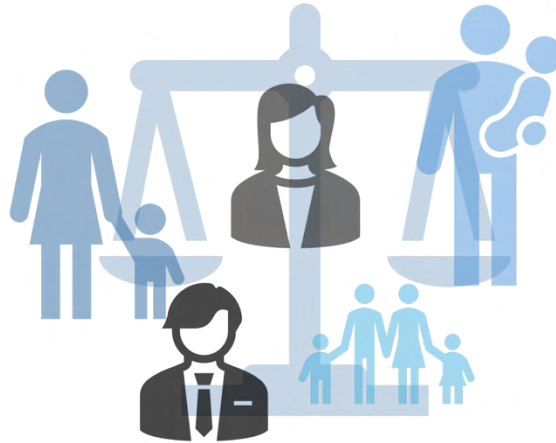


Balancing Family and Work Life.

A business perspective.



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Abstract

Family-Work Balance (FWB) is essential for individual employees' health and mental state. This stream of research is well-rooted in the literature, but it is also informed mainly from a sociological or psychological perspective. The business perspective is missing, and as a result, the actual benefits of helping their employees achieve such a balance remain scarce and hardly documented. Subsequently, the managerial effort to improve perceived FWB remains desultory and highly subjective. This manuscript aims to start filling this gap and launch the effort to look at FWB from a business, relational perspective. Grounded on the Vocational-Fit theory, we offer a definition for FWB that accounts for the joint responsibility of management and employees in producing such balance. Using the evidence from 19 in-depth interviews with salespeople, we explain the key constituents of the FWB notion from this business-relational perspective, along with its drivers and impediments. Academic and practical implications for salesperson's management are discussed, along with the directions for future research.

Despite several global crises, such as the hyperinflation in Germany (1945 to 1948), the crisis on the Sterling (1947 and 1964), India's Food and Currency Crisis (1965), and the international oil crisis of 1973 and the ensuing recession, overall, the global economy after World War two grew spectacularly, at least up and until the late 1980s (Wikipedia, 2024, November 16). Unemployment had been low, while salaries and family disposable income had grown. Crucially, many women who, in a way, were forced into the economy during the war years retained their jobs, leading to a multifaceted transformation of the socioeconomic environment and context in many economies (Goldin, 2006). But there has been a price to pay for this growth and transformation. Because economies transitioned to a more consumer-oriented approach, competition intensified, setting productivity as a key performance indicator against which the management measured their company (Holmes & Schmitz Jr, 2010). Consequently, employees had to be more productive but also start working longer hours at the expense of the time available for their private lives (Henle, 1966; Moore & Hedges, 1971). As a result, along with economic prosperity, stress and anxiety also began to sit in (Conger et al., 1994; Sinclair et al., 2013). The globalisation of the economy since the 1990s has intensified this (Messenger, Lee, & McCann, 2007; Sullivan, 2014). This explains why balancing the relationship between an employee's work-life and the other things a person perceives to be important in life (e.g., family roles or social life) has received the attention of many academics since the mid-1970s (Cummings, Molly, & Glen, 1975). This relationship underpins the notion of family- and work-life balance (FWB) (Brough & Kalliath, 2009).

Employees benefit from FWB in both their personal and professional lives (e.g., Bakalım & Karçkay, 2017; Baral & Bhargava, 2010), but this requires employers to have a clear commitment and appropriately supportive human resources (HR) policies in place (Glass & Estes, 1997), before the company and its employees can benefit (Guedes et al., 2023). For this to happen, though, a clear definition of what such strategies seek to achieve is necessary. Both normative and empirical academic work has been seeking to supply practitioners with such a definition.

Academic work in FWB goes back five decades (e.g., Cummings et al., 1975). Since then, the conceptualisation and understanding of FWB have received significant attention, producing a more refined research stream (e.g., Duxbury, Lyons, & Higgins, 2008; Allen & Martin, 2017; Guedes et al., 2023). Despite the prolific work, the FWB stream of research remains without an equivocal definition that the management can

act upon (Wayne et al., 2017). In fact, to this day, academics describe the balance between the family- and work-life using different terminologies, which attest to the various and usually not converging perspectives typical to this stream of research (see, for instance, Duxbury et al., 2008 and Greenhaus et al., 2012).

One possible reason is that sociologists and psychologists originated this stream of research and still steer it (e.g., Dumas & Stanko, 2017 Fleetwood, 2007). Business academics lag significantly despite the clear implications for an employee's social behaviour [both in the work and personal domains], psychology, and work performance (Guedes et al., 2023), begging for more research in the FWB to allow for relevant empirical findings to emerge and inform actions and policies.

Consequently, this white paper reports on the normative and empirical work funded by the Leverhulme Trust to understand the notion of this balance from a business perspective. This should allow companies to track and monitor their employees' perceived balance between their work and personal lives, enabling management to act and shape policies to help employees improve and sustain this balance. In doing so, a brief review of the extant literature helps to identify the shortcomings of the extant body of literature regarding FWB and managerial actions. For a more business perspective to emerge, the Vocation-Fit Theory (VFT) is introduced -for the first time- as an alternative theoretical vantage that allows considering FWB from a business and actionable point of view. Together, these two sections allow for a rigorous theoretical underpinning for FWB. This section concludes with a theoretical conceptualisation and a working definition of FWB from such [a business] perspective.

In this respect, this white paper answers three questions. First is the question of defining the essence of this "balance." The literature offers different definitions that do not necessarily converge towards a single notion or definition managers can use. In fact, over the years, various theoretical approaches have emerged regarding the definition of such a balance. A critical review of the extant and pertinent literature allows for documenting them and, at the same time, explaining the limitations each of these approaches has for practitioners. At this point, VFT is introduced to provide the argumentation and necessary theoretical approach to FWB from a business perspective.

The second question is, what are the components of FWB from a business perspective, and the third question is how employees' personal and work life interplay in allowing them to achieve such a "balance"? A qualitative

study informs the answers to questions two and three. For the qualitative research, we focused on salespeople to widen the relevance of our investigation. This is because of the palette of people and job roles associated with the selling task. People with very diverse backgrounds in education, experiences, or personalities start and often pursue a career in sales (e.g., Billups & Poddar, 2018; Wiles & Spiro, 2004). At the same time, sales roles are demanding and stressful because selling roles are the main, if not the only, revenue-generating roles in a company's structure (Habel et al., 2020). Thus, a detailed discussion of the research protocol employed to generate this qualitative evidence follows the critical review of the extant literature. Next comes the interpretation of the information these interviews produced. A discussion of this study's contributions follows, and the paper concludes with the limitations and suggested directions for future researchers.

Theoretically framing the balance between personal and work lives

Economic progress has allowed employees to consider other aspects of life beyond merely having a job and receiving a wage. Such needs as caring for family and having a social and/or personal life become important once people pass the level of making ends meet (De Bruin & Dupuis, 2004).

Such priorities fuel the discussion for satisfying job/career and personal/non-job specific employees' needs and goals. Hence, the notion of FWB. The notion is subjectively defined since, for instance, age, family, and career lifecycles condition how employees (will) define and perceive FWB under varying circumstances (Kasper, Meyer, & Schmidt, 2005). This subjectivity probably explains why FWB lacks a universal definition (and measure) (Maxwell & McDougall, 2004) but also introduces ambiguity when studying FWB-related phenomena.

Scholars looking at such FWB-related phenomena have mainly approached the notion of FWB from two different theoretical vantages. The first is "*role theory*" (including role balance and enhancement theories). From this perspective, humans behave in different yet predictable ways depending on their social identities and the situation (Biddle, 1986). Within this domain, a paradigm of looking at role theory from an organisational role perspective emerged in the late 1950s (Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1958). Scholars following this paradigm focus on the social systems that are preplanned, task-oriented, and hierarchical, allowing academics to demarcate role expectancy and its implications. Roles in such organisations are assumed to be associated with identified

social positions and subject to normative expectations, which vary among individuals, reflecting the pressures from formal and informal groups (Kahn et al., 1964).

The second is “*identity theory*,” which has been increasingly used in work-family research (e.g., Dumas & Stanko, 2017). Drawing on role theory, this stream suggests that individuals classify themselves into various social categories, defining their identity and roles (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Cameron, 2004; Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). Once individuals identify with a role, they can determine who s/he is and shape his/her behaviour (Stryker, 1968). Nevertheless, situational factors and/or social norms can induce individuals to behave in ways that are not always consistent with their identities (Greenhaus, Ziegert, & Allen, 2012).

In the periphery, the resource-based theory has also been considered in the broader investigation of FWB-related phenomena to address how individuals manage the available resources to achieve such balance (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Zhou & Buehler, 2016).

Yet, a simple search on the internet, including AI applications, will fail to produce a clear, unanimous, and unequivocal definition of the notion (Wayne et al., 2017), despite recent efforts for a more holistic perspective (e.g., Allen & French, 2023). This is probably because research in the field took different routes in conceptualising the notion of FWB despite coming from mainly the same theoretical domains. This is not necessarily a concern, especially in sociology or psychology. This diversity in how to approach the notion of FWB can allow for the theoretical flexibility required to delineate such a subjective notion. However, from a practical perspective, the ambiguity resulting from equivocal and unclear definitions of FWB impedes companies and their management from charting policies that will facilitate and allow their employees to achieve such balance. Doing so is important for two reasons. First, employees benefit from FWB personally and professionally (e.g., Bakalim & Karçay, 2017). Secondly, companies will benefit both in terms of their employees’ performance and commitment to the company (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999).

Some earlier attempts look at FWB through the resolution of the conflicts that emerge because an employee has divergent roles (e.g., Duxbury et al., 2008). In this context, researchers emphasise the absence of conflict and the presence of facilitation (Frone, 2003: 145; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003). From this perspective, the degree

of autonomy individuals perceive themselves to have over demands stemming from their different roles conditions the balance employees see between work and personal life (Fleetwood, 2007).

Stemming from this perspective, FWB would appear to result from individuals' autonomy over the roles most salient to them. If individuals could reduce their work hours to spend time with their newborn child, for example, this could be perceived as an effective work-life balance since “time” is an essential trigger of such conflicts (see, for instance Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980 Duxbury et al., 2008). However, conflicting roles do not necessarily lead employees to see their work and personal lives lacking balance. Working from home has become dominant since the recent pandemic. Many companies have moved to this mode permanently. While this mode increases the employee’s autonomy over work and job-related tasks, empirical evidence suggests that this type of employment contracts the employee’s perception of balance between their personal and work lives (e.g., Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003; Hsieh et al., 2005). This is because employees prioritise their different roles based on their circumstances. A working single mother (or a widow) has different priorities/needs from a married, non-working mother, which will also differ from those of a married working mother. The same goes for fathers. Thus, the main problem with this line of investigating and assessing FWB is that while individuals may see the conflicts in the different roles they have to perform, they can still see their life as “balanced”, given the salience different roles have for them at a specific time in (or stage of) their life and given their particular circumstances.

Other scholars relied on a balancing perspective to explain why and how employees seek to reconcile diverging demands from their work and personal lives. Also known as “work-family enrichment”. This enrichment reflects a process whereby improvements in one role (work or family) contribute to improvements in the other role (family and work) through the transfer of resources or positive affect from one role to the other (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Greenhaus et al., 2012).

Positive interdependencies between work and family roles are considered to be positive work-family spillovers (Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006b) and work-family facilitation (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004). However, the main issue with this approach is that transferring resources from one role to the other is not always seamless; sometimes, it is not even possible. For instance, families with toddlers or young kids, while both parents are working, will find it harder to transfer resources from family life and children’s responsibilities to accept a new job role or appointment requiring either parent to be away from home for a long time. The

opposite is also true since maternity or paternity leaves, where available, provide, for example, only this much space and transferring resources from work to family, which remains temporary.

Moving forward, the most recent views on FWB echo a relational perspective embedded in a person's (broader) social environment, including that of the individual's personal (taking a broader perspective of "family life") and work life (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). From this broader perspective, work-family balance reflects an integrative relationship between work and personal life. Hence, a more inclusive definition of FWB: *"Work-life balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities"* (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Unfortunately, a measure to reflect this definition was not provided, but some broad guidelines were offered to develop such a measure. While again short of framing the measurement of FWB, a more recent definition treats the balance between work and personal lives as a multidimensional construct: *"Employees' evaluation of the favourability of their combination of work and nonwork roles, arising from the degree to which their affective experiences and their perceived involvement and effectiveness in work and nonwork roles are commensurate with the value they attach to these roles"* (Casper et al., 2018). This definition also recognises that personal values and priorities are central to balancing personal and work life.

To round up, the dialogue of the importance of balancing personal and work life started in the mid-1970s (e.g., Reilly, 1975), continued in the 1980s (e.g. Reilly & Sirias, 1981), and has been evolving since then, reflecting the significance for the employees' psychological and social well-being. Not surprisingly, psychologists and sociologists have steered this discourse. Early studies have attempted to address the "balanced" question from two key perspectives: First, in relation to addressing and managing the conflicts associated with the different roles different employees hold, and second, by looking at the reconciliation of diverging demands from those roles. Both come with particular and significant concerns when framing what constitutes "a balanced life". A more recent confabulation has been initiated, probably to deal with such concerns. According to the emerging discourse, this "balance" is viewed from a relational perspective embedded in a person's (broader) social environment while also reflecting the employees' circumstances in their personal and work lives. Alas, lacking empirical studies, this relational perspective has yet to deliver a measurement for assessing how balanced employees perceive their personal and work lives. Consequently, we are also missing evidence to gauge the impact of achieving such balance on the companies' and employees' performances

(Guedes et al., 2023). From a business perspective, this is a significant gap preventing companies from a) assessing the impact of actively facilitating their employees to achieve such a balance on the company's performance and b) what practices need to change or come into place for this balance to ensue. To overcome this gap, in the following section, we introduce the Vocation-Fit Theory, which allows for capturing the relational/business perspective of FWB.

Vocation-Fit Theory and Implication for Conceptualizing the Balancing of Employees' Life.

The goal of understanding how and why people make their career choices led to investigating how an employee's personality can explain this employee's choice regarding alternative jobs, careers and work environments (Holland, 1959). Later work led to the development of the "vocational personality" concept, the Holland Codes or RIASEC model (Holland, 1968; 1973; Jerdee, 1975). The need for aligning an individuals' personality and the characteristics of their job, career path and work environments as an antecedent to vocational satisfaction emerged as the key contribution from this [early] seminal work. During the same period, the investigation of job satisfaction from the organisational psychology perspective showed that the congruence between individual employees' preferences and job characteristics impacted job satisfaction (see Locke, 1969). This is the foundational work underpinning what presently is referred to as the Vocation-Fit Theory (VFT).

VFT posits that employees experience greater job satisfaction, job performance, and well-being when there is alignment between their idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g., skills, values, preferences) and the characteristics of their work environment (e.g., job tasks, organisational culture, values). According to VFT, the greater the fit, the more likely an employee will experience higher job satisfaction, engagement, and performance (Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003).

This fit is subjective, reflecting how employees, on the one hand, perceive their skills, abilities, and preferences and how, on the other, they perceive the job or role requirements with the job, supervisor, or company (Cable & DeRue, 2002). When the two are in congruence, it can be extended to include the fit between the employee and his/her supervisor or the company overall regarding the company's values, ambitions, management style, climate, and so on (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).

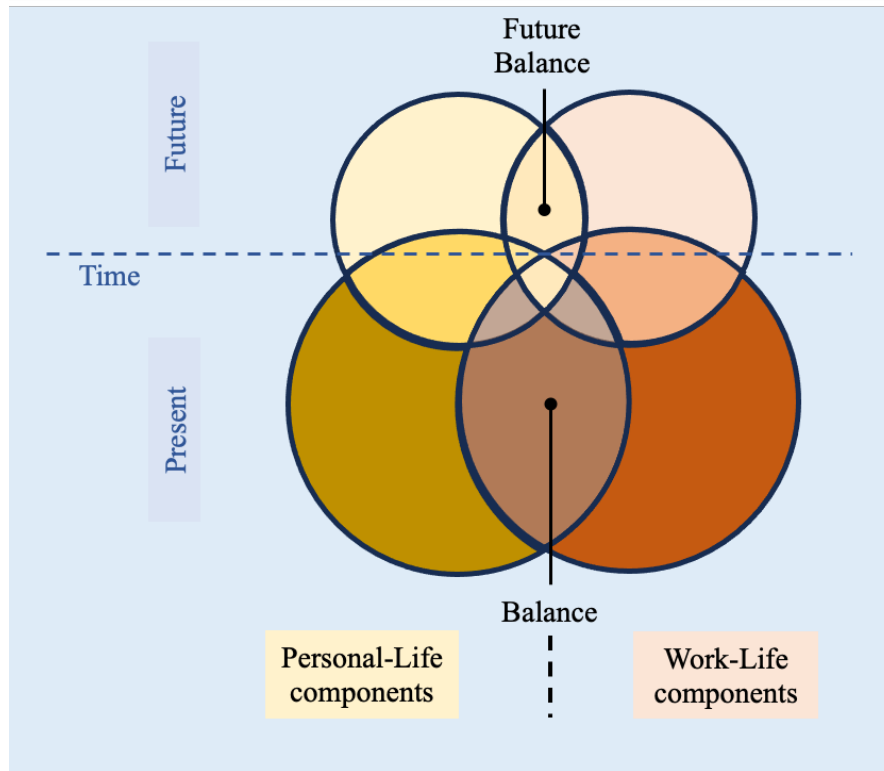
This subjectivity the VFT posits has three important implications that the extant FWB stream of research is missing: a) different employees will see the same job role differently depending on their [subjective] understanding of their skills, values and preferences and how they perceive the requirements of the job/role; b) the same employees, depending on their circumstances at different stages of their personal and work life will evaluate this fit [or the lack of it] differently since VFT has received only sporadic attention in the FWB stream of research (Casper et al., 2018; Table 3, p189); (c) the company's management has a responsibility to shape job roles and descriptions, along with working conditions to make their offering to existing employees and recruit candidates more attractive and appealing.

Thus, we rely on VFT as the method theory (Jaakkola, 2020) and offer the following working definition: “[FWB is] *to have a clear line between work and personal life, each of which equally contributes to one's bliss with life. Balancing the two is different for different people and changes over time, reflecting different phases in one's work/career and personal life*”. This definition echoes that of Kalliath & Brough, (2008) in considering the employee's present stage in both work and personal life. This allows us to focus on how well the individual balances the personal and work lives so that s/he achieves an equipoised affective state. This state is subjectively defined and can change when the employee's perceptions of their skills, abilities, and preferences or the requirements and characteristics of a specific job or role within an organisation change. The employees' subjective perception of their personal life, preferences, and desires, or the priorities they see in their personal lives, change over time or with changing circumstances. Thus, our working definition is dynamic, conceding that what may be a “balanced life” today is not necessarily relevant in the future.

Also, because of the subjectivity, what constitutes a “balanced life” is idiosyncratic and will not necessarily be the same for all employees. By implication, different combinations of one's work and personal life constituents will deliver a “balanced life” for other employees. As a result, the conditions precipitating such a “balanced life” will also vary for different employees. In this, our working definition differs from definitions emphasising the value employees receive from their work and personal life or managing the conflicts that work and personal roles can trigger (e.g., Casper et al., 2018; Frone, 2003). Ours implies that employees seek to achieve a balance between their subjective understanding of the salient components of their personal and work lives. At the same time, with time, the components of personal life, work life, or both may and most probably will change as the individual's circumstances change. The quest for a “future balance” will deliver a new

intersection ground between the two, which may or may not be a direct projection of the (previous) present balance, reflecting the volatility and fluid nature of the notion. Figure 1 below visually describes our conceptualisation of the “balanced life,” emerging from this working definition.

Figure 1: A theoretical conceptualisation of balancing the existing and future components of an individual’s personal and work lives.



Empirically Exploring the Face Validity of the Conceptualization and Working Definition.

Empirical Exploration: Context and Eligibility for Participation.

Further to critically reviewing the FWB literature, we sought to empirically explore the face validity of our theoretical conceptualisation as part of a broader investigation funded by the Leverhulme Trust through the Major Fellowships awards. The broader investigation explores what defines and improves the salespeople’s perceived FWB for the company’s and its employees’ mutual benefit. For face validity empirical validation, we followed an inductive approach. We completed 19 semi-structured in-depth interviews to capture participants’ context and lived reality of a “balanced life” (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The decision to focus on sales was because of the variety of people and job roles associated with the selling task. People with diverse backgrounds in education, experiences, or personalities start and then pursue a career

in sales (e.g., Billups & Poddar, 2018; Clift, 1997; Greenberg & Greenberg, 1980; Wiles & Spiro, 2004). At the same time, sales roles are demanding because selling roles are the prominent revenue-generating roles in a company's structure (Habel et al., 2020). Salespeople usually receive clear sales/revenue/profit objectives (Avila, Fern, & Mann, 1988; Dubinsky & Lippitt, 1980). Salespeople's career advancement relies heavily on meeting these competitive [against other salespeople in the same organisation and their rivals from competition] objectives, and this is a significant source of stress in their work-life (Dubinsky & Lippitt, 1980; Good & Schwepker Jr, 2001; Leischnig, Ivens, & Henneberg, 2015; Weeks & Fournier, 2010; Leischnig et al., 2015), which they need to balance vis-à-vis their personal life. Hence, from the VFT's perspective, sales roles reflect work-life conditions and individual circumstances beyond what other job roles can reflect. Therefore, the generalisability of the findings regarding the face validity of the construct in the business context is warranted. Having decided on the context, eligibility to participate required a minimum of two years of continuous experience in a selling role so that interviewees could fully grasp their work-life role and the implications of balancing this aspect of their life with their personal life. Informants were also selected to have at least a year of experience with their employer to ensure their apprehension of the job role and requirements the employer has.

Research Protocol and Method of Analysis

In-depth interviewing is commonly used to advance a theory from an inductive, interpretive approach (Brounéus, 2011; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The extant literature has provided the grounds for developing a theoretical framework. However, endorsing this theoretical framework with real-life cases can only enhance the framework's rigour and face validity. Semi-structured in-depth interviews serve this purpose (Brounéus, 2011). In total, 19 interviews proved enough to achieve information saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The process of identifying participants followed the rationale of criterion and chain referral: the criterion approach to selecting participants ensured participants were eligible for participation, while chain referral made it possible to collect the data timely. In qualitative research such designs are common (Nakkeeran, 2016).

The first three participants were recruited from the part-time MBA course according to the eligibility criteria. Using chain referral sampling, the first three participants identified more candidates from their circle of friends and colleagues, who did the same upon accepting to participate and completing the interview (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Table 1 summarises the key demographic characteristics of the 19 participants.

The interview guide consisted of three primary and distinct parts. First, the interview focused on aspects of the participants' work life (e.g., years of experience, job role and tasks, perceived stress from job role and coping mechanisms, work climate, etc.). Next, the discussion moved on to their personal life (e.g., habits and hobbies, usual activities and preferences, caring for any minors or elders, as well as exploring what an "ideal" personal life would look like) before engaging with the notion of balancing personal and work lives. At that stage, each participant was presented with the working definition [*"To have a clear line between work and personal life, each of which equally contributes to one's bliss with life. Balancing the two is different for different people and changes over time, reflecting different phases in one's work/career and personal life"*] and asked to comment on this. We also asked participants to reflect on barriers impeding them from achieving such balance. To serve the aims of this manuscript, we focus on sharing the findings from analysing (a) the components of employees' perceived FWB, (b) what obstacles they see in achieving such balance, (c) what the key components of their personal life after work are, and (d) how they see their work life.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Profile.

		n	%			n	%
Marital Status	Single	9	47%	Gender	Male	7	37%
	Married	10	53%		Female	12	63%
Kids	Yes	7	37%	Family Annual Income	Up to £25k	3	16%
	No	12	63%		£26-50k	6	32%
Age	20-30	4	21%		£51-75k	5	26%
	30-40	4	21%		£75-100k	4	21%
	40-50	6	32%		£100k +	1	5%
	50-60	3	16%	Education	High School	2	11%
	60+	2	11%		Apprentice	2	11%
					College	5	26%
					University	10	53%

Template analysis informs the analysis of the interviews. Template analysis combines elements of content analysis and a grounded theory approach, that is, *a priori* and emergent coding. This form of analysis emphasises hierarchical coding while allowing the researcher to develop new codes as they emerge from rich data (Brooks et al., 2015). The review of the pertinent literature and the developed working definition of FWB provided the basis for the initial template. Each transcription was marked with the appropriate code. Two coders analysed the transcripts independently, developing coding frames to reflect emerging patterns (Miles, 1994) while categorising them according to the research focus (Bryman & Burgess, 2002). These codes were revised

repeatedly during the analysis when a relevant concept that did not match existing codes emerged, thus allowing us to record emergent or unforeseen codes.

Template Analysis: Findings and Key Themes

Table 2 presents the themes the analysis revealed coming from the participants' comments on our FWB working definition and their responses when nudged to elaborate further. Two indicative quotes from different participants for each code supplement the Table. All names are pseudonyms to protect the participants' anonymity.

The first theme that emerged as a component of FWB is having “*gratifying experiences*,” which depends on four key conditions. Two are work-related, namely, the amount of stress people bear in their personal lives because of their work and the amount of their [personal] time that work takes away. The other two are specific to their perceptions of their personal lives: the quality of their personal time and how enjoyable their personal life is. Closely relating to the first theme, the second one captures FWB's “*welfare*” component. Three conditions comprise this theme: again, the amount of stress people carry in their personal lives is coupled with making fewer sacrifices to one's personal life for the sake of work while actively seeking to maintain one's mental health [given the responsibilities people have in their personal and work lives.] A third theme upon which FWB reflects is “*job fulfilment*.” Job security, recognition at work and opportunities for career development inform this theme. Notably and surprisingly, the template analysis also allowed for an unexpected theme to emerge: “*Delusion*”. This theme emerged from only two of the 19 participants (10% of participants), “Angela” and “Ali”. While discussing and commenting on FWB, these two participants objected to such a balance being possible or even relevant, given today's demands of the work environment and people's personal life choices. As subsequent analysis has revealed, family values and role perceptions drive the latter. According to our working definition, holding such views contracts one's overall perceived FWB, hence the negative sign in Table 2.

Relevant to the definition of FWB is the question of what impedes employees from achieving such balance. Table 3 summarises the participants' responses to this question. Notably, the individual employee and the employer are both, albeit not equally necessarily, responsible for the unbalance between personal and work lives. Regarding the **employees' responsibility**, certain **habitual behaviours** (such as time spent online, e.g., social media) and specific **family backgrounds** are two conditions that could curtail the balance between their personal and work lives. **Work zeal**, as manifested by one's lack of control over work-related ambitions, choices

Table 2: Key Themes Associated with the Notion of FWB

Codes	COMPONENTS OF FWB. THEMATIC ANALYSIS							
	GRATIFYING EXPERIENCES	WELLFARE	DELUSION (-)	JOB FULFILLMENT	Participant	Quote	Participa nt	Quote
LESS STRESS					Antony	Balancing the two is mainly about managing stress. Work is a source of stress, but your personal life can also cause stress, when others do not understand. So, managing stress makes your life better and balanced.	Jenny	A balanced life is a life that is not stressful. You can go about doing your work but also do the things you do in your private life.
ENJOYABLE PERSONAL LIFE					Peter		A balanced life is one that allows you to enjoy the time you have for yourself.	
TIME AT WORK					Alan	You need to draw the line. Day has only 24hrs so the more hours you spend with your work the less time you have for you and your life.	Bruce	You cannot have a balanced life unless you work only as much as is necessary. Often this is not the case. Lengthy meetings, for instance, without any true purpose, distract you, waste your time, and you end up having to work late.
QUALITY OF PERSONAL TIME					Nancy	When I go out I want to be able to enjoy my time. Not to have part of my mind locked at work.	Mary	It is not only about how much time you have. Quality time matters, too. Actually, this is more important.
FEWER SACRIFICES					Anny	We all have to work to make a living. Yes? For me, the question is what we need to give up so we can make a living!	Andrew	You have plans to go out with your mates, and they call you from your store and ask you to pop in cause one of the guys did not turn up. What do you do? You say yes because you want to or you must?
LESS STRESS					Ali	It is not easy to achieve this balance, but I think it is about having less stress (...mainly from work)	Thomas	A balanced life is the life that allows you to stay healthy. Mentally. You can work out and try to stay fit but if the stress from work burns you out, this is a problem.
MENTAL HEALTH					Francis	A balanced life is the one that lets you keep it together. You don't want to go mental. Stay in control of both work and personal life.		
NO SUCH A THING								Angela
OUTDATED NOTION								
RECOGNITION AT WORK					Alan	To be balanced also requires that you enjoy your work, and this depends on how you are treated and if people recognise you.	Rebecca	I do not get the recognition I deserve at work. To say I have balanced the two includes the management recognising what and how I contribute to the company.
JOB SECURITY					Mary	Times are very competitive. Knowing you have the support of your manager, and you won't lose your job is important to balance work and personal life.	Peter	I'm on zero hrs contract and this is not helpful. It is hard to plan your life when missing a regular income.
CAREER DEVELOPMENT					Ali	Career development is also important. To have balance between the two, they both need to advance. Improve your personal life but also improve in developing your career.	Andrew	The chance to learn [from work] and advance my career is very important for me. This is one of the reasons I'm staying with this company.

Table 3: Themes Associated with the Barriers to FWB.

Codes	INDIVIDUAL			COMPANY		Participant	Quote	Participant	Quote
	PERSONAL DISPOSITIONS	WORK ZEAL	CAREER LIFE CYCLE	WORK CONDITIONS	SUPPORTIVE COLLEAGUES & MANAGERS				
HABITUAL BEHAVIOURS						Anny	Become less engaged with social media and use my time better for the things I want	Andrew	My weekly screen time reports say I spend too much time on my phone. Obviously, I have to control this. And plan better my time.
FAMILY BACKGROUND						Angela	As I said, my dad was always working and never distinguished between family and work life.	Ali	Both my parents have been working hard to provide for us. I wouldn't have it any different for my family.
ONE'S CHOICE OF LIFE						Julia	Yes, times are hard and getting a good job is not always easy but what can you do? At some point, you need to draw the line if you want to have a life.	Rebecca	You're in a job that you don't like. You're stressed and miserable. But you have the choice to look for a different job. Maybe it will take some time, but the choice is there.
AMBITION						Alan	The more you hope to achieve and the sooner you want it the less balanced your life is. People are responsible to live measured lives	Bruce	I have ambitions but I think are reasonable. My friends are too ambitious and willing to sacrifice their personal life to see them.
SHELF RESTRAIN						Bob	I used to work a lot more at home in the past. With time and experience, I was able to take control and since I have a more balanced life	Francis	You cannot allow work to take over. If you want balance in your life you need to stop yourself from being the company's chump.
CAREER STAGE						Andrew	At this stage I understand I need to set my priorities straight if I am to achieve what I want to achieve. Like it or not, work comes first.	Alan	Early in my career, I used to spend more time on my work. I have now come to the point that this is no longer necessary.
STRESS AT WORK						Ali	It's the stress at work that keeps me from balancing my personal life with my work.	Lena	The lack of a store manager for a month or so was chaotic. This caused a lot of stress for everyone. Balance was lost during this time.
JOB DESCRIPTION [LOAD]						Francis	The tasks I'm paid for and expected to perform are simply too many. I'm paid to work 9to5 but to keep up with my role I need to work far more than this.	Anthony	It comes with the job. The job is demanding. On top of everything else, practically, you also are the advisor and provide psychological support for many of your customers. This consumes and drains you.
MANAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS						Jenny	Managers set the objectives and your goals without consulting you. Then you need to deliver on this, even if what they ask is not realistic.	Andrew	It's impossible to keep my personal life in balance if I am to deliver what I'm expected to deliver.
COMPANY ATTITUDE						Martha	As long as companies look at profits and revenues without considering employees as humans it is very hard for the employees to enjoy a balanced life.	Peter	Zero hours contracts are a disgrace. They [management] simply show that they don't care for you.. They say they do but in practice they don't.

in life, and shelf-restraining, emerged as another theme that potentially prevents employees from balancing their work and personal lives. Finally, a single code informs a third interesting theme, which is conceptually clearly unrelated to the rest: **Career life cycle**, capturing how employees may prioritise work over their personal life when in the early stages of their career or when, for instance, accepting an appointment for a new job in a new company, to which some employees often feel they need to prove they are worthy. This can temporarily tip the balance between personal and family lives, but not necessarily for long.

Table 3 also includes **work conditions** and **supportive colleagues and managers** as emergent themes **reflecting the employer's accountability** for facilitating or not a balanced life for an employee. Especially in sales, work conditions are stressful because of the sales quota and the competitive environment salespeople face. At the same time, companies seek to streamline and generate efficiencies. Thus, management is inclined to ask employees to perform more tasks efficiently within their job roles and working hours. This can quickly become excessive, and if the management lacks self-awareness of what they ask/expect from the employees, it can impede employees from achieving a balanced life. The company's overall attitude [towards its employees] and the management's expectations are closely related conditions that jointly feed how the participants saw the significance of supportive colleagues and managers as a prerequisite for balancing their personal and work lives. For instance, setting objectives without genuinely taking on board the views of the employees responsible for delivering on these objectives or seeking to maximise profitability at the expense of their employees' need for job and income security (e.g., through zero-hours contracting) reflects a particular set of managerial expectations and a company attitude that deter employees from balancing their personal life with their work life.

Before addressing their FWB, the participants independently discussed their personal and work lives to streamline the interview process. Tables 4 and 5 summarise the results from this part of the interview. During this part of the interviews, participants were asked to discuss what they usually do '*when a typical (9-5) day at work is over, and they are back from the office.*' This [wording] ensured that participants would not confuse working from home, a popular working mode, especially since the recent pandemic.

The analysis allowed six themes to emerge (see Table 4). All appear to be sensible and relevant. **Recharging** is one theme, informed by activities such as winding down, relaxing, working out, or caring for themselves. Notably, when mentioned together with other activities, such as baking/cooking-a-quick-dinner and/or watching a movie, relaxing informs another theme, **Cocooning**. Another theme that emerged from the analysis is spending

Table 4: Themes reflecting key aspects of personal life.

Codes	COMPONENTS OF PERSONAL LIFE									
	Recharge	Time with loved ones	Leisure time	Cocooning	Working from home	House Keeping	Participant	Quote	Participant	Quote
WIND-DOWN							Lena	<i>Just come back home, relax and wind down</i>	Anthony	<i>I always take a shower. Helps me “wash off” the day</i>
RELAX							Bob	<i>First thing I do is to try to relax. Maybe have a drink or two to steam off</i>	Martha	<i>To have quality time with my husband and our friends. Staying at home and relaxing from work</i>
WORK-OUT GYM							Bruce	<i>I like going to the gym. This is important for me although cannot do as often as I wish</i>	Thomas	<i>No matter what, I work out. I bought a treadmill for this.</i>
TAKE CARE OF ME							Andrew	<i>First thing I do is get showered. Just look after me.</i>	Julia	<i>I indulge me in some quality time. Sometimes it is candles and wine, sometimes it is listening to music. I also do yoga.</i>
WORK FROM HOME							Angela	<i>I work at home. My dad was working at home. I know not to separate the two [personal and work life.]</i>	Ali	<i>I'm looking at my meetings in my calendar and prepare for what comes tomorrow.</i>
TIME WITH FAMILY MEMBERS							Alan	<i>I generally, I'd go have dinner with my wife, and then we'll go do whatever we're doing in the evening</i>	Angela	<i>I love spending time with my family. I have a big family and I'm always invited in family events.</i>
TIME WITH FRIENDS							Francis	<i>We like having friends over. When we can.</i>	Ali	<i>I like going out with friends. Spend time with them and share things.</i>
WATCH A MOVIE							Peter	<i>Netflix is a life saver! Turn the TV on and watch a movie before going to bed</i>	Julia	<i>I like movies. Sometimes at the cinema, sometimes at home.</i>
COOK							Alex	<i>I like cooking. Do some pasta or chilli, enjoy the food, and relax.</i>	Jenny	<i>I have to prepare the food. Husband is no good. So, I must do it</i>
BAKE							Martha	<i>I'm a woman. My husband understands and is helping but taking care of our home is mainly my responsibility</i>	Peter	<i>I'm single. So I need to get things sorted [in the house].</i>
TIDYING UP										

Codes	COMPONENTS OF PERSONAL LIFE									
	Recharge	Time with loved ones	Leisure time	Cocooning	Working from home	House Keeping	Participant	Quote	Participant	Quote
TRAVEL							Martha	<i>I want to see the world. In a relaxed way. I travel a lot and see different places, but this is part of my work. This is not the same.</i>	Nancy	<i>I like travelling a lot. Especially abroad so I travel every time I can. Even for a long weekend</i>
STUDY							Anny	<i>I work a Sunday and then I'm in (uni) usually on a Monday so that's like oh no I would rather sit and do uni work than be at work and come back</i>	Ali	<i>I'm working on my dissertation for my master's degree. Daily.</i>
SHOPPING							Jenny	<i>More time to go maybe for lunches with friends and maybe have a day out shopping or something like that</i>	Nancy	<i>I enjoy going to the shops</i>

Time with Loved Ones. Understandably, in their personal life, people enjoy spending time with friends and family members. A fourth theme that emerged is having and using **Leisure Time**, which is informed by activities such as travelling, including short escapes or longer travels, recreational shopping, or studying [for a degree, relevant to the younger participants.] Although such activities appear diverse, they share the availability of personal time people can use at their pleasure. **Housekeeping** is the fifth theme the analysis allowed to emerge, informed by activities such as tidying up the house or cooking/preparing dinner. Finally, one activity that was distinct from all the rest was **working from home** as part of how some participants used their time. Even if they were working from home, many participants avoided or refrained from engaging in work-related activities such as answering emails or preparing for the next day at work. In contrast, some do, and in doing so, they may even use their personal time to engage actively with clients or colleagues through teleconferencing.

Concerning work-life, the focus was on two key topics the literature in FWB has identified as particularly relevant: Coping with the stress at work and the barriers employees see in enjoying their job role and, subsequently, their work (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2010; Hammond, Murphy, & Demsky, 2021). Given the context of this study (sales), a primary source of stress for salespeople is achieving their sales objectives; hence, the interview focused on the stress coping mechanisms available to deal with this stress, along with the impediments to leaving an enjoyable work life. Table 5 summarises the results from this part of the interview.

The analysis of the participants' answers allowed four key themes concerning stress coping mechanisms to emerge. They are not mutually excluded but also not necessarily complementary. The first reflects the **Self-Coping mechanisms** employees may use, informed by such means as sharing and discussing with one's partner, working out, and even forbearance in the sense that several participants conceded that selling is inherently stressful, and salespeople must come to terms with this. The second reflects the **Informal Support** they receive from their employer. Discussing with their colleagues or (informally) with their manager is another way several participants release steam and stress caused by their job role. The following two themes reflect the formal support employees receive from their employers: **Formal soft Support** or **Formal hard Support**. Interpersonal, face-to-face interactions for sharing and receiving guidance, such as formally sharing with the manager, colleagues, or mentor [when available], inform the former. Using sales planning templates or receiving IT support (e.g., company apps or company systems, such as CRM) inform the latter.

Table 5: Themes reflecting key aspects of work life.

STRESS COPING MECHANISMS							
Codes	SELF COPING	INFORMAL SUPPORT	FORMAL SUPPORT (SOFT)	FORMAL SUPPORT (HARD)	Participant	QUOTE	
DISCUSS WITH PARTNER					Nancy	George [pseudonym for husband] is an amazing guy and a great listener. When I'm stressed or have issues at work, we sit together, and I tell him my problems. Usually over a glass of wine. His advice is always helpful, and I go to sleep with less trouble.	
JOGGING / WORKING OUT					Anthony	I work out. I'm jogging a lot. While running my mind empties. Stress goes fully away during these times	
FORBEARANCE					Alan	So even though you put in the effort in, you feel like you're letting everybody down. The rest of the company, they hear about the sales figure, it being a zero, and they wonder if you're-what you're doing all day	
DISCUSS WITH COLLEAGUES					Thomas	Talking to other managers to get ideas is always helpful.	
DISCUSS WITH MANAGER					Julia	They [Senior Management] always telling you, you know, to push it a bit more and try and do more. But if that doesn't happen, there's nothing else you can do. If the customer doesn't want it. So, it can be a bit stressful. Yes.	
SHARE WITH MANAGER				Bob	I have regular formal meetings with my manager. Like monthly. We discuss my progress. Friendly. And she advises me how to move on the next month and do better		
SHARE WITH TEAM				Rebecca	I'm talking to my team, and we are trying to find solutions together. What can we do better to meet our targets?		
MENTORING				Andrew	When I started this job, I was assigned to Alex [pseudonym for mentor]. He helped me a lot to understand the role and the tasks but also cope with the challenges.		
IT SOLUTIONS & SUPPORT					Ali	We have CRM system in place. This helps in monitoring and prioritizing in meeting our objectives	
PLANNING TEMPLATES					Angela	We use tools and templates to help us set reasonable objectives in the outset. This helps to be more realistic and makes meeting objectives less stressful	
IMPEDIMENTS TO AN ENJOYABLE WORK LIFE							
Codes	MANAGERIAL SUPPORT	HEALTH	WORK VALUE	VOCATION FIT	ALOOFNESS	Participant	QUOTE
LACK OF SUPPORT						Anny	You're told to try and push XXXX [private label] first, and then, if not, go to the other side. I find myself like without realising that I'm pushing towards the XXXX items before the other brands
LACK OF TRAINING						Jenny	They just tell you to try your best. But that's that. I mean that they do tell you that. Just try your best but never say "how" to do this.
LACK OF MENTAL PEACE						Francis	Business is becoming more and more demanding. More competitive. You need to be on the edge all the time and you cannot ease off.
STRESS						Thomas	It's always a challenge and it's always stressful. It's always stressful, and here we've got a perfect scenario where last quarter, we achieved very high sales, whereas this quarter, we haven't achieved anything at all.
INCOME						Martha	I'm working the same hrs with many male colleagues, but I know I am paid less!
WORKING HRS						Bruce	Usually, it seems that work never ends. You get emails in the evening, for instance, and you are forced to reply though we are told we do not have to. But if you do, you show you care for your job, and this is always "appreciated."
COMPANY POLICIES						Jenny	[Management] will just say: "Right. You've not taken that amount of money, so you're now over hours. They'll try and cut back hours from the store. So, you will be working with less staff.

VOCATION FIT			Ali	<i>Stress comes with the job [sales]. I know this is not for me, and I need to plan how I will change my career path.</i>
DIGITALISATION			Angela	<i>Nowadays, everything is about influencing. We are forced to be on camera and if we don't live on social media, we are going to disappear; become irrelevant</i>

Finally, the analysis has allowed five themes to emerge regarding the impediments participants saw as barriers to enjoying their work life. The first is the presence or *lack of Managerial Support*, manifested by the availability or not of appropriate and sufficient training and -overall- support from the company, such as unambiguously communicating what is expected from the employee or where to prioritise. Implications for the employee's *Health* is the second theme informed by mental health issues, closely associated with excessive stress that remains unchallenged and enduring. The *Value from Work* was the third emerging theme the analysis reveals, informed by conditions such as work income, working hours, and company policies. The final two themes are *Vocation Fit* and *Aloofness*. The former reflects a career choice that, with time, some employees see as not matching their expectations or personality. The latter reflects the distant and detached way of doing business and the lack of [sufficiently frequent] personal interaction due to the emergence of new channels and modes of communication.

Discussion & Contribution.

The critical review of the salient, most influential work (both normative and empirical) in the FWB stream of research allows for a summary of the key contributions and limitations this stream has produced. Regarding the key contributions: (a) FWB has been recognized to be profoundly important for the employee's (and the salespeople's) well-being; (b) Albeit supported by scattered empirical evidence, FWB has also been recognized as contributing to the employees' job performance (Guedes et al., 2023). However, several limitations also emerged: (a) The stream is mainly informed from a sociology/psychology perspective, focusing on the notion of "balance" without duly considering the broader ecosystem [work and personal life conditions as well as their present idiosyncratic situation] individual employees face in their quest for such a balance; (b) albeit the stream is mainly informed from the same [domain] theories, a consensus of how to define [and measure] the notion is missing (Wayne et al., 2017). As a result, the scope for managerial actions and initiatives to improve perceived FWB is limited.

In responding to these limitations while pushing the FWB agenda forward, we took on the emerging views of looking at FWB from a relational perspective. This requires a shift in the theoretical anchoring and lenses through which academics approach FWB. Hence, we have introduced VFT in the FWB discourse. The theory explaining how salespeople (or other employees) choose a job allows the FWB research stream a new [missing] vantage point from a relational perspective, demonstrating the joint responsibility salespeople and their managers

have in improving the employees' perceived FWB. This perspective is vital for two reasons. First, a relational perspective grounded on VFT identifies the management's responsibility [alongside the individual salespeople] to shape the conditions contributing to how much balance salespeople see between their personal and work lives. By looking at how individual salespeople can best resolve the conflicts that emerge because they have different or divergent roles (e.g., Duxbury & Higgins 2001), salespeople are responsible for improving their FWB. The same is true when approaching FWB from a balancing perspective (e.g., Greenhaus & Powell 2006; Hanson et al. 2006) since transferring resources between work and life roles is a duty for individual salespeople to manage. As a result, without a relational perspective, the management's role in facilitating higher levels of their salespeople perceived FWB remains unnoticed and obscured. Subsequently, the second reason supporting the significance of a relational approach is that by pinpointing the shared [between the salespeople and their managers] responsibility for augmenting FWB, it is possible to theoretically conceptualize FWB in such a manner that charts and eventually will allow measuring [as more research in this direction is carried out] how each side contributes to this goal. This is a ring so far missing from the literature and the chain of actions and policies relating to managing the company's human resources and takes the broader research stream on FWB one step forward. We next explain the contribution of academics and practitioners from our work that allows the consideration of this missing ring.

Academic Contribution

This paper reports the results of the qualitative data analysis from 19 in-depth interviews with salespeople. While the singularity of the context is a concern we address in the next section, sales attract individuals with very diverse backgrounds in education, experiences, or personalities (see Clift, 1997, Billups & Poddar, 2018; Wiles & Spiro, 2004). As such, sales roles are an excellent context in which to consider and apply the idea of FWB from a relational perspective grounded on the VFT.

We identified four pillars [constituent components] by taking this relational view of FWB and how it reflects on the minds of different employees. The first theme is having "*gratifying experiences*," anchoring on four key conditions: two work-related (the amount of stress people carry in their personal lives from their work and the amount of their [personal] time that their work takes away) and two that are specific to their perceptions of their personal lives (quality of their personal time and having an enjoyable personal life). The second theme relates to this, capturing the "*welfare employees*" enjoy from balancing their personal and work lives. The three conditions to which this second theme anchors include [again] the amount of stress employees carry back from

work, but in this case, it is coupled with making fewer sacrifices to one's personal life (because of work) while actively seeking to maintain one's mental health [given the responsibilities people have in their personal and work lives.] These two first themes seem to align with the view that FWB depends on how well employees resolve the conflicting roles associated with their personal and work lives (e.g., Duxbury et al., 2008; Fleetwood, 2007).

The third theme captures salespeople's perceived "job fulfilment" as part of balancing their personal and work lives. The theme anchors on enjoying job security, recognition at work, and opportunities for career development inform this theme. As such, this third theme is closer to the view that FWB depends on the spill-over effects each aspect of the salespeople's life [work and family] has for the other (e.g., Hanson et al., 2006b; Poelmans, Stepanova, & Masuda, 2008). At the same time, this theme allows marking the management's co-responsibility to shape conditions that increase salespeople's perceived FWB, which past studies have only sporadically considered and rarely put into the empirical testing (e.g., Hanson et al., 2006a; Brough & O'Driscoll, 2010). Notably, template analysis allowed for a fourth theme: "Delusion." Anchoring on views suggesting that the notion of FWB is obsolete or even irrelevant, this fourth theme, when strong, contracts the employee's overall perceived FWB.

As such, our choice to frame FWB from a relational perspective based on the VFT has allowed us to produce a working definition of FWB that bridges the two dominant views in the FWB stream of research while allowing for another aspect of the notion to emerge: the disbelief (rooted on personal experiences or circumstances) that such a balance is at all possible, bearing a negative impact on an employee's overall perceived FWB. Unveiling this angle of FWB allows for outlining the components of the notion more comprehensively while also considering aspects that lessen the overall perceived FWB. The extant literature on FWB is missing this integrative perspective, the relational approach to FWB offers, while also missing the impact of such conditions as relevance or personal circumstances have in explaining why some may perceive FWB as unattainable, thus reducing their overall perception of balance they have, in their work and personal lives. Crucially, an inductive approach to generating empirical data has produced a strong case for the face validity of our suggested working definition and the constituent components of FWB from this [relational] perspective. To further explore the shared responsibility [between salespeople and their managers] in staging the conditions for employees' FWB, we asked participants to "talk" about this before asking them to discuss aspects of their personal lives. Tables 3 to 5 summarized the emergent codes and themes.

Our findings help understand and address the managerial interventions required in business to improve employees' perceived FWB beyond stress management (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2010; Egan et al., 2009). Crucially, our findings address the question of managerial intervention regarding the salespeople's choices concerning their personal lives, which no previous study has attempted so far. In this respect, we have shown, for instance, that building the "gratifying experiences" aspect of perceived FWB requires the management to support the individual salesperson ["managerial support" as a work-life condition] and ensure a supportive climate ["supportive colleagues and managers" as a barrier to FWB the management has to tackle], particularly for salespeople who prioritize spending time with their loved ones and avoid [wish not] working from or when at home. In the same vein, enhancing the "job fulfilment" aspect of FWB requires the management to produce the conditions (e.g., job description) that will allow salespeople to see they fit into the job from which they get value, and this would seem to be particularly relevant for those in the early stages of their career while wishing to maintain a fair amount of leisure time as part of their personal life.

The academic implication is crystal: Managerial intervention to improve FWB must recognize the individual's personal circumstances. What works for one will not necessarily work for everyone. The extant literature has been missing this point (e.g., Allen & French, 2023; Bakalim & Karçkay, 2017; Greenhaus et al., 2012). By implication, having a universal map charting the actions and policies for improving FWB for a company's employees is impossible. Consequently, if salespeople's perceived FWB (or other employees') is to improve, companies need to become more oriented toward caring for the value their employees receive from their employment (Gounaris, 2006). Hence, our study allows us to conceptually bridge two related but so far independently investigated streams of research: Internal marketing and IMO development [as an antecedent] with FWB [as its outcome].

Managerial Contribution

In addition to this study's implications for academics, practitioners also benefit from looking at FWB from a business perspective. The first implication is that for the company and its salespeople to benefit from a more balanced approach between their personal and work life, the management must be self-aware of what they ask/expect from the salespeople. As we have shown, FWB is a shared responsibility that directly affects how companies set expectations for the work, role behaviors, and job and role descriptions. Shaping these conditions properly is key in delivering the company's part regarding salespeople achieving FWB. In doing so, the management has to ensure, for instance, a participative approach in setting objectives, allowing for serious

consideration of the salespeople's feedback in setting goals and objectives. Where necessary, the management will also need to change attitudes and start taking a win-win approach that allows both the company and the individual salesperson to benefit from having working conditions that are not merely focusing on goal achievement, sales revenue, customer retention, or profitability. While legitimate, such goals cannot and should not come at the expense of the salesperson's ability to see their work experiences as rewarding and fulfilling both their career and personal life expectations.

By implication, this requires revisiting the company's approach to managing its human capital - its people. For instance, our study has shown how mentoring can be beneficial in helping salespersons deal with their circumstances in their private lives or their habitual behaviors, not just their job role and expectations. Not every company offers mentoring; those that usually make mentoring available provide it only for relatively early-career employees, with the more experienced salespeople being expected to cope with the challenges they face. However, our study establishes the need for management to realize that different individuals face different challenges in their personal lives, and their habitual behaviors could equally disturb their ability to experience FWB. Regardless of how experienced they are and because of evolving personal circumstances. Likewise, during recruitment, the management has to go beyond merely ticking boxes and matching job requirements with formal qualifications and/or past working experiences. Fitting the person with the job will have long-term benefits for both the company and the employee, but this requires the company to have the ability to make this assessment, either in-house or through a proper and qualified agent (outsourcing). Both actions call for more money diverted -and invested- in managing the company's human capital. The findings from our study suggest this is a worthwhile investment. Improving employees' perceived FWB has a direct positive impact on the employee's job satisfaction, from which companies benefit in many different ways, including financial performance (REF)

Limitations & Directions for Future Research.

A deductive approach informs our study and findings. Moreover, our study is context-specific, addressing FWB among salespeople. Together, the two immediately raise the question of the generalizability of our findings. Inductive research is instrumental when trying to break ground and advance theory. From the outset, one of our goals was to examine the FWB notion from a business perspective and, by

doing so, advance the extant theory and knowledge on the FWB stream of research. This has allowed us to understand perceived FWB from a business perspective, reflecting how salespeople give meaning to this notion.

However, our data come from a single country (the UK). This limits our ability to generalize our findings to other cultural contexts with different values and/or expectations companies have from their salespeople or how they perceive and define their identity and the consequences of this definition for their understanding of what a balance between work and personal lives should look like. Hence, the first obvious direction for future researchers would be to replicate this study in contexts that have significant cultural differences than ours.

The second crucial direction for future researchers is to attempt to develop and empirically validate a measure reflecting the key themes our existing work has allowed to emerge. This will require an appropriate research design to collect the necessary quantitative data. The third avenue for future research that will open at that time is exploring the link between securing FWB for the company's employees and the company's performance, which will require further empirical investigation.

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