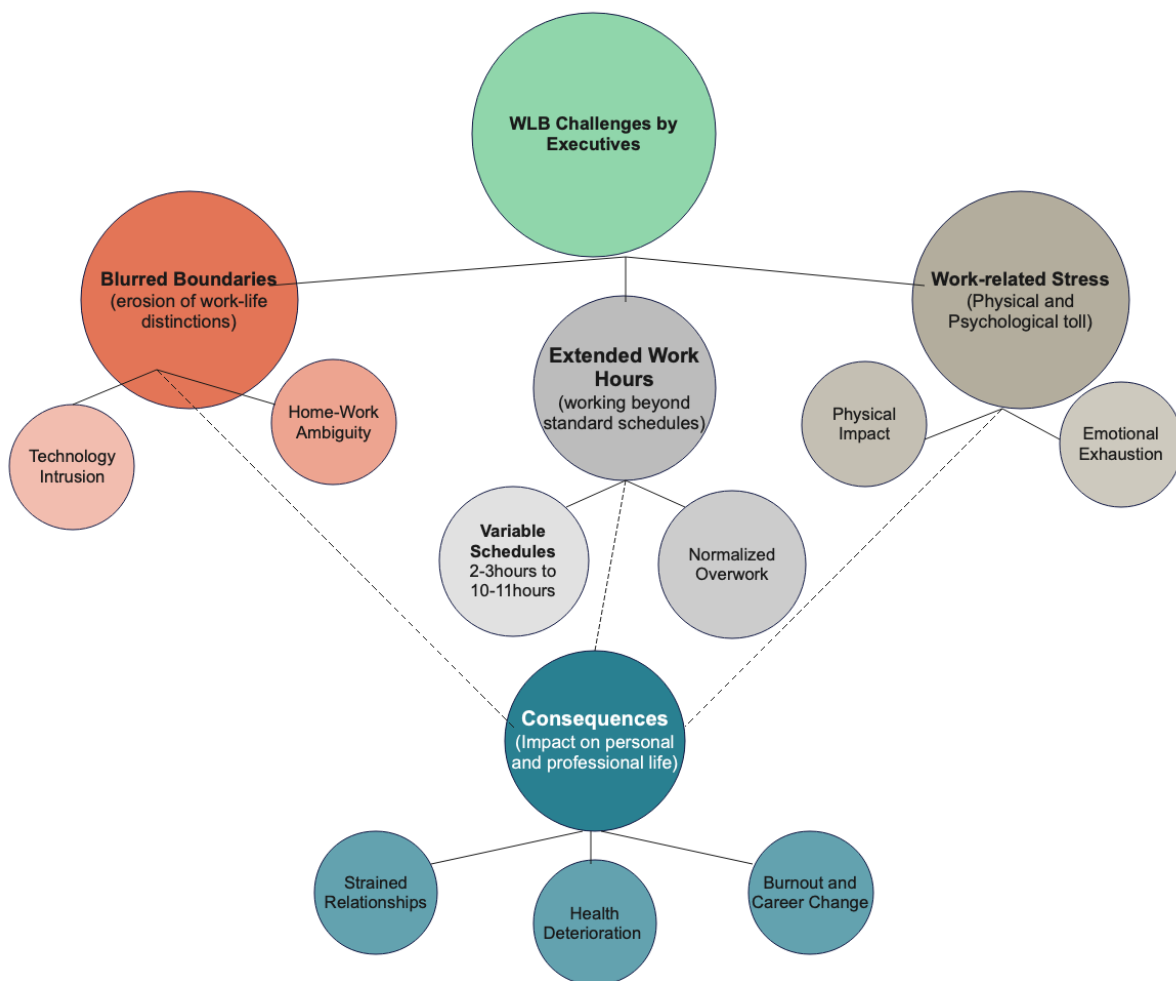


Figure 5.2: Thematic Map showing WLB challenges by Executives

5.3.4 Sector-Differences in Work-Life Balance Challenges

This thematic analysis further delved deeper into the data to explore differences in WLB experiences between leaders in the public and private sectors. The areas of difference that emerged included workload and time boundaries, organisational support structures,

5.3.4.1 Workload and Time Boundaries

Public Sector Pattern: Leaders in the public sector consistently reported experiencing high workloads alongside significant boundary erosion between work and personal life. Extended working hours and limited control over daily workflow were common themes. Tina described the cumulative effect of these pressures.

"Monday to Friday doing that cause from when I start work until I finish work I hardly get time for anything else" and "I never really finish it 6:00 o'clock"

Similarly, Sarah highlighted the unpredictability and disruption that characterised their work:

"There's nothing that is typical. Everything comes by the day" and "One phone call just put everything out of the window"

These findings suggest that while public sector work may formally prescribe set hours, in practice, many leaders experience significant overtime and blurred boundaries due to workload demands and crisis-driven workflows.

Private Sector: In contrast, while private sector leaders also reported high workloads, they generally exhibited greater autonomy in structuring their work schedules and protecting personal boundaries. Ruby emphasised the ability to maintain balance.

"I've got a very good work life balance. I have a lot of time to spend with my family"

Similarly, Olivia described a structured but flexible approach to work

"I work 3 days in the office and two days at home" and "I don't work weekends at all"

These patterns indicate that private sector leaders, particularly those in senior or ownership roles, may have more agency in managing workload intensity and establishing firmer boundaries between work and personal life.

Overall, the findings relate notable differences in how workload and time boundaries are experienced. Public sector leaders often operate within formally structured schedules but face intense and unpredictable demands that erode personal boundaries and extend working hours. In contrast, private sector leaders, particularly those in senior or ownership positions, enjoy greater autonomy over their schedules, enabling them to set clearer work-life boundaries despite similarly high workloads. These differences suggest that organisational autonomy and flexibility, rather than workload volume alone, are critical factors shaping leaders' ability to achieve and maintain WLB across sectors.

5.3.4.2 Organisational Support Structures

Public Sector Pattern: Public sector participants frequently highlighted systemic constraints that limited their ability to maintain work-life balance. Staffing shortages,

funding limitations, and rigid policy frameworks were common challenges. Anita described the environment as:

"We're underfunded, we're under-staffed... a lot of pressures on people"

Similarly, Sarah pointed to a culture of accountability pressures

"More of a blame culture" and "Offset just comes to see key performance indicators"

These systemic issues appear to not only intensify workloads but also restrict the ability of public sector organisations to implement meaningful support initiatives for employee wellbeing

Private Sector Pattern: In contrast, private sector participants reported more flexibility and resource investment in supporting work-life balance. Organisations were described as actively promoting employee wellbeing through targeted initiatives. Naomi shared:

"Well-being budgets and mental health days" which "contribute to employees feeling valued and reducing stress and sick leave"

Similarly, Lydia mentioned organisational practices focused on promoting wellness:

"Wellness initiatives... massage... go as a group to the theatre"

Such initiatives suggest that private sector organisations may have more structural capacity and cultural willingness to prioritise employee wellbeing as part of their operational strategies.

Overall, the findings highlight a stark contrast between public and private sector organisational support structures. While public sector leaders often operate within constrained environments with limited systemic support for WLB, private sector organisations, particularly those led by senior executives or founders, appear better resourced and more proactive in implementing wellbeing initiatives. These differences underscore the importance of organisational culture and resource availability in shaping employees' WLB experiences across sectors.

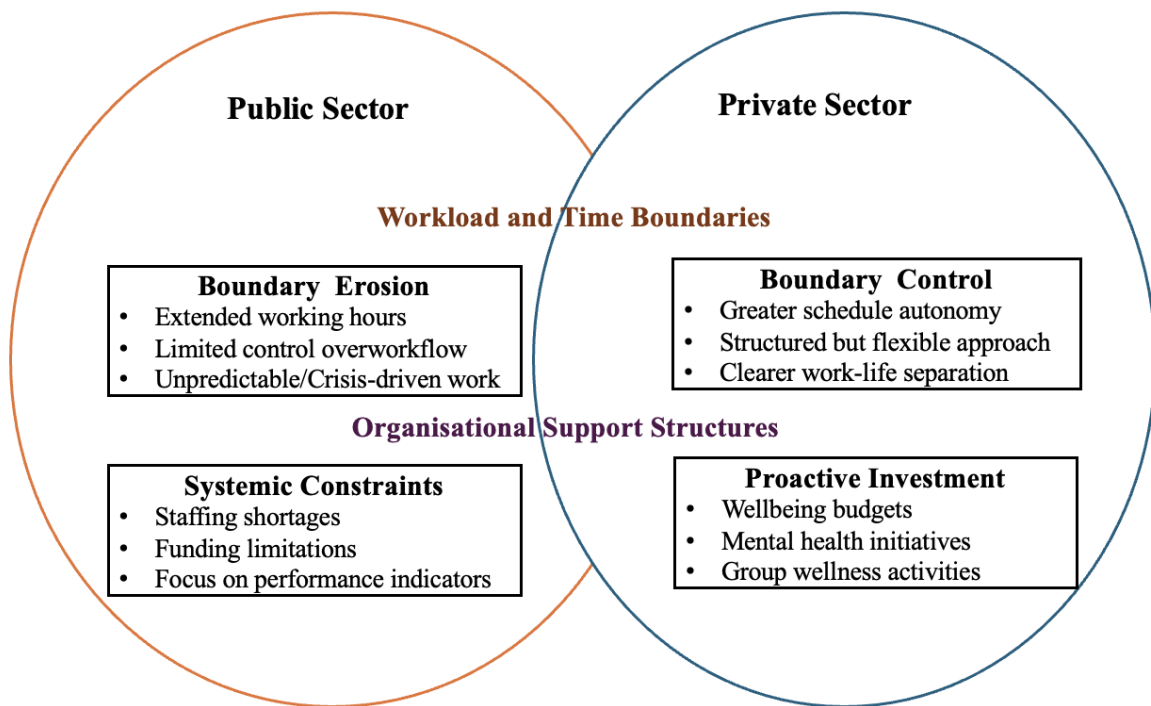


Figure 5.3: Sector-Differences in WLB Challenges

5.4 Coping Mechanisms

This analysis explored the key strategies employed by professionals to navigate the WLB. Four major strategies emerged from that analysis: professional boundaries and temporal autonomy, communication and accessibility management, psychological adaptation and structural support. Professional boundaries and temporal autonomy involved setting limits, delegating tasks, and managing time proactively. Communication and accessibility management involved separating work and life roles through strict email policies and controlled availability. Emotional regulation highlighted resilience in managing stress. Finally, structural support emphasised external support systems like childcare, support from spouse and colleagues (See Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Coping Mechanisms used to achieve WLB

Theme	Sub-theme	First Order Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Participants	Participants' Interpretation
Professional Boundaries and Temporal Autonomy	Boundary Setting	Setting limits, pushing back against excessive demands, assertive role definition, clear responsibility delegation	"I understand that I'm not a miracle worker. That's first and foremost. I push back wherever I can and try to educate everybody involved on the case to always share the responsibility." (Sarah) "Somebody else should be responsible for [certain tasks]. I'm very confident to delegate those tasks... I make sure that I am not doing other people's work. If there's something that needs to be done by somebody else, I make it clear that it's their responsibility." (Anita)	Anita, Sarah	Executives actively shape their work environment by setting clear expectations and avoiding role overload to maintain control over professional and personal boundaries.
	Time Management	Fixed work schedules, reduced workweek, strategic scheduling, proactive planning, contingency planning	"I work Monday to Thursday... If it's going to go over, I'll use the Friday rather than the weekend." (John) "Oh, I typically work four days a week now. I used to work five days a week, but I had to change my hours because... work-life balance—I was really struggling with all the hours and everything." (Tina) "I will have... a time journal. So that means blocking out time to do XY and Z and then having a contingency if that was to go over... It's just setting aside the time elements. But if it goes over, it goes over. It's not set in stone." (John) "My approach is like just to keep everything stress free and done very well ahead of time..If you plan far ahead... you can have a good time with working, and it will ease your stress off." (Olivia)	Tina, Anita, John, Olivia	Time management is viewed as a proactive strategy rather than a passive response, allowing executives to structure their working hours to safeguard personal time and reduce work-related stress.

Communication and Accessibility Management	Email Discipline	Scheduled emails, no out-of-hours email responses, setting communication expectations	"I try to be quite disciplined with emails and not do them out of hours. I really try because otherwise, you wouldn't know when to stop...I scheduled them so if I receive an e-mail dead on the 8:30, it's because it's been scheduled... I try and protect them and myself 'cause if I send emails at 10:00, they're gonna send them back and you end up setting up an expectation of working at night and I don't want to do that." (Naomi)	Naomi	Email discipline is seen as essential to prevent creating expectations of constant availability and to establish clear boundaries between work and personal time.
	Weekend Availability	No weekend work, emergency-only access, firm boundaries on off-hours	"I do not work over the weekend, and I am not setting the precedent to be reached over the weekend unless there's an absolute emergency. Even if the email were to come in on a Saturday or Sunday, I would not respond." (Emma) "I work five days a week. The way that I have done it is I try to make myself not available. If there's an emergency, they need me, then yes, but to be honest, it hasn't really happened—no one's called me at the weekend to help with anything." (Sally) "I don't work weekends at all. That's just something I've established because I don't want to give my weekends to work. The reality is that even if there is work, it can usually wait until Monday. We're doing marketing, not saving lives, so it can wait." (Olivia)	Sally, Olivia, Emma	Limiting weekend availability is viewed as a critical boundary-setting practice to ensure personal time is protected and to reinforce that most work matters can wait until regular business hours.
	Gatekeeping Mechanisms	Using personal assistants, structured accessibility, controlled	"My role is such that I am very, very accessible. But I also try as much as possible to create some sort of boundaries... whether it means getting somebody else to gatekeep... The PA	Lydia	Gatekeeping mechanisms are employed to balance professional accessibility with personal needs, allowing executives to

		professional engagement	will make sure that the PA does some gatekeeping." (Lydia)		remain available for important matters while filtering unnecessary interruptions.
Psychological Adaptation	Emotional Regulation	Maintaining composure, managing internal stress, professional demeanor	"At times they also come to me... I try to be very calm even though I'm struggling, and inside I'm going 'not again'... I just smile even though I'm feeling like oh inside." (Tina)	Tina	Emotional regulation is seen as a necessary skill to navigate workplace demands while preserving mental well-being, allowing executives to present a calm exterior despite internal struggles.
	Mental Resilience	Taking mental breaks, recharging, perspective maintenance	"That experience from there, I've taken it to understand my professional life in the sense that sometimes being able to step back... give yourself some time to recharge. Take a step back and smell the roses because at the end of the day, money is important. Yes. So having you know, financial stability is very important, but life is precious and fragile." (Sophie)	Sophie	Developing mental resilience and the ability to step back from work pressures is viewed as essential for maintaining perspective on what matters in life beyond professional success.
Structural Support	Childcare Support	Reliable childcare services, reduced parental stress	"I've got a good childcare support in place, so that's taken care of in a way. So I don't have to worry too much about that." (Peace)	Peace	Access to dependable childcare is recognized as a crucial element that alleviates concerns about balancing parental duties with professional obligations.
	Spousal Support	Shared responsibilities, partnership in managing demands	"What helps me is me and my husband—we share the childcare. Maybe if I was on my own, there's no way I would have been able to do this job and meet my childcare responsibilities. There are times when I finish work very late." (Anita)	Anita	Spousal support and shared responsibilities are acknowledged as essential factors in maintaining equilibrium between work and home life, particularly for executives with significant time demands.

5.4.1 Professional Boundaries and Temporal Autonomy

The findings highlighted professional boundaries and temporal autonomy as crucial coping strategies that enable executives to negotiate work expectations while striving for WLB (See Table 5.2). Participants described employing structured boundary-setting, delegation, and strategic time management to manage workload effectively. A key aspect of boundary management involved assertive role definition and responsibility redistribution. Participants emphasised the importance of pushing back against excessive demands and ensuring that responsibilities were appropriately shared. Sarah articulated this principle, stating:

"I understand that I'm not a miracle worker. That's first and foremost. I push back wherever I can and try to educate everybody involved on the case to always share the responsibility." (Sarah)

"Now I have realised that you can't do everything and then you just need to be satisfied that you've done the very best and then leave it. [...] I think now I've got better at managing my own caseload at managing my own diary, which gives me more free time if it makes sense." (Anita)

Anita further reinforced this by emphasising confidence in delegation:

"Somebody else should be responsible for [certain tasks]. I'm very confident to delegate those tasks... I make sure that I am not doing other people's work. If there's something that needs to be done by somebody else, I make it clear that it's their responsibility." (Anita)

These narratives illustrate an intentional effort to maintain professional boundaries by setting clear expectations and avoiding role overload. Another dimension of boundary management was temporal autonomy, where participants structured their working hours to safeguard personal time. Several participants reported adopting fixed work schedules that excluded weekends or reducing their workweek to maintain WLB. John shared:

"I work Monday to Thursday... If it's going to go over, I'll use the Friday rather than the weekend." (John)

Similarly, Tina described modifying her schedule to address WLB concerns:

"Oh, I typically work four days a week now. I used to work five days a week, but I had to change my hours because... work-life balance—I was really struggling with all the hours and everything." (Tina)

Participants also employed strategic time management techniques, demonstrating a sophisticated approach to balancing work demands. This included proactive scheduling, contingency planning, and maintaining flexibility. John illustrated this by describing the use of a time journal to plan and adjust tasks as needed:

"I will have... a time journal. So that means blocking out time to do XY and Z and then having a contingency if that was to go over... It's just setting aside the time elements. But if it goes over, it goes over. It's not set in stone." (John)

Additionally, long-term planning emerged as a key strategy for reducing work-related stress. Olivia and Anita highlighted the benefits of planning ahead to ensure work remains manageable:

"My approach is like just to keep everything stress free and done very well ahead of time..If you plan far ahead... you can have a good time with working, and it will ease your stress off." (Olivia)

"It's always within timescale, so always planning ahead, making sure that nothing is outstanding or overdue." (Anita)

These findings suggest that boundary management and temporal autonomy are not passive responses to workplace pressures but intentional, proactive strategies. Participants actively shaped their work environments to maintain control over their professional and personal lives, reinforcing the notion that WLB is a negotiated and dynamic process.

5.4.2 Communication and Accessibility Management

The findings highlight communication and accessibility management as key strategies through which executives regulate professional interactions to safeguard their WLB. Participants demonstrated a deliberate approach to controlling access to their time, particularly outside traditional working hours, by setting firm boundaries around email responsiveness and availability. A common theme was discipline in managing work-related communication, especially outside of working hours. Naomi articulated this principle clearly:

"I try to be quite disciplined with emails and not do them out of hours. I really try because otherwise, you wouldn't know when to stop...I scheduled them so if I receive an e-mail dead on the 8:30, it's because it's been scheduled... I try and protect them and myself 'cause if I send emails at 10:00, they're gonna send them back and you end up setting up an expectation of working at night and I don't want to do that." (Naomi)

This stance was reinforced by participants who strictly limited their availability on weekends, ensuring that professional responsibilities did not encroach on personal time. Emma emphasised a firm approach:

"I do not work over the weekend, and I am not setting the precedent to be reached over the weekend unless there's an absolute emergency. Even if the email were to come in on a Saturday or Sunday, I would not respond." (Emma)

Other participants echoed this approach, emphasizing that weekend work was neither expected nor encouraged. Sally noted:

"I work five days a week. The way that I have done it is I try to make myself not available. If there's an emergency, they need me, then yes, but to be honest, it hasn't really happened—no one's called me at the weekend to help with anything." (Sally)

Similarly, Olivia emphasised the importance of maintaining personal time:

"I don't work weekends at all. That's just something I've established because I don't want to give my weekends to work. The reality is that even if there is work, it can usually wait until Monday. We're doing marketing, not saving lives, so it can wait." (Olivia)

Beyond setting boundaries, some participants also employed gatekeeping mechanisms to manage accessibility while ensuring professional responsibilities were met. Lydia explained a structured approach to balancing availability with controlled access:

"My role is such that I am very, very accessible. But I also try as much as possible to create some sort of boundaries... whether it means getting somebody else to gatekeep... The PA will make sure that the PA does some gatekeeping." (Lydia)

These insights suggest that communication and accessibility management are essential strategies for executives seeking to maintain WLB. The findings highlight how executives set clear expectations, limiting availability outside working hours, and leveraging gatekeeping mechanisms, to actively control the extent of their professional engagement, ensuring that work demands did not overshadow their personal lives.

5.4.3 Psychological Adaptation

Some participants showed that psychological adaptation is a crucial but often overlooked dimension of WLB. Participants described the need to regulate their emotions and maintain professional composure, even when experiencing internal stress or frustration. This ability to manage emotions effectively allowed them to navigate workplace demands while preserving their mental well-being.

For instance, Tina illustrated the challenge of maintaining a calm exterior despite internal struggles:

"At times they also come to me... I try to be very calm even though I'm struggling, and inside I'm going 'not again'... I just smile even though I'm feeling like oh inside." (Tina)

Similarly, Sophie reflected on how these experiences shaped their professional approach:

"That experience from there, I've taken it to understand my professional life in the sense that sometimes being able to step back... give yourself some time to recharge. Take a step back and smell the roses because at the end of the day, money is important. Yes. So having you know, financial stability is very important, but life is precious and fragile " (Sophie)

These accounts suggest that WLB is not solely about external arrangements, such as flexible working hours, but also involves developing emotional resilience and psychological coping mechanisms. The ability to manage stress, regulate emotions, and create mental space for recovery emerged as key strategies that professionals used to maintain equilibrium between work and personal life.

5.4.4 Structural Support

The analysis revealed that structural support systems played a crucial role in facilitating WLB. Participants emphasised the importance of reliable childcare and supportive partners in managing both professional and personal responsibilities. These support mechanisms helped reduce stress and allowed some executives to remain productive at work while fulfilling personal commitments. One key aspect of structural support was access to dependable childcare, which alleviated concerns about balancing parental duties with professional obligations. Peace illustrated this by stating:

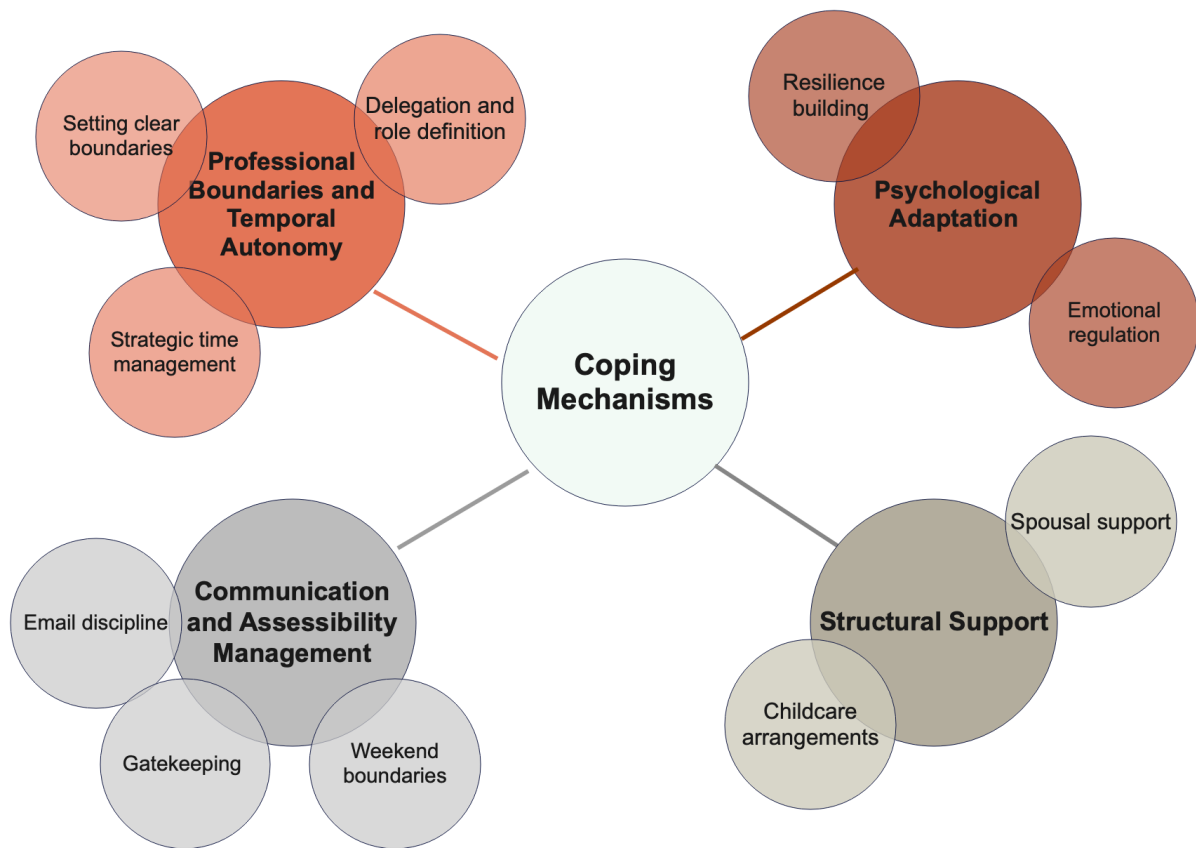
"I've got a good childcare support in place, so that's taken care of in a way. So I don't have to worry too much about that." (Peace)

For others, spousal support and shared responsibilities were essential in maintaining equilibrium between work and home life. Anita highlighted the significance of partnership in managing work demands:

"What helps me is me and my husband—we share the childcare. Maybe if I was on my own, there's no way I would have been able to do this job and meet my childcare responsibilities. There are times when I finish work very late." (Anita)

These accounts demonstrate the interdependent nature of WLB, where external support structures, which in this case were in the form of childcare services and spousal cooperation, served as essential enablers of professional success. Without these support systems, individuals may face increased stress, making it more challenging to achieve a sustainable WLB. This theme highlights the necessity for organisations and policymakers to consider structural reinforcements that facilitate WLB, such as workplace childcare provisions and family-friendly policies.

Overall, the findings here reveal that WLB among executives is actively negotiated through a combination of structural support, boundary management, and strategic communication (See Figure 5.3). Participants employed professional boundaries and temporal autonomy to regulate workload, assert role definitions, and maintain flexibility in their schedules. Many executives deliberately pushed back against excessive demands, delegated tasks, and proactively planned their work to reduce stress. Communication and accessibility management also emerged as a crucial coping mechanism, with participants enforcing strict email policies, limiting weekend availability, and using gatekeeping mechanisms to regulate professional interactions. These strategies highlight a conscious effort to separate work from personal life and prevent burnout. Additionally, structural support systems, including childcare and spousal support played a significant role in enabling WLB. Participants emphasised the importance of having a reliable support network, reinforcing the idea that WLB is not solely an individual effort but also reliant on external systems.



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5.4.5 Sector-Differences in Coping Mechanism

The analysis observed notable differences in coping mechanisms adopted by leaders in the public and private sector especially in the areas of decision-making autonomy and boundary management strategies.

5.4.5.1 Decision-Making Autonomy

Public Sector: Public sector leaders reported more constrained decision-making autonomy, with their daily schedules heavily influenced by external demands such as policy requirements, emergency responses, and bureaucratic processes. Flexibility appeared limited and often aspirational rather than embedded in practice. Sophie noted:

"Being able to step back... give yourself some time to recharge" presented as an aspiration rather than regular practice.

However, this was presented more as an aspiration than a consistent reality. Similarly, Sarah described the necessity of working outside of contracted hours to manage workload:

"You then have to work outside of hours to catch up"

These accounts suggest that public sector environments limit leaders' ability to exercise control over their time, often resulting in reactive rather than proactive work patterns.

Private Sector: In contrast, private sector leaders described significantly greater autonomy in structuring their schedules and managing workloads. Flexibility was often built into the organisational culture, especially among founders and senior executives. For example, Lydia shared:

"Yesterday I... worked very long hours. But then today I am not going to start 9:00, I probably will start midday"

Similarly, Clara explained how organisational flexibility was intentionally designed

"It was born out of this is what my staff is going to need".

This comment reflects a proactive approach to supporting flexible work arrangements for themselves and their teams.

The findings indicate that decision-making autonomy is a critical differentiator between public and private sector leaders' WLB experiences. Public sector leaders often operate within rigid, externally-imposed frameworks that restrict their control over work patterns, while private sector leaders, particularly those at the ownership or executive level, enjoy greater autonomy to tailor their schedules around personal and organisational needs. This autonomy appears to play a key role in enhancing perceptions of WLB among private sector participants

5.4.5.2 Boundary Management Strategies

Public Sector: Public sector leaders often described reactive boundary management approaches, driven by external pressures and institutional demands. Rather than setting firm boundaries, participants adjusted their personal time around overwhelming work obligations. Jasmine shared that.

"At the moment and since I actually started my master's at Sheffield Hallam in 2022, I'll try to balance a little more in favour of work and less in favour of life."

Similarly, Emma reflected on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

"During lockdown I felt we lost... I was exhausted after that year"

These examples illustrate that many public sector professionals found it challenging to maintain consistent work-life boundaries, often sacrificing personal wellbeing in response to professional demand.

Private Sector: In contrast, private sector leaders reported more proactive strategies for managing work-life boundaries. These included clearly defined non-work hours and intentional time management practices. Israel stated:

"I do not work over the weekend, and I am not setting the precedent to be reached over the weekend unless there's an absolute emergency"

Ella also described structured planning

"I do a time journal... blocking out time to do XY and Z"

These practices suggest that private sector leaders are more empowered to enforce boundaries that protect personal time and reduce the risk of burnout.

The contrast between sectors reveal that boundary management is closely linked to the degree of autonomy and support embedded in the work environment. Public sector leaders tend to adopt reactive boundary strategies due to rigid structures and external demands, whereas private sector leaders are more likely to employ intentional, proactive approaches. This difference further reinforces the theme that structural flexibility and leadership autonomy are key facilitators of effective WLB.

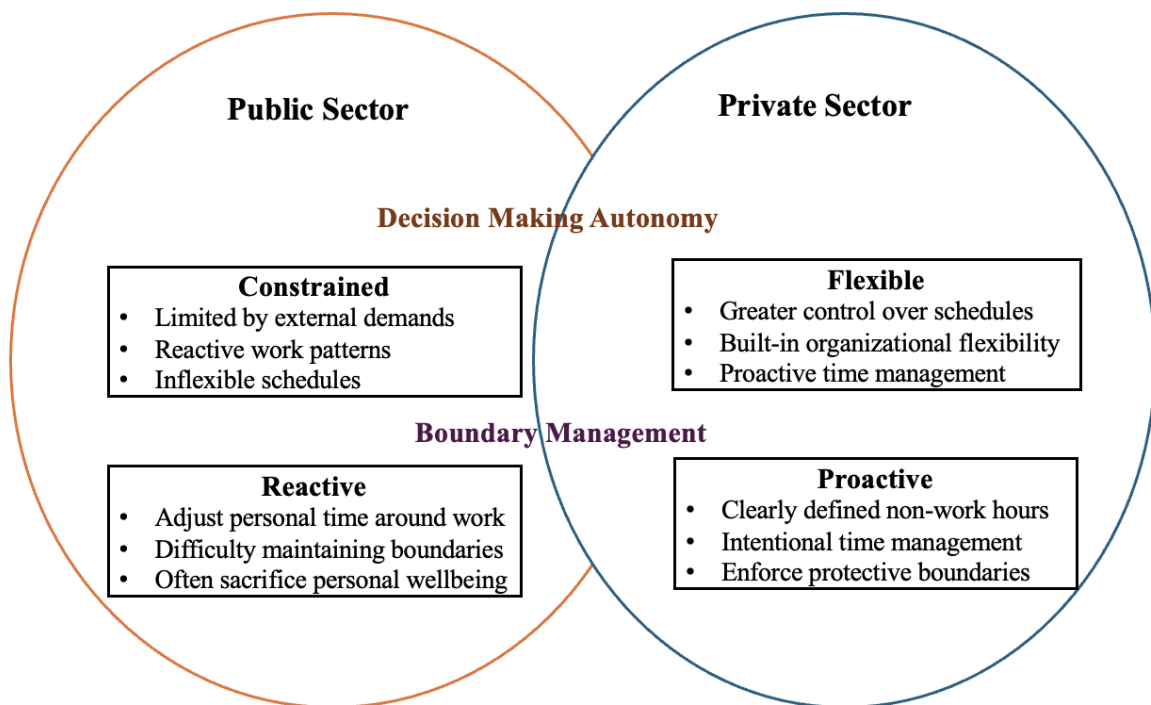


Figure 5.4: Sector Differences in Coping Mechanisms

5.5 Factors shaping WLB experience

The analysis delved deeper into the factor shaping the WLB experience of executives in the UK health and social care sector: role, technology, these factors act as support and constraint (See Figure 5.4)

5.5.1 Flexibility: Hybrid Model and WLB

5.5.1.1 Hybrid Work as a Key Enabler of Work-Life Balance

Participants highlighted the hybrid work model as a significant factor in achieving WLB. The ability to alternate between working from home and the office provided them with autonomy, efficiency, and greater control over their time. Many participants noted that remote work enhanced their productivity by reducing workplace distractions, while occasional office presence maintained social and professional interactions. Ella described this balance, stating:

"It's reasonably good at the moment because I have got that flexibility to be able to work in the office and work at home.... Much more productive at home than I am in the office...cause I can just get my head down and work rather than doing all the conversations." (Ella)

This sentiment was echoed by several participants who appreciated the ability to customize their work environments to suit their needs. Some found that remote work allowed them to focus on complex tasks without interruptions, while the office environment provided opportunities for collaboration and team engagement. Peace explained:

"I'm in the office two days a week and I work from home three days a week, so kind of alternate it. It kind of changes." (Peace)

The hybrid model also facilitated better time management, allowing individuals to integrate personal responsibilities such as childcare, household tasks, and self-care into their daily routines. This flexibility contributed to a healthier WLB, reducing stress and burnout while increasing overall job satisfaction.

5.5.1.2 Results-Oriented Work Over Time-Based Monitoring

A common sentiment among participants was that flexibility was not just about location but also about performance-based expectations. Many executives emphasised that as long as tasks were completed efficiently, strict adherence to rigid schedules was unnecessary. This shift from a time-based to a results-oriented work culture allowed employees to work at their own pace, optimizing their performance without being micromanaged. Naomi highlighted this perspective:

"If you have done all of your work, your admin, your files are in great shape... you could be on the beach Friday afternoon. I don't care." (Naomi)

This results-driven approach empowered individuals to manage their time effectively, accommodating personal responsibilities without compromising professional output. Many participants noted that being evaluated based on outcomes rather than hours spent at a desk fostered a sense of accountability and motivation. Employees felt more engaged and responsible for delivering high-quality work, knowing that they had the freedom to structure their schedules around their most productive hours.

5.5.1.3 Logistical and Personal Considerations in Hybrid Work

While hybrid work was largely viewed as beneficial, some participants noted logistical challenges that affected their ability to fully optimize this model. Factors such as commuting distances, childcare responsibilities, and fluctuating workplace expectations played a significant role in shaping individual experiences of hybrid work.

For some, the flexibility to work remotely was counterbalanced by the practical difficulties of traveling to the office. Hazel provided a detailed account of the strain commuting placed on their routine:

"I work from home... meant to go in about twice a week. And then it kind of went down to one day a week and now it's quite ad hoc... it's all the way in Wimbledon and it's a lot of effort for me to get there because I have to take my child to breakfast Club... Then I have to run for the train... By the time I get to the office, I'm already exhausted."
(Hazel)

Another participant shared that:

"Travelling can take up about... sometimes I'll be waiting for the train for an hour and I won't get home till say 8:00" (Olivia)

This sentiment reflects a broader challenge faced by employees navigating hybrid work arrangements. While remote work reduces time spent commuting, required in-office days can introduce stress, particularly when combined with caregiving responsibilities or long travel times. The hybrid model was also seen as a crucial mechanism for adapting to external factors, such as weather or transport disruptions.

One participant noted:

"So, but it does give you the ability to do things and to work differently and to be able to switch it up when you need to, because as you said, sometimes it might be look. There's things in there like the trains have been, you know, like if it was snowing outside, you know, you'd be able to still work from home without going to the office. You wouldn't be forced to try and travel in and stuff like that. So you know, the fact that you've got that it gives you a flexibility that you don't have..."

Participants also shared how flexibility was leveraged in response to specific needs or circumstances. Several participants discussed how their employers provided flexible working arrangements in cases of health concerns, family obligations, or personal challenges. Organisations that supported flexible working arrangements were perceived as more empathetic and employee-centric, fostering a positive workplace culture. For instance, Israel noted:

"Well yeah, I think they would consider all sorts of flexible working. I mean they're quite good in terms of flexibility for short-term things... like if someone had a doctor's note that says it's best if they work from home for whatever period of time." (Israel)

This responsiveness to personal circumstances enabled employees to balance work with their well-being. Additionally, seasonal variations influenced work arrangements. Some industries, such as healthcare and retail, experienced fluctuating demands

throughout the year, necessitating adaptable work schedules. Olivia described how their schedule adjusted depending on the time of year:

"I work 3 days in the office and two days at home, but it changes depending on how busy the week is... after Christmas and New Year, hospitals are not that busy. So that's when we have quiet weeks and I might do four days from home, one day in the office. But if it's a big season, like Christmas, New Year's, or Saint Patrick's Day, I might do five days from the office." (Olivia)

This illustrates that while hybrid work provides flexibility, its implementation is often influenced by industry demands, requiring employees to remain adaptable. Similarly, Megan highlighted the structured yet flexible nature of their hybrid arrangement:

"So it's kind of a hybrid model where we go into the office once a week. Within a month, the month is 4 weeks, so we just go into the office once a week, but the other days of the week, we will be working from home." (Megan)

This structured hybrid approach provided predictability while still offering the benefits of remote work. However, some participants noted that organisational expectations around office attendance could shift over time, impacting their routines. The hybrid work model emerged as a crucial enabler of WLB, allowing individuals to integrate professional and personal responsibilities effectively. Participants emphasised the importance of results-driven work cultures, adaptability to changing needs, and the influence of logistical factors. While hybrid work offers substantial benefits, its implementation must consider individual circumstances to optimize WLB outcomes. Employers that remain flexible and responsive to employees' needs will likely experience higher job satisfaction, improved productivity, and a more engaged workforce.

5.5.2 Role (Leadership) and WLB

Participants highlighted the profound impact of leadership roles on their WLB experiences. Many described the constant demands of leadership, which required high levels of accessibility and availability, making it challenging to maintain boundaries between work and personal life. The need to be consistently engaged with work responsibilities often led to blurred lines between professional and personal time. However, some leaders attempted to manage these demands through strategic delegation, as illustrated by one participant:

"My role is such that I am very, very accessible. But I also try as much as possible to create some sort of boundaries... whether it means that I'll get somebody else to gatekeep... the PA will make sure that the PA does some gatekeeping." (Lydia)

"It depends, so I work till about 5:45 I'd say, but where it's needed if I need to stay, I stay. So that's the, that's the. That's the crux of being an executive. You have to work until you get the job done. However, I can leave early when it's a slower period of time." (John)

For others, the unpredictability of leadership responsibilities, particularly in crisis management, made achieving WLB even more difficult. One participant noted:

"In my role, I think it's difficult to do it. It can be difficult to have a work-life balance because you're also managing crisis on a daily basis. So you don't know what's going to happen or what comes through. And you have to prioritise things. And sometimes they end up working even after hours or even before hours. So if you're not intentional about giving yourself time, you can end up working all times." (Anita)

Entrepreneurs and business owners, on the other hand, highlighted that leadership could offer flexibility not typically available in traditional employment. However, this flexibility was contingent on the business's operational demands, making WLB inconsistent. As one entrepreneur explained:

"When you have your own business and it's only small, you have to do what's needed... if it needs me to work more in order to get things done, then I do. But if I'm able to work less because we're ticking along or it's not so busy, then I can as well." (Clara)

Conversely, participants in senior management roles reported more rigid expectations, often embedded in an organisational culture that prioritised work over personal life. In some instances, organisations explicitly discouraged WLB, as exemplified by a participant who recounted their director's expectations:

"The director actually said you are a registered manager. You are not expected to have much of a work-life balance, and she expected the average working week to be between 60 and 70 hours." (Naomi)

Some participants, however, found that stepping down from leadership roles significantly improved their WLB, allowing them to regain control over their personal lives. One individual reflected on their experience post-leadership:

"I'm able to have a few holidays here and there. Meanwhile, when I was in management, you could hardly pry me from the laptop." (Sophie)

These findings suggest that leadership roles, while providing varying degrees of control over work schedules, often come with heightened expectations and pressures

that can disrupt WLB. The extent to which leaders can maintain balance depends on their ability to set boundaries, delegate tasks, and, in some cases, step away from high-intensity roles. Ultimately, the organisational culture and role-specific expectations play a critical role in shaping the WLB experiences of leaders.

5.5.3 Industry-Specific Factors and Work-Life Balance

The findings indicate that WLB is heavily shaped by industry-specific demands, with industries such as healthcare, social work, and law requiring high levels of commitment and long working hours. Participants working in these fields described the inflexibility of their roles, which often made it difficult to accommodate personal responsibilities. For instance, a participant in healthcare emphasised the rigid nature of their job, contrasting it with sectors that offer remote work options during personal emergencies:

"Unlike other places where people could say, 'Okay, your daughter is not feeling well, you don't come to work, you can work from home,' we need people on the analysers, so we can't really do that." (Tina)

Similarly, legal professionals described how their work was structured around case deadlines, requiring intense bursts of activity to close deals. While these demands were temporary, participants acknowledged that they were often financially compensated for their extra efforts:

"Sometimes you have to get the job done. In law, when we're working on a particular case, sometimes they call that a deal... as a team, you all come together and work long hours to get that deal closed. But the other side of that is once the deal is closed, you'll probably be compensated for the extra hours that you put in." (Sally)

Beyond long hours, social workers faced additional pressures linked to heightened external scrutiny, particularly with the rise of social media. Some participants felt that a culture of blame had intensified, leading to increased stress and professional frustration:

"Recently, with social media and the impact it has, there is more of a blame culture... Even something that you don't have remit for, it's always 'Oh, the social worker didn't do this.' I don't even see the child every day like the school does." (Sarah)

The psychological toll of such demanding environments was evident, with reports of stress-related illnesses and high levels of absenteeism, particularly within social work:

"The amount of sickness stress in social work at the moment is the highest I've ever known it." (Ella)

Some social workers attributed their inability to maintain WLB to structural inefficiencies, particularly the lack of clarity regarding role responsibilities. One participant described how the failure of other professionals to manage minor issues resulted in an overwhelming caseload:

"I think there should be some balance in being rational. We are there to protect and serve, but the Children Act says that everybody has a duty of care. It's not necessarily the social worker's role to do everything. If you are working with professionals who are risk-averse and anxious, they push everything to you. You end up actually not having any work-life balance because you're holding a caseload of 25 to 30 cases, with multiple schools and professionals involved." (Sarah)

Participants in other sectors also described peak work periods that significantly impacted WLB. For example, those involved in membership and finance-driven industries noted that annual renewal campaigns created intense workloads, requiring additional time and effort:

"January in particular tends to be an extremely busy month for us. The last month has been extremely busy because of the renewals but also because of the reorganisation, objective settings, and new finance system issues, which means more manual input from us." (Sally)

For executives, managing teams introduced additional responsibilities that further complicated their ability to maintain WLB. Leaders described the challenges of overseeing large teams, requiring them to be constantly available and accountable for their employees' work:

"In the past, I was a director and a manager, but I was still an individual contributor. My work expectations were different. Now I'm a director of a programme that has staff, and managing staff has added a completely new layer... I'm now responsible for the work of 40-plus other people." (Emma)

Overall, these findings highlight the structural and cultural constraints that shape WLB across different professions. While some industries offer financial compensation for extended work hours, others, particularly social work, involve high stress with limited personal and professional support. These sector-specific challenges highlight the need for more flexible work policies, improved mental health support, and structural reforms to foster a more balanced and sustainable work environment.

5.5.4 Technology paradox and WLB

Technology emerged as both an enabler and a disruptor of WLB. While advancements in workplace technology facilitated flexibility, efficiency, and remote working, they also introduced challenges such as overconnectivity, isolation, and diminished human interaction.

5.5.4.1 Enhancing Flexibility and Productivity

Technology was widely recognised as a catalyst for efficiency, with organisations making substantial investments in digital tools to facilitate seamless workflows. These innovations provided employees with greater autonomy, enabling them to work from various locations while maintaining high levels of productivity. Many participants highlighted how digital advancements, such as customised software and remote access systems, allowed them to complete tasks with ease, regardless of their physical location:

"My firm has invested quite a lot of money in having tailor-made software... They've also invested a lot of money in giving us all brand new laptops with headpieces... it just means you can pick up your laptop, go to an area of the firm, maybe one of the meeting rooms or one of the quiet spaces, and work remotely or you can work remotely from home." (Sally)

"Probably 70% of my work is done using technology... everything else is being done through the use of technology" (Jasmine)

A key advantage of this technological shift was the reduction of time spent commuting, allowing employees to structure their workday more effectively. Many found this flexibility empowering, as it enabled them to optimize their schedules according to workload demands:

"Technology. It helps you to manage and organise your work as well .. Then organising your work. Is also an advantage of technology. Then another aspect we can consider is the. Ability to perform your duties from any location or yeah, without being required to be in a certain physical location. Then it also saves time. Imagine the time that would be wasting travelling every day, but you just wake up, sit on your laptop, you're already doing work. So in terms of productivity..." (Megan)

Additionally, automation played a crucial role in streamlining tasks, reducing the need for manual processes and enhancing operational efficiency. Participants noted that digital systems eliminated repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on more strategic and value-driven activities:

"Technology is important because... things that you'd have to do manually can now be done automatically through the system." (Ruby)

These insights express how technological integration has transformed modern work environments, offering employees both greater control and efficiency. However, while these advancements provided undeniable benefits, they also introduced new challenges, particularly in maintaining work-life boundaries.

5.5.4.2 *Blurring Boundaries Between Work and Personal Life*

While technology provided flexibility and efficiency, it also contributed to a blurring of work and personal life, making it difficult for employees to fully disengage from their professional responsibilities. Many participants described the challenge of constant accessibility, where the ability to work remotely often translated into an expectation to be always available. For some, the ease of digital access meant that work tasks extended beyond traditional office hours, diminishing personal downtime:

"A negative to it, I would say... because it is easy access. Anything that's online? Yeah, the access. It's just there. And for me, because I do like to work, I'm always going to take advantage of that." (Grace)

Others expressed frustration over the implicit pressure to respond promptly, even outside regular working hours, contributing to increased stress:

"The benefits are... I can do it anywhere... That can also be a disadvantage because, of course, you are contactable all the time, and people don't understand that you are not going to get back to them like yesterday." (Clara)

Furthermore, the home environment became an extension of the workplace, making it difficult to create clear distinctions between professional and personal life. Some participants noted that the ability to work from anywhere resulted in work spilling into leisure time:

"I can do exactly what I can do at work at home. So I don't need to be in the office... If we sat down in front of the telly, I've got my laptop, got my laptop. I'm normally doing something." (Clara)

These findings highlight the paradox of technology indicating that technology while it enhances flexibility, it also disrupts WLB by fostering an 'always-on' culture.

5.5.4.3 Loss of Human Interaction and Emotional Connection

A recurring concern among participants was the impact of technology on social interactions and emotional intelligence in the workplace. While digital communication tools such as Teams and Zoom enabled remote collaboration, they lacked the depth and engagement of in-person interactions. Many participants noted that while virtual meetings were convenient, they often felt impersonal and disconnected, making it harder to build strong workplace relationships:

"It's good having the ability to have things like Teams... but it doesn't replace that face-to-face human interaction." (Israel)

"Before COVID, I could count on my fingers how many Zoom meetings I'd had. Now I've had a lot... but meetings can feel a little bit stale, disconnected." (Ruby)

Beyond immediate workplace interactions, some participants raised concerns about the long-term implications of digital communication on emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, particularly for future generations:

"I worry about how communication and emotional intelligence will work in future generations." (Ruby)

For employees working remotely for extended periods, the lack of daily social interaction contributed to feelings of isolation and loneliness:

"It can sometimes be quite lonely because you're working from home... only connected through Teams." (Olivia)

"...There's lost that personal touch... The meetings can feel a little bit stale. They can feel a little bit disconnected. It's not face to face. So you know, that human interaction elements kind of being a little bit and really good as well 'cause that can affect actually mental health and having a negative effect on mental health." (Ruby)

These findings highlight the trade-offs of technology-driven work environments. While remote work and digital tools provide flexibility, they also reduce opportunities for spontaneous interactions, mentorship, and social bonding, which are essential for workplace cohesion and emotional well-being.

Overall, the findings illustrate the technology paradox: while digital advancements enhance flexibility, efficiency, and remote work, they also pose challenges that affect WLB, emotional well-being, and workplace interactions. Employees benefit from increased autonomy, reduced commuting time, and improved productivity through

automation. However, these advantages are counterbalanced by overconnectivity, which blurs the boundaries between work and personal life, leading to stress and an 'always-on' culture. Additionally, while virtual communication tools facilitate collaboration, they cannot fully replace face-to-face interactions, contributing to feelings of isolation and disconnection. The imperative is that while technology redefines modern work environments, organisations must actively address its unintended consequences to ensure that executives experience the benefits of digital transformation without compromising their well-being or professional relationships.

5.5.5 Organisation support and constraint and WLB

The analysis revealed organisational culture and workplace policies as significant factors influencing WLB. While some organisations demonstrated progressive approaches that facilitated employee well-being, others maintained rigid structures that constrained WLB.

5.5.5.1 Supportive Organisational Practices

Several participants described their organisations as actively promoting WLB through mental health initiatives, flexible work arrangements, and employee engagement activities. For example, Peace highlighted holistic well-being efforts:

"They've even showcased people who've achieved certain things apart from just it being about work... they think about your whole well-being... They've trained mental health champions... creating entertainment for colleagues, like a singing competition, bring your pet to work day." (Peace)

Others emphasised mental health days and wellness initiatives, which allowed employees to recharge:

"We also have three days a year, which are mental health days. If you are just having a tough time, you're shattered, or you wake up feeling like 'just no'—you can take that time." (Naomi)

Ruby added that:

"We also have a well-being budget for every member of staff. You can apply you. It gets taxed when it hits your salary. But. What people do is they claim for like 240 lbs worth of stuff, and then they actually get 200. Do you see what I mean? I ask for mine. I went on a yoga retreat and I use my 200 LB for that. Each person has £200 a year for well-being and we I know somebody that put it towards. A spa weekend. I know somebody who had driving lessons with it, driving lessons. It's partly when times have been tough financially and they can't afford a big pay rise for everyone. ..." (Ruby)

Participants also described employee assistance programs, private health insurance, and therapy services as valuable support mechanisms:

"We have private health insurance... free therapy provided by the office... cycle to work scheme." (Olivia)

"We do staff surveys... we have an employee assistance programme... an app called What at me so that you can ask people how they are and you can put stuff down anonymously"(Israel)

"Recognised as well as have a, you know, a promotion of Wellness initiatives. So what we you know, an evening out or you know think of, you know, joining a particular I think recently they were talking about having massage or something. Things like that and you know in the days that we had, you know, fostering. So all that is quite important. It helps us with our mental health." (Lydia)

Moreover, flexible work arrangements emerged as a key facilitator of WLB, with some organisations providing tools and resources to support remote work:

"Management is very supportive in promoting work-life balance. They can even provide necessary tools for your work to be quite smooth and convenient from home....We have softwares that we use... Liquid Logic gives you tabs... your upcoming tasks... everything that you do is recorded on liquid logic. So having that opportunity to work remotely is also a good thing for work life balance." (Megan)

"They'll provide a sum of money for a chair and a sum of money for a desk and then you would buy the desk that you want that fits your space" (Israel)

Additionally, strong leadership support played a crucial role in fostering WLB, as illustrated by Jasmine's experience:

"The division head basically told me to go home and take care of myself. She was like, 'We have assistant lecturers. Life goes on. You need to focus on yourself.'" (Jasmine)

These findings suggest that organisations that actively promote employee well-being create a culture of support that enhances job satisfaction, mental health, and overall balance between professional and personal life.

5.5.5.2 Organisational Constraints and Challenges

Conversely, some participants described work environments that imposed excessive demands, lacked supportive policies, or failed to acknowledge employees' well-being. John emphasised the challenges faced by executives when WLB is not structurally supported:

"Not everyone is fortunate to be able to do the work-life balance even as an executive.. If the organisation doesn't warrant it or doesn't allow it... it's very hard to get that work

balance... You may have skills, but you haven't got the actual apparatus to be able to let me do that" (John)

Rigid expectations and high workloads were commonly cited barriers, particularly in demanding sectors:

"They are aware, but I think they just detach themselves from the day-to-day challenges we face. All they want is, if a time scale says 72 hours, then come high water, come rain, come sunshine—the child has to be seen within that time scale." (Sarah)

Some organisations operated under unsustainable workloads, creating significant WLB constraints. Naomi described a previous work experience that disregarded personal well-being:

"The last company I worked at had absolutely no respect for home life, family, or any concept of rest. The director actually said, 'You are a registered manager, you are not expected to have much of a work-life balance,' and she expected an average working week to be between 60 and 70 hours." (Naomi)

Another participant added:

"I think a lot of them don't. I think they've breath and eat work and they think everybody else should." (Ella)

Staff shortages and high turnover rates further exacerbated WLB challenges, increasing pressure on remaining employees:

"What's been difficult to create a work life balance within my team is the high turnover of staff. [...] It causes a lot of pressure on everyone when people come and go, when people come and go. So within my organisation that has made it quite difficult to create a work life balance. Because then I'm pick that up and those cases then go on duty as well. So you end up carrying more than your own tasks as well. So I think there has been a challenge in terms of creating that work life balance and again it creates pressures for managers. It creates pressures for the team and then it becomes difficult to get to that point of an even kill your firefighting basically all the time." (Anita)

"Staffing really affects your ability to manage work and home life... when you're the first point of contact as well you can't sort of put things to one side" Israel

Understaffing was also linked to excessive workloads, as noted by some participants:

"We're underfunded, we're understaffed, and we're in an improvement journey. There's a lot of pressure on people, which doesn't help." (Ella)

From the above findings, work environments that undermine WLB create significant barriers for employees regardless of their position. Organisational structures that impose excessive workloads, rigid timelines, and unsustainable expectations make

balance nearly impossible to achieve, even for executives. The analysis revealed a troubling disconnect between organisational awareness and meaningful action. Companies that normalize 60-70 hour workweeks demonstrate fundamental disregard for employee wellbeing. Staffing challenges, including high turnover and persistent understaffing, further exacerbate these pressures by increasing demands on remaining staff. These findings suggest WLB requires not just individual effort but organisational commitment through supportive policies and realistic workload expectations.

5.5.5.3 Workplace Relationships and Delegation Strategies

Despite these challenges, some participants highlighted workplace relationships and delegation strategies as crucial coping mechanisms. Supportive teams provided an additional layer of resilience against workplace pressures. Anita described the benefits of collaborative team dynamics:

"In those meetings, we even discuss personal issues. Other team members or managers can then chip in and assist." (Anita)

Effective delegation and workload management also emerged as strategies for maintaining WLB:

"Building relationships with the people you work around is crucial because when you need support, you know you have it. Also, delegating—knowing your limits and making sure your workload is shared rather than trying to carry everything on your own—is key." (Anita)

However, in environments where support systems were lacking, employees struggled with excessive individual workloads:

"Your case is your decision. You can only ask for advice or opinion, but when it comes to handling the case, you're on your own. Nobody holds your hand to guide you. Everyone is just rushing to finish their own work." (Sarah)

The findings highlighted a spectrum of organisational support and constraints that shape employees' ability to maintain WLB. While some organisations have embraced progressive policies that promote well-being through mental health initiatives, flexible working arrangements, and leadership support, others impose rigid demands and excessive workloads, making it difficult for employees to achieve balance (See Figure 5.4). A key takeaway is that workplace culture, leadership attitudes, and structural

policies significantly impact WLB outcomes. Organisations that foster a supportive work environment through well-being programs, flexible policies, and effective delegation enhance employees' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities. Conversely, those that neglect these factors risk workplace stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction.

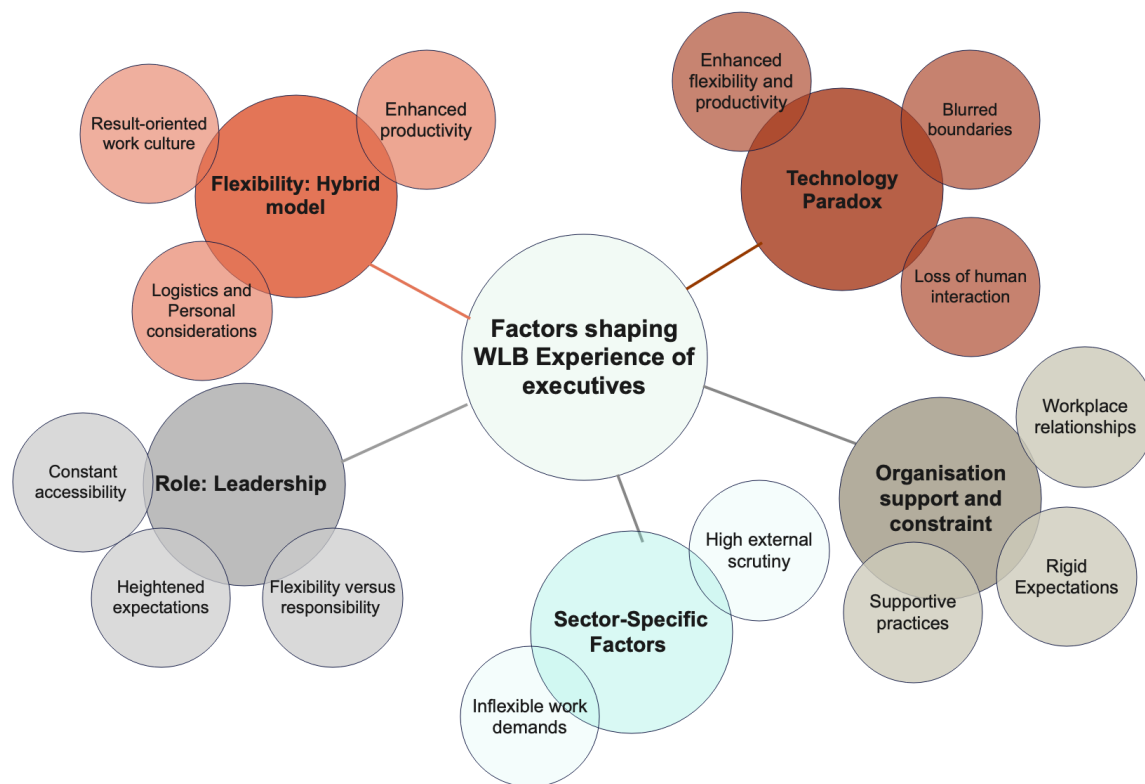


Figure 5.5: Thematic Map showing Factors shaping WLB experiences of Executives

5.6 Transformational leadership strategies and work-life balance

The findings revealed that UK executives deploy transformational leadership strategies to navigate WLB challenges. In this regard, four themes emerged: human-centric leadership, empowerment focused leadership, inclusive leadership, developmental leadership (See Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Transformational Leadership styles deployed to achieve WLB

Theme 1: Human-Centric Leadership

Sub-Theme	First-Order Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Participants	Interpretation
Empathetic Communication	Personal greetings, individual recognition, understanding team dynamics	"In the morning, I say hello to everyone" (Tina) "I know they have children... how is so and so" (Tina) "When that member of staff is not performing... I know why" (Tina) "Not seeing your employees as workers for the company, but rather as human beings" (Olivia)	Tina, Olivia, Grace, Peace	Emphasises individual connections. Goes beyond transactional workplace interactions. Demonstrates understanding of employees' personal circumstances
Emotional Support	Emotional labour, mood management, team morale maintenance	"I just smile even though I'm feeling like oh inside" (Tina) "Smiling on the outside so that they feel better" (Tina) "It's not just all about work, because people also have personal issues" (Peace) "I am always banging on to them about their mental health" (Grace)	Tina, Sarah Peace, Grace	Leaders manage personal emotions for team benefit. Prioritises psychological well-being. Recognises emotional aspects of workplace performance

Theme 2: Empowerment-Focused Leadership

Sub-Theme	First-Order Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Participants	Interpretation
Trust and Autonomy	Minimal supervision, performance-based management, individual responsibility	"Trusting your staff and delegating tasks... show them the way" (John) "If you are doing the work, I'll leave you alone" (Sophie) "There needs to be a level of... trust... allow me to showcase my skills" (Peace) "Not micromanage... give people responsibility so they can develop" (Hazel)	John, Peace, Hazel, Sophie	Shifts from control to trust-based management. Recognises individual capabilities. Promotes intrinsic motivation

Professional Empowerment	Skill development, career progression support, learning opportunities	"I want you to progress and move... support you" (John) "Enrol them for training" (Sarah) "Trying to check in with her... What can I do? Is there any training?" (Hazel) "Play to their strengths... helping team members with areas they struggle" (Ruby)	John, Sarah, Ruby, Hazel	Active investment in employee growth. Personalized development approaches. Views employees as evolving professionals
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Theme 3: Inclusive Leadership

Sub-Theme	First-Order Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Participants	Interpretation
Collaborative Decision-Making	Democratic processes, team consultation, participative strategy formulation	"I'm very much democratic. I'm very much like Rep this is the situation. What do you think? And we make a decision altogether" (Clara) "Discuss with the team... what is working, what's not working" (John) "Good communication skills... adapt your communication style to different people" (Hazel) "I would love to do... a questionnaire that they can say, OK, what did I do good as a leader? What can we improve?" (Ruby)	John, Ruby, Clara, Hazel	Breaks traditional hierarchical structures. Encourages collective intelligence. Promotes psychological safety and engagement
Communication Adaptability	Multi-style communication, personalized Messaging. active listening	"An effective leader should... be able to communicate well with subordinates... through strategic meetings" (Megan) "Fostering that culture, developing and maintaining a culture of trust and respect" (Megan) "First and most importantly is your communication with your staff " "Honesty and transparency" (Israel)	Israel, Megan, Ella	Recognises diverse communication needs. Builds trust through transparency.

Theme 4: Developmental Leadership

Sub-Theme	First-Order Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Participants	Interpretation
Staff Development	Mentorship, continuous learning, performance enhancement	"Ensuring that you're supportive of staff... through training, mentoring, learning" (Ella) "Enrol them for training" (Sarah) "I want you to progress and move... support you" (John) "Trying to check in with her... What can I do? Is there any training?" (Hazel)	John, Ella, Sarah, Hazel	Holistic approach to employee growth. Views development as organisational investment. Supports long-term talent cultivation
Performance Orientation	Clear expectations, goal setting, inspirational leadership	"Every meeting you attend, you're supposed to get the minutes within 5 days" (Sophie) "I first having a clear vision...communicating that to the subordinates in such a way that they become inspired" (Jasmine) "Laying down your expectations so that workers understand" (Sophie) "I can turn any negative into a positive" (Grace)	Grace, Sophie, Jasmine	Balances supportive approach with performance standards. Creates motivational frameworks. Transforms challenges into opportunities

Executives used these strategies to manage their WLB and also create an environment where employees feel valued beyond their professional contributions, which in turn enhances their ability to manage work-life demands.



Figure 5.6: Thematic Map showing transformational strategies deployed to achieve WLB

5.6.1 Human-Centric Leadership in Addressing Work-Life Balance

The findings suggest that UK executives adopt a human-centric leadership style within their transformational leadership approach to address WLB challenges (See Figure 5.5). The analysis showed that executives create psychologically safe workplaces where employees feel understood, valued, and supported by fostering empathetic communication and providing emotional support. This leadership style not only enhance workplace morale but also facilitates employees' ability to manage professional and personal responsibilities effectively.

5.6.1.1 Empathetic Communication

Executives demonstrated a deep awareness of their employees' personal circumstances, moving beyond transactional workplace interactions to establish meaningful connections. Through personalized communication and an appreciation of employees' lives outside of work, leaders cultivated a culture of care and inclusivity:

"I think it's just like not seeing your employees as workers for the company, but rather as human beings who have their own life, which [my CEO] does very effectively. You know, understanding that we need our own work-life balance. We have life outside of work..." (Olivia)

"Yes, I'm rushing 'cause I need to do my work, but I say hello, and some of them I know have children... I ask how their daughter is doing." (Tina)

Executives acknowledged that they fostered a sense of belonging and trust by acknowledging employees as individuals with personal commitments. This relational leadership style contributed to WLB by making employees feel psychologically supported, reducing work-related stress, and ensuring that professional demands did not overshadow personal well-being. Moreover, executives proactively monitored team dynamics, recognizing that performance fluctuations could be linked to personal challenges. This awareness enabled them to provide appropriate support without compromising work expectations:

"At times, they say, 'Oh, she's fine but travelling with school' or 'Oh, she's fine but has a cold and hasn't gone to school.' When I get that information, I understand why a staff member might not be performing as usual." (Tina)

This approach reframed WLB as a collective responsibility rather than an individual burden, reinforcing a workplace culture where employees felt safe discussing their challenges without fear of negative repercussions.

5.6.1.2 Emotional Support

Beyond fostering empathetic communication, leaders engaged in emotional labour to maintain a positive and motivational work environment. By regulating their own emotions, they ensured workplace morale remained high even during challenging periods:

"The people I work with have deadlines, so they come to me with concerns. I try to be very calm even when I'm struggling inside. I smile so they feel better because I understand we are all coming from the same place." (Tina)

"They have to be empathetic... life happens. If an employee is dealing with childcare issues, a bereavement, or another personal matter, leaders need to understand those circumstances first before prioritising work. You have to have those conversations." (Sarah)

This leadership approach recognised that employees' personal lives could influence their professional performance. By offering emotional support and adjusting workloads where necessary, leaders alleviated stress and prevented burnout:

"If something impacts a person's ability to work, then just say, 'OK, let me take this away from you so you can focus on other things.' That way, the work is still being done, and the person feels supported." (Sarah)

Additionally, leaders emphasised the importance of mental well-being, actively encouraging employees to set boundaries and avoid work encroaching on personal time:

"I'm always talking to my team about their mental health and the fact that they shouldn't be taking work home. If they don't finish work, I will help them." (Grace)

"I make sure that everybody is OK. At the end of the day, it's not just about work because people have personal issues they are contending with. I maintain an open-door policy so they feel free to talk to me." (Peace)

From the findings, normalising discussions around mental well-being and implementing practical support mechanisms was a strategy executives used to create an environment where employees felt comfortable voicing their concerns. This proactive approach reduced workplace stress and reinforced the idea that WLB was not solely an individual concern but an organisational priority. Executives in the UK facilitate WLB by adopting a human-centric leadership approach that prioritises empathetic communication and emotional support. By recognizing employees as individuals with personal responsibilities, fostering open and personalized dialogue, and actively supporting mental well-being, these leaders create an inclusive and psychologically safe work environment. This leadership style not only enhances employee engagement and job satisfaction but also ensures that WLB is integrated into the organisational culture as a shared responsibility.

5.6.2 Empowerment-Focused Leadership in Supporting Work-Life Balance

Findings reveal that UK executives adopt empowerment-focused leadership strategies as part of their transformational leadership approach to addressing WLB challenges

(See Figure 5.5). By fostering trust, autonomy, and professional empowerment, these leaders enable employees to take ownership of their work while maintaining flexibility, ultimately supporting a more balanced and fulfilling work environment.

5.6.2.1 Trust and Autonomy

Executives demonstrated a trust-based leadership approach, shifting away from traditional control mechanisms and instead allowing employees to manage their own responsibilities. This approach was characterized by minimal supervision, performance-based management, and an emphasis on individual responsibility, reinforcing confidence in employees' abilities:

"So my approach when I was in management was if you are doing the work, I'll leave you alone and I'll only be touching base with you for your welfare... because I can see on the system the work is being done. There's no need for me to be on top of you... there's no need for me to stress myself." (Sophie)

"A really big thing for me because I hate it myself is not to micromanage... Give people responsibility so that they can develop. Be very clear about what they need to achieve, but let them come to me if they need support and help. I can't stand micromanaging." (Hazel)

"I'm the type of person that, as long as we all know what the ground rules are—being that we are at work to get the work done—let's get on with it. If there are any problems, let's flag them up in good time so I'm aware and can deal with them. I like to support my team and make sure everybody's okay." (Peace)

This leadership style promotes intrinsic motivation and enhances job satisfaction, as employees feel a sense of ownership over their tasks rather than being subject to rigid oversight. Trust-based management also enables employees to structure their work schedules more flexibly, facilitating better WLB. Furthermore, participants emphasised the importance of allowing employees to showcase their skills and develop professionally rather than being confined to restrictive oversight:

"There needs to be a level of trust. My manager needs to feel confident that I'm able to do my job. Allowing me to work competently on my own and manage things independently without too much interference is important. I work best when I know I can reach out if I'm struggling rather than being micromanaged." (Peace)

"I think there has to be a level of trust. I have to be able to trust the person that I'm assigning to do the job to actually do the job. If there are gaps, my role would then be to provide support rather than control." (Sarah)

"It's about showing trust, allowing people to grow themselves, and giving them the confidence and tools—whatever they may be—to complete tasks independently. That, in turn, allows me to focus on my own responsibilities." (John)

The findings indicate that executives empower employees and create an environment where individuals feel capable of managing both professional and personal demands effectively by fostering a culture of trust. Through autonomy, minimal supervision, and performance-based evaluations, executives in the UK provide employees with the flexibility needed to achieve a sustainable WLB.

5.6.2.2 Professional Empowerment

Beyond autonomy, transformational leaders actively invest in the professional development of their employees, recognizing that career progression and continuous learning contribute to job satisfaction and overall well-being. Participants highlighted the importance of actively supporting employees' career aspirations, even when it meant losing valuable team members to promotions or external opportunities. The willingness to nurture employees rather than retain them through restriction was perceived as a leadership strength that contributed to organisational reputation and employee loyalty:

"I want you to progress. I want you to progress and move and go. Yeah. And I think that comes across with a team, you know, they know that. And it's not that I don't want you to stay because you can't do your job. If you're going to move on, I will support you. You can move on, and people used to say to me: Why are you doing that? Are you letting that go? You know, they're good. You just keep them. I wouldn't... Because the people within all have the same kind of.... So we're moving within the company. So you're retaining good people. So the reputation of the company is people, companies, the company, and they stay. They want to stay, but they move up. Yeah, yeah. But they move up the ladder and they can progress and they can get promoted and they can move on." (John)

This approach to leadership ensured that employees remained engaged and motivated, knowing that their development was valued and supported. By encouraging internal mobility and career progression, executives fostered long-term job satisfaction while simultaneously strengthening organisational stability. Beyond offering general professional development initiatives, leaders emphasised the importance of tailoring support to individual employees' needs. Regular check-ins were employed as a strategy to understand specific aspirations, identify areas for improvement, and provide targeted assistance:

"Yeah. But I think the person that I'm managing at the moment, she's a young person and she's going to leave at some point. You know, she's very good at her job. You know, I had another person from the team who left. And there's a recruitment fee. So it's not being filled. And obviously, you know, I want to keep this person. So my way is

always trying to check in with her that how can I support her? Can't keep her forever, but to keep her for longer. What can I do? Is there any training that she can do? And how can she get the most out of the job? And also too, I say to people I work with, listen, if you're going to leave, give me a heads up because..." (Hazel)

This proactive approach to employee development reinforced a sense of trust and openness, allowing employees to voice their concerns and aspirations. Leaders sought ways to ensure that employees derived maximum benefit from their current roles, even if they anticipated eventual departure. Another critical aspect of professional empowerment was recognizing employees' strengths while assisting them in overcoming challenges. Leaders adopted a flexible and adaptive approach, ensuring that professional development was aligned with individual capabilities:

"They were struggling a little bit. The workload, you know, I was just letting them know that... It's okay since I know this may not be your strong suit. I will also help you out with this specific part. And then I just keep motivating them. So I just play to their strengths when I come and I have to understand that as a leader, for me to be able to motivate my employees, I have to also be able to communicate. We're not just forcing things my way, but trying to do different things as I know, okay, they're not good with this thing. I'm good at this thing now. Maybe I can help them with this, or I know another team they're really good at something I'm not good at. And I'll just help them do that." (Ruby)

This leadership approach reinforced employee confidence and competence, making it easier for employees to balance professional ambitions with personal commitments. Executives empowered employees to take ownership of their work and grow within their roles by acknowledging diverse skill sets and providing necessary support. The findings here suggest that empowerment-focused leadership enhances workplace satisfaction and contributes significantly to WLB. Most executives achieved this by minimising micromanagement, encouraging self-management, and investing in professional growth. In this sense, transformational leaders enabled employees to take control of their careers while maintaining personal well-being. This leadership style fostered a culture of trust, autonomy, and continuous development, ensuring that employees felt valued and supported in managing both their professional and personal lives effectively. Moreover, executives who prioritised employee empowerment also benefited from improved WLB. They are able to achieve this by developing a competent and self-sufficient workforce. This way, executives reduced their need for constant oversight, thereby allowing themselves more flexibility and reduced stress in their own roles. This reciprocal relationship between employee growth and executive

well-being underscores the broader impact of transformational leadership on organisational health and sustainability.

5.6.3 Inclusive Leadership in Supporting Work-Life Balance

Findings from the study highlight how UK executives employ inclusive leadership strategies to enhance workplace cohesion and WLB concerns. By fostering a participative and adaptive leadership approach, these leaders create an environment where employees feel valued, heard, and supported. This, in turn, reduces workplace stress and enhances overall well-being.

5.6.3.1 Collaborative Decision-Making

A key feature of inclusive leadership among UK executives is the shift from traditional hierarchical structures toward a more democratic, participatory approach to decision-making. Leaders actively involve employees in shaping workplace policies and strategies, ensuring their voices are heard and their contributions valued. This participatory leadership style is evident in team consultations, open discussions, and shared responsibility in decision-making:

"I know all about leadership and I would say I'm very, very much democratic. My business partner was more autocratic—'this is what I want done, and you do it this way.' But I'm very much democratic. I prefer saying, 'This is the situation; what do you think?' and then we make a decision together." (Clara)

"I wouldn't make decisions in isolation. As a leader, I always discuss with the team because they may have ideas I haven't thought of. No one is an island—you need the team around you. We sit down together and analyse what's working, what's not, and how we can improve things if they're not going to plan." (John)

Through this inclusive approach, executives empower employees, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in workplace decisions. This strategy also enhances psychological safety, allowing employees to voice their WLB concerns without fear of negative consequences. Employees feel encouraged to participate in discussions about work processes, making them more invested in solutions that balance professional and personal commitments. Executives also recognise the importance of self-reflection and continuous improvement in their leadership approach. They emphasise the value of gathering employee feedback to assess leadership effectiveness and the overall WLB climate within their organisations. Leaders express

a commitment to ongoing evaluation and adaptation, ensuring that workplace practices evolve in response to employees' needs:

"If they feel there's anything that needs improvement, I'd like to know. I'd love to introduce an annual questionnaire where employees can share what I did well as a leader, what needs improvement, and how they feel about work-life balance. It's not just about evaluating me as a leader, but also assessing the overall work-life balance in the organisation." (Ruby)

Listening to employee feedback and making adjustments, executives reinforce inclusivity and strengthen team dynamics. This iterative approach fosters a culture of openness, trust, and continuous learning, ensuring that WLB remains a priority within the organisation. Overall, the findings accentuate the role of inclusive leadership in shaping a supportive work environment that prioritises WLB. Through collaborative decision-making and continuous self-improvement, UK executives create an atmosphere where employees feel valued and empowered. Encouraging participation, creating a safe space for open conversations, and staying responsive to employee concerns, these leaders contribute to a more engaged, productive, and well-balanced workforce.

5.6.3.2 Communication Adaptability

Effective communication emerged as a cornerstone of inclusive leadership, with executives demonstrating adaptability in their communication styles to meet the diverse needs of their teams. Leaders employed multi-style communication, personalized messaging, and active listening to ensure clarity, relevance, and support in their interactions. These strategies facilitated the seamless flow of information and reinforced a culture of openness and inclusivity within the organisation. One executive highlighted the role of structured communication channels, such as strategic and review meetings, in cascading organisational vision and ensuring alignment across all levels:

"I think any effective leader should be... I mean.. they should be able to communicate well with subordinates, and in terms of that communication, their strategic meetings that are always done and.. That offers an opportunity, really, for managers to cascade information down to their employees. Through these meetings that they do...having the opportunity to express the organisational vision in those meetings, then that information can cascade down to the lowest employee in the organisation. So those meetings, which are part of communication, I think it's very important." (Megan)

Beyond structured meetings, leaders emphasised the importance of honesty, transparency, and consistency in communication. They held the notion that by modelling these values, they fostered trust and encouraged open dialogue, particularly regarding WLB challenges:

"Lead by example—that's another thing. But also, again, it's that honesty and transparency... But consistency is also very important as well in a leader." (Israel)

Building strong professional networks and maintaining ongoing conversations with staff were also seen as vital in understanding team dynamics, identifying challenges, and offering necessary support:

"First and most importantly is your communication with your staff, your colleagues... Developing networks of staff and colleagues enables you to have a picture of what's happening, where it's happening, strengths and weaknesses, and ensuring that you're supportive of staff... Being able to develop them." (Ella)

Leaders further accentuated the need for emotional intelligence in communication, highlighting its role in detecting underlying concerns and fostering a psychologically safe work environment:

"The importance of having very strong communication skills and that emotional intelligence to be able to pick up what is going on as well." (Lydia)

"I think you have to be able to be an effective communicator." (Grace)

Additionally, communication was framed as an ongoing process rather than a one-time exchange. Leaders recognised the importance of keeping employees informed, engaging in discussions about organisational challenges, and collaborating on potential solutions:

"So it's communication for me every time... If you don't communicate—both verbally and through the medium of email and everything—and keep people informed... My view is that there are always things we can influence. And we should talk about them, develop strategies, and look at what we might be able to alter for the better. Of course, there are also things we can't change, but ensuring communication happens allows us to navigate that reality together." (Ella)

This adaptability in leadership communication not only strengthened trust and engagement but also contributed to a more inclusive and psychologically safe workplace. Employees felt empowered to voice their concerns, including those related to WLB, knowing that leadership was receptive and responsive to their needs.

Ultimately, inclusive leadership fosters a culture of collaboration and transparency, ensuring that employees feel valued and supported in balancing their professional and personal commitments. Integrating employees into decision-making processes and tailoring communication strategies to diverse needs can allow transformational leaders enhance workplace trust, psychological safety, and overall well-being. In this environment, WLB concerns can be openly addressed and collaboratively managed, reinforcing a culture where employees thrive both professionally and personally.

5.6.4 Developmental Leadership in Enhancing Work-Life Balance

The findings suggest that UK executives adopt developmental leadership strategies to support employees' professional growth while maintaining clear performance expectations. This approach balances career advancement with well-being by fostering skill development, providing mentorship, and setting structured yet flexible performance standards. In doing so, leaders ensure that employees feel empowered to progress in their careers without compromising their WLB.

5.6.4.1 Staff Development (*Mentorship and Learning*)

Executives regarded employee development as a long-term investment, recognizing that mentorship, continuous learning, and career support were essential to workplace success. Leaders actively facilitated professional growth through structured training programs, career progression opportunities, and regular check-ins to understand employees' development needs:

"Ensuring that you're supportive of staff... through training, mentoring, learning." (Ella)

"Trying to check in with her... What can I do? Is there any training?" (Hazel)

By taking a holistic approach to staff development, leaders positioned employees as evolving professionals whose growth contributed to both personal fulfilment and organisational success. Investing in employees' skills not only improved job satisfaction and retention but also reduced stress associated with career stagnation, ultimately enhancing WLB:

"I want you to progress and move... support you." (John)

Providing structured development opportunities reinforced a culture where workplace learning coexisted with well-being, ensuring that employees felt valued and empowered.

5.6.4.2 Performance Orientation

While executives prioritised staff development, they also emphasised **goal-setting**, performance standards, and motivational leadership. Clear expectations helped prevent work overload, minimized ambiguity, and ensured accountability without micromanagement:

"And I drum into them that every meeting you attend, you're supposed to get the minutes within five working days of that meeting. So when I go on the file and there's no evidence... I'm going to have problems with you." (Sophie)

However, maintaining a balance between structure and autonomy was also important. Leaders stressed the significance of giving employees space while upholding professional integrity, ensuring that expectations were transparent and mutually understood:

"Need to give that space and also respect the professional integrity of the workers. What helps us all is laying down your expectations so that workers understand what you expect of them. It's an interactive process." (Sophie)

Beyond setting clear expectations, executives sought to inspire and motivate their teams by communicating a compelling vision, reframing challenges as opportunities for growth, and demonstrating leadership beyond administrative management:

"I first have a clear vision... communicating that to the subordinates in such a way that they become inspired." (Jasmine)

"I have a combination of business and technology understanding... I can really lay out the big picture and explain it in a way that makes sense. Some people are great managers—they handle paperwork—but they don't inspire. Leadership is about inspiring." (Emma)

Leaders also played a key role in shaping employees' mindsets, helping them navigate workplace challenges with resilience and positivity:

"You have to be able to motivate and uplift people... For me, it's taken a very long time, but I can turn any negative into a positive. If a staff member is frustrated, I remind them of the rewarding aspects of their work. It helps shift perspectives." (Grace)

The findings here indicate the importance of balancing high performance expectations with support mechanisms, to cultivate a structured yet adaptable work environment. This ensured that employees remained motivated and productive while maintaining their personal well-being. Developmental leadership fosters a supportive yet structured workplace where employees receive career-enhancing opportunities without excessive pressure.

Overall, the findings for this objective highlight how transformational leadership transcends traditional management paradigms, shifting from control-based supervision to an approach centred on inspiration, empowerment, and adaptability. Modern executives in practice recognise that fostering a human connection and providing individual recognition are essential in building trust and engagement. Employees thrive in environments where they feel valued, supported, and motivated to contribute meaningfully. Leadership today is less about enforcing rigid structures and more about empowering employees to take ownership of their roles while maintaining a healthy WLB. The ability to adapt communication styles, mentor employees, and set clear expectations plays a crucial role in ensuring both organisational success and employee well-being. Furthermore, emotional intelligence (the capacity to understand and respond to employees' needs) has emerged as a critical leadership competency.

5.6.5 Sector-Differences in Transformational Leadership approaches

The study explored the differences in how UK executives deploy transformational leadership styles to achieve WLB.

5.6.5.1 Leadership Philosophy and Implementation

Public Sector: In the public sector, transformational leadership often centred on empathy, staff wellbeing, and fostering supportive interpersonal relationships, within the constraints of institutional limitations. Leaders in this sector often highlighted the importance of emotional awareness and relational care, even when structural flexibility was lacking. For example, Tina noted:

"In the morning I say hello to everyone" and "When that member of staff is not performing... I know why"

Similarly, Anita emphasised the value of team cohesion

"Building relationships with colleagues you know you've got support"

These perspectives suggest a leadership style grounded in emotional connection and daily interpersonal reinforcement, which may help offset systemic pressures.

Private Sector: Conversely, private sector leaders exhibited a more strategic and forward-thinking interpretation of transformational leadership. Their approach emphasised not just empathy, but also vision, delegation, and the active development of team members' capabilities. Lydia described a multifaceted view.

"You need to be visionary... have empathy... emotional intelligence"

Likewise, Sally articulated a focus on empowerment and growth:

"Trusting your staff and delegating tasks... show them the way" and "I want you to progress and move... support you"

These reflections illustrate a blend of personal and organizational ambition, where leadership involves both emotional intelligence and a strong emphasis on outcomes.

While both sectors value transformational leadership, their implementation diverges. Public sector leaders prioritise relational care and day-to-day support, shaped by systemic and resource constraints. In contrast, private sector leaders adopt a broader strategic orientation that combines emotional intelligence with proactive staff development and long-term vision. These differences reflect how contextual factors shape leadership behaviours and the translation of leadership philosophies into daily practice.

5.6.5.2 Management of Team Work-Life Balance

Public Sector: Public sector leaders often navigated a complex tension between institutional expectations and their desire to support their teams' work-life balance. They emphasized the importance of empathy, staff development, and emotional support but were constrained by rigid operational demands. For instance, John highlighted:

"Ensuring that you're supportive of staff... through training, mentoring, learning."

Similarly, Peace described the challenge of balancing compassion with operational needs:

"Empathy but also understanding that there is a job that has to still get done."

These reflections suggest that although public sector leaders aimed to foster supportive environments, systemic pressures often limited their ability to fully prioritize team wellbeing.

Private Sector: In contrast, private sector leaders described greater flexibility in managing team workloads and implementing work-life balance initiatives. They spoke of adopting a more people-centred and proactive management style that allowed them to embed wellbeing practices into everyday operations. Naomi explained:

"Providing support plans instead of action plans, focusing on professional empathy."

Hazel similarly emphasised approachability and relationship-building:

"I'm very approachable. I like to have a good relationship with people I manage."

This suggests that private sector leaders had more structural freedom to integrate wellbeing initiatives into team management practices.

Overall, while leaders across both sectors demonstrated a commitment to supporting work-life balance for their teams, the extent and manner of their support differed. Public sector leaders frequently had to balance empathy with rigid institutional obligations, whereas private sector leaders, benefiting from greater organizational flexibility, were able to embed wellbeing more directly into their leadership practices. These differences reflect how broader organizational structures and sector-specific demands influence managerial approaches to team wellbeing.

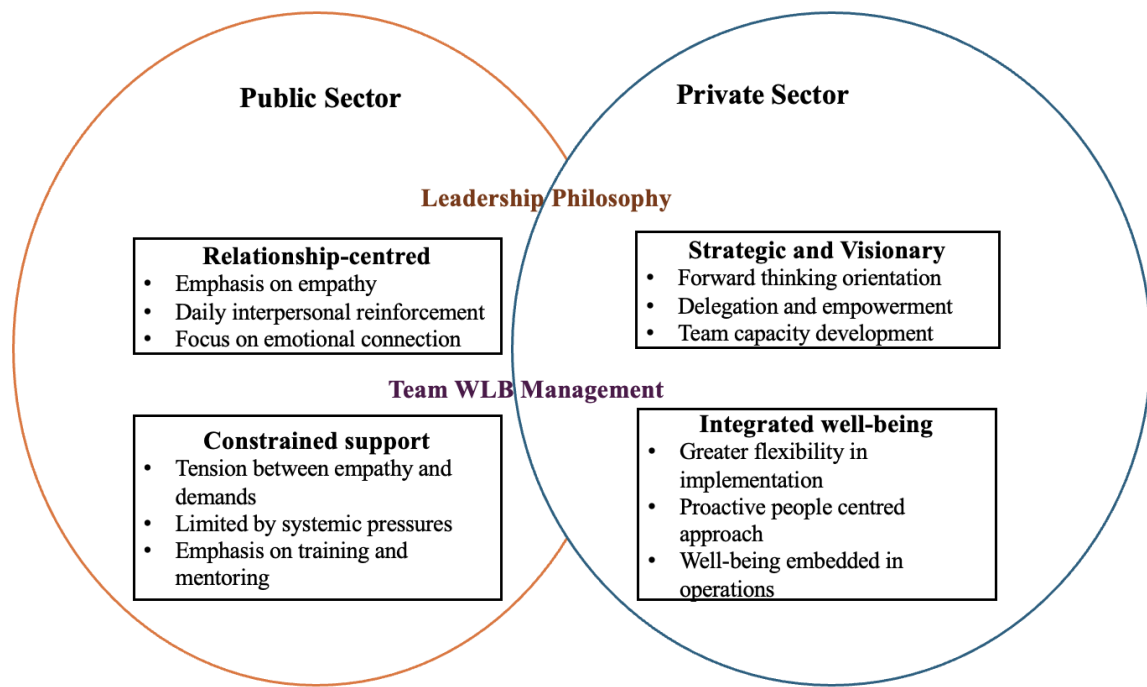


Figure 5.7: Sector Differences in Transformational Leadership Approaches

5.7 Transformational leaders' use of technology to achieve WLB in the UK

The third objective of this study was to analyse how transformational leaders leverage technology to achieve WLB in the UK. The analysis reveals three key themes. First, technology as work enabler. Leaders utilised communication platforms (Teams, Slack, Zoom) and task management tools to enhance remote collaboration, streamline workflows, and facilitate flexible arrangements. AI integration further improved efficiency. The second theme was the strategic implementation of technology. This theme highlights how organisations invest in tailored digital solutions to optimise processes. Findings under this theme highlight how success depends on cultural readiness, employee involvement, and addressing generational differences in technology adoption. The third theme was technology challenges (See Table 5.4). Despite benefits, the findings uncovered obstacles facing executives in their adoption of technology to achieve WLB including system reliability issues, inaccurate performance management tools, connectivity problems, insufficient training, limited software access, and digital fatigue. The findings demonstrate that while technology significantly enables flexible work and efficiency, strategic implementation and addressing challenges are crucial for maximising technology's potential to enhance WLB for UK executives.

5.7.1 Technology as a Work Enabler

This theme explores how transformational leaders integrate technology into their work routines to enhance efficiency, collaboration, and WLB. Participants highlighted the essential role of digital tools in streamlining communication, improving task management, and enabling flexible work arrangements. The use of various communication and collaboration technologies emerged as a significant factor in maintaining engagement, optimizing workflows, and ensuring seamless coordination across different locations.

Table 5.4: Transformational Leaders' use of technology to achieve WLB

Theme	Sub-theme	First-order Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Participants	Participant's Interpretation
Technology as a Work Enabler	Communication and Collaboration Tools	Use of Microsoft Teams, Slack, Zoom for meetings and communication	"I have design meetings with the marketing team, and we stay in touch through Teams meetings and Slack."	Hazel, Anita, Lydia, Sally	Digital tools enable seamless collaboration and engagement across locations.
		Digital platforms as performance monitoring tools	"You're able to even track performances. You're able to have real-time communication."	Lydia, Anita, Ruby	Digital tools help in tracking tasks and providing feedback.
		Remote consultation through virtual platforms	"My work mostly involves remote consultations because I work with individuals in different locations."	Peace, Olivia, Ruby, Sally	Virtual consultations improve accessibility and flexibility.
		Cloud-based work systems for remote accessibility	"Liquid Logic is a platform where you can access your work from anywhere... it gives you your upcoming tasks and records everything."	Olivia, Sally, Ruby	Cloud systems enhance task management and documentation.
Work Management and Efficiency	Task Management and Prioritisation	Use of cloud storage and task tracking software	"We have a cloud space—OneDrive—where everything gets stored. We also use Monday to organize tasks."	Olivia, Sally, Lydia	Cloud-based tools support structured task allocation and accountability.
		AI tools for automation and efficiency	"AI-driven documentation helps structure ideas efficiently."	Sophie, Emma, John	AI reduces cognitive workload and improves documentation efficiency.
		Digital documentation for real-time updates	"90% of my cases don't require me to take notes later. I document as I go."	Sophie, Ruby	Reduces redundancy and enhances workflow.
Strategic Implementation of Technology	Organisational Investment in Digital Solutions	Use of customized software for workflow optimization	"My firm has invested a lot in tailor-made software to streamline processes."	Sally, Ella, Naomi	Investment in digital solutions enhances efficiency and minimizes manual tasks.
		Challenges with bespoke digital systems	"We use our own database instead of industry-standard	Naomi, Olivia	Custom systems need alignment with industry

		systems, which I would change if I could."		standards for better usability.
	Employee involvement in technology adoption	"Our workers were involved in the development of a case management system."	Ella, Olivia	Employee engagement ensures that digital tools meet practical work needs.
Cultural Readiness for Digital Transformation	Differences in technology adoption across generations	"Younger employees are more digitally savvy, whereas those above 40 need more support."	Lydia, Megan, Ella	Generational gaps require structured training and peer mentorship.
	Role of COVID-19 in accelerating digital transformation	"COVID was instrumental in getting us to move to digital."	Clara, Ella, John	The pandemic drove widespread digital adoption and work flexibility.
	Technology as a long-term strategic tool	"Developing software is not just about reacting to external pressures; it's about sustainability."	Ella, Lydia, Sally	Digital transformation should be proactive and long-term.

5.7.1.1 Communication and Collaboration Tools

Participants emphasised the adoption of digital communication platforms, which facilitate real-time interactions and remote collaboration. Virtual meeting platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Slack were frequently mentioned as indispensable tools for conducting meetings and maintaining engagement with teams. Hazel illustrated this, stating:

"I have design meetings with the marketing team, and we stay in touch through Teams meetings and Slack. It's our main form of communication. In the UK, most employees use these platforms, which also function as monitoring tools. When you log in, your status is visible to colleagues." (Hazel)

This highlights how multiple digital platforms support remote collaboration while maintaining accountability. Performance tracking was another crucial function of these tools, allowing leaders to oversee tasks and provide real-time feedback. Lydia noted:

"We're able to have the virtual meetings, , you're able to even, track performances. You're able to have real time, you know, communication. So tools such as what we're using, the teams, the zoom."

Remote consultation technologies have further enhanced accessibility and flexibility in work settings. Peace described their reliance on such tools, particularly in geographically dispersed work environments:

"So my work mostly involves consultations, and they're usually remote consultations because I work with individuals who are working in different locations, so they're not really where I am."

Similarly, Olivia, Sally and Ruby shared the advantages of cloud-based work systems, such as Liquid Logic, Teams and Doom Max, which facilitate remote access and task organisation:

"Liquid Logic is a platform where you can access your work from anywhere...so liquid logic gives you tabs or the home page of that software it gives you or your or your upcoming tasks the way that you are required to do and everything that you do is recorded on liquid logic. So having that opportunity to work remotely is also a good thing for work life balance."

"You can work remotely from home so that it gives you that option... So, teams we've got teams so people are on chat with you on teams or sometimes. It's a video call just like we're doing now." (Sally)

"We can have team meetings through Doom Max themes that we're using now, all this. All this had to be done in a board on a meeting, whereas now this can be done Pretty much any point in time or day to be just set the dates at the meeting. It can be done."

So, I think that's the way that technology is improved because 20 years ago we couldn't. You couldn't do the things like that..." (Ruby)

The integration of digital scheduling tools was also highlighted as a means of streamlining coordination. Peace noted:

"Teams has significantly improved scheduling. It automates meeting coordination, making the process more efficient." (Peace)

Anita further emphasised how technology has reduced the need for travel:

"To read it through and make the corrections, but at least the bulk of it is already amended as required, so that helps and I think also when people are not it saves time because people don't have to meet in person. So I think a lot of meetings are now done on teams, so people can be in different locations. So it saves before you know you were travelling to different places cause meetings were done in person." (Anita)

Video conferencing tools play a central role in enabling continuous connectivity within teams. Ruby shared her experience:

"Previously, meetings had to be conducted in person. Now, with platforms like Teams, meetings can be scheduled and held at any time, improving efficiency."

This transition to digital meetings was also emphasised by Clara, who described a hybrid approach post-COVID:

"I do. We do a lot of zooms. Zoom is my preferred method of online meetings. So yeah, I like do like a bit of zoom. So yeah, zooms and since COVID. So obviously all the way through COVID we could only do zooms with our learners and since COVID we tend to do 50-50, so 50% of the time we visit and 50% of the time we're still doing zooms." (Clara)

The effectiveness of these tools in bridging communication gaps was echoed by Sally:

"Teams and Zoom have become essential. You can quickly get answers without waiting for an email response or needing to travel. The immediacy of these tools has really changed how we work."

Lydia further noted how digital tools contribute to maintaining productivity:

"With these platforms, I can check in with my team anytime, no matter where they are. We don't have to wait for physical meetings to discuss progress or solve problems."

Technology has also played a critical role in fostering international collaboration. Naomi provided insights into how digital platforms enable geographically dispersed teams to remain connected:

"We have a finance manager working from Mauritius who joins meetings via Teams or Zoom. Another colleague works remotely from Ireland part of the year, balancing personal and professional commitments. Our senior manager, based in Barbados, adjusts her work schedule to align with UK time zones."

Peace elaborated on the adaptability of these platforms:

"There's a lot of things that Teams does that they don't even get to use the half of it you know. So yeah, but it's fantastic and even scheduling meetings have been so much easier via teams, you know? Yeah."

Anita emphasised the time savings and flexibility technology provides:

"We now have the option to work from anywhere, saving time on commuting and allowing more personal time while staying productive."

Clara illustrated how these tools support ongoing collaboration despite time zone differences:

"Even if I'm away, I can join meetings in real-time without disruption. This has made balancing work and personal commitments much easier."

This theme illustrates how leaders strategically leverage digital tools to bridge geographical distances and support flexible work arrangements. The findings suggest that transformational leaders effectively utilise technology to facilitate communication, enhance collaboration, and ensure global team integration, ultimately contributing to improved WLB outcomes.

5.7.1.2 Work Management and Efficiency

Technology plays a pivotal role in structuring work processes, enhancing task organisation, and fostering seamless collaboration among team members. The findings reveal how digital tools, including cloud storage solutions, task management platforms, AI integration, and remote work infrastructure, contribute to WLB by improving efficiency, flexibility, and employee autonomy. Participants shared how these technological advancements enable work prioritisation, documentation, and structured task allocation, ultimately leading to a more balanced and productive work environment. A recurring theme among participants was the role of digital tools in improving task management and prioritisation. Cloud-based platforms and task management software were frequently mentioned as essential for structuring work processes and tracking progress. Participants emphasised how these tools ensure accountability, streamline workflow, and enhance collaboration. For instance, Olivia

described the integration of cloud storage and task management software in their workplace:

"We obviously have a cloud space—OneDrive—where everything gets stored. We also use Monday to organize tasks so that everyone stays updated. It gives a clear view of what others are doing. If I need advice from my CEO, I can check Monday and see their workload."

Similarly, Megan highlighted the efficiency-enhancing aspect of technology:

"Technology helps you manage and organize work... prioritising things that are more important."

These accounts illustrate how technology supports structured work allocation, ensuring that employees can focus on high-priority tasks, leading to improved decision-making and time management. Another key finding was the impact of technology on real-time documentation. Participants described how digital tools streamline documentation, reducing the burden of administrative work and enhancing efficiency. Sophie shared their experience with real-time documentation:

"About 90% of my cases don't require me to take notes and type them later. I document as I go. When I was in management, there was never a breathing space to do supervision and then sit down to type reports. You learn to do it as you go along."

This highlights how technology facilitates immediate documentation, reducing redundancy and ensuring that records are accurate and readily accessible. Clara further reinforced this by discussing the transition to cloud-based storage:

"We are moving to Google Drive for our learners' work. This transition enhances accessibility and security."

The findings suggest that cloud storage solutions not only provide centralized access to work documents but also enable efficient data retrieval, contributing to a more organized workflow. Digital tools were also found to facilitate collaboration and collective knowledge-sharing. Many participants discussed the value of shared workspaces in enabling team coordination and joint project execution. Olivia elaborated on this benefit:

"The great thing about technology is that we have all our data well organized. We can work on a campaign together using Google Sheets, where everyone inputs their ideas. It enhances collaboration, though it's not quite the same as brainstorming in person."

This reflects how technology enables remote teamwork by providing shared platforms where employees can contribute and track collective progress, reinforcing a culture of transparency and efficiency. The findings also highlight the increasing role of AI in workplace management. Participants described AI tools as integral to automating routine tasks, providing decision-making support, and enhancing overall efficiency. Emma described their enthusiasm for AI adoption:

"I love AI. My experience started with ChatGPT, but AI was around long before that. If you've ever used Grammarly, that's AI-driven."

Similarly, John emphasised AI's role in work collaboration and brainstorming:

"I'm a massive fan of AI... You need to use it as a colleague, just as you would have a discussion with someone to brainstorm ideas."

AI was perceived as reducing cognitive workload and providing employees with smart solutions for managing tasks. Sophie noted:

"One of the best tools is AI-driven documentation. You can put your thoughts down, and AI helps structure them efficiently."

These insights suggest that AI-driven tools enhance workplace efficiency by automating repetitive tasks, supporting brainstorming, and optimizing documentation processes. The integration of AI allows employees to focus on strategic tasks while minimizing stress, thereby improving overall well-being. The findings illustrate how technology is reshaping work management by enhancing efficiency, improving collaboration, and enabling flexible work processes. Cloud-based solutions, task management platforms, and AI-driven tools have become indispensable in structuring workflows, supporting decision-making, and reducing administrative burdens. Executives in the UK are leveraging these digital innovations to foster a balanced and productive work environment, ultimately promoting WLB and overall well-being.

5.7.2 Strategic Implementation of Technology

Participants in this study emphasised the strategic role of technology in enhancing WLB by improving efficiency and flexibility. A key theme that emerged was the necessity for organisations to make deliberate investments in digital solutions tailored to their operational needs. These investments not only streamline workflows but also minimize manual effort, fostering adaptable work environments. One participant

(Sally) illustrated this proactive approach, noting how their organisation had "invested in tailor-made software" to optimize administrative processes. This investment significantly reduced repetitive tasks, allowing employees to focus on more strategic responsibilities:

"My firm has invested quite a lot of money in having tailor-made software for the firm's requirements. If we wanted to pull up an invoice or generate a client engagement letter, it's all done for us at the press of a button." (Sally)

Similarly, other participants acknowledged the role of customized digital solutions in enhancing operational efficiency. However, challenges were also noted. Naomi shared a contrasting perspective, expressing dissatisfaction with their organisation's bespoke database system despite its user-friendly design:

"In our database, we don't use the commonly used databases and systems in the sector. We don't use Charms or anything like that. We've got our own, which is the one thing I would change about our organisation if I could, but don't tell anyone that. But our system was designed to be as user-friendly as possible, needing the least training." (Naomi)

Beyond automation, the process of integrating technology was seen as a collaborative effort. Ella provided an example of how engaging employees in system development ensures alignment with actual work demands:

"Our organisation invested heavily in a new casework management system because the previous one hadn't worked for the team. So, I ensured our workers were involved in the development, working directly with IT and case management teams to design forms and workflows that fit our needs." (Ella)

These accounts highlight the importance of aligning digital investments with employee workflows to maximize usability and adoption. Moreover, participants expressed that technology extends beyond infrastructure; it also influences organisational culture. Tina described technology as "essential infrastructure," positioning it as a fundamental enabler of WLB. However, participants recognised that successful technology integration depends on cultural readiness rather than enforced adoption. Instead of imposing rigid transitions, leaders encouraged organic acceptance, allowing employees to adopt digital tools at their own pace. As John noted:

"Finding people who accept change and letting them spread the word." (John)

This bottom-up approach enables early adopters to drive digital transformation, fostering a more inclusive and adaptable workplace. Additionally, participants

acknowledged generational differences in technology adoption. Lydia highlighted that younger employees tend to be more digitally savvy, whereas older employees often require additional support:

“Younger employees are very digitally savvy, whereas those above 40 require more support.” (Lydia)

Megan elaborated on this challenge, emphasizing the need for patience and structured training:

“If I can say, those above 40, in many cases, require a lot of support or self-drive to learn technology compared to someone in their mid-20s or early 30s. In many instances, I find colleagues in their 50s and 60s struggling even to use a printer.” (Megan)

To bridge these gaps, organisations implemented mentorship and peer learning strategies. Lydia described a structured co-working approach to ensure seamless knowledge transfer:

“The older ones require more training, and you have to be patient so that you’re not knocking their confidence. Pairing employees together allows them to utilise each other’s strengths.” (Lydia)

This approach expresses the importance of supportive learning environments in fostering digital confidence across age groups. Furthermore, participants recognised the role of technology in supporting remote work, particularly in globalized work settings. Naomi highlighted that digital tools facilitate seamless cross-time-zone collaboration, ensuring sustained productivity while preserving WLB. External factors, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, were identified as accelerators of digital transformation. Many participants acknowledged that the pandemic forced organisations to adopt remote work and digital collaboration tools at an unprecedented pace. Clara reflected:

“COVID was very instrumental in getting us to move to digital.” (Clara)

Ella reinforced this perspective, emphasizing that digital transformation should not be reactionary but rather a long-term strategy:

“Developing software for efficiency is crucial. It’s not just about reacting to external pressures; it’s about ensuring sustainable productivity and work-life balance.” (Ella)

Clara shared an example of how their organisation fully transitioned to digital processes during the pandemic:

“It was massive. Because we weren’t a company that had to stop working during COVID, we had to go online—using Google Drive, emails, and other digital platforms. We became paper-free and now operate almost entirely digitally.” (Clara)

Overall, the findings illustrate that executives view technology not only as an operational tool but also as a cultural enabler. To this end, they consider investing in tailored digital solutions, fostering adaptive adoption, and proactively responding to external challenges as a means to ensure that technology integration aligns with both organisational efficiency and employee well-being. These insights highlight the evolving role of digital tools in shaping flexible, efficient, and supportive work environments.

5.7.3 Technology Challenges

On the flipside, while technology is widely acknowledged as a key enabler of workplace efficiency and WLB, executives in the UK reported persistent challenges that undermined its intended benefits. Participants identified system reliability issues, inaccurate performance management tools, unreliable internet connectivity, insufficient training, limited access to necessary software, and digital fatigue as critical barriers to technology’s effectiveness. These challenges create operational inefficiencies, increase employee workload, and, in some cases, hinder effective communication and decision-making (See Table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Technology Challenges facing UK Executives' adoption of technology

Theme	Sub-theme	First-order Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Participants	Participant's Interpretation
Technology Challenges	System Reliability and Technological Failures	System failures, downtime, operational disruption	"For example, you know after the last two working weeks, our system has been down three days... There was a major data center failure..." (Ella)	Ella, Clara, Sarah, Peace	System failures are a significant issue, creating operational bottlenecks and hindering task completion. Participants described frequent downtime and frustration from technological disruptions.
			"There are things that go wrong or things aren't working as they should. We do have a computer company that we use, but it's just annoying that you have to keep asking them..." (Clara)		
	Inaccurate Performance Management Systems	Performance management inefficiency, manual processes	"One of my major problems at the moment is that the performance management system isn't accurate and doesn't work in the way it should..." (John)	John, Sarah, Peace	The performance management system is flawed, requiring manual workarounds and increasing administrative burdens. This inefficiency detracts from the purpose of using digital tools to streamline processes.
	Connectivity Issues and Communication Barriers	Unreliable internet, communication issues	"Sometimes you do have downtime, sometimes if the connectivity is not very good, the station can be a bit blur, and you cannot hear people very well." (Lydia)	Lydia, Peace, Sarah	Unreliable internet connectivity impedes seamless communication, especially in remote and hybrid work settings. This creates barriers for effective collaboration and decision-making.
			"I can't think of anything from the top of my head, but all I can tell you is when the internet's not working or the internet's down, it's really difficult..." (Peace)		
	Lack of Training and Technological Competency	Insufficient training, technology competency gaps	"Some are able to do genograms, and I think it's one thing that I want to learn, but I can never do that. The computerized genograms... but we don't know how to do it." (Sarah)	Sarah, Peace, Anita, John	Many employees struggle with technology due to lack of training, leading to inefficiencies. Structured training programs and hands-on

		"To be honest, I only use Word most times and I don't think I know enough because honestly, I shouldn't be still typing like word for word." (Peace)		learning opportunities are essential for improving productivity.
		"You know it's funny because we don't get updates, you know, we don't get the training on these systems, we kind of muddle our way through." (Anita)		
Limited Access to Essential Software	Software availability, licensing issues	"Lack of the software itself, yeah. We don't have the software because most of them are license-based where they have to pay a subscription." (Sarah)	Sarah, John, Peace	Limited access to essential software due to licensing costs and resource constraints hinders the ability to fully utilize technology, affecting workplace efficiency and performance.
Regulatory and Operational Constraints in Healthcare	Data security, operational barriers, remote access	"If I were to access patient information from home, the hospital would need to provide its own computer and assess my work area. That's extra cost and logistical concerns." (Tina)	Tina	Regulatory constraints in healthcare, particularly around data security, limit the ability to leverage technology for remote work, adding complexity and extra costs.
Digital Fatigue and System Overload	Platform overload, digital fatigue	"Companies have so many different systems and platforms. Whether it's budgeting or booking holidays, there's just so many." (Hazel)	Hazel, Sarah, Peace, John	The excessive number of platforms and tools leads to digital fatigue, making processes more cumbersome and complex rather than streamlining workflows.

System Reliability and Technological Failures

A recurring concern among participants was the reliability of technological infrastructure. System failures significantly disrupt workflow and impact employee performance, as highlighted by Ella, a Lead, Social Work who described a major data centre failure that rendered systems inoperative for three days:

"For example, you know after the last two working weeks, our system has been down three days... There was a major data centre failure... So it's not just us, it's everybody who's using that particular system at 3:00 days down."

This prolonged downtime illustrates how technological disruptions create bottlenecks, preventing employees from completing essential tasks efficiently. Similarly, Clara described the frustration of dealing with frequent system malfunctions:

"There are things that go wrong, or things aren't working as they should. We do have a computer company that we use, but it's just annoying that you have to keep asking them, oh, this disappeared or this isn't working today, or that seems to have dropped out."

Inaccurate Performance Management Systems

Beyond system failures, participants reported inefficiencies in performance management tools that fail to function as intended. John emphasised the limitations of these systems, stating:

"One of my major problems at the moment is that the performance management system isn't accurate and doesn't work in the way it should... you have to do it manually."

This inefficiency contradicts the very purpose of digital tools to streamline processes and reduce workload. Instead, employees are forced to adopt manual workarounds, increasing their administrative burden and reducing overall productivity.

Connectivity Issues and Communication Barriers

Reliable internet connectivity emerged as another major challenge affecting productivity. Participants frequently described difficulties in maintaining seamless communication, particularly in remote and hybrid work settings. Lydia, drawing from prior experience in Ghana, noted:

"Sometimes you do have downtime, sometimes if the connectivity is not very good, the station can be a bit blur, and you cannot hear people very well."

Similarly, Peace expressed frustration over unreliable network services:

"I can't think of anything from the top of my head, but all I can tell you is when the internet's not working or the internet's down, it's really difficult. Then you wish—well, if I had the individual right in front of me, I could have easily just done this, you know?"

These experiences show how technological disruptions impede collaboration, forcing employees to rely on less efficient alternatives.

Lack of Training and Technological Competency

A prominent challenge identified by participants was the insufficient training on workplace digital tools, which hindered employees' ability to maximise their efficiency and effectiveness. The analysis revealed that many employees struggle to fully engage with available technologies due to a lack of structured guidance and hands-on learning opportunities. Several participants expressed frustration over their limited competency with digital tools, emphasizing that training gaps create barriers to productivity. For instance, Sarah highlighted the difficulty of using specialised software, stating:

"Some are able to do genograms, and I think it's one thing that I want to learn, but I can never do that. The computerized genograms... but we don't know how to do it. Lack of training, lack of training."

Similarly, Peace shared the need for interactive, practical training sessions, reflecting on their own challenges in using word-processing tools efficiently:

"To be honest, I only use Word most times and I don't think I know enough because honestly, I shouldn't be still typing like word for word. So I feel that maybe, you know, training is always helpful. Show me, tell me, let me see what I need to press."

Anita further reinforced the theme by pointing out that employees are often expected to navigate new technologies without formal instruction:

"You know it's funny because we don't get updates, you know, we don't get the training on these systems, we kind of muddle our way through."

These insights suggest a pressing need for structured training programs that provide employees with the necessary skills to engage with workplace technology effectively. The absence of such training not only leads to inefficiencies but also fosters a sense

of frustration and disengagement among employees. Addressing these gaps through targeted, hands-on learning interventions could significantly enhance technological proficiency and overall workplace productivity.

Limited Access to Essential Software

In addition to training gaps, access to required technology remains a critical challenge. Several participants highlighted the unavailability of essential software due to licensing costs. Sarah noted:

"Lack of the software itself, yeah. We don't have the software because most of them are license-based where they have to pay a subscription."

Similarly, John reflected on the irony of job requirements versus available resources:

"I don't think the problem is using the technology all the time. I think it'll be good to use this, but we don't have the technology. We don't have the structure."

This indicates that, even when employees possess the necessary skills, the absence of appropriate tools hinders digital adoption and workplace efficiency.

Regulatory and Operational Constraints in Healthcare

For professionals in highly regulated industries such as healthcare, technological adoption is further complicated by data security and operational restrictions. Tina described the barriers to remote access:

"If I were to access patient information from home, the hospital would need to provide its own computer and assess my work area. That's extra cost and logistical concerns."

This highlights the constraints that prevent certain professionals from leveraging remote work benefits, even when technology theoretically enables it.

Digital Fatigue and System Overload

Finally, participants reported experiencing digital fatigue due to the overwhelming number of platforms and systems in use. Hazel reflected on the excessive reliance on multiple tools:

"Companies have so many different systems and platforms. Whether it's budgeting or booking holidays, there's just so many."

Rather than promoting efficiency, the sheer volume of digital tools sometimes creates additional complexity, making processes cumbersome rather than streamlined.

Overall, technology challenges in UK workplaces significantly undermine productivity and WLB despite its intended role as an enabler (See Table 5.5). System failures, inaccurate performance management tools, and unreliable internet connectivity create operational bottlenecks that increase employee workload. Insufficient training and limited access to essential software further hinder employees' ability to utilise digital tools effectively. Moreover, regulatory constraints in industries such as healthcare limit the extent to which technology can facilitate flexible work arrangements. Additionally, digital fatigue from excessive platform use adds to workplace stress rather than alleviating it. Collectively, these challenges highlight the gap between technology's intended purpose and its real-world implementation, underscoring the need for better infrastructure, training, and streamlined digital solutions to enhance workplace efficiency and employee well-being.

5.7.4 Sector-Differences in Technology Integration and Work-Life Balance

5.7.4.1 *Technology's perceived role*

Public Sector: In public sector narratives, technology emerged as an essential tool that often failed to fully meet work demands and sometimes contributed to feelings of frustration. Leaders highlighted outdated or unsupportive systems and minimal integration of advanced tools. For example, John noted:

"Systems are not designed to help and support. The database-based systems aren't designed to help and support the tasks we do."

Similarly, Sarah expressed limited digital engagement:

"I only use Word most times" and "I don't know how to just talk and then it's typed."

These insights suggest that technology in the public sector was often perceived as rigid, limiting rather than enhancing WLB.

Private Sector: In contrast, private sector leaders described technology as a powerful enabler of work flexibility, efficiency, and better boundary management. Advanced digital tools were readily integrated into daily workflows, facilitating communication and task organisation. Hazel highlighted:

"We use Teams for meetings... Slack for communication."

Megan further emphasised how emerging technologies like AI supported personal productivity:

"My new favourite friend is AI... I actually use ChatGPT to organise my day."

These accounts suggest that private sector leaders experienced technology as an empowering force, enhancing their ability to manage workloads and personal boundaries effectively.

Overall, sectoral differences in technology usage and perception were apparent. While public sector leaders often encountered technological systems as sources of inefficiency, private sector leaders leveraged technology as a facilitator of flexibility and improved work-life management. This contrast underscores how technological infrastructure and digital culture within organisations critically shape leaders' experiences of WLB.

5.7.4.2 Organisational Technology Infrastructure

Public Sector: Public sector leaders commonly reported significant challenges related to organisational technology infrastructure. Issues included outdated systems, lack of integrated digital tools, and inadequate training or support. For instance, Sarah highlighted:

"Lack of software licenses" and "No corporate electronic calendar."

Sophie also noted systemic disruptions:

"After the last 2 working weeks... our system has been down 3 days."

These challenges suggest that technological limitations in public sector organisations not only hindered efficiency but also exacerbated work-life balance difficulties by increasing administrative burdens and unpredictability.

Private Sector: In contrast, private sector leaders described more positive experiences, characterised by modern, purpose-built systems designed to streamline workflows and support remote or hybrid working. Olivia explained:

"We have a cloud space... OneDrive" and "We use the software on Monday just to organise all the tasks."

Similarly, Hazel noted:

"Firm has invested in tailor-made software."

Such investments in digital infrastructure allowed private sector leaders to operate more flexibly, manage tasks more efficiently, and maintain better boundaries between work and personal life.

In summary, organisational technology infrastructure emerged as a critical factor influencing leaders' work-life balance experiences across sectors. Public sector leaders often struggled with outdated, unreliable systems that undermined their efficiency, while private sector leaders benefited from proactive investments in technology that enhanced flexibility, productivity, and boundary management. This highlights the central role of technological readiness in shaping contemporary leadership experiences.

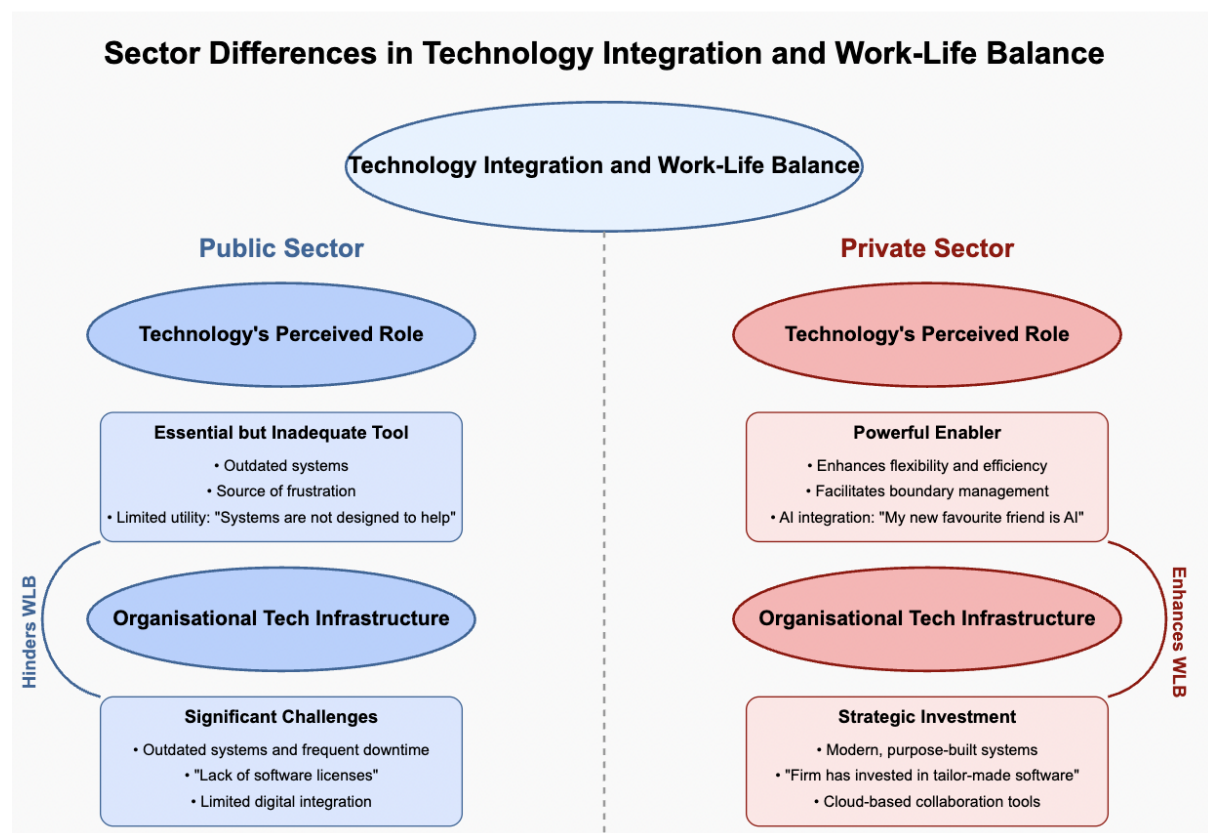


Figure 5.8: Sector-Differences in Technology Integration and WLB

5.8 Demographic differences in transformational leaders' receptiveness and use of technology to achieve Work life balance

The fourth objective of the study was to explore how demographic factors influence executives' technology adoption and WLB strategies. The study examines three key dimensions: First, the study analysed age-related differences in technology adoption, revealing how generational digital literacy and learning adaptability shape engagement with digital tools (See Table 5.6). Second, the analysis investigated gender differences in technology use, challenging traditional stereotypes while acknowledging how workplace context influences perceptions. Third, the analysis examined role-based differences, showing how professional responsibilities determine whether technology functions as a necessity or strategic enabler.

While the participants interviewed makes it difficult to assess demographic differences in technology adoption and WLB practices due to the specific female gender and mid-age dominance within the children's services sector, participants directly inferred demographic differences in receptiveness and use of technology through their observations and experiences. This offered a detailed perspective on how age, gender, and professional roles influence technological engagement among executives. Although the sample composition limits generalisability across diverse demographic groups, participants' insights provided valuable contextual understanding of how demographic factors shape technology adoption patterns and WLB strategies in professional settings.

5.8.1 Age-Related Technology Adoption

The findings revealed a strong link between age and technology adoption, highlighting generational differences in digital literacy and adaptability. Participants consistently acknowledged the influence of age on their engagement with digital tools, with younger employees displaying higher proficiency and confidence compared to their older colleagues. Two key sub-themes emerged: generational digital literacy and technology learning adaptability.

5.8.1.1 Generational Digital Literacy

The analysis revealed a distinct generational divide in digital literacy within the workplace. Younger employees, often referred to as "digital natives," demonstrated greater ease and familiarity with technology compared to their older counterparts, who were largely "digital immigrants." This divide shaped participants' experiences and perceptions of digital competency, influencing their engagement with technological tools. A recurring issue in participants' narratives was the role of early exposure to technology in shaping digital proficiency. Many older employees reported that their limited interaction with digital tools during their formative years contributed to lower confidence in adopting new technologies. As Tina reflected:

"I always think about it for myself because when I went to school, we were not using computers the way these children nowadays are using computers. I went to university in the 90s in Africa, and back then, we were not using computers like this. Now, everything is digital. I feel like if I had started using computers in secondary school like children today, it would have been different."

This perspective shed light how early exposure significantly influences digital adaptability. Older employees often had to learn digital skills later in life, which sometimes resulted in a steeper learning curve and greater apprehension. Some participants also highlighted the necessity of learning digital skills "on the fly," which often led to frustration and a preference for traditional methods. Anita, for instance, described the challenges of digital adaptation:

"If it's working fine, then it helps. But if it's not, it can be frustrating and difficult. My generation—probably those over 40—had to learn on the fly. I enjoy using software to make things more efficient, but I learned it on the job. I didn't take training courses; I wasn't brought up with it."

Similarly, Peace expressed the initial reluctance that comes with learning new digital tools:

"I'm not from the generation that grew up with technology, so it's all been a learned skill. Initially, I may feel a little wary of using something, particularly if I haven't used it before. It takes me a lot longer to navigate new technology, whereas using familiar methods seems simpler."

This insight aligns with broader findings, emphasising that while older employees are capable of adapting, their learning process often requires additional time and effort. Participants also observed that younger employees, having grown up in a digital

environment, were often more comfortable troubleshooting and navigating technological challenges. Clara noted this distinction in workplace interactions:

"One of my staff members is retiring soon. She considers herself ICT literate, but sometimes she struggles. We hear a lot of 'It's not working,' 'My computer isn't working,' and so on. Meanwhile, the youngest member of our team is a real whiz—she just gets it instantly."

This dynamic positions younger employees as informal digital facilitators, often assisting their older colleagues in resolving technical issues. However, despite the general trend of younger employees being more adept with technology, some participants challenged the assumption that digital literacy is strictly age-dependent. John highlighted that not all younger individuals are naturally proficient:

"It can be a factor... Yeah, people are scared of it. And that doesn't have to be just older people. Younger people do too, even though they grew up in a technological world. Not everybody is naturally tech-savvy."

This sentiment was echoed by Hazel who acknowledged that even professionals in technology-related roles struggle to keep pace with advancements:

"I work in this field, but even I feel behind when it comes to social media and emerging tech. I'm just managing to keep afloat, but the generation behind me seems much more adept."

Participants emphasised that the pace of technological advancement poses a challenge for many older employees. Megan noted the additional effort required for those over 40:

"For those above 40, in many cases, they require significant support or strong self-motivation to learn new technology compared to those in their mid-20s or early 30s. I've seen colleagues in their 50s and 60s struggle even with simple tasks like using a printer."

Naomi reinforced this point, describing how younger employees find digital processes more intuitive, whereas older employees often revert to familiar tools:

"The younger ones have an advantage because it's totally natural to them. Why wouldn't you do it digitally? But for older employees, it's more like, 'Where's my Word document? Where's my printed copy?'"

Overall, the findings indicate a clear generational digital divide in the workplace. While younger employees generally exhibit greater digital fluency, older employees often rely on traditional methods and require additional support to navigate digital tools

effectively. However, digital literacy is not solely determined by age—individual experiences, exposure, and willingness to learn also play a crucial role. These insights highlight the need for tailored digital upskilling initiatives that consider both generational differences and individual learning preferences.

5.8.1.2 Technology Learning Adaptability

Beyond generational differences, individual attitudes toward learning new technologies emerged as a crucial factor influencing technology adoption. While younger employees generally exhibited higher digital proficiency, adaptability varied across age groups. Contrary to common assumptions, some older employees displayed a strong willingness to learn, challenging the notion that age is a barrier to technological adaptation. Israel reinforced this perspective, noting, "The oldest employees seem more willing to learn something new." Similarly, Anita highlighted the variability in attitudes toward technology adoption, explaining that while some individuals resist technological change, others recognise its inevitability and are open to embracing new tools:

"I think that you will find that there are some older employees who don't want to move with technology, who are very resistant. But there are also some who are open-minded, who see that the world is moving forward and are more willing to adopt and adapt. Confidence plays a role as well; some people are simply more confident in their ability to learn new technologies."

This insight challenges the stereotype that older employees inherently resist digital transformation and highlights the importance of personal willingness to adapt. However, other participants reinforced the perception of higher digital proficiency among younger generations. Megan observed:

"Younger people tend to be more competent with software compared to older colleagues. Even children in high school, who are always on their phones, know more about technology than we do."

Similarly, Grace elaborated on the generational exposure to technology, explaining how younger employees have grown up in a digital environment that fosters proficiency:

"Younger people are more accustomed to using technology. They've been exposed to it through school and social media. In contrast, someone over 50 who hasn't had recent exposure or younger children to guide them may find it more challenging to adapt to

ICT tools. It's not about capability but about familiarity. Many older employees are excellent professionals but hesitate with digital tools because they weren't part of their formative work experience."

Workplace dynamics also reflect generational differences in technology preferences. Emma shared an experience where younger and older employees had differing views on communication tools:

"I worked in a team that was 50% young and 50% older. The younger employees didn't want to use email to send documents—they insisted on using OneNote. The older employees, including myself, found this shift confusing and struggled to adapt."

This highlights a shift in workplace technology habits, where younger employees often favour collaborative digital platforms over traditional methods such as email. Sophie reinforced this trend, acknowledging that while younger employees are generally more tech-savvy, adaptability varies within age groups:

"Generally, the younger ones are more comfortable with technology. However, not all young people are proficient, and some older employees are quite willing to learn."

Despite this openness among some older employees, persistent challenges remain. Olivia described difficulties faced by older employees in adopting workplace digital tools:

"In our company's finance team, many older employees struggle to use digital tools like Monday. They prefer writing tasks down on paper rather than logging them into the system."

These findings highlight a strong link between generational exposure and technology adoption while acknowledging that digital literacy is not solely age-dependent. Younger employees, often described as "digital natives," generally demonstrate higher proficiency and confidence in using digital tools. In contrast, older employees, as "digital immigrants," may require more effort to adapt due to limited prior exposure. However, individual willingness, confidence, and prior experience with technology significantly influence adoption. Additionally, workplace technology preferences often reflect generational differences, with younger employees favouring modern collaborative platforms while older employees tend to rely on familiar methods. While age-related disparities exist, fostering an inclusive digital learning environment that supports employees across generations can help bridge this gap. Ultimately,

technology adoption is shaped by a combination of generational exposure and individual adaptability rather than age alone.

5.8.2 Gender Differences in Technology Use

The analysis of participants' perspectives on gender differences in technology use among executives revealed three key themes: (1) Perceived gender differences, (2) Workplace context shapes observations, and (3) Individual differences supersede gender. These themes provide insight into how executives of different demographic backgrounds perceive and engage with technology to achieve WLB (See Table 5.6).

Table 5.6: Demographic Differences in Transformational Leaders' Receptiveness and Use of Technology to Achieve WLB

Theme	Sub-Theme	First-Order Codes	Illustrative Quotes	Participants	Interpretation
Age-Related Technology Adoption	Generational Digital Literacy	Digital natives vs. digital immigrants, early exposure, confidence in tech use	"I always think about it for myself because when I went to school, we were not using computers the way these children nowadays are using computers."	Tina, Anita, Peace, Clara, Megan, Naomi	Younger employees tend to be more proficient in technology due to early exposure, while older employees may require additional support.
	Technology Learning Adaptability	Willingness to learn, confidence, resistance to change, familiarity vs. capability	"The oldest employees seem more willing to learn something new."	Israel, Anita, Megan, Grace, Emma, Sophie, Olivia	Individual adaptability plays a crucial role in overcoming generational digital divides.
Gender Differences in Technology Use	Perceived Gender Differences	Traditional stereotypes vs. evolving norms	"Men are you know, from time they're born with kind of like that call... there was a time where it was men and gadgets."	Peace, Hazel	While gender stereotypes about tech proficiency persist, societal norms are shifting.
	Workplace Context Shapes Observations	Influence of industry composition, exposure to gender diversity	"I'm very mindful of generalisation because I'm working in an environment that is predominantly female."	Sophie, Hazel	Workplace demographics affect perceptions of gender differences in tech use.
	Individual Differences Supersede Gender	Competence over gender, access and experience as key factors	"I wouldn't say they do. I think it depends on the individual."	Grace, Anita, Sally	Technological proficiency is more dependent on individual access and experience than gender.
Role-Based Differences in Tech Use for WLB	Technology as a Functional Necessity vs. Strategic Enabler	Operational necessity vs. enabler of flexibility	"I'm using technology all day. Whether it's a content management system for the website, a database CRM..."	Hazel, Tina	Some roles require intensive technology use, while others use it selectively.
	The Role of Social Media and Communication Technologies	Engagement with younger demographics, professional networking	"Young people engage better with texting and social media apps. Once you know how to use them, it can be a hook."	Anita, Grace	Social media enhances engagement, especially in roles working with younger demographics.
	AI and Technological Adaptation	AI for decision-making, restructuring due to AI, adaptation challenges	"It depends on what I'm doing, but sometimes I might ask AI, 'This is what I've done, this is what I've got. Do you have anything to add?'"	John, Israel	AI is reshaping leadership roles, but its adoption varies by industry and readiness.

5.8.2.1 Perceived Gender Differences

Participants expressed differing views on the role of gender in technology use. Some referenced traditional stereotypes that historically positioned men as more inclined toward technology. One participant noted:

"Men are you know, from time they're born with kind of like that call... there was a time where it was men and gadgets, you know, men and their toys." (Peace)

However, the same participant also recognised that these perceptions are evolving, as both men and women in contemporary settings actively engage with technology:

"...the generation we have now is both men and women are very much driven and they use technology." (Peace)

This quote shift suggests that while gendered notions of technology use persist, they are becoming less relevant as societal norms change.

5.8.2.2 Workplace Context Shapes Observations

Participants highlighted the role of workplace composition and industry context in shaping their perceptions of gender differences in technology use. A participant working in a predominantly female environment was cautious about making broad generalizations:

"I'm very mindful of generalisation because I'm working in an environment that is predominantly female... I cannot generalise it because I've not had lots of men around me." (Sophie)

This highlights how exposure to diverse workplace demographics influences individual perceptions. Another participant reflected on gender representation in the technology sector, acknowledging that while progress has been made, imbalances persist:

"I actually did a post on LinkedIn today... [about] an all-female meeting and it was the first time that she'd seen that, and we work for a technology company... It's not that I think males are better at technology or intact, there's just an imbalance with genders in the tech space and there's progress to be made." (Hazel)

These observations suggest that gender differences in technology use may be more reflective of broader structural and organisational dynamics rather than inherent capabilities.

5.8.2.3 Individual Differences Supersede Gender

A dominant perspective among participants was that individual differences in skills and experience outweigh gender in determining technology use. Several participants emphasised that competence in technology is based on personal abilities rather than gender:

"I wouldn't say they do. I think it depends on the individual." (Grace)

"I think it's having the skills or not having the skills, which I don't think it doesn't matter whether either male or female." (Anita)

"I haven't noticed that to be fair at work and I think. Because of the nature of the company. I think we already have that in us to work with technology." (Sally)

This theme suggests that, rather than gender being a defining factor, technological proficiency is more closely linked to access, exposure, and personal aptitude. This perspective aligns with the growing emphasis on digital literacy and skill development in modern organisations, which increasingly prioritise individual competencies over traditional gender norms.

Overall, the findings indicate that while historical gender stereotypes about technology use persist, they are gradually fading in the face of changing societal attitudes and workplace dynamics. The influence of workplace composition on perceptions suggests that observed differences may be more contextual than inherent. Furthermore, the emphasis on individual capabilities point to the evolving nature of technology use, where competence and adaptability are prioritised over gender-based assumptions.

5.8.3 Role-Based Difference in Transformational Leaders' Receptiveness and Use of Technology to Achieve WLB

This section explores the role-based differences in transformational leaders' receptiveness to technology and its impact on WLB. It highlights how technology functions as both a necessity and a strategic enabler, depending on the role. While digital tools enhance productivity and flexibility in some roles, others face operational constraints. Social media and communication technologies play a crucial role in engagement and professional development. Additionally, AI adoption is reshaping leadership approaches, though integration levels vary. This section illustrates how

leaders' technology use is shaped by industry demands, organisational policies, and personal adaptability, influencing their WLB experiences

5.8.3.1 Technology as a Functional Necessity vs. Strategic Enabler

One of the key themes that emerged from the data is the varying ways in which executives perceive and use technology based on their roles. For some, technology is an indispensable functional tool integral to daily operations. Others see it as a strategic enabler that enhances flexibility and WLB. For instance, participants in marketing and digital-oriented roles, such as Hazel, highlighted how they engage with multiple digital platforms and software to perform their daily tasks. The extensive use of CRM systems, content management tools, and data analytics software was noted as necessary for productivity. As Hazel noted:

"I'm using technology all day. Whether it's a content management system for the website, a database CRM, or different platforms for data like Zoom Info, there are loads of different programs I need. I use a lot, more than the average, and I log into many different tech platforms."

This contrasts with roles that involve more hands-on management, such as healthcare professionals, where technology serves a different function. For instance, Tina, working in a clinical setting, acknowledged the necessity of technology for accessing patient information but also noted constraints in remote access due to managerial responsibilities:

"I just need the computer to access results and pull information from the analyser for doctors. But they have not put remote access in place because they want us to be in the building for day-to-day management."

This indicates that while technology facilitates certain aspects of work, its application is role-dependent, with some leaders having more flexibility to integrate digital tools for WLB than others.

5.8.3.2 The Role of Social Media and Communication Technologies

Another significant theme is the use of social media and communication platforms, particularly in roles that require engagement with younger demographics. Anita emphasised how understanding and leveraging social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, and texting applications improved engagement with younger employees or clients:

“Young people engage better with texting and social media apps. Once you know how to use them, it can be a hook.”

This highlights the necessity for leaders in youth-oriented sectors to be technologically adaptable to enhance communication effectiveness. In contrast, other executives noted that their use of social media was primarily for professional development and networking. Grace, for example, described how social media serves as a source of inspiration and continuous learning:

“I follow a lot of childcare apps and startups for training managers. Sometimes I just look to them for inspiration, especially if I’m having a bad day.”

This illustrates that while technology plays a different role for leaders in different sectors, its use extends beyond immediate work functions into personal and professional development.

5.8.3.3 Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Technological Adaptation

The study also found that the adoption of AI and advanced digital tools is reshaping leadership approaches across roles. John described using AI as an augmentation tool for decision-making:

“It depends on what I’m doing, but sometimes I might ask AI, ‘This is what I’ve done, this is what I’ve got. Do you have anything to add?’”

This suggests that leaders are beginning to integrate AI as a collaborative partner in their workflow, potentially reducing cognitive load and enhancing productivity. However, this approach was not universally observed across all roles. Israel noted that AI adoption has led to structural changes within organisations, suggesting that some leaders are still adapting to these technological shifts:

“We use a lot of technology in our job, and now AI is becoming a massive factor. We just did a restructure partly because of AI, and we’re rushing to get ahead of the curve.”

This indicates that while AI and automation are becoming more prevalent, their integration varies by industry, role, and readiness of the organisation. The analysis revealed that executives' receptiveness to and use of technology varies significantly based on their roles. While technology acts as a fundamental enabler in some sectors, facilitating remote work and engagement, in other sectors, its use is constrained by operational demands. The integration of AI is reshaping work structures, yet not all

leaders have fully embraced its potential. Furthermore, social media and digital platforms play a crucial role in professional development and engagement, especially among leaders interacting with younger demographics.

The findings reveal that demographic factors, including age, gender, and professional roles, significantly influence executives' receptiveness and use of technology to achieve WLB. Age-related differences highlight a generational digital divide, with younger employees generally exhibiting higher digital literacy, while older employees often require additional support and motivation to adapt. However, individual willingness to learn plays a crucial role in overcoming these barriers. Gender differences in technology adoption appear to be diminishing, with many participants emphasizing individual competence over traditional stereotypes. While historical biases persist, workplace dynamics and industry exposure shape perceptions of technological proficiency more than gender itself. Role-based differences indicate that technology serves distinct functions across leadership positions. For some, it is a fundamental operational necessity, while for others, it acts as a strategic enabler that enhances flexibility and WLB (See Table 5.6). The adoption of AI and digital communication tools is reshaping leadership approaches, yet its integration varies depending on organisational readiness and sector-specific needs. Overall, while demographic differences influence technology adoption, individual adaptability and workplace context are key determinants. Leaders who actively embrace technology as a strategic tool can leverage it to enhance productivity, engagement, and overall WLB.

5.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretations of the results of the thematic analysis conducted to explore the impact of transformational leadership on the WLB of executives in the UK. The chapter delved into the perception of WLB among UK executives, highlighting the diverse experiences and challenges they faced. It identified three distinct subthemes: balance achievers, balance sceptics, and WLB as a dynamic and contextual process. Balance achievers expressed satisfaction with their WLB, attributing their positive experiences to flexible work arrangements, structured schedules, and organisational support. Balance sceptics, on the other hand, perceived WLB as elusive or even unattainable due to occupational demands,

self-imposed work habits, and structural constraints. The chapter emphasized the fluid and dynamic nature of WLB, suggesting that it is not a fixed state, but a continuous journey shaped by personal, professional, and contextual factors.

The chapter also explored the coping mechanisms employed by UK executives to navigate WLB challenges. These strategies included professional boundaries and temporal autonomy, communication and accessibility management, psychological adaptation, and structural support. Executives actively shaped their work environments by setting clear expectations, avoiding role overload, and maintaining flexibility in their schedules. Communication and accessibility management involved limiting availability outside working hours and using gatekeeping mechanisms to regulate professional interactions. Psychological adaptation highlighted the importance of emotional regulation and mental resilience in managing workplace demands. Structural support, such as reliable childcare and spousal cooperation, played a crucial role in enabling WLB.

In relation to the second objective, the chapter explored various transformational strategies UK executives deploy to achieve WLB. These strategies included human-centric leadership, empowerment-focused leadership, inclusive leadership, and developmental leadership. Human-centric leadership involved empathetic communication and emotional support, fostering a psychologically safe work environment. Empowerment-focused leadership emphasized trust and autonomy, allowing employees to manage their own responsibilities and develop professionally. Inclusive leadership promoted collaborative decision-making and communication adaptability, ensuring that employees felt valued and heard. Developmental leadership focused on staff development and performance orientation, balancing career advancement with well-being.

The chapter also presented the results on executives' use of technology to achieve WLB. Technology was identified as a work enabler, enhancing efficiency, collaboration, and flexibility. Digital tools such as communication platforms, task management software, and AI integration played a significant role in streamlining workflows and supporting remote work. However, the chapter also highlighted the challenges associated with technology adoption, including system reliability issues, insufficient training, and digital fatigue.

Finally, the chapter examined the perceived demographic differences in the use of technology to achieve WLB. The demographic factors considered were age, gender, and professional roles. Younger employees were found to be more digitally savvy, while older employees required additional support and training. Gender differences were not so pronounced, rather emphasis was more on individual capabilities and adaptability. The next chapter discusses the findings that have emerged from the study in relation to extant literature.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents a critical discussion of the findings from this study. The discussion aims to deepen understanding of the multifaceted nature of WLB among senior professionals in these demanding sectors, drawing on both participants' lived experiences and relevant theoretical frameworks. The chapter is structured around key themes that emerged from the analysis guided by the research objectives. It begins by examining the WLB experiences of executives with regards to their perception, primary challenges they face in achieving WLB, coping mechanism, and factors that shape their WLB experience. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the findings on the transformational strategies deployed to achieve WLB including human-centric, empowerment-focused, inclusive and developmental leadership strategies. The chapter also discussed how executive leverage technology to achieve WLB and finally the findings on demographic differences in the use of technology to achieve WLB are discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter

6.1 Work-Life Balance Experiences of Executives in Health and Social Care in the UK

The study uncovered interesting findings relating to the WLB experiences of executives in health and social care in the UK, particularly England and Wales. The discussion of the experiences are multifaceted covering executives' perception of WLB, WLB challenges, coping mechanisms and factors shaping those WLB experiences.

6.1.1 Perception of WLB

This study identified three distinct perspectives on WLB among health and social care executives: balance achievers, balance sceptics, and those who view WLB as a dynamic process. While prior studies have recognised variability in individual WLB perceptions (Guest, 2002; Clark, 2000), it has tended to organise these within a binary framework of balance achieved versus balance absent. The tripartite typology generated by this study challenges that framing, and in particular the third orientation i.e. WLB as a dynamic, temporally situated negotiation shaped by ongoing boundary

work, represents an empirically substantiated category that binary models do not accommodate. Among senior executives in the UK health and social care sector, this orientation reflects a distinctive occupational reality: one in which balance is not a stable state to be achieved but a continuous, context-responsive process of adjustment. This tripartite conceptualisation, through the lens of spillover theory, which posits that experiences, emotions, and behaviours can transfer across work and family domains (Khateeb, 2021), these perspectives illustrate how both positive and negative spillover shapes individual perceptions of WLB.

The experiences of balance achievers align with research emphasising the role of flexibility, autonomy, and organisational support in facilitating positive spillover between work and life domains (Arzu *et al.*, 2022; Ferreira *et al.*, 2025; García-Salirrosas *et al.*, 2023). These participants described high levels of perceived control over their schedules and working arrangements, supporting Grzywacz and Carlson's (2007) assertion that control is a key determinant of WLB satisfaction. The centrality of organisational support observed in this group also echoes findings by Kossek *et al.* (2011) and Wilson (2021) who argue that supportive work environments foster conditions where resources gained at work can positively influence home life, thus enabling beneficial spillover.

Executives reporting satisfaction with WLB often credited hybrid work models and flexible schedules, which allowed for better alignment between professional and personal responsibilities. These experiences support Fung *et al.* (2021) and Suter and Kowalski (2021) findings that schedule and location control enhance perceived WLB. Yucel and Fan (2023) similarly argued that control over work location facilitates positive spillover by reducing stress and improving time allocation. Interestingly, the findings highlighted the role of COVID-19 in changing the dynamics of work in favour of flexibility (Dogra & Parrey, 2024) such that it supported WLB. This moves away from mainstream argument that COVID-19 had a negative impact of professionals particularly in health and social care (Gomes *et al.*, 2024; Rana, 2025). For example Rana (2025) reported the negative role COVID-19 played on the WLB of employees in the healthcare sector.

However, this study extends such findings by highlighting the paradoxical nature of flexibility. Despite favourable conditions, even balance achievers reported difficulty

detaching psychologically from work, indicating that structural support does not always mitigate negative spillover. This aligns with Sandoval-Reyes *et al.*'s (2021) work on the challenge of psychological detachment and supports Mikolajczyk *et al.* (2023) argument on work intensification, where flexibility may heighten expectations of constant availability, undermining balance through increased negative spillover.

Conversely, balance sceptics viewed WLB as largely unachievable, especially in the context of crisis-driven and emotionally demanding roles. Their perspectives contribute to a growing body of literature that critiques the attainability of WLB in high-stakes environments (Gragnano *et al.*, 2020; Olaniyan *et al.*, 2022). This is similar to Guest (2002) who considered achieving balance a myth. The metaphor of WLB as a “unicorn” offered by one participant encapsulates critiques from Storm and Muhr (2023), who argue that dominant WLB discourses fail to reflect the structural realities of work, especially in demanding professions. These sceptics' experiences align with Kreiner *et al.*'s (2009) findings on boundary permeability, where job demands routinely spill over into personal life, often unidirectionally and negatively. The intense and unpredictable nature of executive roles in health and social care appears to reinforce Olaniyan *et al.*'s (2022) and Frick *et al.*'s (2025) assertions that job characteristics in helping professions structurally inhibit WLB.

Moreover, many balance sceptics demonstrated self-awareness of their own role in sustaining imbalance, reflecting dynamics of willing workaholism (Burke, 2000; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009) and work devotion schemas (Blair-Loy & Cech, 2022). These internalized norms create a scenario where executives, despite possessing control over their time, remain tethered to work due to identity concerns and cultural expectations (Sandberg & Löwstedt, 2025). This is a reflection of an autonomy paradox, wherein personal agency is undermined by professional norms, leading to persistent negative spillover (Berti & Simpson, 2019; Mazmanian *et al.*, 2013). The absence of behavioural change despite cognitive recognition of dysfunction suggests deep psychological entrenchment in overwork cultures, a key mechanism sustaining the transfer of stress and overload across domains.

Some participants viewed WLB as a dynamic and evolving process, characterised by fluid boundary negotiation and context-dependent adaptations. This perspective aligns with recent theoretical developments emphasising the temporal and situational

variability of WLB (Agosti *et al.*, 2017; Hasan *et al.*, 2020). From a spillover perspective, this group's orientation reflects an ongoing effort to manage and regulate the direction and intensity of spillover effects. Casper *et al.* (2018) advocated for such deeper understanding, recognising that WLB is not static but shifts over time in response to personal and professional transitions. Kreiner *et al.* (2009) similarly argue that boundaries are not fixed but are continually negotiated, while Kossek and Lautsch (2012) framed boundary management as a continuum shaped by environmental and personal factors.

The emphasis on intentionality and agency in this group supports Koch and Binnewies (2015) and Kangas *et al.*'s (2023) findings on proactive boundary strategies, where individuals consciously develop mechanisms to mediate spillover effects and protect well-being. This approach also aligns with Kossek *et al.*'s (2021) position that work-life strategies evolve in tandem with changing life stages and responsibilities. For executives in health and social care, this dynamic perspective appears particularly relevant, as they navigate shifting professional demands alongside evolving family and personal needs. These three perspectives provide a deeper understanding of how spillover dynamics shape WLB experiences, revealing that balance is linked to structural conditions, psychological engagement, occupational context, and temporal adaptation.

6.1.2 Challenges to Achieving Work-Life Balance

The study identified three major challenges affecting the WLB of health and social care executives in the UK: blurred boundaries, extended work hours, and work-related stress.

Although boundary blurring, extended working hours, and occupational stress are well-established features of demanding professional work (Mazmanian *et al.*, 2013; Murphy & Doherty, 2011; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015), their expression among the executives in this study is shaped by conditions specific to the health and social care context in England and Wales: chronic understaffing, crisis-driven workflows, regulatory accountability pressures, and a marked asymmetry between public and private sector leaders in their capacity to exercise boundary control. These institutional conditions

produce a configuration of challenges whose form and intensity extend existing knowledge.

Drawing on spillover theory, these challenges reveal how work-related demands and stressors increasingly intrude into personal life, leading to a cumulative depletion of psychological and physical resources. The erosion of traditional work-life boundaries was a significant concern. Participants described how technology enabled constant connectivity, with laptops and smartphones becoming ever-present tools even during holidays. This links to the always-on culture mentioned in extant scholarship (Ma *et al.*, 2021; Ninaus *et al.*, 2021; Tammelin & Alakärppä, 2021; Tennakoon, 2021) creating a permanent tether to work. Such connectivity fosters negative spillover, as the boundaries between work and home become porous, leading to increased stress and reduced opportunities for psychological recovery. This supports Mazmanian *et al.*'s (2013) observation that mobile technologies introduce a paradox: while offering flexibility, they also intensify expectations of constant availability.

In addition, the findings here aligns with recent scholarship asserting that technology has transformed the concept of the workplace, turning the home into an extension of the office (Al-Saidi, 2015; Bardoel & Drago, 2016; Currie & Eveline, 2011; Duan *et al.*, 2021; Duxbury & Smart, 2010; Jackson *et al.*, 2020; Mikolajczyk *et al.*, 2023; Moylan, 2008; Nagy, 2020; Nam, 2014; Raja & Soundarapandian, 2022; Rasool *et al.*, 2022; Shintri & Narasalagi, 2021) and challenging domain-based WLB theories that assume distinct separations between work and non-work domains (Clark, 2000). Moreover, the compulsive email-checking behaviours reported by participants aligns with the findings of Derks *et al.* (2014) on the impairment of psychological detachment due to smartphone use. These behaviours highlight a crucial aspect of spillover theory not just the presence of boundary blurring, but its emotional and cognitive impacts on individuals' capacity to disengage from work. Similarly, these accounts support Olafsen and Bentzen's (2020) research on the importance of psychological detachment in promoting well-being. The findings underscore Kreiner *et al.*'s (2009) argument that boundary management requires not only structural solutions but also psychological strategies for transitioning between life domains. Yet, despite research outlining these risks, many organisations continue to champion remote and flexible work models

without addressing their unintended consequences (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010), exacerbating negative spillover effects.

The second major challenge, extended work hours, reflects a widespread culture of overwork (Adisa *et al.*, 2017a; Drew & Murtagh, 2006; Gopinathan *et al.*, 2020; Marsh *et al.*, 2022; Tams *et al.*, 2020). Participants described working 60–70 hour weeks, consistent with concept of presenteeism beyond office hours and studies Murphy and Doherty (2011) and Brown *et al.* (2019) illustrated how excessive hours are normalised certain professions. Murphy and Doherty (2011) found that long hours and presenteeism were inherent expectations from senior manager roles in Europe. These extended schedules demonstrate how temporal spillover occurs when work demands intrude not only into psychological space but into time once allocated to personal life.

This culture often equates visible commitment with long hours (Adisa *et al.*, 2016; Ali *et al.*, 2023; Tunji-Olayeni *et al.*, 2017), creating pressure for executives to signal dedication through extended presence (Mladenović & Krstić, 2021). Particularly troubling was the finding that reduced working days often failed to reduce workload, simply compressing tasks into fewer hours, a phenomenon aligned with Kelliher and Anderson's (2009) discussion of work intensification in resource-constrained sectors. Bouwmeester *et al.* (2021) observed an increase in negative WLB experiences particularly in strategy houses due to heightened work pressures. This suggests that longer work hours, especially in strategic roles, may compromise WLB perceptions among consultants. These structural and cultural expectations result in negative resource spillover, as executives are left with diminished energy and time for personal recovery. Such dynamics support Mikolajczyk *et al.*'s (2023) critique of modern work environments as toxic to employee well-being and echo Duan *et al.*'s (2021) argument that schedule control without workload relief is unlikely to produce meaningful improvements in WLB. Despite formal WLB policies, informal norms and operational demands in health and social care organisations may undermine well-being, perpetuating cycles of negative spillover.

The third major challenge identified was work-related stress, which appeared as both a symptom and consequence of boundary blurring and overwork. Participants described physical manifestations of stress, including exhaustion and musculoskeletal problems. These outcomes align with the literature on the physiological toll of chronic

overwork (Ali *et al.*, 2023; Marsh *et al.*, 2022; Tams *et al.*, 2020). Kalliath *et al.* (2020) similarly document how prolonged work stress contributes to physical and mental health deterioration, while Sonnentag and Fritz (2015) emphasised that failure to detach psychologically from work can exacerbate health risks such as cardiovascular problems.

The narratives of sustained fatigue and diminished personal time reflect the core principle of resource depletion within spillover theory where the energy drained by one domain leaves individuals ill-equipped to function in another (Suter & Kowalski, 2021; Wayne *et al.*, 2017). This is consistent with Sonnentag's (2018) research, which shows that insufficient detachment impairs psychological recovery, leading to chronic fatigue. For executives in emotionally intensive roles, as in health and social care, the dual impact of emotional labour and extended hours amplifies vulnerability to such negative outcomes (Deng *et al.*, 2022; Gautam & Singh, 2017; Harb & Keyrouz, 2022).

Finally, participants' reflections on increased organisational strain during contextual disruptions (e.g., lockdown periods) reveal how environmental and systemic conditions can amplify negative spillover. This supports Charoensukmongkol and Puyod (2021) and Adisa *et al.*'s (2021) assertion that situational constraints such as crises, staffing shortages, or systemic inefficiencies profoundly shape individual WLB experiences.

6.1.2.1 Sector Differences

Further analysis revealed significant sector-based differences in how these challenges manifest amongst health and social care executives. The interplay between workload management, boundary setting, and organisational support structures varied considerably between public and private sector leaders, highlighting how institutional contexts shape individual WLB experiences.

Public sector leaders reported particularly acute experiences of boundary erosion and extended working hours, with minimal control over workflow despite formally prescribed schedules. These align with Mladenović and Krstić's (2021) observations regarding the intense pressures faced by public service professionals, particularly in crisis-response environments. The findings echo Gopinathan *et al.*'s (2020) research

on healthcare professionals, which identified how organisational demands in resource-constrained settings often override individual boundary-management efforts.

In contrast, private sector leaders demonstrated greater agency in structuring work schedules and establishing firmer work-life boundaries despite comparable workload intensities. This pattern supports Kreiner *et al.*'s (2009) assertion that autonomy in role structuring significantly impacts boundary management effectiveness. Similarly, Kelliher and Anderson's (2010) research suggests that organisational authority and position strength correlate with enhanced schedule control, enabling senior private sector leaders to better mitigate negative spillover effects.

Organisational support structures further amplified these sectoral differences. Public sector participants consistently highlighted systemic constraints including staffing shortages, funding limitations, and rigid policy frameworks that undermined WLB initiatives. These constraints align with Adisa *et al.*'s (2021) research on how institutional structures shape individual WLB experiences, particularly in publicly funded services. The findings also support Charoensukmongkol and Puyod's (2021) assertion that situational constraints profoundly affect wellbeing outcomes.

Private sector organisations, conversely, demonstrated greater structural capacity and cultural willingness to implement meaningful wellbeing initiatives. Leaders reported organisations actively investing in employee wellbeing through dedicated programmes. These findings support Duan *et al.*'s (2021) research suggesting that organisational resource allocation significantly impacts the effectiveness of WLB interventions. Similarly, Raja and Soundarapandian's (2022) work indicates that targeted wellbeing initiatives can substantially mitigate negative spillover effects when adequately resourced.

These sectoral differences highlight how the previously discussed challenges of boundary blurring, extended hours, and work-related stress are not experienced uniformly across organisational contexts. Rather, they are mediated by institutional factors including leadership autonomy, resource availability, and organisational culture. As Mikolajczyk *et al.* (2023) argue, effective WLB interventions must account for these systemic variations rather than focusing solely on individual coping strategies. The findings suggest that spillover theory must be contextualised within specific organisational settings, as the mechanisms of resource depletion operate differently depending on institutional constraints and support structures (Ali *et al.*, 2023; Harb & Keyrouz, 2022; Marsh *et al.*, 2022).

6.1.3 Coping Mechanisms

The findings revealed a range of coping mechanisms employed by executives in health and social care to manage WLB, including professional boundary-setting, temporal autonomy, communication and accessibility management, psychological adaptation, and structural support. Participants described employing structured boundary-setting, delegation, and strategic time management to counterbalance WLB challenges. These actions align with Kossek *et al.*'s (2012) taxonomy of boundary management, particularly the 'separators', who strive to maintain clear divisions between work and personal life. Such segmentation illustrates how executives proactively reduce negative spillover from work into home life (Kreiner *et al.*, 2009). The emphasis on assertive role definition and redistribution of responsibilities supports Kangas *et al.* (2023) findings that boundary-setting is a form of active negotiation with organisational norms and expectations, aimed at limiting the spill of job demands into personal time. Participants' use of time management techniques, such as time journaling and contingency planning, indicates the use of temporal coping strategies to navigate overlapping demands. These findings support Mazmanian *et al.*'s (2013) observation that individuals can reclaim temporal autonomy by deliberately structuring their time, despite organisational pressures for constant availability. This echoes Haun *et al.*'s (2023) work on individual crafting behaviours, whereby professionals shape their work conditions to better align with personal priorities thus reducing negative temporal spillover and enhancing domain integration.

The management of communication and accessibility was another critical coping mechanism. Participants employed strict email boundaries and limited weekend availability, rejecting norms of constant responsiveness. These behaviours expand Leppäkumpua and Sivunen's (2023) work on communication management by illustrating how executives consciously redefine expectations about their availability, resisting the culture of 24/7 accessibility. This challenges earlier WLB literature (Blair-Loy & Cech, 2022) which often depicts executives as inevitably sacrificing personal time for career advancement. Instead, these findings align with Ramarajan and Reid's (2013) and Radcliffe *et al.*'s (2022) notion of strategic resistance to overwork cultures. The use of gatekeeping mechanisms, such as personal assistants, supports Perlow and Porter's (2009) argument that organisational tools and role-based systems are

essential for creating protected time and managing professional demands. These strategies show how both individual and structural tactics are employed to mitigate negative spillover from work into personal life.

Participants also demonstrated a range of psychological coping strategies, including emotional regulation and internal reframing, to manage the emotional demands of leadership. These align with Sonnentag and Fritz's (2015) research on the cognitive dimensions of WLB, indicating that managing internal boundaries is as vital as managing external ones. The ability to maintain composure amid stress illustrates concept of emotional labour, underscoring the emotional toll of leadership roles (Beharrie & Mabitsela, 2023). Here, executives expended emotional energy to prevent internal stress from spilling over into their personal lives, reflecting an intrapersonal coping layer of boundary management. These findings expand Ashforth *et al.*'s (2000) boundary theory by demonstrating the critical importance of psychological detachment alongside physical separation. Participants' efforts to step back and recharge further reinforce the need for mental disengagement from work to restore depleted psychological resources, consistent with Sonnentag and Fritz's (2015) emphasis on psychological detachment as central to recovery. The findings suggest that WLB requires not only structural interventions but also the development of internal psychological resilience strategies that allow executives to sustain equilibrium across domains.

The study found the importance of reliable childcare and supportive partners as a critical enabler of WLB among executives in this study. This aligns with spillover theory, which posits that experiences in one domain (e.g., family or work) can transfer and influence experiences in another, either positively or negatively (Mordi *et al.*, 2023). The findings demonstrate positive spillover, where structural supports in the home domain such as spousal involvement and dependable childcare enhanced functioning and well-being in the work domain.

Participants' accounts highlight the interdependent nature of structural support systems, illustrating how external resources facilitate not only professional effectiveness but also personal well-being. These dynamics reflect Wayne *et al.*'s (2017) notion of crossover effects, where partners' behaviours and support directly influence each other's WLB outcomes. Such insights reinforce Vyas's (2022),

argument for conceptualising WLB at the family level, acknowledging the collaborative and collective management of boundaries within households. In this context, structural supports also contribute to work-family facilitation (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007), further supporting the idea that the relationship between work and family is not inherently conflictual. Instead, the study highlights how structural supports both formal (e.g., childcare) and informal (e.g., spousal support) create conditions for mutual enhancement across domains, challenging deficit-oriented models that focus solely on work-family conflict (Ferreira *et al.*, 2025). This coping strategy is linked to Folkman and Moskowitz's (2004) assistance seeking strategy of seeking social support in managing potential role conflicts.

Moreover, these findings shed light on the gendered dimensions of WLB, particularly for women in executive roles, who often encounter greater domestic expectations alongside their professional responsibilities (Blair-Loy & Cech, 2022; Tunji-Olayeni *et al.*, 2017). In this regard, structural support systems play a compensatory role, enabling women leaders to navigate dual roles more sustainably. This supports prior research emphasising that spillover is not just an individual phenomenon, but one shaped by broader social and organisational structures (Wayne *et al.*, 2020).

6.1.3.1 Sector Differences

The analysis further revealed significant sector-specific variations in coping mechanisms employed by health and social care executives. Particularly notable were differences in decision-making autonomy and boundary management strategies between public and private sector leaders, which substantively influenced their ability to achieve work-life balance.

Public sector executives reported considerably more constrained decision-making autonomy, with their schedules heavily determined by external demands including policy requirements, emergency responses, and bureaucratic processes. This aligns with Gregg's (2018) observation that public sector professionals often experience diminished control over temporal boundaries due to institutional structures and political imperatives. The rigid operational frameworks within public organisations appear to limit leaders' ability to exercise agency over their time, resulting in predominantly reactive rather than proactive work patterns. As Heponiemi *et al.* (2021) argue, such

institutional constraints can significantly hamper professionals' capacity to implement effective boundary-setting strategies, regardless of individual intent or capability. The necessity of working outside contracted hours to manage workload, as expressed by some participants illustrates a situation where organisational demands inevitably penetrate personal domains due to structural limitations (Ryan & Bergin, 2021).

In contrast, private sector executives demonstrated markedly greater autonomy in structuring their schedules and managing workloads, with flexibility often embedded within organisational culture. This enhanced autonomy appears to facilitate what Kossek and Lautsch (2018) term 'customised work arrangements', whereby professionals can tailor their temporal boundaries to accommodate both professional and personal priorities. The practice of compensatory time allocation—working longer hours one day balanced by a later start the next day—reflects Sturges' (2012) concept of 'temporal crafting', through which professionals actively shape their working patterns to achieve sustainable integration. The intentional organisational design supporting flexibility, exemplifies what Skinner *et al.* (2021) identify as 'organisational enablers' of effective work-life boundary management.

These sectoral differences extended to boundary management strategies, with public sector leaders predominantly employing reactive approaches driven by external pressures. Rather than establishing firm boundaries, these executives frequently adjusted their personal time around overwhelming work obligations. McDowall and Lindsay (2014) described this approach as accommodative coping. The physical and emotional exhaustion reported during periods of intense demand, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, corresponds with Kinman and McDowall's (2020) findings on the severe boundary erosion experienced by public service professionals during crisis periods. This pattern suggests that structural constraints within public organisations may fundamentally limit the effectiveness of individual coping strategies, supporting Chung and Van der Lippe's (2020) contention that organisational context significantly determines boundary management efficacy.

In marked contrast, private sector executives demonstrated more proactive strategies for managing work-life boundaries, including clearly defined non-work hours and deliberate time management practices. These approaches align with boundary control behaviours, through which professionals actively establish and defend temporal and

psychological borders between domains (Sturges and Guest, 2004). The practice of time journaling and systematic planning described by participants mirrors what Mazmanian *et al.* (2013) term 'temporal autonomy practices', whereby professionals deliberately structure their availability to preserve personal time despite organisational pressures. The explicit rejection of weekend work (P19) exemplifies what Kreiner *et al.* (2009) describe as 'boundary work', where individuals actively resist organisational norms of constant availability.

The disparity in boundary management capabilities between sectors reflects Kossek *et al.*'s (2012) argument that boundary management is not merely an individual choice but is fundamentally shaped by organisational structures and professional contexts. These findings contribute to work-life balance scholarship by demonstrating that sectoral characteristics significantly moderate the relationship between individual coping strategies and work-life outcomes. As Ollier-Malaterre and Foucreault (2017) suggest, organisational flexibility and leadership autonomy appear to be critical contextual factors that enable or constrain effective boundary management. The greater autonomy observed in private sector settings appears to facilitate what Ďuranová and Ohly (2016) term 'proactive work-life management', whereas the constrained environment of public sector organisations often necessitates more reactive approaches to managing domain boundaries.

These sectoral differences in coping mechanisms have important implications for WLB theory and practice, suggesting that effective interventions must address not only individual strategies but also the structural conditions that enable or inhibit their implementation. As Jostell and Hemlin (2018) argue, sustainable work-life balance requires alignment between individual boundary preferences and organisational boundary conditions. These findings reinforce Kossek and Lautsch's (2018) call for greater attention to the contextual enablers of boundary management, particularly highlighting how sectoral characteristics may determine the range of coping strategies available to health and social care executives.

6.1.4 Factors shaping WLB experiences

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the factors that shape WLB experiences of executives in the UK health and social care sector. The analysis

revealed that executives' WLB is influenced by multiple factors including flexibility through hybrid work models, leadership roles, sector-specific demands, technology dynamics, and organisational support structures.

6.1.4.1 Flexibility of Hybrid work

The study found prevalence of hybrid work among executives in the health and social care sector. The hybrid work model supported flexibility and permeability. Flexibility refers to the extent to which the boundaries can be altered in terms of space and time. On the other hand, permeability is the extent to which the psychological concerns emerging from one role (work or family) can intrude on the other currently performed role (family or work) (Adisa *et al.*, 2021). For many this flexibility through hybrid work was a key enabler of WLB among health and social care executives. This experience aligns largely with some advocates of flexible working arrangements. For example, some studies found that technology has positively influenced WLB (Raja & Soundarapandian, 2022; Shintri & Narasalagi, 2021). Most of these studies have cited the flexibility that telework, for example, affords (Hubbard, 2016). Notably, while the survey carried out by First Psychology Scotland (2015) acknowledged the widespread notion that technology is interruptive, their findings showed that close to 60% were satisfied with their WLB despite using digital technology for longer periods, in wide range of scenarios and beyond their work hours. Similarly, Nam (2014) found that the employees' perception of flexibility and permeability with regard to the balance of work and life spheres is shaped by technology. In addition, the study found that technology determines the type of work-life balance experienced by individuals. In tandem, a more recent study of female executives also supports the positive role technology plays in assisting them in meeting the demands of work and family simultaneously (Nagy, 2020). The findings indicate that the ability to alternate between office and remote work provides executives with autonomy and control over their schedules, consistent with extant literature arguing that flexibility enhances perceived control over work-life boundaries (Linda and Fitria, 2016; Tanner, 2018; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020). The participants' emphasis on productivity gains through reduced workplace distractions echoes Kelliher and Anderson's (2009) findings that remote work can enhance concentration and efficiency for complex tasks.

However, the study also revealed important issues relating to how hybrid work arrangements are experienced. The logistical challenges highlighted by participants particularly around commuting distances and childcare responsibilities demonstrate what Nagy's (2020) describe as the paradox of flexibility, wherein flexible arrangements can create new forms of work-life conflict. For instance, the current study found that executives often experienced exhaustion from combining childcare responsibilities with commuting. This is an indication of how structural constraints can undermine the theoretical benefits of hybrid working (Drew & Murtagh, 2006; Edralin, 2012; Fung *et al.*, 2021).

In addition, the current study found observed a shift from time-based work to a results-oriented work culture. In this sense, flexibility was not just about location but also about performance-based expectations. From the results, many executives emphasised that as long as tasks were completed efficiently, strict adherence to rigid schedules was unnecessary. This shift represents a significant evolution in management philosophy within health and social care organisations and extends Uhl-Bien and Arena's (2018) work on how organisational discourses around flexibility can reshape professional identities and practices. Notably, this finding challenges (to some extent) Drew and Murtagh's (2006) stance that flexible options, such as working from home, reduced hours, or flextime, are often deemed incompatible with holding high-ranking positions. On the contrary, the current study shows that the emerging emphasis on outcomes rather than physical presence challenges traditional presenteeism cultures that have been particularly entrenched in healthcare settings (Kaihlainen *et al.*, 2023). Nevertheless, as Lewis and Beauregard (2018) cautioned, results-based management approaches require careful implementation to avoid intensifying work pressures or creating implicit expectations of constant availability.

6.1.4.2 Leadership role

The findings regarding the impact of leadership roles on WLB contribute to the understanding of how hierarchical position influences boundary management strategies. So far, empirical discourse remains controversial and vary across contexts. On one hand, the current study found a continuous demands for accessibility which aligns with Duxbury and Smart's (2011) concept of role overload among executives, where leadership responsibilities create expectations of perpetual availability.

Particularly striking is the explicit organisational expectation of reduced WLB for those in leadership positions, as exemplified by the director who stated that registered managers "are not expected to have much of a work-life balance" and should work 60-70 hours weekly. This finding extends research on how professional identity can normalise extreme work hours and the sacrifice of personal time (Gopinathan *et al.*, 2020).

Insights from the work of Murphy and Doherty (2011) suggested the pervasive acceptance of long hours and presenteeism as integral to higher-level roles being a norm in the professional landscape. For example, the findings from the study of Mordi *et al.* (2023) indicated that academics in the UK experience issues around increased boundary permeability between work and nonwork domains and role overlap, which engender the transfer of negative rather than positive spillover experiences and exacerbate negative consequences to the well-being of academics. This further reinforces why the current study revealed how leadership roles in health and social care can institutionalise what ideal worker norms, where commitment is measured through unlimited time availability (Restivo *et al.*, 2022).

However, the finding that some participants experienced improved WLB after stepping down from leadership positions introduces an important counterpoint to assumptions about career progression. This aligns with McGinnity and Russell's (2015) perspective on downshifting as a deliberate career strategy to reclaim WLB. The experiences of some participants who noted being able to take holidays after leaving management, illustrates what Pedersen and Lewis (2012) describe as opting out of intensive career trajectories in favour of personal well-being.

6.1.4.3 Industry-Specific Factors

The findings highlight distinctive sector-specific challenges that complicate WLB for executives in health and social care. The inflexibility of roles requiring physical presence, particularly in healthcare, contrasts with sectors offering greater remote work possibilities. This supports Křížková *et al.*'s (2024) analysis of how embodied care work creates unique constraints on flexibility in healthcare settings. The participant observation that "unlike other places" healthcare cannot accommodate

remote work during family emergencies underscores the structural rigidity that Kaihlanen *et al.* (2023) identified as endemic to care provision.

Social workers' experiences of intensified scrutiny through social media represent an emerging dimension of professional stress that extends beyond traditional workload concerns. This finding contributes to emerging literature on how digital visibility impacts professional identities in caring professions (Legood *et al.*, 2016). The study also found that due to the nature of social work, there was the prevalence of blame culture resulting from public scrutiny and mediatization of care failures (Radhakrishna, 2015). The structural inefficiencies highlighted by participants, particularly around unclear role boundaries and risk-averse practices, and frustration with holding 25-30 cases due to other professionals' risk aversion suggests dysfunctional system effects that result from fragmented responsibility structures in child protection (Raykova *et al.*, 2015) and aligns with Munro's (2004) critique of how bureaucratization and defensive practice have intensified workloads in social care. The findings regarding seasonal peaks in workload pressure contribute to our understanding of the temporal rhythms of care provision that impact WLB. The description of renewal campaigns creating intense January workloads highlights how administrative cycles intersect with service provision to create predictable but challenging peak demand periods.

6.1.4.4 Technology Paradox

Technology is considered a major driver of change in the world and workplace. The rapid growth of technology has largely reshaped daily lives and how businesses are conducted and jobs are carried out globally (Juntunen, 2019; Rasool *et al.*, 2022). The rate and pace of globalisation have further accelerated the process and transition of the world economy to industry 4.0, where more emphasis is placed on technology (Shintri & Narasalagi, 2021). These changes have sparked remarkable interest as to the role of technology in the workplace. One of the major issues regarding technology in the WLB discourse is its effect of recrafting spatial and temporal dynamics of workers including executives (Nagy, 2020).

The result of this current study shows that technology plays a dual role as both enabler and disruptor of WLB. This finding contributes to the ongoing discourse of the paradoxical nature of technology and contributes significantly to the literature on digital

work. The paradoxical nature of technology is will noted in literature (Adisa *et al.*, 2017; Currie & Eveline, 2011; Jackson *et al.*, 2020; Nagy, 2020; Shin & Enoh, 2020) including in social care (Marc *et al.*, 2023; Olaniyan *et al.*, 2022). This supports the notion held by Oladele and Oyewole (2020) who argued that technology can be pervasive and/or destructive.

The investment in technological infrastructure described by participants supports Mazmanian *et al.*'s (2013) argument that organisations increasingly view technological enablement as central to professional productivity. For instance, the use of technology in social care, such as electronic health records and communication platforms, can offer opportunities for improving service delivery, enhancing communication among team members, and accessing resources more efficiently (Whitfield & Hamblin, 2022). This efficiency gains reported align with Ferreira *et al.*'s (2025) research on how digital tools can streamline administrative tasks in healthcare settings. Zaresani and Scott (2020) also found that physicians who used digital health technology were more likely to report respectively higher job satisfaction and good work–life balance, compared with the physicians who did not use it. Duan *et al.* (2021) also showed that the use of digital technologies improved coordination and knowledge sharing between individuals and had the potential to improve communication and decision making. Meanwhile, they contest the notion that it can improve WLB experiences of senior managers.

The blurring of boundaries between work and personal life through technology aligns with Mordi *et al.*'s (2023) perspective on digital encroachment, where workplace communications infiltrate previously protected personal spaces. The experience of some participants, who described working on a laptop while ostensibly relaxing in front of the television, exemplifies psychological presence of work during non-work time (Tams *et al.*, 2020). This finding is particularly relevant for healthcare executives, who face autonomous self-exploitation through technology, where professional dedication and constant connectivity become intertwined (Sandoval-Reyes *et al.*, 2021; Wosny *et al.*, 2023).

The concerns raised about diminished quality of virtual interactions align with growing evidence on the limitations of technology-mediated communication. P7's observation that digital platforms "don't replace face-to-face human interaction" supports the

findings of Kaihlanen *et al.* (2023) on how virtual work can impede relationship development and social capital formation. According to Olaniyan *et al.* (2022), social care professionals and executives, including those working in child support services, may experience unique challenges in managing their WLB due to the nature of their work. The use of technology for health and social care executives can lead to an "always-on" culture (Ninaus *et al.*, 2021), where professionals and executives feel pressure to be constantly available and responsive to work-related matters, blurring the boundaries between work and personal life. Moreover, the nature of social care work often involves face-to-face interactions, empathy, and building rapport with clients (Kaihlanen *et al.*, 2023; Westheimer *et al.*, 2023). The increasing reliance on technology in social care may raise concerns about the potential dehumanization of services (Rolewicz, 2020) and the loss of personal connection with service users, which can impact job satisfaction and overall well-being for social care professionals (Marc *et al.*, 2023).

The expressed worry about impacts of technology on emotional intelligence in future generations extends this concern. This in a way reinforces what Waytz and Gray (2018) identified as a broader societal anxiety about technology's impacts on interpersonal capabilities. The reported isolation from extended remote work contributes to emerging literature on the psychological impacts of digital work arrangements. This aligns with Wang *et al.*'s (2021) research on social isolation as a significant challenge in remote work, particularly in caring professions where relational aspects are central to professional identity. This finding suggests that technological solutions to flexibility may inadvertently undermine the relational foundations of healthcare work.

6.1.4.5 Organisational Support and Constraints

The findings on organisational support revealed significant variability in how health and social care organisations approach WLB. The comprehensive well-being initiatives described by some participants including mental health champions, wellness budgets, and employee assistance programs align with what Roodbari *et al.* (2025) identifies as high-commitment approaches to WLB that integrate support across multiple dimensions of employee well-being. The findings showed that some organisations invested in employee well-being to support employee resilience and

stress management (Ainapur *et al.*, 2016; Bartlett *et al.*, 2021; Caringal-Go *et al.*, 2022; Hill *et al.*, 2003; Rashmi & Kataria, 2021).

Conversely, the organisational constraints identified in the study highlight persistent gaps between WLB rhetoric and organisational practices. The dissonance between awareness of challenges and practical support found in this study points to implementation gaps corporate organisations, where resource constraints limit the realization of employee-supportive policies (Lubbad & Adam-Bagley, 2021). In addition, the rigid time expectations described by participants, particularly around case management deadlines, show how organisational imperatives override individual needs despite formal policies supporting flexibility. Lee and Kim (2025) referred to this as flexibility stigma in care settings which is consistent with this notion of Wang *et al.* (2011) who found a significant gap between the organisation's commitment to WLB policies and the utilisation of the policies by the employees.

In addition, the finding that some organisations normalise excessive working hours adds to existing research on how organisational cultures can undermine formal WLB policies (Gopinathan *et al.*, 2020; Murphy & Doherty, 2011). This study highlights the presence of informal expectations for employees to work 60–70 hours per week, contributing to workplace climates of overwork that persist despite growing societal emphasis on the importance of WLB. This issue is especially concerning in health and social care settings, where, as Bamforth *et al.* (2023) show, excessive working hours are linked to impaired decision-making and a decline in the quality of care.

The influence of staffing shortages on WLB extends research on the relationship between resource constraints and work intensification in public services. The experiences of increased workload due to high staff turnover align with Stuckler *et al.*'s (2017) findings on how austerity policies have created chronic understaffing in UK healthcare, with consequent impacts on remaining staff. Some participants' description of 'firefighting' due to constant staff changes illustrates the cycle of crisis management that prevents sustainable workload planning in resource-constrained care settings (Marc *et al.*, 2023; Olaniyan *et al.*, 2022). The strategies employed by participants to navigate these challenges particularly team collaboration and delegation highlight the importance of relational resources in managing work-life boundaries (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013) termed. The emphasis of some of the

participants on building relationships for support aligns with research by Kossek and Lautsch (2018) on the importance of workplace social capital in managing workload pressures. However, the finding that some participants felt unsupported by colleagues ("nobody holds your hand") suggests an uneven access to collaborative resources within nominally team-based environments.

6.2 Transformational Leadership Strategies for Work-Life Balance

The findings revealed that UK executives in the health and social care sector deploy four distinct transformational leadership approaches to address WLB challenges: human-centric leadership, empowerment-focused leadership, inclusive leadership, and developmental leadership. These interconnected strategies create environments where employees feel valued beyond their professional contributions, thereby enhancing their ability to manage work-life demands effectively.

6.2.1 Human-Centric Leadership as a Transformational Strategy for Supporting Work-Life Balance

The findings of this study identified human-centric leadership as a salient strategy through which executives in England and Wales address WLB. This leadership orientation closely aligns with the dimension of individualised consideration within transformational leadership theory, as conceptualised by Bass and Avolio (2006). Executives demonstrated this attribute through empathetic communication, emotional support, and the creation of psychologically safe environments. These conditions created an avenue for employees to feel genuinely understood, respected, and valued as individuals rather than merely as organisational resources. This emphasis on human connection represents a deliberate move beyond transactional leadership practices, highlighting the formation of meaningful leader-employee relationships.

Executives' attentiveness to employees' personal lives expressed in sentiments such as recognising staff as "human beings who have their own life" mirrors the principles of supportive leadership as defined by Rafferty and Griffin (2004). This approach substantiates Yue *et al.*'s (2019) assertion that leaders who acknowledge and accommodate employees' non-work responsibilities enhance trust and foster more adaptive work-life integration. Similarly, Kelloway *et al.* (2012) found that leaders who

actively demonstrate concern for employee wellbeing significantly reduce work-related stress and promote positive WLB outcomes. These findings provide empirical evidence that such leadership behaviours facilitate a positive spillover effect from work to non-work domains, reinforcing the applicability of spillover theory in this context.

Moreover, the emotional support provided by executives contributes further to the transformational leadership literature. Participants were found to engage in emotional labour by modulating their own emotional expressions in service of creating a supportive workplace climate. This reflects Wang and Seibert's (2015) concept of emotional regulation competency, whereby leaders use emotional intelligence to manage both their own and others' emotions effectively. This also extends Ertiö *et al.*'s (2024) exploration of emotion-focused leadership, demonstrating how such capacities actively contribute to stress reduction and burnout prevention within teams. The practical application of this emotional intelligence was evident in executives' efforts to promote healthy boundary-setting among employees. The practice of "actively encouraging employees to set boundaries" points to leadership behaviour shown to significantly enhance employees' work-life outcomes (Kossek *et al.*, 2018). These findings reinforce the transformational role leaders can play in mitigating the often-blurred boundaries between professional and personal life, particularly in the context of hybrid and remote work environments.

Significantly, this study revealed a reframing of WLB not as an individual concern but as a collective and organisational responsibility. This perspective challenges some traditional paradigms that attempt treat WLB as a matter of personal time management (Sirgy *et al.*, 2020), instead aligning with more contemporary frameworks that situate WLB within broader discourses of organisational support and responsible leadership (Carr *et al.*, 2019). By normalising conversations around mental wellbeing and embedding practical mechanisms for support, the executives in this current study enacted work-family supportive supervision (Wayne *et al.*, 2017) within a transformational leadership framework. This organisational-level commitment points to the strategic deployment of leadership as a vehicle for creating sustainable, human-centred work cultures.

6.2.2 Empowerment-Focused Leadership

The study identified empowerment-focused leadership as a core transformational strategy through which executives in England and Wales facilitate improved WLB. This leadership approach is characterised by a deliberate shift from control-oriented management practices toward autonomy-enhancing structures that empower employees to take greater ownership of their roles. The findings revealed a strong alignment with Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment theory, particularly in relation to the dimensions of self-determination and perceived competence. Executives' adoption of trust-based practices such as "minimal supervision" and "performance-based management" extends Arnold *et al.*'s (2000) construct of empowering leadership into the WLB domain, demonstrating its relevance and impact in enabling employees to exercise agency over their time and workload.

This empowerment-driven approach encourages self-leadership whereby individuals are encouraged to set goals, regulate their behaviours, and take initiative (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015). The executives' rejection of traditional oversight in favour of outcome-oriented management practices exemplifies autonomy-supportive behaviours (Tennakoon, 2021), reinforcing the transformational leadership principle of fostering individual growth. Importantly, this leadership behaviour facilitates temporal flexibility which refers to the ability for employees to structure their work in ways that accommodate personal and family commitments (Shirmohammadi *et al.*, 2023). This flexibility is consistently linked to improved WLB outcomes across the literature (Ali *et al.*, 2023; Bella, 2023; Farradinna *et al.*, 2019; Sok *et al.*, 2014), and in this study, it emerged as a key mechanism through which executives support the integration of work and non-work domains.

Additionally, the findings highlight a developmental dimension to empowerment-focused leadership that enriches traditional understandings of intellectual stimulation within transformational leadership theory (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Rather than focusing solely on innovation or problem-solving, executives in this study used career development as a strategic tool to enhance both job satisfaction and personal wellbeing consistent with the work of AbdELhay *et al.* (2025). The emphasis on "nurturing employees rather than retaining them through restriction" brings to the fore relevance of promoting long-term employee engagement while equipping individuals

with skills and confidence to navigate competing life demands. The strength-based orientation adopted by many executives further illustrates this developmental ethos. By “recognizing employees’ strengths while assisting them in overcoming challenges,” leaders applied the principles of positive leadership (Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014) in a targeted way that supports WLB. This approach is closely related to strengths-based developmental supervision (van Woerkom & de Bruijn, 2016), which has been shown to enhance employee self-efficacy and engagement. In line with Bakker and van Woerkom (2018), such practices were found to facilitate a greater sense of personal agency among employees, thereby enhancing their ability to reconcile professional ambitions with family or personal responsibilities.

A particularly interesting contribution of this study lies in its identification of a reciprocal relationship between employee empowerment and executive wellbeing. Executives reported that by cultivating “competent and self-sufficient workforces,” they were able to reduce their own monitoring responsibilities, which in turn allowed them to experience greater balance in their own professional and personal lives. This finding extends leadership sustainability by illustrating how transformational leadership, when empowerment-focused, produces bidirectional wellbeing benefits (Liao, 2022). Drawing on the spillover theory, the finding here suggests that empowering leadership not only enhances the employee experience but also creates a positive feedback loop that reduces strain on leaders themselves (Poelmans *et al.*, 2008; Farradinna *et al.*, 2019; Kopperud *et al.*, 2020).

6.2.3 Inclusive Leadership

The findings of this study underscore inclusive leadership as a key transformational strategy through which executives address WLB by fostering participative and psychologically safe work environments. This leadership style is distinguished by collaborative decision-making, communication adaptability, and a commitment to transparency each of which contributes to building cultures in which WLB challenges are collectively acknowledged and constructively addressed. The study found that a key feature of inclusive leadership among UK executives was the shift from traditional hierarchical structures toward a more democratic, participatory approach to decision-making. This strategy is consistent with the notion of psychological safety, particularly as it relates to leadership behaviours that create space for open dialogue and mutual

respect. Executives actively involved employees in shaping workplace policies and WLB strategies, thereby operationalising participative leadership. This inclusion not only empowered employees to voice their concerns but also reduced the psychological strain associated with workplace silence (Y. Liu et al., 2024).

This democratic approach to leadership represents a significant departure from traditional hierarchical models. The shift toward more participative structures evidences a practical application of Bass and Avolio's (1994) intellectual stimulation dimension within transformational leadership. However, this study extends the original conceptualisation by demonstrating its specific utility in WLB contexts. By encouraging employee input on work-life policies, executives created environments in which staff could safely articulate their personal and professional boundaries without fear of judgement or reprisal. This finding reinforces Kossek *et al.*'s (2011) argument that psychologically safe climates are critical for employees to fully utilise work-life supports. It also gives some credence to Wayne *et al.*'s (2017) assertion that employee perceptions of safety in disclosing WLB challenges significantly shape their engagement with available organisational resources.

The study further highlights communication adaptability as a central component of inclusive leadership. While Avolio *et al.* (1999) recognised communication as a foundational element of transformational leadership, the present findings provide more insight into how adaptive communication practices such as multi-channel messaging, active listening, and personalised dialogue enhance inclusivity in WLB support. Executives tailored their communication styles to meet the diverse needs of their workforce, thereby creating more responsive and inclusive work environments. This aligns with Leppäkumpua and Sivunen's (2023) identification of communication adaptability as a core aspect of work-life supportive supervision.

Moreover, the findings reveal that informational justice defined by Qi *et al.* (2023) as the fairness of information dissemination was embedded in executives' leadership practices. Participants emphasised "honesty, transparency, and consistency in communication" as non-negotiable values, particularly when addressing sensitive WLB concerns. This supports Erdoğan's (2018) work, which highlights how employees' perceptions of fairness and transparency significantly influence their sense of organisational support. By positioning communication as "an ongoing

process rather than a one-time exchange,” executives aligned with Kossek and Lautsch’s (2018) notion of sustained boundary management support, a practice crucial for fostering long-term WLB resilience.

Finally, inclusive leadership practices observed in this study reflect the core tenets of spillover theory, as they facilitate the transmission of positive affect and wellbeing across organisational levels. Leaders created environments in which employees could more effectively manage their work and personal responsibilities by establishing participatory and communicative norms,. These practices not only supported employees’ WLB but also enhanced overall organisational cohesion and trust, suggesting that inclusive leadership contributes to broader systemic wellbeing.

6.2.4 Developmental Leadership: Balancing Growth and Wellbeing

The findings position developmental leadership as a crucial transformational strategy through which executives in England and Wales address the dual objectives of enhancing employee performance and promoting WLB. Central to this theme is the staff development dimension, which expands Bass’s (1985) concept of individualised consideration by illustrating how executives provide structured and consistent support for professional growth. Through mechanisms such as “structured training programs, career progression opportunities, and regular developmental check-ins,” executives signal their long-term investment in employees’ careers. This supports studies that contend that well-designed career development initiatives can enhance rather than hinder WLB, especially when tailored to individual goals and life circumstances (AbdELhay *et al.*, 2025; Ainapur *et al.*, 2016; Lubbad & Adam-Bagley, 2021). Unlike exploitative development models that prioritise performance at the expense of wellbeing, the practices observed in this study emphasise mutual benefit supporting both organisational capacity and personal fulfilment.

Executives framed employee development as a long-term investment rather than a short-term performance tool. This perspective aligns with Rafferty and Griffin’s (2004) conceptualisation of developmental leadership and contributes to it by highlighting its specific implications for WLB. In this case, executives viewed employees as “evolving professionals whose growth contributed to both personal fulfilment and organisational success,” thus operationalising Kossek *et al.*’s (2011) model of dual-agenda

leadership. This model rejects the conventional dichotomy between performance and wellbeing, a tension often overstated in management literature (Leslie *et al.*, 2012) and instead underscores the interdependence of the two. Employees who are growing and feel supported are also more resilient in managing life demands, contributing to positive spillover between work and nonwork domains.

The performance orientation evident in executives' leadership styles also plays a pivotal role in this balancing act. By providing "clear expectations" and "minimising ambiguity," leaders established a sense of role clarity, a factor that has been linked to reduced role conflict and enhanced WLB (Michel *et al.*, 2011). This finding resonates with Piccolo and Colquitt's (2006) notion of *role clarity leadership* and extends the *inspirational motivation* dimension of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) to WLB contexts. Rather than creating pressure, clear and motivational communication was used to reduce stress, foster focus, and help employees manage their boundaries more effectively.

A key contribution of this theme is the articulation of a leadership strategy that balances structure with autonomy. Executives provided sufficient scaffolding through performance feedback and structured developmental plans while also allowing employees flexibility in how and when tasks were completed. This practice mirrors Kossek and Lautsch's (2012) concept of customised work arrangements, which suggests that flexibility can coexist with strong performance expectations. The findings also support Aiyenitaju, *et al.*'s (2021) conclusion that perceived flexibility, even in high-demand roles, enhances employees' ability to manage competing responsibilities by increasing their sense of control.

Importantly, this balanced approach contributes to spillover theory by demonstrating how positive leadership behaviours such as career support and flexible goal-setting generate emotional and psychological resources that transfer across work and nonwork domains. When employees perceive their growth and wellbeing as interconnected and supported by leadership, they are more likely to experience enriched personal lives, and vice versa. This creates a reinforcing cycle of wellbeing and engagement that benefits both individuals and the organisation.

6.2.5 Sector-Specific Variations in Transformational Leadership for Work-Life Balance

This study revealed significant sectoral variations in how transformational leadership strategies are conceptualised and implemented to address WLB challenges in the UK health and social care landscape. These differences highlight the importance of contextual factors in shaping leadership practices and their effectiveness in promoting WLB.

Public sector executives demonstrated a transformational leadership approach characterised predominantly by interpersonal relationships and day-to-day supportive interactions within institutional constraints. Their implementation of human-centric leadership emphasised emotional awareness and direct personal engagement, exemplified by practices such as greeting "everyone" in the morning and developing nuanced understanding of staff performance challenges. This aligns with Kelloway *et al.*'s (2012) assertion that leaders who actively demonstrate concern for employee wellbeing can mitigate work-related stress even within structurally constrained environments. The participants' emphasis on "building relationships with colleagues" for mutual support reflects what Kossek *et al.* (2011) identify as the creation of psychologically safe climates where employees can better navigate work-life challenges. These findings suggest that public sector leaders often employ transformational leadership as a compensatory mechanism to offset systemic pressures and rigid operational demands that might otherwise undermine WLB.

In contrast, private sector executives exhibited a more strategically oriented interpretation of transformational leadership that balanced empathy with vision, delegation, and proactive staff development. Their approach integrated emotional intelligence with a stronger emphasis on long-term outcomes and professional growth, as evident in the multifaceted leadership philosophy. This broader strategic orientation aligns with Bass and Avolio's (1994) conceptualisation of transformational leadership as simultaneously addressing individual needs and organisational objectives. The focus on "trusting your staff and delegating tasks" while showing "them the way" depicts empowerment-focused leadership identified in this study, which Spreitzer (1995) links to enhanced psychological empowerment. Importantly, private sector leaders reported greater structural flexibility to embed wellbeing initiatives directly into

their leadership practices, allowing for what Arnold *et al.* (2000) describe as autonomy-enhancing structures that empower employees to exercise greater agency over their work-life integration.

The sectoral differences extended to the practical management of team WLB. Public sector leaders frequently navigated tensions between institutional expectations and their desire to support staff wellbeing. While emphasising training, mentoring, and learning as developmental approaches, they study showed that participants simultaneously acknowledged the challenge of balancing empathy with the understanding getting jobs done. This tension aligns with Michel *et al.*'s (2011) observation that role clarity and organisational constraints significantly influence work-family conflict. Conversely, private sector leaders described implementing more proactive and embedded WLB approaches, such as providing support plans instead of action plans and cultivating approachability in management relationships. These practices align with Kossek and Lautsch's (2012) concept of customised work arrangements, where flexibility coexists with performance expectations.

These sectoral variations suggest that while the four transformational leadership strategies identified in this study, i.e. human-centric, empowerment-focused, inclusive, and developmental leadership are relevant across sectors, their expression and implementation are significantly shaped by sectoral constraints and opportunities. These findings support Erdoğan's (2018) argument that employees' perceptions of organisational support are influenced by contextual factors, including sector-specific norms and structures. Moreover, they extend Wayne *et al.*'s (2017) work on work-family supportive supervision by illustrating how such support manifests differently depending on sectoral positioning.

6.3 Transformational Leaders's use of Technology to Achieve Work-Life Balance

The findings reveal that transformational leaders in the UK utilise technology as a strategic tool for achieving WLB through three primary mechanisms: technology as a work enabler, strategic implementation of technology, and addressing technology challenges. This discussion contextualises these findings within existing literature,

particularly through the lens of the TAM, to demonstrate their theoretical and practical implications.

6.3.1 Technology as a Work Enabler

The study findings highlight how transformational leaders leverage digital communication platforms and work management tools to enable flexible work arrangements and enhance efficiency (Wach *et al.*, 2023). This aligns with the core principles of the TAM developed by Davis (1989), which posits that technology adoption is primarily driven by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The widespread adoption of platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Zoom among UK executives demonstrates what Venkatesh and Davis (2000) identified as high perceived usefulness, where users recognise the performance benefits these tools offer for remote collaboration and flexible work arrangements (Doanh *et al.*, 2023; Rožman *et al.*, 2022).

The study findings showed that these platforms simultaneously function as communication and monitoring tools a paradox of connectivity where technology both liberates and constrains workers through constant accessibility (Mazmanian *et al.*, 2013). This paradox presents a challenge to the straightforward adoption pathway suggested by early TAM research, supporting later extensions such as TAM2 (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000) that incorporate social influence processes as mediating factors in technology acceptance. The findings regarding work management and efficiency gains through cloud-based solutions and AI integration extend the TAM framework through job relevance and output quality determinants of perceived usefulness (Venkatesh and Bala, 2008). The real-time documentation capabilities practiced by executives in this study exemplify digital workflow optimisation, where technology reduces administrative burdens, allowing professionals to focus on high-value activities (Cardon *et al.*, 2023; Farrelly & Baker, 2023). This supports the TAM assertion that individuals adopt technologies that enhance their job performance, particularly when the benefits are immediately apparent and aligned with work requirements (Rožman *et al.*, 2023).

The enthusiasm for AI tools expressed by participants reflects high technology readiness, an extension of TAM that incorporates individual propensity to embrace

new technologies (Al Naqbi *et al.*, 2024; Lepcha, 2023). This perspective aligns with Venkatesh *et al.*'s (2012) Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2), which incorporates hedonic motivation as a significant predictor of technology acceptance, explaining why some leaders enthusiastically adopt AI as a digital colleague that augments their capabilities. Cardon *et al.* (2023) and Kakkad and Suresh (2023) however in their study observed the mixed reactions of employees regarding the role of GAI. While some held the notion that it was good for society, others perceive it to do more harm. This accentuates the mainstream notion in existing literature about the complex relationship between GAI and WLB, highlighting both opportunities and challenges (Al Naqbi *et al.*, 2024; Doanh *et al.*, 2023; Kakkad & Suresh, 2023; Lozie *et al.*, 2024; Rožman *et al.*, 2023)

6.3.2 Strategic Implementation of Technology

The findings revealed that transformational leaders approach technology implementation as a strategic organisational initiative requiring deliberate investment and cultural readiness. This extends beyond the individual-focused original TAM to incorporate organisational factors that influence technology adoption, supporting Venkatesh and Davis's (2000) TAM2 model, which includes subjective norms and image as determinants of perceived usefulness. The study showed that some firms invested in tailored software. This exemplifies what Petko *et al.* (2015) and Schmitz *et al.* (2023) identified as organisational integration factors that significantly influence technology adoption beyond individual perceptions. Participant accounts highlighting employee involvement in technology development align with Baroudi *et al.*'s (1986) early work on user involvement in system development, which demonstrated that participation positively influences both system usage and user satisfaction by enhancing perceived usefulness and ease of use. This collaborative approach has been integrated into later TAM extensions by Venkatesh and Bala (2008) in their TAM3 model, which emphasizes the importance of user participation in design as an antecedent to perceived ease of use.

The generational differences in technology adoption identified by some participants reflect what Morris and Venkatesh (2000) identified as age-based variations in technology acceptance determinants, with younger users typically demonstrating higher perceived ease of use. Younger leaders, with higher perceived ease of use,

may adopt new technologies rapidly, energising younger employees but challenging older employees who rely on strong facilitating conditions (Morris & Venkatesh, 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2003). Older leaders tend to implement technology more cautiously, benefiting older employees but potentially constraining younger staff seeking autonomy. Peer learning and mentoring can bridge these gaps, with younger employees supporting digital skill development and older leaders offering strategic guidance. Such reciprocal learning strengthens facilitating conditions and mitigates power imbalances linked to digital fluency (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

The acceleration of digital transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, mentioned by multiple participants, corresponds with King and He's (2006) meta-analysis of TAM studies, which demonstrated that external situational factors can significantly alter the relative importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in technology adoption decisions. As P4 noted, sustainable digital transformation requires strategic planning rather than merely reacting to external pressures, supporting the view that contextual integration factors are critical for long-term technology acceptance (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008).

6.3.3 Technology Challenges

Despite its benefits, the findings highlight substantial challenges that transformational leaders face when leveraging technology for WLB. The system reliability issues described by participants align with studies that critiqued TAM noting that system characteristic factors influence perception of ease of use in the TAM framework (Kemp *et al.*, 2019; Malatji *et al.*, 2020). These challenges reflect technostress, which directly reduces perceived usefulness and technology acceptance by creating additional workplace strain rather than alleviating it (Bondanini *et al.*, 2020). The connectivity issues reported in this study, mirrors findings from early research by King and He (2006), who demonstrated that system reliability significantly moderated the relationship between perceived usefulness and actual system use. Similarly, the inadequate training highlighted by multiple participants corresponds with Venkatesh and Bala's (2008) TAM3 model, which identifies computer self-efficacy and perceptions of external control as key determinants of perceived ease of use, both of which are directly influenced by training quality.

The digital fatigue mentioned by some participants aligns with Mikolajczyk *et al.*'s (2023) research on technology-induced stress, which demonstrated that information overload and system complexity significantly reduce perceived ease of use and ultimately technology acceptance. This supports the findings from King and He's (2006) meta-analysis of TAM noting that complexity and compatibility are significant external variables affecting both perceived usefulness and ease of use. The regulatory constraints in healthcare settings reflect what Holden and Karsh (2010) identified as contextual constraints on healthcare technology acceptance, where regulatory requirements often override individual perceptions of usefulness and ease of use in determining technology adoption patterns. This highlights an important limitation to the original TAM framework when applied to highly regulated industries, supporting studies that have argued that industry-specific constraints must be integrated into TAMs for accurate prediction of adoption behaviour (Burton-Jones & Hubona, 2005; Marangunić & Granić, 2015).

These findings extend both transformational leadership theory and TAM by demonstrating how transformational leaders influence technology acceptance among followers. The findings align with Kaihlanen *et al.*'s (2023) research, which demonstrated that transformational leadership positively influences technology adoption through enhanced perceptions of usefulness and ease of use. The strategic implementation approaches described by participants align with Bass and Riggio's (2006) intellectual stimulation dimension, where leaders challenge existing processes and encourage innovative approaches to technology adoption. The emphasis on collaborative technology adoption and mentorship reflects the individualised consideration dimension of transformational leadership, where leaders attend to followers' developmental needs (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This leadership approach directly addresses what Venkatesh and Bala (2008) identified as intervention points for enhancing perceived ease of use, including training, peer support, and organisational encouragement. These findings support Schiuma *et al.*'s (2024) empirical research on model of e-leadership, arguing that transformational leaders must develop specific technological competencies to effectively lead in digital environments. However, the challenges identified suggest that technological constraints may limit transformational leaders' ability to fully actualise their leadership

vision, supporting Ghasabeh's (2020) argument that technology mediates the relationship between leadership intentions and outcomes.

6.3.4 Sector Differences in Technology Integration for WLB

The findings revealed significant sectoral variations in how transformational leaders leverage technology to achieve WLB, with distinct patterns emerging between public and private sector organisations. These differences manifest primarily through technology's perceived role and organisational technology infrastructure.

Public sector narratives predominantly framed technology as a necessary but often inadequate tool that frequently failed to meet work demands, contributing to frustration rather than facilitating WLB. This perspective aligns with Malatji *et al.*'s (2020) findings that institutional constraints within public organisations often impede effective technology implementation. The limited digital engagement reflects what Bondanini *et al.* (2020) identified as technology resistance stemming from inadequate organisational support structures.

In contrast, private sector leaders characterised technology as a powerful enabler of flexible working arrangements and boundary management. This buttresses what Wach *et al.* (2023) identified as technology-enabled work flexibility and aligns with Al Naqbi *et al.*'s (2024) research on technology readiness, where individual propensity to embrace new technologies directly correlates with perceived WLB improvements.

These sectoral differences extend Venkatesh and Bala's (2008) TAM3 model by demonstrating how organisational context mediates the relationship between technology availability and acceptance. While the original TAM framework emphasised individual perceptions, these findings support Burton-Jones and Hubona's (2005) argument that institutional factors significantly influence technology adoption patterns independent of perceived usefulness and ease of use. The contrasting experiences between sectors reflect what Holden and Karsh (2010) identified as contextual constraints on technology acceptance, where organisational culture and resource allocation create fundamentally different environments for technology integration.

The study revealed marked differences in organisational technology infrastructure between sectors, significantly impacting transformational leaders' ability to implement technology-mediated WLB strategies. Public sector leaders consistently reported challenges with outdated systems, lack of integrated digital tools, and inadequate

technical support. In tandem, Marangunić and Granić (2015) identified as organisational barriers to technology adoption that transcend individual acceptance factors. Similarly, Kemp *et al.* (2019) emphasised reliability issues that demonstrated significantly impact perceived usefulness in the TAM framework.

Conversely, private sector leaders described purposeful investments in modern, integrated digital ecosystems designed to enhance workflow efficiency and support flexible working arrangements. This aligns with Doanh *et al.*'s (2023) research on digital workflow optimisation. Schmitz *et al.* (2023) argued that this strategic organisational integration of technology enhances both efficiency and flexibility.

These findings extend transformational leadership theory by demonstrating how sectoral constraints moderate leaders' ability to enact technological change. Bass and Riggio's (2006) intellectual stimulation dimension, where transformational leaders challenge existing processes and encourage innovation, appears more readily actualisable in private sector contexts with greater technological resources and organisational flexibility. This supports Schiuma *et al.*'s (2024) model of e-leadership, which argues that transformational leaders require both technological competencies and supportive organisational infrastructure to effectively lead in digital environments. The sectoral differences in technology infrastructure also reflect broader institutional constraints identified by Ghasabeh (2020), where public sector organisations often operate under more rigid bureaucratic structures that impede rapid technological adaptation. This supports Kaihlanen *et al.*'s (2023) argument that transformational leadership's influence on technology adoption is mediated by organisational readiness factors, including infrastructure investment and cultural orientation toward innovation. These findings contribute to the growing literature on differential technology adoption across sectors (Rožman *et al.*, 2022; Cardon *et al.*, 2023) and extend both TAM and transformational leadership theories by demonstrating how sectoral contexts create fundamentally different environments for technology-mediated WLB strategies. This suggests that effective transformational leadership in technology implementation requires contextually-sensitive approaches that acknowledge and address sector-specific constraints and opportunities, rather than universal best practices that may prove ineffective across different organisational settings (Farrelly & Baker, 2023; Lepcha, 2023).

6.4 Demographic Differences in Transformational Leaders' Technology Use for Work-Life Balance

This section discusses the findings on demographic differences in transformational leaders' receptiveness and use of technology to achieve WLB. The discussion covers the influence of age, gender and professional roles.

6.4.1 Age-Related Differences in Technology Adoption

The study revealed significant age-related differences in technology adoption among transformational leaders, highlighting a generational digital divide characterized by varying levels of digital literacy and adaptability. This finding aligns with Prensky's (2001) seminal conceptualisation of 'digital natives' versus 'digital immigrants,' which suggests fundamental differences in technological comfort based on early exposure to digital tools.

This generational distinction reflects technological socialisation which is the process through which individuals develop technological competencies based on their historical exposure to digital environments (Wang *et al.*, 2021). Younger leaders, having grown up in increasingly digitized environments, demonstrate greater ease navigating technological ecosystems, corroborating Morris and Venkatesh's (2006) and Martín-García *et al.*'s (2021) findings that age significantly influences technology adoption intentions and behaviours. The observed pattern of younger employees serving as informal digital facilitators for older colleagues aligns with reverse mentoring dynamics identified by Wang *et al.* (2013), wherein digital natives guide digital immigrants through technological challenges.

However, the findings also challenge deterministic views of age-related technological capacity. While generational differences exist, individual adaptability emerged as a crucial moderating factor, supporting Jokisch *et al.*'s (2020) assertion that self-efficacy and perceived usefulness can override age-related barriers to technology adoption. This aligns with Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovations theory, which categorizes adopters based on psychological characteristics rather than solely demographic factors.

The study's finding that learning trajectories differ between generations reflects Moxley *et al.* (2022) research on cognitive aging and technology adoption, which suggests that older adults may require different pedagogical approaches when acquiring digital skills. This has significant implications for organisations seeking to leverage technology for improving WLB across multigenerational workforces, reinforcing Neves *et al.*'s (2013) recommendation for tailored digital literacy initiatives that acknowledge generational learning differences.

6.4.2 Gender Differences in Technology Use

The analysis of gender differences in technology use revealed evolving perspectives that both acknowledge historical stereotypes and recognize their diminishing relevance in contemporary professional environments. The findings suggest that while traditional gender-technology associations persist in social consciousness, these generalisations are increasingly viewed as outdated and inaccurate in professional contexts. This evolution reflects broader societal shifts in the gender digital divide leading to the gradual narrowing of gender gaps in technology access and usage over time (J. Cooper, 2006). The study's finding that gender differences appear less pronounced than individual skill differences aligns with Kuek and Hakkennes (2019) assertion that digital competence increasingly transcends traditional demographic categorisations.

The study's emphasis on workplace context as a significant factor in perceived gender differences supports Ely and Meyerson's (2000) social constructionist perspective on gender, which emphasizes how organisational environments shape gender-related perceptions and practices. Participants' recognition that observations about gender differences might be influenced by industry composition, echoes Wajcman's (2010) technofeminist theory, which argues that the relationship between gender and technology is mutually constitutive and context-dependent. These findings challenge essentialist views of gender-based technological aptitude, supporting Trauth's (2023) individual differences theory of gender and IT, which posits that individual characteristics, socio-cultural influences, and environmental factors collectively shape technological engagement more than gender identity alone. This theoretical perspective helps explain why participants emphasized individual differences over gender-based generalisations when discussing technology adoption and usage.

However, the acknowledgments of persistent gender imbalances in technology-intensive sectors indicate that structural inequalities identified by Reychav and McHaney (2017) continue to influence gendered patterns of technology engagement in certain contexts. These observations suggest that while individual-level gender differences in technology aptitude may be diminishing, systems-level gender disparities in technology representation remain relevant concerns for organisational leadership.

6.4.3 Role-Based Differences in Technology Use for WLB

The findings related to role-based differences in technology use reveal how professional responsibilities significantly shape technological engagement patterns among transformational leaders. The study identified distinct approaches to technology: as a functional necessity or as a strategic enabler, depending on role requirements and constraints. This dichotomy reflects what Orlikowski (2000) termed technologies-in-practice referring to the situated and emergent technological usage patterns that develop within specific professional contexts. For leaders in digitally-intensive roles (e.g., marketing, information management), technology functions as an operational necessity integrated throughout daily workflows e.g. "I'm using technology all day" aligning with what Nagy (2020) regarded as work intensification through digitalization. In contrast, leaders in roles with significant in-person management responsibilities experience technology as a selective enabler, available for specific tasks but constrained by physical presence requirements, as illustrated by the clinical manager's observation about remote access limitations. This is consistent with the findings from Borges do Nascimento *et al.*'s (2023) systematic review of barriers and facilitators to utilizing digital health technologies by healthcare professionals. This role-based variability indicates that leaders leverage differently based on their professional contexts. The suggest that role characteristics including autonomy, interdependence, and physical presence requirements significantly influence whether transformational leaders can strategically deploy technology to enhance WLB. This confirms Kossek *et al.*'s (2011) assertion that occupational attributes moderate technology-enabled boundary management strategies.

The study's identification of social media and communication technologies as role-specific enablers reflects social media affordances. Social media affordance relates to

the potential actions facilitated by digital platforms within specific organisational contexts (Leidner *et al.*, 2018; Sæbø *et al.*, 2020). Leaders working with younger populations strategically leverage platforms like WhatsApp to enhance engagement, while others utilise social media primarily for professional development and networking. This varied appropriation of social technologies aligns with Treem and and Leonardi's (2013) research on how professionals selectively utilise social media affordances based on role-specific needs and contexts. The emerging role of artificial intelligence as both decision support tool and structural change driver e.g. "We just did a restructure partly because of AI" indicates the growing human-AI complementarity in leadership practices (Faulconbridge *et al.*, 2023; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). This finding suggests that transformational leaders are experimenting with new human-technology configurations to enhance their effectiveness while managing implications for WLB, though integration levels vary significantly across roles and organisational contexts.

6.5 Theoretical Implications

This study advances theoretical understanding of WLB through the empirical study of how senior executives in the UK health and social care sector conceptualise, experience, and navigate the interplay between professional and personal life domains. While phenomena such as blurred boundaries, extended working hours, occupational stress, and the paradoxical role of technology are documented in the broader WLB literature (Mazmanian *et al.*, 2013; Murphy & Doherty, 2011; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015), this study specifies how they operate within a particular institutional configuration shaped by chronic resource pressure, crisis-driven workflows, and sector-based asymmetries in leadership autonomy. It further integrates Spillover Theory and TAM as a dual analytical lens to interpret how leadership behaviour and technology use interact in shaping WLB outcomes at the executive level, a combination not previously applied to this professional population.

A key contribution is the identification of a tripartite model of WLB among executives: *balance achievers*, *balance sceptics*, and those who view WLB as a *dynamic process*. This challenges traditional binary models and enriches spillover theory by illustrating how both positive and negative spillover differentially shape individual perceptions of balance (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

Balance achievers align with literature emphasizing flexibility, autonomy, and organisational support as facilitators of positive spillover, confirming the centrality of control in achieving WLB satisfaction (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). In contrast, balance sceptics who perceive WLB as unattainable reflect critiques of dominant WLB discourses that overlook structural constraints in high-stakes roles (Kreiner *et al.*, 2009). Their characterization of WLB as a “unicorn” underscores the enduring incompatibility between executive job demands and personal well-being, reinforcing LePine *et al.*'s (2007) view that structural and cultural job features can inhibit balance. The third group conceptualizes WLB as an evolving, situational process shaped by fluid boundary negotiation and life transitions. This aligns with theoretical developments highlighting the temporal and contextual variability of WLB (Casper *et al.*, 2018; Harris & and Haar, 2024; Kossek & Lautsch, 2012; Wayne *et al.*, 2017). These findings support the notion that boundaries are not fixed but are constantly managed, adjusted, and redefined in response to shifting personal and professional demands (Kreiner *et al.*, 2009; Soga *et al.*, 2022).

The study also provides theoretical insights into the persistent challenges confronting WLB, particularly blurred boundaries, extended work hours, and occupational stress (Kakkad & Suresh, 2023). These factors highlight how work demands intrude into personal life, depleting psychological and physical resources. Blurred boundaries in this context is linked to technology leashing (Büchler *et al.*, 2020; van Zoonen *et al.*, 2021) wherein constant digital connectivity erodes the separation between work and home. This contributes to negative spillover and diminished opportunities for psychological recovery (Mazmanian *et al.*, 2013). Extended work hours (Deng *et al.*, 2022; Gautam & Singh, 2017; Harb & Keyrouz, 2022) and a culture of presenteeism (Murphy & Doherty, 2011) suggest temporal spillover, where professional obligations encroach upon time traditionally reserved for personal life. Meanwhile, chronic work-related stress manifesting in both emotional and physical symptoms supports contention that structural and cultural job demands exacerbate health risks among professionals (Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2021; Craig & Sawrikar, 2009; Prabhashani & Ratnayaka, 2017; Thompson, 2008). The findings contribute to ongoing discussions about the range of adaptive strategies employed by executives to mitigate these challenges. These include boundary-setting, delegation, temporal autonomy, and communication management all of which support individual efforts to reassert control

and limit negative spillover (Adhyke *et al.*, 2023; Allen *et al.*, 2015; Derks *et al.*, 2014). Psychological strategies such as emotional regulation and cognitive reframing also play a critical role in sustaining well-being in high-pressure environments (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Additionally, structural supports within the home domain such as reliable childcare and spousal support reinforce the role of positive spillover in enhancing professional functioning (Fayaz & Gulzar, 2025; Wayne *et al.*, 2017).

This study makes a further theoretical contribution by demonstrating how transformational leadership can shape WLB outcomes. Leadership styles emphasising empathy, empowerment, inclusivity, and developmental support create organisational climates that foster psychological safety and encourage boundary respect (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Empowerment-oriented leadership enhances employee autonomy and control over time use (Hancer *et al.*, 2005; Oliveira *et al.*, 2023), while inclusive leadership promotes open communication around WLB needs (Liu *et al.*, 2024; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Developmental leadership helps align personal growth with professional demands, balancing performance with well-being (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). These insights underscore the importance of leadership in moderating spillover dynamics and enabling sustainable work practices.

Finally, the study contributes to technology and WLB literature by highlighting the dual role of digital tools as both enablers and disruptors (Davis, 1989). While technologies such as communication platforms and scheduling apps enhance flexibility and efficiency supporting the TAM's constructs of perceived usefulness and ease of use they also amplify technostress and digital fatigue (Bondanini *et al.*, 2020). These findings affirm the need for strategic, intentional technology use, with transformational leaders playing a critical role in shaping digital norms that support, rather than undermine, WLB (Avolio *et al.*, 2014; Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014).

Putting all the findings together, the study developed an empirical grounded framework to synthesise the findings (See Figure 6.1). The conceptual model presented in Chapter Two (Figure 2.1) and the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Three (Figure 3.2) were constructed deductively, prior to fieldwork, from the broader WLB, leadership, and technology literatures. Figure 6.1 however, presents the empirical model derived inductively from the themes generated in Chapter Five integrating the conceptual and theoretical groundwork with what was found in the data. The model

does not introduce a new theory of WLB. Rather, it specifies how established mechanisms, namely transformational leadership behaviour, technology-mediated spillover, and boundary management, combine and sequence within this specific population of UK health and social care executives.

From the framework, four transformational leadership strategies, human-centric, empowerment-focused, inclusive, and developmental, function as the primary behavioural mechanism through which executives shape the WLB conditions of their organisations and, reciprocally, their own. These strategies operationalise the dimensions of transformational leadership identified by Bass and Riggio (2006) and Rafferty and Griffin (2004), but the model foregrounds a finding not fully anticipated by that literature: empowerment-focused leadership produced a bidirectional wellbeing effect, in which delegating responsibility to a more self-sufficient workforce reduced executives' own monitoring burden and thereby improved their personal WLB (Liao, 2022).

These leadership strategies feed into technology use, which the data position not as a separate independent variable but as the channel through which leadership intent is enacted and through which spillover, positive or negative, is generated. Technology functioned as both enabler and disruptor of WLB, consistent with the established technology paradox (Mazmanian *et al.*, 2013; Bondanini *et al.*, 2020), and TAM's constructs of perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008) help explain why some executives experienced a given tool as boundary-supporting while others experienced the same category of tool as boundary-eroding.

The model situates demographic and sector context (age, gender, professional role, and public versus private sector positioning) as a moderating determinant of WLB outcomes through its influence on the use of technology. This reflects the finding that executives' receptiveness to technology, and the latitude available to enact transformational leadership behaviours, varied systematically with these factors. Age-related differences in digital literacy, and the contrast between public sector resource constraints and private sector flexibility, shaped how readily the leadership strategies and technology practices described below could be exercised (Nam, 2014; Mordi *et al.*, 2023).

The combined influence of leadership and technology practices is transmitted to WLB outcomes through spillover, understood here in Edwards and Rothbard's (2000) sense of transfer between work and non-work domains. Positive spillover, associated with flexibility, autonomy, and structural support, and negative spillover, associated with technostress and boundary erosion, are the mechanisms through which leadership and technology translate into lived WLB experience.

The outcome layer is the tripartite typology generated in this study: balance achievers, balance sceptics, and executives for whom WLB is a dynamic, continually renegotiated process. This typology extends binary achieved-versus-absent framings of WLB (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007) and is consistent with boundary theory's emphasis on WLB as an ongoing negotiation rather than a fixed state (Kreiner *et al.*, 2009; Casper *et al.*, 2018; Wayne *et al.*, 2017; Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). Which orientation an individual executive occupies is shown by the model to depend on the cumulative pattern of leadership exposure, technology experience, and spillover valence specific to their context.

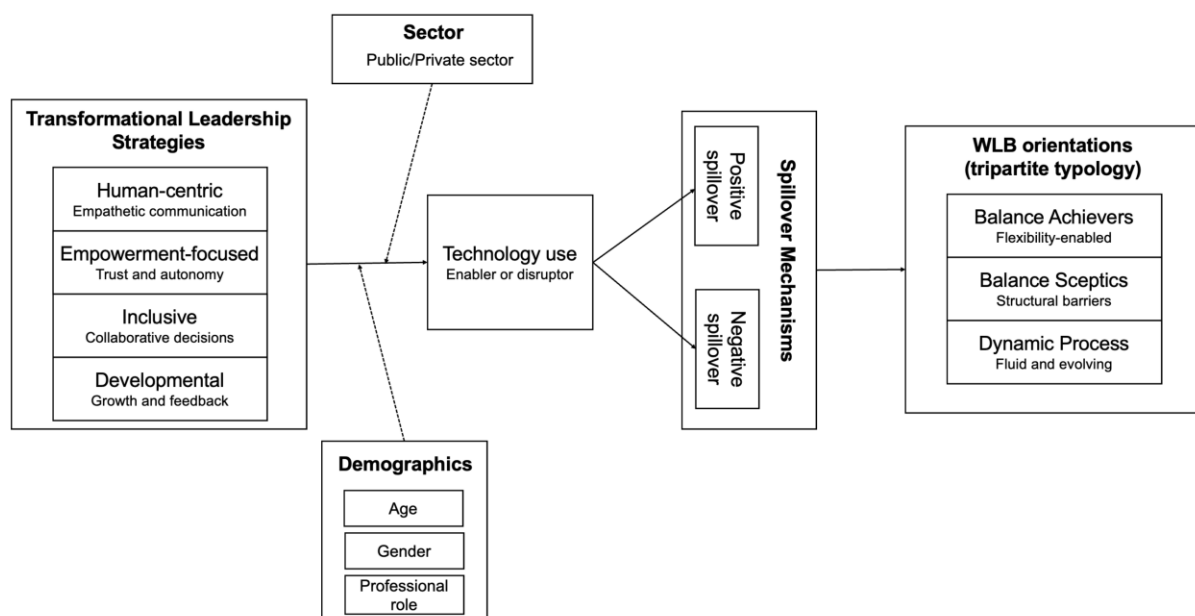


Figure 6.1: Model of transformational leadership, technology use, and WLB among UK health and social care executives

In sum, this study deepens theoretical understanding of work-life balance by moving beyond static dichotomies toward a more integrated, dynamic view of how professionals navigate the work-life interface. By reframing WLB as a contextually situated, psychologically mediated, and leadership-influenced process, it advances spillover theory and offers a more holistic framework for interpreting executive experiences in high-pressure service environments (Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

6.6 Practical Implications

This study findings have important practical implications for addressing WLB challenges faced by executives in the UK health and social care sector. The findings, highlighting the complexity and variability of WLB experiences, offer valuable guidance for shaping organisational policies, leadership practices, and individual strategies that promote more sustainable work-life integration.

First, the identification of three distinct orientations toward WLB: *balance achievers*, *balance sceptics*, and those viewing WLB as a *dynamic process* demonstrates the inadequacy of one-size-fits-all approaches. Instead, organisations must adopt tailored interventions responsive to the varied needs of their executive workforce. For balance achievers, policies that enhance flexibility and autonomy, such as hybrid work models and adjustable scheduling, can sustain positive spillover between work and personal domains. For balance sceptics, addressing deep-rooted structural and cultural constraints is essential. This may include re-evaluating role expectations, reducing excessive workloads, and expanding access to targeted mental health and wellbeing resources (Adisa *et al.*, 2021; Bouwmeester *et al.*, 2021).

The challenges of blurred boundaries, extended work hours, and occupational stress underscore the need for organisational-level reforms. Implementing clear digital communication protocols such as restricting email usage outside standard hours and discouraging weekend availability can support psychological detachment and recovery (Althammer *et al.*, 2021; Petitta & Ghezzi, 2023). Furthermore, shifting performance metrics from time-based to outcome-based evaluations can help dismantle cultures of presenteeism and reduce temporal spillover (Marsh *et al.*, 2022; Tams *et al.*, 2020). To address chronic stress and its physical and psychological toll, organisations should offer comprehensive wellbeing initiatives, including mental health support services (Farradinna *et al.*, 2019; Poelmans *et al.*, 2008; Shintri & Narasalagi,

2021), employee assistance programs, and stress management workshops (Lockwood, 2003; Ojo *et al.*, 2014).

The study identifies a range of coping strategies utilised by executives, including professional boundary-setting, temporal autonomy, communication management, psychological adaptation, and home-based structural support. These can be reinforced through organisational initiatives such as training in time management and boundary-setting (Ali *et al.*, 2023; Opatha & Perera, 2017; Uddin, 2021). Encouraging the strategic use of gatekeeping mechanisms, such as executive assistants, can help protect personal time by regulating access (Kossek *et al.*, 2023). In addition, offering resilience-building programs focusing on emotional regulation and cognitive reframing can empower leaders to manage the psychological demands of their roles more effectively (Caringal-Go *et al.*, 2022). Recognising the value of reliable childcare and spousal or family support systems can also promote positive spillover between home and work domains (Adisa *et al.*, 2021; Fayaz & Gulzar, 2025; Lakshmypriya & Krishna, 2016).

The findings reinforce the critical role of transformational leadership in cultivating workplace cultures that support WLB. Leadership approaches that are human-centric, empowerment-focused, inclusive, and developmental contribute to environments in which employees feel respected and supported beyond their functional roles (Y. Liu *et al.*, 2024; Qi *et al.*, 2023). Organisations should invest in leadership development programs that emphasize empathetic communication, participative decision-making, autonomy support, and career development pathways (AbdELhay *et al.*, 2025; Kock *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2022). Such programs foster psychological safety, promote workplace autonomy, and align professional expectations with personal wellbeing goals key drivers of sustainable work-life integration (Tunji-Olayeni *et al.*, 2017).

The study also highlights the dual nature of technology as both an enabler and disruptor of WLB. While digital tools can enhance efficiency and flexibility, they also pose risks of technostress, digital fatigue, and constant connectivity (Bondanini *et al.*, 2020). Organisations must adopt a strategic approach to technology use, including training employees on best practices for digital communication and time management (Marsh *et al.*, 2022). Establishing norms that discourage over-reliance on digital tools outside work hours can preserve boundaries and prevent burnout (Shafariah & Gofur, 2025). Moreover, equipping leaders with digital competencies enables them to model

healthy technology use and support team members in navigating technology-enabled work environments (Kludacz-Alessandri *et al.*, 2025; Tagscherer & Carbon, 2023).

Taken together, the practical implications of this study point to the need for context-sensitive, multilevel interventions that address both structural and psychological dimensions of WLB. By implementing differentiated support strategies, investing in transformational leadership development, managing digital boundaries, and promoting resilient work practices, organisations in the UK health and social care sector can foster environments conducive to sustainable WLB and improved executive wellbeing.

6.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive discussion of the WLB experiences of executives within the UK health and social care sector. The analysis was structured around key themes that emerged from the data, aligned with the study's research objectives. The discussion offered in-depth insights into how executives perceive, experience, and manage their professional responsibilities and personal lives. The chapter began by exploring the varying conceptualisations of WLB among participants. Three distinct orientations were identified: *balance achievers*, *balance sceptics*, and those who viewed WLB as a *dynamic and evolving process*. Balance achievers highlighted the importance of flexibility, autonomy, and organisational support in enabling positive spillover across life domains. In contrast, balance sceptics regarded WLB as largely unattainable due to the crisis-driven, emotionally demanding nature of their roles. The third group viewed WLB as fluid, shaped by ongoing boundary negotiation and contextual factors, reflecting the temporal and situational complexity of balancing work and life.

The discussion then turned to the key challenges impacting executives' WLB, namely: blurred boundaries, extended work hours, and work-related stress. Technology was identified as a significant factor exacerbating boundary blurring, contributing to constant connectivity and negative spillover. A prevailing culture of overwork led to extended hours, reinforcing temporal spillover into personal life. Work-related stress was both a symptom and consequence of these dynamics, with participants reporting physical and emotional strain, including exhaustion and musculoskeletal issues. To navigate these challenges, executives employed a variety of coping mechanisms. These included professional boundary-setting, temporal autonomy, communication

and accessibility management, psychological adaptation, and reliance on structural supports. Strategies such as strategic delegation, managing email availability, and prioritising emotional regulation were critical to sustaining wellbeing. Additionally, access to reliable childcare and support from partners facilitated positive spillover from the home to the work domain.

The chapter further examined contextual factors shaping WLB experiences. Flexibility enabled by hybrid work models provided executives with greater autonomy over their schedules. However, leadership roles often institutionalized expectations of constant availability, making WLB more difficult to achieve. Sector-specific demands, including roles requiring physical presence, compounded these challenges. Technology emerged as both a facilitator and a disruptor of WLB while it enhanced efficiency, it also contributed to boundary erosion and technostress. Organisational support was found to be uneven; while some employers implemented wellbeing initiatives, others perpetuated a culture of overwork.

Transformational leadership was highlighted as a critical enabler of WLB. Four leadership approaches were identified: *human-centric leadership* (emphasizing empathy and psychological safety), *empowerment-focused leadership* (fostering autonomy and trust), *inclusive leadership* (encouraging collaboration and transparent communication), and *developmental leadership* (balancing performance expectations with wellbeing). These leadership styles contributed to the creation of psychologically safe and supportive environments that facilitated work-life integration.

Finally, the chapter acknowledged the complex role of technology and the influence of demographic factors on WLB experiences. While technology enhanced flexibility, it also introduced challenges related to digital fatigue and continuous connectivity. Age-related differences in technology adoption were noted, though individual skill levels appeared more influential than gender. The findings extended existing spillover theory by illustrating how transformational leadership mediates work-life interactions and shapes the direction and intensity of spillover effects.

The chapter concluded with a synthesis of the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, advocating for tailored WLB interventions, structural reforms, leadership development, and the strategic management of technology to foster sustainable WLB

in high-pressure healthcare environments. The next chapter presents the summary of the study, the conclusions drawn and the recommendations put forward.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter synthesises key findings, draws conclusions about their implications for leadership practice and organisational culture, and offers targeted recommendations for executives, organisations, and the broader health and social care sector. It also acknowledges the study's limitations and suggests directions for future research.

7.1 Summary of the Study and Findings

This research set out to explore the interplay between transformational leadership, technology use, and WLB among executives in the health and social care sector in England and Wales. The study was motivated by the recognition that while extensive research has examined how leaders can support their employees' WLB, there is a notable gap in understanding how executives themselves navigate these challenges (Griffith-Echito, 2019; Nagy, 2020). This oversight is particularly concerning in the context of the unprecedented changes in work patterns and accelerated technology adoption following the COVID-19 pandemic, which have fundamentally transformed the nature of work and leadership (Kniffin *et al.*, 2021; Baert *et al.*, 2020). The research was guided by four specific objectives: (1) to explore the WLB experience of executives in England and Wales; (2) to assess how executives deploy transformational leadership strategies to address WLB issues; (3) to analyse how transformational leaders leverage technology to achieve WLB; and (4) to identify demographic differences in transformational leaders' receptiveness and use of technology to achieve WLB. Underpinned by spillover theory and the TAM, the study employed a qualitative methodology, adopting an interpretivist philosophy and a case study strategy. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with nineteen executives in the health and social care sector and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis revealed interesting findings summarised below:

1. The study revealed that WLB among UK executives in the health and social care sector is perceived and experienced in diverse ways. Three distinct orientations emerged from the data: balance achievers, balance sceptics, and those who viewed WLB as a dynamic and evolving process. Balance achievers emphasized the importance of flexibility, autonomy, and organisational support in enabling positive spillover across life domains. They actively shaped their

work environments by setting clear expectations, avoiding role overload, and maintaining flexibility in their schedules. In contrast, balance sceptics regarded WLB as largely unattainable due to the crisis-driven, emotionally demanding nature of their roles. The third group viewed WLB as fluid, shaped by ongoing boundary negotiation and contextual factors, reflecting the temporal and situational complexity of balancing work and life. The research identified several key challenges impacting executives' WLB, including blurred boundaries between work and personal life, extended work hours, and work-related stress. Technology was found to be a significant factor exacerbating boundary blurring, contributing to constant connectivity and negative spillover. A prevailing culture of overwork led to extended hours, reinforcing temporal spillover into personal life. Work-related stress was both a symptom and consequence of these dynamics, with participants reporting physical and emotional strain, including exhaustion and musculoskeletal issues. To navigate these challenges, executives employed a variety of coping mechanisms: professional boundary-setting, temporal autonomy, communication and accessibility management, psychological adaptation, and reliance on structural supports. Strategies such as strategic delegation, managing email availability, and prioritising emotional regulation were critical to sustaining wellbeing. Additionally, access to reliable childcare and support from partners facilitated positive spillover from the home to the work domain. These challenges manifested differently across sectors. Public sector leaders experienced more severe boundary erosion, unpredictable schedules, and systemic constraints including staffing shortages, funding limitations, and rigid policy frameworks that undermined WLB initiatives. The "blame culture" and focus on "key performance indicators" further complicated their ability to maintain boundaries. Private sector organisations demonstrated greater structural capacity and cultural willingness to implement meaningful wellbeing initiatives, including dedicated well-being budgets, mental health days, and group wellness activities that helped employees feel valued while reducing stress and sick leave.

2. The study found that transformational leadership was a critical enabler of WLB for executives in the health and social care sector, with significant variations between public and private sector implementations. Four leadership approaches were identified as particularly effective in addressing WLB issues:

human-centric leadership, empowerment-focused leadership, inclusive leadership, and developmental leadership. Human-centric leadership emphasized empathy and psychological safety, creating an environment where both leaders and team members could openly discuss work-life challenges. This approach manifested differently across sectors: public sector executives predominantly implemented this through interpersonal relationships and day-to-day supportive interactions within institutional constraints, exemplified by practices such as greeting everyone in the morning and developing nuanced understanding of staff performance challenges. In contrast, private sector leaders balanced empathy with a more strategic vision, integrating emotional intelligence with stronger emphasis on long-term outcomes. Empowerment-focused leadership fostered autonomy and trust, allowing team members to manage their responsibilities in ways that accommodated their personal needs while delivering on professional commitments. Private sector executives demonstrated greater capacity to implement this approach through trusting staff and delegating tasks while showing them the way, benefiting from more structural flexibility to embed wellbeing initiatives directly into their leadership practices. Public sector leaders, despite valuing empowerment, often navigated tensions between institutional expectations and their desire to support staff wellbeing. Inclusive leadership encouraged collaboration and transparent communication, ensuring that all team members felt valued and heard. This approach facilitated the equitable distribution of workload and resources, preventing burnout and promoting a sustainable work environment. While valued across sectors, public sector leaders often employed this as a compensatory mechanism to offset systemic pressures and rigid operational demands, focusing on "building relationships with colleagues" for mutual support. Developmental leadership balanced performance expectations with wellbeing considerations, recognising that long-term organisational success depends on the health and satisfaction of the workforce. Public sector leaders emphasized "training, mentoring, learning" while acknowledging the challenge of balancing "empathy" with understanding that there is a job that has to still get done. Private sector leaders implemented more proactive approaches, such as "providing support plans instead of action plans" and cultivating approachability in management relationships. These sectoral variations suggest that while all

four transformational leadership strategies are relevant across sectors, their expression and implementation are significantly shaped by sectoral constraints and opportunities. Public sector leaders frequently used transformational leadership as a compensatory mechanism within structurally constrained environments, while private sector executives had greater flexibility to embed wellbeing initiatives strategically.

3. The research revealed a complex relationship between technology use and WLB among transformational leaders in the health and social care sector. Technology was identified as both a facilitator and a disruptor of WLB. The findings showed that while it enhanced efficiency and flexibility, it also contributed to boundary erosion and technostress. Digital tools such as communication platforms, task management software, and AI integration played a significant role in streamlining workflows and supporting remote work, allowing executives to better manage their time and responsibilities. However, the study also highlighted the challenges associated with technology adoption, including system reliability issues, insufficient training, and digital fatigue. The constant connectivity enabled by technology often led to expectations of immediate responsiveness, extending work hours and eroding personal time. Some executives reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume of digital communications and the perceived need to be constantly available. To mitigate these negative effects, successful executives implemented strategic approaches to technology use, including setting clear boundaries around digital availability, using technology to automate routine tasks, and leveraging digital tools to facilitate flexible working arrangements. Public sector leaders face more severe WLB challenges due to rigid structures, resource constraints, and outdated technology systems. They report acute boundary erosion, unpredictable schedules, and limited control over workload. Their transformational leadership approach emphasizes day-to-day supportive interactions within institutional constraints. In contrast, private sector executives demonstrate greater agency in boundary-setting, schedule control, and technology integration. Their organizations invest more in wellbeing initiatives

and modern digital ecosystems. Their transformational leadership balances empathy with strategic vision and staff development.

4. The study identified several demographic factors influencing how executives use technology to achieve WLB, including age, gender, and professional roles. Age-related differences in technology adoption were noted, with younger executives generally demonstrating greater comfort and facility with digital tools. However, the research suggested that individual skill levels and attitudes toward technology were more influential than chronological age in determining technology adoption and effective use. Gender differences were not pronounced in the findings suggesting that while individual-level gender differences in technology aptitude may be diminishing, systems-level gender disparities in technology representation remain relevant concerns for organisational leadership. Professional role type and seniority also influenced technology use patterns, with executives in more operationally focused roles reporting different technology needs and challenges compared to those in strategic leadership positions. Despite these differences, the study found that transformational leadership qualities particularly adaptability, openness to learning, and a focus on empowering team members were associated with more effective technology integration for WLB across demographic categories. Executives who exhibited these transformational behaviour were more likely to leverage technology in ways that enhanced rather than diminished their WLB, regardless of age, gender, or role specifics.

7.2 Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the interrelationship between transformational leadership, technology use, and WLB among executives in the health and social care sector in England and Wales. The findings extend our understanding of how executives experience and manage WLB challenges in a high-pressure, technology-intensive work environment, and how transformational leadership approaches can facilitate better outcomes for both leaders and their organisations.

The research confirms that WLB remains a significant challenge for executives in the health and social care sector, with many experiencing substantial tensions between their professional and personal lives. However, the study also demonstrates that

achieving satisfactory WLB is possible, even in demanding leadership roles, when supported by appropriate strategies, supportive structures, and effective technology use. The diverse perspectives on WLB identified in the research from achievable balance to inherent conflict reflect the subjective and contextual nature of work-life experiences, suggesting that organisational approaches to supporting executive WLB should be flexible and individualised rather than prescriptive. The tripartite distinction between balance achievers, balance sceptics, and those experiencing WLB as a dynamic process functions here as a contextual extension of existing spillover and boundary theory, not a new theoretical category: the underlying mechanisms of positive and negative spillover and of boundary permeability are already established in the literature (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Kreiner et al., 2009), and the contribution of this study lies in showing how these mechanisms combine to produce three identifiably different orientations among health and social care executives specifically.

The identification of four transformational leadership approaches human-centric, empowerment-focused, inclusive, and developmental provides a framework for understanding how leadership styles can positively influence WLB outcomes. These approaches share common elements of empathy, trust, collaboration, and growth orientation that create psychologically safe environments where both leaders and team members can thrive professionally while maintaining personal wellbeing. The study suggests that these transformational leadership qualities not only benefit individual executives in managing their own WLB but also contribute to more supportive organisational cultures that value and protect work-life boundaries. These four approaches correspond closely to established dimensions of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Read in that light, their value lies chiefly in illustrating how known leadership behaviours operate in relation to executive WLB within an under-researched population, not in establishing a new leadership typology.

The findings on technology use highlight the dual role of digital tools in both facilitating and complicating WLB for executives. While technology offers unprecedented flexibility and efficiency, enabling leaders to work remotely and manage their time more effectively, it also creates expectations of constant availability and erodes boundaries between work and personal life. The study suggests that the influence of technology on WLB depends largely on how it is implemented and managed, with clear

boundaries, strategic use, and organisational policies all playing important roles in determining outcomes. This dual characterisation of technology as both facilitator and disruptor of WLB is consistent with, and confirms, the established technology paradox and technostress literature (Bondanini et al., 2020; Mazmanian et al., 2013). The contribution here is one of contextual confirmation and extension within an executive health and social care population, not a new theoretical claim about technology's role in WLB.

Finally, the research on demographic differences provide insights into how factors such as age, gender, and professional role influence technology use for WLB. While certain patterns emerged related to these demographic characteristics, the study suggests that individual attitudes, skills, and circumstances are more predictive of technology adoption and effectiveness than demographic categories alone. These finding challenges simplistic narratives about generational or gender-based technology use and points to the importance of personalized approaches to technology implementation and training. This finding offers an empirical illustration, within a previously underexamined executive population, of an existing debate about whether technology engagement is better explained by individual differences than by demographic category (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008); it confirms rather than originates this position.

Overall, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of executive WLB in the digital age, emphasising the interconnected nature of leadership approaches, technology use, and organisational contexts in shaping work-life experiences. The findings suggest that improving executive WLB requires attention to multiple levels of influence, from individual strategies and leadership development to organisational policies and broader societal attitudes toward work and wellbeing.

7.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for executives, organisations, policymakers, and researchers seeking to enhance WLB in leadership roles within the health and social care sector.

7.3.1 Recommendations for Executives

7.3.1.1 Public Sector Executives

Public sector leaders face particularly acute challenges related to boundary erosion, limited control over workflow, and systemic constraints including staffing shortages and rigid policy frameworks. To navigate these challenges effectively, public sector executives should adopt a multifaceted approach to WLB management.

First, public sector executives should leverage their strengths in interpersonal relationship-building to create compensatory support mechanisms within their teams (Williams, 2002). As the research revealed, public sector leaders already demonstrate strong human-centric leadership through practices such as greeting everyone in the morning and developing better understanding of staff performance challenges. These interpersonal approaches should be consciously amplified and systematised to offset the structural constraints of public sector environments (Quick & Feldman, 2014).

Second, public sector executives should develop more structured approaches to boundary management that account for the unpredictable, crisis-driven nature of their work (Kreiner et al., 2009; Perrigino & Raveendran, 2020). Rather than attempting to establish rigid boundaries that may prove unrealistic in emergency-response settings, leaders should implement structured handover processes, create clear protocols for managing crisis situations, and develop communication cascades that distribute responsibility for urgent responses. This approach recognizes the differentially permeable nature of boundaries in public service contexts (Nam, 2014).

Third, given the technological challenges identified in public sector environments where systems are not designed to help and support and reliability issues abound, executives should focus on strategic technology optimisation rather than extensive innovation (Malatji et al., 2020). This involves advocating for improved infrastructure through evidence-based business cases while simultaneously developing pragmatic workarounds for existing system limitations (Hansen Rosenberg & Ferlie, 2016).

7.3.1.2 Private Sector Executives

Private sector leaders demonstrated greater agency in structuring work schedules, establishing firmer boundaries, and leveraging technological resources. Their organisations also showed greater capacity for implementing meaningful wellbeing initiatives. To maximise these advantages, private sector executives should adopt strategies that build upon these existing strengths while addressing remaining challenges.

First, private sector executives should focus on balancing their demonstrated empathetic leadership with strategic vision-setting that embeds wellbeing as a core organisational value (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The research revealed that private sector leaders already integrate emotional intelligence with a stronger emphasis on long-term outcomes, as exemplified by one CEO's multifaceted leadership philosophy encompassing vision, empathy, and emotional intelligence. This balanced approach should be further developed to create organisational cultures where wellbeing is positioned not only as a personal responsibility but as a strategic priority (Carr et al., 2019).

In addition, private sector executives should leverage their greater autonomy to establish proactive and formalised boundary management systems (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). Unlike their public sector counterparts who often struggle with institutional constraints, private leaders can design comprehensive flexible working arrangements that provide both structure and predictability. This includes establishing explicit expectations around digital availability and responsiveness (Piszczeck, 2017), creating team charters that articulate shared values around WLB, and implementing formal policies that protect personal time.

Furthermore, given the more advanced technological infrastructure available in private settings, executives should position technology as a strategic enabler of both performance and wellbeing (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). The research highlighted that private sector leaders benefit from integrated digital communication platforms, cloud-based infrastructures, and emerging AI tools. Building on these advantages, executives should continue to invest in technologies that enhance workflow efficiency while simultaneously implementing features that support healthy work-life integration

(Rožman et al., 2022). This might include utilizing digital wellbeing analytics to track patterns of technology use, implementing automation for routine administrative tasks (Cardon et al., 2023), and establishing technology-enabled flexible work arrangements with appropriate infrastructure to support remote and hybrid working.

Finally, private sector executives should also fully leverage their organisations' greater capacity for meaningful wellbeing initiatives. As the research demonstrated, private organisations demonstrate greater structural capacity and cultural willingness to implement initiatives such as well-being budgets, mental health days, and group wellness activities (Duan et al., 2021). Executives should not only participate in these programs but also advocate for their continuous improvement, ensuring they address the specific challenges of leadership roles. Additionally, leaders should establish internal communities of practice focused on balanced technology use and sustainable work patterns, creating forums where teams can collectively develop norms that support healthier work-life integration (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013).

7.3.2 Recommendations for Organisations

In the context of rapid technological advancement and evolving work expectations, organisations have a critical role to play in enabling executives to achieve and sustain WLB. Institutional support for WLB not only benefits individual leaders but also enhances organisational resilience, employee engagement, and long-term performance. The following recommendations outline key strategies that organisations can adopt to create an environment conducive to balanced, effective, and sustainable leadership.

First, organisations should invest in leadership development programs that explicitly integrate WLB considerations (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). These programs should go beyond technical skill-building to address the unique challenges executives face in managing work and personal demands. Emphasising transformational leadership approaches, such initiatives can cultivate leaders who are empathetic, inclusive, and attuned to the wellbeing of themselves and their teams (Bass & Avolio, 2006). Embedding WLB as a core competency within leadership training signals a commitment to sustainable leadership practices and has been shown to deliver

measurable improvements in productivity and work-life balance outcomes (Work Institute, 2025).

Second, the establishment of clear and enforceable technology use policies is essential (Piszczek, 2017; Hartner-Tiefenthaler et al., 2021). Organisations must articulate guidelines that respect employees' boundaries, particularly regarding communication outside of standard working hours. This includes defining expected response times, discouraging unnecessary after-hours contact, and promoting the use of features such as email scheduling and status indicators (Nam, 2014). These policies help to mitigate the always-on culture that digital connectivity can foster, thereby supporting healthier work patterns and reducing work-extending technology effects (Towers et al., 2006).

Third, comprehensive technology training should be provided to all executives (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). This training should not only cover the functional use of digital tools but also include guidance on how to use these tools in ways that enhance WLB. For example, executives should be trained in time management applications, digital wellbeing features, and collaborative platforms that support flexible work without increasing cognitive load or stress (Bondanini et al., 2020). By equipping leaders with the knowledge and strategies to use technology mindfully, organisations empower them to model and promote more balanced digital practices.

Furthermore, organisations should implement flexible working policies that recognise the diverse needs of executive staff (Shirmohammadi et al., 2023). This includes providing options for remote or hybrid work, flexible scheduling, and autonomy in task management. When well-structured, such flexibility enhances both performance and wellbeing by allowing leaders to tailor their work arrangements to fit their personal and professional responsibilities (Yucel & Fan, 2023). Importantly, these policies must be supported by a culture of trust and accountability to be truly effective (Kelly et al., 2014).

Lastly, organisations should revise performance management and recognition systems to include indicators of sustainable leadership (Kossek et al., 2011). This entails evaluating and rewarding not only results but also the means by which those results are achieved such as the promotion of team wellbeing, effective boundary-

setting, and balanced use of technology. Recognizing and incentivizing these behaviours reinforces their value and encourages a shift toward leadership practices that support both organisational objectives and individual sustainability.

7.3.3 Recommendations for the Health and Social Care Sector

Executives in the health and social care sector operate within uniquely demanding environments characterised by high emotional labour, complex stakeholder dynamics, and persistent resource constraints. These challenges significantly impact their ability to maintain WLB and underscore the need for targeted, sector-specific interventions. The following recommendations offer a framework for promoting more sustainable leadership practices within this critical field.

A primary concern that must be addressed is the structural staffing shortages that contribute to executive overload and diminished WLB (Boamah et al., 2022). Chronic understaffing not only places excessive demands on frontline staff but also on leaders who are tasked with managing service delivery under constrained conditions. Tackling this issue requires comprehensive recruitment and retention strategies, supported by investment in workforce development initiatives that build a resilient and adaptable talent pipeline (Amimo et al., 2021). Addressing these systemic issues is foundational to any meaningful progress in supporting executive wellbeing. Research consistently demonstrates that job satisfaction, career development, and work-life balance are the main determinants for healthcare worker retention (Boamah et al., 2022), making these areas critical for organizational investment.

Second, it is essential to develop and implement technology solutions tailored specifically to the health and social care context (Kaihlanen et al., 2023). Many generic digital systems fail to accommodate the complexity and sensitivity of healthcare environments, often resulting in increased administrative burden and reduced efficiency. Investing in purpose-built systems that streamline workflows, reduce duplication, and integrate seamlessly with care delivery processes can enhance productivity while supporting WLB (Whitfield & Hamblin, 2022). Crucially, these technologies should be co-designed with input from executive and clinical leaders to ensure they meet the sector's unique needs and avoid the pitfalls of technology overload (Diaz et al., 2012).

Third, the sector should facilitate the creation of cross-organisational support networks for executives (Williams, 2012). These networks can serve as valuable forums for sharing experiences, strategies, and resources related to managing WLB, particularly in navigating crises, regulatory changes, and workforce pressures. Given the emotionally intense nature of leadership in health and social care, peer support mechanisms can reduce isolation, promote collaborative problem-solving, and reinforce a sense of shared purpose among sector leaders (Quick & Feldman, 2014).

In addition to peer networks, sector-wide wellbeing initiatives are needed to address the specific psychological and emotional demands of health and social care leadership (Kinman & McDowall, 2020). These initiatives should include access to confidential mental health support, resilience training, reflective practice sessions, and protected time for self-care. Leadership wellbeing must be positioned not as a luxury, but as a core component of effective and ethical health and social care delivery. Studies show that promoting work-life balance, recognizing achievements, and maintaining a culture of mutual respect and collaboration are essential for retaining healthcare workers (Boamah et al., 2022).

Finally, collective advocacy for broader policy reforms is critical. Health and social care organisations must work together to influence policy agendas that support sustainable leadership. This includes lobbying for adequate and sustained funding, realistic performance targets that do not incentivize burnout, and formal recognition of the essential role that leadership wellbeing plays in service quality and system resilience (Stuckler et al., 2017). By advancing these reforms, the sector can create an enabling environment in which leaders are supported to deliver compassionate, high-quality care without compromising their own health and wellbeing.

7.4 Limitations of the Study

While this study offers valuable insights into the relationship between transformational leadership, technology use, and WLB among executives in the health and social care sector, several limitations must be acknowledged to contextualise the findings and guide future research. The qualitative nature of this research, based on a sample of nineteen executives, enabled in-depth exploration of individual experiences. However, the limited sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings to the broader

population of health and social care executives. Furthermore, the use of convenience and snowball sampling may have led to a sample that lacks diversity in terms of organisational levels, geographic representation, and demographic characteristics.

The study employed a cross-sectional research design, capturing participants' experiences and perceptions at a single point in time. This approach limits the ability to assess how executives' approaches to work-life balance and technology use evolve over time or in response to dynamic professional and personal contexts. Data collection through self-reported interviews introduces potential biases. Social desirability bias may have led participants to portray their leadership styles or WLB strategies in a more favourable light, while recall bias may have affected the accuracy of retrospective accounts. These factors may compromise the objectivity and completeness of the data. The research was confined to England and Wales, which may limit the transferability of findings to other national or cultural contexts. Differences in healthcare systems, organisational norms, and technological infrastructure across countries could influence the applicability of the insights generated.

While qualitative methods are well-suited for capturing rich, contextual data, they present limitations in the precise measurement of complex constructs such as transformational leadership behaviours and WLB. The absence of quantitative metrics restricts the ability to establish causal inferences or compare findings across populations. The study's focus on transformational leadership may have inadvertently marginalized the potential contributions of other leadership approaches such as transactional, servant, or authentic leadership to executive work-life outcomes. A more inclusive examination of diverse leadership styles may have provided a broader understanding of leadership–WLB dynamics. Technology was examined in a broad and general sense, rather than through the lens of specific tools, platforms, or systems. This lack of granularity may have obscured important distinctions in how particular technologies support or hinder WLB. Data collection occurred in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, a period marked by exceptional disruptions to work and personal life. Consequently, the findings may reflect crisis-driven adaptations rather than enduring patterns of technology use and WLB management.

The exclusive focus on the health and social care sector, while valuable, limits the applicability of findings to other industries. Distinct operational demands, regulatory

environments, and professional cultures in other sectors may yield different insights regarding leadership, technology, and WLB. The study did not systematically account for variations in organisational size, structure, culture, and resource availability. Such differences may significantly shape executives' experiences with technology and WLB, and their omission may limit the depth of contextual interpretation. By focusing solely on executives' self-perceptions, the study lacks triangulation with the perspectives of team members or organisational performance indicators. This limits the ability to assess the broader impact of leadership approaches on employees' experiences and organisational outcomes.

7.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Building on the insights and limitations of this study, there are several promising directions for future research that could deepen understanding and enhance the practical relevance of findings on transformational leadership, technology use, and executive WLB. One important avenue is the adoption of longitudinal research designs that track changes in executives' experiences over time. Such studies would capture how leadership styles, technology adoption, and WLB strategies evolve across career stages, personal life transitions, or organisational transformations. These insights would be particularly valuable for understanding the long-term sustainability of leadership practices and coping mechanisms in dynamic work environments.

Further methodological advancement could come from integrating mixed-methods approaches that combine the rich contextual depth of qualitative inquiry with the precision and generalizability of quantitative measurement. This would allow for more robust exploration of the relationships between leadership behaviours, technology use, and WLB outcomes. Additionally, future research would benefit from multi-level analyses that consider how individual experiences are shaped by team dynamics, organisational structures, and broader societal or policy contexts. Such an approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex, layered influences affecting executive well-being.

The contextual scope of research should also be broadened. Comparative studies across different sectors would help illuminate how industry-specific demands, work cultures, and operational constraints influence the intersection of leadership and WLB.

Similarly, cross-cultural investigations are essential for examining how national norms, institutional frameworks, and cultural values shape executives' leadership practices and their use of technology for managing work-life boundaries. Within organisations, there is a need to explore how leadership climates, organisational cultures, and internal policies either support or undermine sustainable leadership behaviours and well-being outcomes.

In terms of thematic focus, future research should examine the specific impact of particular technologies on leadership and WLB, moving beyond general categories to investigate tools such as AI-driven assistants, collaboration platforms, and remote monitoring systems. Understanding the effects of these tools would help identify the most effective digital solutions for supporting executive functioning and personal well-being. Relatedly, there is a growing need to explore how executives recover from work-related stress and build resilience, especially in high-pressure contexts like health and social care. These studies could provide insights into the coping practices and environmental conditions that sustain leaders in demanding roles.

Policy-oriented research is also crucial. Evaluating the effectiveness of organisational, sectoral, and governmental policies on executive WLB and leadership sustainability would offer evidence-based recommendations for practice and reform. Moreover, stakeholder-centred research that includes the perspectives of team members, peers, and family members could enrich our understanding of how leadership practices and technology use ripple across professional and personal domains. This would foster a more holistic view of leadership well-being and its broader implications.

It is equally important to consider how identity-related factors influence executive WLB. Future studies should delve deeper into the roles of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, cultural identity, and disability, among others, in shaping the challenges and strategies executives employ. Expanding demographic considerations in this way ensures a more inclusive and equitable understanding of executive experiences. Finally, there is a practical need for applied research that designs, implements, and evaluates targeted interventions aimed at improving executive WLB. These could include leadership development programs, strategic use of technology, digital skills training, and supportive organisational policies. Investigating the long-term effects of such interventions on leadership sustainability, organisational performance, and

employee outcomes would significantly enhance both theoretical understanding and real-world impact.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

General information

- a. What is your current position in the organization, and how long have you been in this position?

Explore the work-life balance experience of executives in the UK

- a. Can you describe your typical workday and workweek?
- b. How do you define and perceive work-life balance in your role?
- c. What are the major factors influencing your work-life balance?

Assess how UK executives deploy transformational leadership strategies

- a. What would you consider the important features of an effective leader?
- b. How would you describe your approach to leadership?
- c. Can you provide examples of transformational leadership practices you have exercised?
- d. How do leaders in your organization support employees in achieving work-life balance?

Analyse how transformational leaders leverage technology for work-life balance

- a. What do you think of technology in helping manage your role as an executive?
- b. In what ways does technology play a role in your daily work activities and communication with your team?
- c. How have leaders in your organization incorporated technology to enhance work-life balance?
- d. Can you share any challenges or benefits of using technology in your work-life balance?

Identify demographic differences in transformational leaders' receptiveness and use of technology

- a. Are there any demographic factors (age, gender, role) that you believe influence how leaders approach technology and work-life balance?
- b. How do you perceive generational differences in the acceptance and utilization of technology in your workplace?
- c. Have you noticed any variations in leadership styles based on demographic factors?

Additional Question

- a. Is there anything else you want to share regarding your experiences with work-life balance and transformational leadership?

Appendix 2: Summary of empirical studies

s/n	Findings	Method	Theory	Context	Authors
1.	“Our findings indicate that academics in the UK experience issues around increased boundary permeability between work and nonwork domains and role overlap, which engender the transfer of negative rather than positive spillover experiences and exacerbate negative consequences to the well-being of academics. ICTs also reinforced gendered work-family boundaries and generated more negative work-life/family spillover for women than for men.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Spillover theory	United Kingdom/ Education	(C. Mordi <i>et al.</i> , 2023)
2.	“The results showed that remote managers struggle with the work-life imbalance and blurred boundaries between work and private roles, as well as difficulties in maintaining digital hygiene. The use of ICT enables high flexibility but contributes to work-life conflict. Managers who work from home experience a constant workload and suffer from impaired recovery.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Border theory	Poland	(Mikolajczyk <i>et al.</i> , 2023)
3.	“The findings indicate that, regardless of nationality, single student-working mothers are affected by inter-role conflict, role ambiguity, role strain, role overload and external role pressures, which make achieving WLB a herculean task.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Role theory	Nigeria and the UK	(T. Mordi <i>et al.</i> , 2023)
4.	“Transformational leadership had a significant and positive impact on the digital school infrastructure, teachers’ positive beliefs about digital technology, their technical skills, and their skills in teaching with digital technologies. In turn, all of these factors, except the digital school infrastructure, significantly	Quantitative: Questionnaire	“Interactive, constructive, active, passive” (ICAP) model	Switzerland/ Education	(Schmitz <i>et al.</i> , 2023)

	and positively predicted higher levels of technology integration.”				
5.	“Telecommuting has an adverse influence on employees’ work- life balance. While remote working has been widely viewed as a means of attaining a more balanced WLB through increased flexibility in work arrangements, the intersecting of work obliga- tions and personal concerns that results from telecommuting have a detrimental effect on employees’ ability to maintain a healthy balance amid professional and personal life.”	Systematic review	Not applicable	General	(Bhat <i>et al.</i> , 2023)
6.	“The findings suggest that even though ATB communication offers multiple opportunities for journalists and their relational others to engage in boundary management. practices, an important part of achieving a balance between work and life is to refrain from ATB communication.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Border theory	Finnish media organization	Leppäkumpua and Sivunen (2023)
7.	“The study found positive correlations with various aspects of flexibility (FL) and permeability (PE). This suggests that as individuals perceive higher levels of ICT use, they also tend to perceive higher levels of flexibility and permeability in their work-life balance.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Theory of planned behaviour	Malaysia	(Kusairi <i>et al.</i> , 2022)
8.	“The study shows that remote work has a positive influence on work life balance whereas the permeability and flexibility has a significant influence on the other way.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	TAM	IT companies	(R. V. Raja & Soundarapandian, 2022)
9.	“Information and communication technology disturbs the boundaries between work time and family time. The implementation of the latest technology allows employees to work more flexibly	Systematic review	Not applicable	General	(Rasool <i>et al.</i> , 2022)

	at home but leads to increased stress, anxiety, and unhealthy work patterns.”				
10.	“The results showed that techno-stressors negatively affected work-life balance, but job self-efficacy buffered employees from this negative effect by reducing their emotional exhaustion.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Job demands–resources (JD-R) theory	China	(J. Ma <i>et al.</i> , 2021)
11.	“The study showed that the use of digital technologies significantly improves coordination and knowledge sharing between individuals, leading to better work-life balance and improved job performance. Furthermore, the study reveals that the use of digital technologies that can enhance communication and decision making does not significantly influence work-life balance and job performance in digital work.”	Review	Boundary Theory	Australia	(Duan <i>et al.</i> , 2021)
12.	“In Malaysia, contextual factors exert a strong influence on WLB experiences for women doctors and nurses. Due to gender norms, women carry the burden of dual responsibilities for both professional and familial duties, which disrupts WLB. Notably, collegiality at work facilitates WLB but is an informal mechanism rooted in a collectivist society. Finally, staff shortages in the healthcare sector also impede WLB.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Not mentioned	Malaysia	(Dousin <i>et al.</i> , 2021)
13.	“Their findings point at a positive relationship between technology use, particularly systems quality and service quality on the WLB of employees in ICT sectors. Their study emphasised the role of technology is achieving a balanced and healthy society.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Not mentioned	Malaysia/ ICT sector	(Gopinathan <i>et al.</i> , 2020)
14.	“Findings revealed that the participants perceived work-life balance as a personal philosophy,	Qualitative: Semi-	Not mentioned	Pakistan	(Kibriya <i>et al.</i> , 2021b)

	managing both sides and event-based. Working women showed their faith in Allah and considered it the most helpful coping strategy. This faith gives them greater strength and courage to deal with problems. Pakistani working women frequently used various work-life balance coping strategies such as; support systems, time and stress management, determining priorities, and task crafting.”	structured interviews			
15.	“Intense use of collaborative technology with actors external to the collaborative spaces can generate perceptions of overload thus making the impact of work-life balance on creativity not significant.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Not mentioned	Italy	(Cochis <i>et al.</i> , 2020)
16.	“Findings reveal that the use of technology greatly promoted women executives’ ability to simultaneously meet the demands of work and family. However, the use of technology created an illusion of WLB for female executives.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Not mentioned	Hungary	(Nagy, 2020)
17.	“Central themes found in regard to technology use, work, and work/life balance included: viewing technology as access, a divide in preference of integrations vs. separation, viewing technology as expectation, viewing technology as leisure, and parental impact on present-day habits.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Border and Boundary theory	Midwestern university	(Juntunen, 2019)
18.	“The findings propose a theoretical model that explains how people can jointly attain work and family goals by using four action strategies (i.e., allocating resources, changing resources and barriers, sequencing goals, and revising goals).”	Qualitative: Review	Action regulation model	General	(Hirschi <i>et al.</i> , 2019)
19.	“The study found that people use multiple devices as a way of creating boundaries between home and	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Boundary theory	United Kingdom	(Fleck <i>et al.</i> , 2019)

	work, and the extent to which they do this relates to their boundary behaviour style.”				
20.	“The findings underscore the important role of MITDs in terms of the attainment of flexibility, which is significant for achieving WLB. However, the use of MITDs has blurred the division between work and non-work domains. This has inadvertently lengthened employees’ working hours, has affected their family relationships, and affected their general health and wellbeing. The evidence suggests that MITDs have the potential to improve WLB but could also lead to work-life conflict if not properly managed.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Labour process theory; border theory	United Kingdom	(Adisa <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
21.	“Family– work enrichment from one day positively influenced work engagement in the following day, as did needs satisfaction (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) and perceived autonomous support. Furthermore, daily burnout reduced work–life balance and this was fully mediated by daily work– family conflict. In addition, daily engagement increased work–life balance and this was partially mediated by daily work–family enrichment.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Conversion of resources	New Zealand/ SMEs	(Haar <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
22.	“The technological innovations such as telecommuting, tablets, handheld gadgets and instant communications tools have made employees fast, flexible, and accessible. More employees are benefitting from organizational initiatives of telecommuting, flexitime, work-from anywhere and compressed worksheet. They further observed that technological innovations have brought so much change the way work is performed	Qualitative: Review	Not mentioned	Not specified	(Fazili & Khan, 2017)

	especially mobile technology have brought stress, anxiety, and conflict in work-life of employees.”				
23.	“The results show differences between the perceptions of WLB in regard to the instructional and non-instructional employees surveyed. Though there was a significant difference, rather than negative perceptions, instructional faculty viewed ICTs as helpful for WLB.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Constructivism, Cognitive Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory	Education	Hubbard (2016)
24.	“The reported quality of IT services is positively associated with work–life balance after controlling for a variety of factors that may also influence work–life balance and using diverse specifications.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Job Demands-Resources model	Australia	(Bardoel & Drago, 2016)
25.	“The use of mobile technologies for both work and social purposes is widespread among the surveyed population, involving various situations and hours. Respondents perceived more advantages than disadvantages to mobile technology use. They disagreed that technology prevented them from switching off from work, had a negative impact on their life, or caused anxiety if unable to check work messages.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Not mentioned	Scotland	(First Psychology Scotland, 2015)
26.	“The findings suggest that using Internet and mobile technologies influences the dimensions (flexibility and permeability), types (integration, autonomy, interference, and segmentation), and consequences (job satisfaction, job stress, and overwork) of work-life balance.”	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Border theory; Boundary theory	America	(Nam, 2014)
27.	“Flexible work–home arrangements explained the variance in time-based negative work–home interference, while no relationship was found between supportive culture and time-based negative work–home interference. Innovative	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Spillover theory	Dutch	(Sok <i>et al.</i> , 2014)

	culture was positively related to positive work-home interference and time-based negative work-home interference."				
28.	"Flexible working hours promote and facilitate work-life balance. Reduced stress and increased employee wellbeing are outcomes of the work-life balance."	Qualitative: Review	Not mentioned	General	Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014)
29.	"The majority of managers say that virtual technology prolongs the workday and around half of them view the reconciliation of work and family life as becoming more complicated. However, they say the reconciliation of work and family is becoming easier."	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Not mentioned	Iceland	(Rafnsdóttir & Stefánsson, 2014)
30.	"The findings reveal that there is diversity in terms of how middle-line managers understand and experience WLB initiatives in Nigeria. Another finding highlights the practice of favoritism in most banks using WLB initiatives. In addition, the study shows that cultural sensitivity affects how WLB is appreciated and utilized."	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Spillover theory	Nigeria/ Banking	(C. Mordi <i>et al.</i> , 2013)
31.	"The findings highlight the subjective nature of work-life balance and the way in which experiences of conflict and balance are not fixed but fluctuate as result of changing circumstances and coping strategies. It identifies several issues which underline the inadequacies of a 'one size fits all' approach to this issue."	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Not mentioned	United Kingdom	(Wattis <i>et al.</i> , 2013)
32.	"The findings suggest that there is a continuum of WLB perceptions, with some seeing work and personal life as separate domains, others viewing work as overlapping with personal life and yet others perceiving the two domains as integrated."	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Border theory	United States of America	(Sarker <i>et al.</i> , 2012)

33.	“The findings show that long hours and presenteeism do form “part of the job” when accepting a role at a higher level. However, modern technology has helped this to some extent by allowing senior managers to be accessible instead of having to be present in the office.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Flexible firm model	Irish senior managers	Murphy and Doherty (2011)
34.	“Findings revealed the use of metaphors such as invasion and intrusion of e-technologies into academics’ homes and their need to establish boundaries to separate work and family life. Most felt that having e-technologies at home was of benefit to their work but they came at a cost to their family life—delivering a blessing and a curse.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Boundary theory	Australia/ Education	(Currie & Eveline, 2011)
35.	“Lodging managers deployed mixed strategies to cope with role conflicts. The lodging managers seemed to use more coping strategies that require the redefinition of structural roles. They were not afraid to alter their external structures. They empowered their subordinates and authorized them to make decisions.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Role theory	-	(Hsieh & Eggers, 2010)
36.	“Findings suggests that mobile technologies are shifting temporal boundaries and that the walls of the office have moved outward to include the home and the myriad of other locations where work can now be done. Furthermore, while work extenders need to deal with the impact of work extension on their work and non-work spheres, the mechanisms they currently use to control their use of technology to perform work extension are only partially successful in helping to keep a clear boundary between work and non-work spheres.”	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	Boundary role theory	-	(Duxbury & Smart, 2010)

37.	"The results indicated that the work life balance of managers are not completely successful due to their present working hours, working environment and increase in products prices, work load, responsibilities in work and decrease of job security due to recession."	Quantitative: Questionnaire	Not mentioned	India	(Thulasimani <i>et al.</i> , 2010)
38.	"The study indicated that claims that mobile technologies facilitate WLB is one-sided. They found that current uses of mobile technology increased work-life conflict by materialising work and taunting family and friends with absent presence."	Qualitative: document analysis	Border theory	Blackberry	(Middleton, 2008)
39.	"The study findings suggests that it was hard for employees to create boundaries around work and non-work time because clients expect and excellent and fast service."	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews	The psychological contract theory may	United Kingdom	(Moylan, 2008)
40.	"The study confirms international trends in the over, and often inappropriate, use of information and communication technology. ICT had accentuated the already prevailing practice of "presenteeism" by ensuring that some managers needed to be "on call" even when they have left their workplace."	Mixed methods	Role theory	Senior managers	(Drew & Murtagh, 2006)