

# Chapter 30

## Work–Life Balance Challenges: Constructing an Employee– Friendly Workplace

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### ABSTRACT

*Within an ever-changing, digitalized world, the working methods have vastly changed over the last few decades. If the effects of a contemporary event such as COVID-19—the global pandemic started in the Hubei region of China at the end of December 2019—are considered, the changes have reached beyond just the practical logistics of working and crossed otherwise untouched social and emotional barriers. As a result of the pandemic, new working ways on an international level have become considerably more prominent. With the post-modern paradigm, organizations have focused on their employees and see them as stakeholders and developed a set of policies and standards under the guise of “an employee-friendly organization.” This chapter sheds light on strategies on how to maintain work-life balance in a virtual environment of remote work, new regulations, and the gaining importance of employee satisfaction, ensuring remote employees feel cared for, valued, and included.*

### INTRODUCTION

*“We need to do a better job of putting ourselves higher on our own ‘to do’ list.” Michelle Obama - Former First Lady of the United States*

Ensuing the World Health Organization’s classification of the COVID-19 outbreak as an “international public health emergency” on January 30, 2020, the occurrence of COVID-19 cases in 113 countries except China, where the first epidemic started, was defined as a global epidemic on March 11 due to the spread and intension of the virus (Turkish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, 2020). With the COVID-19 epidemic that affects the whole world, significant changes have occurred in working life.

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Many of these changes have been permanent and some have temporarily affected employees and employers. While the COVID-19 epidemic, working hours, the way of working, workplace, work-life balance change in terms of occupational health and safety standards, new measures and measures specific to the epidemic have entered the working life rapidly. Although this rapid change has caused specific changes in everyone's lives, common problems and solutions for remote working, work-life balance, workplaces, and employee importance have also come to the fore. Digital solutions that quickly entered the working life with COVID-19 brought some other changes in the way of working remotely as well as working in general. Together with pandemic, digitalization, which entered the business life rapidly, has entered to the comfort personal space of employee in which they have their private life spot "*home*". In today's dynamic environment, employers and human resources departments alternative to increase employee motivation, job belongingness, employee morale and try to retain qualified manpower with quality of knowledge and string along with new working place trends in pandemic.

Work-family balance was used for the first time in the mid-1970s (Borah and Bagla, 2016) and the reason why it was first suggested was the inability to ignore workplace demands while using the time spent with the family or described as "leisure time" and to integrate these two phenomena (Kaliannan et al., 2016). As a matter of fact, the inclusion of the subject in the literature is based on the fact that people started to take into account the negative impacts of work life on family life in 1986 (Choudhary & Singh, 2016). In the early 2000s, the increase in internet usage and the developments in the field of software provided the development of "smart systems". The emergence of new production systems that can perform production processes unmanned has formed the basis for the start of the industry 4.0 process (Serinikli, 2018). Thus, digital transformation has been experienced in production systems. Mechanical systems operating with water and steam power, the dynamism of the Industrial Revolution Industry 1.0, have now been replaced by cyber-physical systems with Industry 4.0 (Bağcı, 2018). In the Industry 4.0 revolution, not only production systems, but also current consumption, distribution and working styles started to change (Çiğdem, 2019). During the period from the Industrial Revolution to the middle of the 20th century, in consequence of technological and economic developments, working hours in factories, enterprises and workplaces began to shorten, and the way of working and the place of work began to change (Yılmaz & Aktaş, 2018). Especially thanks to technological developments, it has become possible to work remotely / mobile / from home with computers and other communication tools outside the workplace (Kıcıır, 2019). In addition, with the developing technology, new working models such as digital entrepreneurship, e-commerce, working with robots have also emerged and spread rapidly (Hasanat et al., 2020).

Work-life balance practices are becoming an increasingly substantial issue in today's post-industrial societies due to concerns and expectations regarding the quality of life (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). In today's corporate, managerial and academic studies, concepts such as "work-life balance", "work-family balance", "work-life integration", "employee-friendly/family-friendly policies" or "work and time flexibility" gain importance (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005). In today's "business" world, there are a wide variety of applications aimed at increasing the productivity of organizations to keep up with both technological developments, environmental and social changes. Corporate Social Responsibility strategies provide added value to the organizations such as environmental friendliness and implementation of green protection in creating environmentally friendly (Blazovich, 2013) and also ethic employee friendly workplaces.

This situation causes the employees of the organizations to work more and more intensely, and accordingly, they are more physically and mentally worn out. With the triggering of the difficult times experienced due to the pandemic, the intense work from home working conditions have led the change

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