

Work-Life Balance: A Quality-of-Life Model

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Abstract Based on a thorough review of the literature we identified four research streams identifying four corresponding factors that play an important role in work-life balance: (1) balanced role commitment, (2) positive spillover, (3) role conflict, and (4) social alienation. Based on these four factors, we classified individuals into four work-life balance groups with differing levels of life satisfaction. We then explained the psychological dynamics of the model by articulating three principles: satisfaction spillover across life domains, need satisfaction quota, and satisfaction from basic plus growth needs. Research and policy implications are also discussed.

Keywords Work-life balance · Work-family conflict · Life satisfaction · Need satisfaction, and basic and growth needs · Subjective well-being · Quality of life

What is work-life balance? Let's start with some popular definitions that seem to have gained a certain degree of acceptance in the research literature.

- Work-life balance is defined as the extent to which individuals are equally engaged and satisfied with work and non-work roles (Greenhaus et al. 2003).
- Work-life balance is viewed as an individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in work and non-work roles being compatible with the individual's values and priorities (Greenhaus and Allen 2006). That is, work-life balance is defined as an overall appraisal of the extent in which the individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are consistent with their life values at a given point in time (Greenhaus and Allen 2011).

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- Work-life balance is experienced when the individual is fully engaged in the roles in various life domains and successfully accomplishing these role-related expectations (Grzywacz and Carlson 2007).
- Individuals characterized as high on work-life balance devote their time and psychological energy in balanced ways while deriving much satisfaction from non-work life domains (Greenhaus et al. 2003).
- Work-life balance results from a high degree role enrichment and with a lower degree of role conflict (Frone 2003).

Much research has demonstrated that work-life balance leads to high organizational performance, increased job satisfaction, and stronger organizational commitment (e.g., Allen et al. 2000). Research has also demonstrated that work-life balance plays an important role in individual well-being such as health satisfaction, family satisfaction, and overall life satisfaction (e.g., Keyes 2002; Marks and MacDermid 1996).

The research in work-life balance is voluminous. The plethora of research on this topic has generated much complexity in definitions, theoretical approaches, measures, determinants, and consequences, etc. (see the following literature reviews: Allen et al. 2000; Crosby 1991; Danna and Griffin 1999; Edwards and Rothbard 2000; Frone 2003; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Korabik et al. 2008). As such, this area of research is in desperate need of integration. This is the goal of this paper. We make an attempt to develop an integrated model of work-life balance guided by the quality-of-life research literature. More specifically, this major goal can be better understood in terms three subgoals.

Our *first* goal is to make an attempt to integrate the research literature by proposing a model of work-life balance based on four disparate research streams: (1) balanced role commitment, (2) positive spill over across life domains, (3) low role conflict, and (4) low social alienation. These four programs of research point to the notion that individuals with work-life balance make a balanced commitment across various life domains with low levels of role conflict and social alienation.

The *second* goal of this paper is to further explore the link between work-life balance and overall life satisfaction (quality of life). Based on four disparate research programs identified in the literature, we propose to classify individuals into four work-life balance groups that have varying levels of life satisfaction: (1) the fully engaged individuals (a high level of balanced commitment across life domains contributing to a high level of life satisfaction), (2) the partially engaged (a moderate level of balanced commitment across life domains contributing to a moderate level of life satisfaction), (3) the engaged but conflicted (unbalanced role commitments across life domains contributing only a limited amount of life satisfaction), and (4) the disengaged (a low level of commitments across life domains resulting in low levels of life satisfaction). In other words, we will argue the fully engaged individuals are likely to experience the highest level of life satisfaction whereas the disengaged the lowest.

The *third* goal of this paper is to make an attempt to explain the psychological dynamics of work-life balance on its effect on overall life satisfaction. Specifically, we will discuss three psychological principles: (1) satisfaction spillover across life domains, (2) need satisfaction quota, and (3) satisfaction from basic plus growth needs. Doing so should help build a foundation of a quality-of-life theory of work-life balance.

In sum, our hope is that the net result of this effort could provide work-life balance researchers with a new model that helps *integrate* the aforementioned disparate streams of research in this area and help build a foundation of a new theory of that can motivate future research.

Four Disparate Research Programs in Work-Life Balance

Much of the research in work-life balance can be categorized into four research streams: (1) balanced role commitment, (2) positive spillover, (3) role conflict, and (4) social alienation. Let's briefly review this literature.

The Role Commitment Approach to Work-Life Balance

The role commitment approach to work-life balance asserts that work-life balance is achieved when individuals have balanced role commitments across various life domains. That is, the theory of role commitment states that work-life balance is achieved when people are fully committed in their various social roles in a balanced way. The balanced commitment allows individuals to spend their time and energy to meet the needs of various life domains (e.g., Voydanoff 2005).

Specifically, work-life balance involves equity across multiple roles (Kalliath and Brough 2008). Work-life balance reflects balance of time, involvement, and satisfaction across life domains. Balanced individuals engage in multiple roles, experience satisfaction from multiple roles by effectively well distributing time and effort across salient life domains. They experience low role conflict because they are engaged in their roles in a balanced way, and they have a high degree of perceived control over their multiple role demands (Kalliath and Brough 2008; Marks et al. 2001). In sum, the role commitment approach to work-life balance focuses on engagement and involvement across various social roles—the more the individual is engaged and committed to his or her various social roles in a balanced way, the more likely that he or she would experience work-life balance and subjective well-being.

While the role commitment approach explains how work-life balance can be increased through role commitment, this approach does not provide us with an understanding of the positive spillover effects that occurs between or among the social roles the person is committed to, and how positive spillover effects contribute to work-life balance. As such, let's now turn to the research stream focusing on positive spillover.

The Positive Spillover Approach to Work-Life Balance

The positive spillover approach to work-life balance asserts that an employee can achieve work-life balance when (1) positive affect and experiences from one life domain are transferred to other life domains (*positive spillover*), (2) the skills and experiences in one life domain improves role performance in other life domains (*role enrichment*), and (3) the two or more life domains are integrated for easy transfer of

positive experiences and affect (*role integration*) (Poelmans et al. 2008). Let's discuss these three spillover conditions in more detail.

Positive spillover refers to positive mood, skills, values, and behaviors that transfer from one life domain to another (Edwards and Rothbard 2000). For example, a person experiences good mood at work and it persists when he comes home. This is mood positive spillover. An example of skill positive spillover is punctuality. An employee and a mother is punctual at work and raises her children to be punctual is getting up in the morning to get ready for school. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) have argued that engagement in multiple roles may result in high levels of subjective well-being through *transfer of positive experiences* from one life domain to another. The learning occurring in one life domain is easily transferred to other life domains, thus enhancing role engagement and effectiveness in multiple domains. For example, a woman may feel that being a mother taught her patience, which served her well as a manager at work.

Role enrichment is highly akin to positive spillover. It refers to the notion that experiences in one role (role privileges, status, security, personality enrichment, etc.) *improve or further enhance* satisfaction in another role (Greenhaus and Powell 2006). Role enrichment is somewhat different from positive spillover in that it refers to increased satisfaction, not simply transferring affect and skills from one life domain to another.

Role integration refers to a special case of spillover between work and nonwork life. Boundary role theory suggests that individuals vary in the extent to which their various roles are integrated between work and non-work life (Olson-Buchanan and Boswell 2006). Role integration means that the transfer of positive affect and experiences between the two life domains is facilitated when the roles in the two life domains are integrated (Ashforth et al. 2000). As such, role integration is related to low role conflict (Olson-Buchanan and Boswell 2006). High level of role integration can contribute significantly to subjective well-being by increasing the relative ease of transitioning from one life domain to another. While positive spillover or role enrichment is based on the notion of affect and skill transfer or enhancement between two different life domains or roles, role integration is based on the notion that the roles in two different life domains are essentially integrated.

In sum, the spillover approach to work-life balance states that work-life balance is achieved through the successful transfer of positive skills, values, privileges, status, and affect from one social role to another in varied life domains. The spillover approach focuses on work-life balance resulting from role enrichment—the degree to which participation in one life domain enhances performance and quality of life in other life domains (Frone 2003; Greenhaus and Powell 2006). The major shortcoming of the spillover approach is that it does not address *negative* spillover effects arising from the interference of one life domain on another domain as the case of role conflict. This brings us to the third major stream of research in work-life balance, namely role conflict.

The Role Conflict Approach to Work-Life Balance

The role conflict approach to work-life balance asserts that work-life balance is achieved when there is little-to-no role conflict between social roles (e.g., Greenhaus

and Beutell 1985; Rau and Hyland 2002). Role conflict reflects the degree to which role responsibilities in one life domain and another life domain are incompatible (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). As such, the demands of one role make performance of the other role more difficult (Netemeyre et al. 1996). People experience role conflict between work and family domains, because the demands of the roles of work life and family life are inherently incompatible due to their different role demands. Much research has shown that role conflict between work and family has a negative influence on job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Netemeyre et al. 1996). Balance is restored by reducing role conflict (e.g., conflict between work and family roles). Doing so reduces stress in general, which serves to decrease the individual's dissatisfaction with life. Frone (2003) argued that role conflict is a very different construct from role facilitation. In other words, the factors that influence role conflict (e.g., between work life and family life) are usually not the same as those that contribute to role facilitation (e.g., between work life and family life). Furthermore, the direction of the influence between one life domain and the other has to be identified because factors related to the influence of work life on family life are not the same as factors related to the influence of family life on work life (cf. Carlson et al. 2000; Friedman and Greenhaus 2000; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985).

Research on work and family roles has shown that work-family role conflict is associated with life dissatisfaction (e.g., Edwards and Rothbard 2000; Fu and Shaffer 2001; Holahan and Gilbert 1979; Sturges and Guest 2004), as well as low marital and family satisfaction and symptoms of low mental and physical well-being (e.g., Parasuraman et al. 1992).

In sum, the role conflict approach asserts that work-life balance is achieved when there is a low degree of role conflict. People experience role conflict between work and family domains because the demands of the roles of work life and family life are mutually incompatible. Work-life balance can be enhanced effectively by engaging in work and family roles in a balanced way in terms of time and psychological involvement.

While this approach may explain the negative impact of imbalanced work life on life satisfaction, this approach fails to explain the case of lack of motivation or no engagement in life domains. The alienation approach fills in that void by addressing the relationship between lack of engagement in life domains and life satisfaction.

The Social Alienation Approach to Work-Life Balance

The social alienation approach to work-life balance states that lack of engagement and involvement in a life domain (i.e., social alienation) has a negative impact on life satisfaction (Michaels et al. 1988). Here, social alienation to a role refers to the extent to which people withdraw from life's major roles such as work and family. It refers to a situation where individuals care little about their social roles, approach their roles with little energy, and do not feel intrinsically motivated to engage in role performance. In other words, alienated individuals become disengaged from social life and society at large.

Consistent with this approach to work-life balance is the work of Greenhaus et al. (2003) who addressed disengagement and alienation in terms of *negative balance*.

These authors distinguished between positive balance and negative balance. Positive balance between work and family life refers to high investment of time and involvement in both work and family roles. In contrast, negative balance is the opposite—that is, the individual does not invest much time or energy in both work and family roles. These scholars maintain that positive balance produces the beneficial quality-of-life effects, *not negative balance*. Negative role balance refers to tendency to become fully disengaged in the performance of every role. It is the practice of apathy and cynicism (Marks and MacDermid 1996).

In sum, the alienation approach to work-life balance states that social alienation in a life domain has a negative impact on life satisfaction. This is because social alienation in a life domain results in less efficient functioning of roles with little or no role enrichment. While the positive spillover approach explains how positive affect spills over from a satisfying life domain to another, the alienation approach focuses on lack of spillover from a domain to another because of lack of involvement and engagement in life domains.

An Integrated Model of Work-Life Balance

While these four programs of research are useful in explaining the effect of work-life balance on life satisfaction, each program can provide only a partial explanation of how work-life balance impacts life satisfaction. These four programs point to the notion that four conditions have to be met to achieve both work-life balance and life satisfaction. Two of these four conditions imply that work-life balance can be achieved by enhancing two positive states while mitigating the effects of two negative states. See Fig. 1. The figure shows that enhancing two positive states and mitigating two negative states. The positive states involve enhancing role commitment (a notion deduced from the role commitment approach—Theory 1 in Fig. 1) and facilitating positive spillover (a notion deduced from the positive spillover approach—Theory 2 in Fig. 1). That is, research on role commitment points to the notion that work-life balance can, in part, be achieved through balanced commitment (i.e., nudging the individual to become fully and totally engaged in his or her varied social roles) across various roles in life domains. Similarly, research on positive spillover suggests that the individual can enhance life satisfaction, in part, by facilitating positive spillover of skills, values, status, and affect between life domains.

The negative states involve reducing role conflict (a notion deduced from the role conflict approach—Theory 3 in Fig. 1) and mitigating social alienation (a notion deduced from the social alienation approach—Theory 4 in Fig. 1). We will fully discuss these two positive states and the two negative states in the sections below. That is, the research streams related to social alienation and role conflict provide us with lessons on how to mitigate the negative states of work-life balance. Specifically, the social alienation approach asserts that full engagement in various roles is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for work-life balance. The role conflict approach advocates the notion that work-life balance can be achieved by reducing role conflict between social roles (i.e., investing time and energy in work life in ways not to take away time and energy required in non-work life, and vice versa).

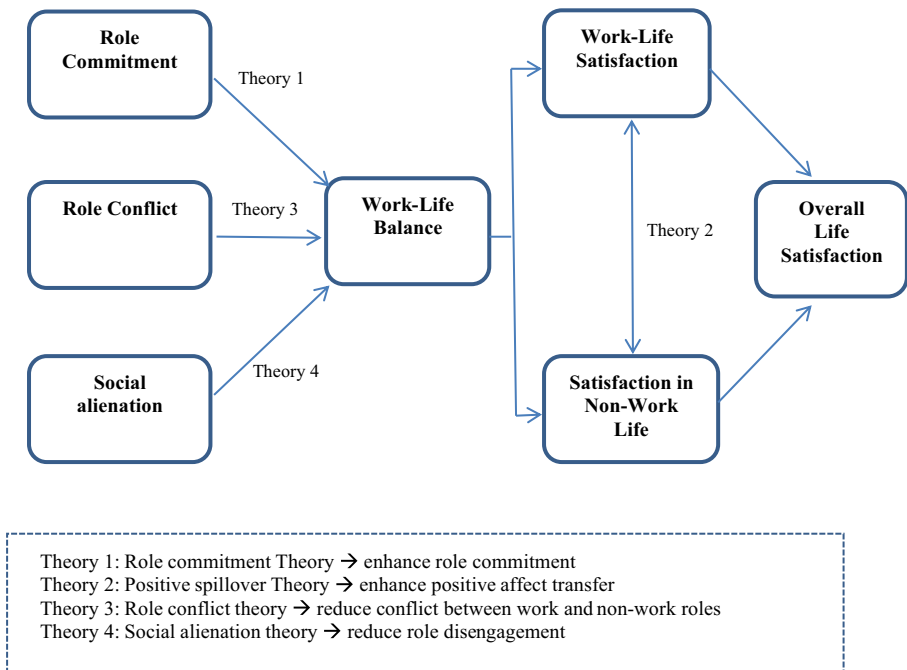


Fig. 1 The Life Satisfaction Model of Work-Life Balance: Integrating Four Theoretical Approaches

The proposed integrated model (as shown in Fig. 1) helps us identify four groups of individuals that experience work-life balance and life satisfaction differently. We will now turn our attention to these four groups of individuals and explain how they may experience life satisfaction differently.

Four Types of Individuals Varying in Work-Life Balance and Life Satisfaction

As shown in Fig. 1, the model we develop addresses the positive conditions of work-life balance (balanced role commitment and positive spillover) as well as the negative conditions (social alienation and role conflict). As such, the model distinguishes among individuals who experience different levels of role commitment, positive spillover, role conflict, and social alienation. We classify individuals in terms of four different types of work-life balance: fully engaged, partially engaged, engaged but conflicted, and disengaged (see Table 1).

The Fully Engaged Individuals

The fully engaged individuals are those with high and balanced commitments across life domains. They are involved in varied social roles in which successful role performance contributes significant positive affect in multiple life domains. A case in point is an individual who assumes varied social roles and successfully meets the role

Table 1 Classifying Individuals with Four Different Types of Work-Life Balance

Type of individual	Degree and scope of engagement in life domains	Role enrichment	Role conflict	Life satisfaction
Fully engaged individuals	Total engagement in various social roles in terms of satisfaction, perceived importance, and time and energy investment	High level of role enrichment	Very low level of role conflict	High level of life satisfaction
Partially engaged individuals	Total engagement in restricted social roles in terms of satisfaction, perceived importance, and time and energy investment	Moderate level of role enrichment	Moderate level of role conflict	Moderate level of life satisfaction
Engaged-but-conflicted individuals	Overload in certain social roles creating conflict in others in terms of satisfaction, perceived importance, and time and energy investment	Low level of role enrichment	Very high level of role conflict	Low level of life satisfaction
Disengaged individuals	Lack of engagement in any social role in terms of satisfaction, perceived importance, and time and energy investment	Very low level of role enrichment	Apathy, no conflict	Very low level of life satisfaction

expectations by becoming fully engaged in the various roles in a balanced way. The person is likely to experience positive affect as a direct result of successful role performance. The person is likely to experience positive spillover of satisfaction across different life domains with minimum role conflict, resulting in a highest level of life satisfaction (see Table 1).

The fully engaged individuals are likely to have highest level of life satisfaction for the following reasons. *First*, they are likely to experience positive affect from role engagement. They are likely to experience a high level of domain life satisfaction because they can devote enough energy and time to successfully meet role expectations (Marks and MacDermid 1996; Voydanoff 2005). *Second*, the fully engaged individuals are likely to experience much need satisfaction from multiple life domains. An individual's overall life satisfaction is high when the individual engage in multiple domains in a balanced way—engagement in multiple life domains contributes to life satisfaction because multiple life domains are more likely to cover the full spectrum of human development needs than single domains. *Third*, the fully engaged individuals are likely to experience positive spillover across life domains. They are likely to experience positive spillover of affect, skills, resources, etc. from work and nonwork domains and vice versa, which in turn contribute significantly to life satisfaction (e.g., Ashforth et al. 2000; Carlson et al. 2006; Edwards and Rothbard 2000; Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Poelmans et al. 2008). *Fourth*, the fully engaged individuals are less

likely to experience role conflict as they are engaged in various roles in a balanced way (Frone 2003). They are less likely to experience role conflict because they engage in roles in various life domains while successfully meeting role expectations (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985).

Thus, we formally describe the fully engaged individuals as follows: *The fully engaged individuals are likely to experience a high level of life satisfaction; they also experience high role enrichment and low role conflict across life domains.*

The Partially Engaged Individuals

The partially engaged individuals are those with a moderate level of commitment balanced across life domains. Consider an individual who is partially committed to various social roles. The person is likely to experience a moderate level of role enrichment, affect spillover, and role conflict, resulting in a moderate level of life satisfaction (see Table 1).

The partially engaged individuals are likely to experience high-to-moderate levels of life satisfaction for the following reasons. *First*, they are likely to experience a moderate level of role enrichment from various life domains as they devote moderate level of resources in each life domain. As such, they experience a moderate level of satisfaction through role engagement. *Second*, the partially engaged individuals are likely to experience a moderate level of affect transfer from one life domain to another. As they engage in multiple roles across life domains (e.g., Crosby 1991; Kandel et al. 1985; Wethington and Kessler 1989), they are likely to experience positive spillover. However, the degree of spillover is likely to be moderate because the domains are less integrated.

Hence, we can formally describe the partially engaged individuals as follows: *The partially engaged individuals are likely to experience a moderate level of life satisfaction; they experience moderate levels of role enrichment and role conflict across life domains.*

The Engaged-but-Conflicted Individuals

The engaged-but-conflicted individuals are those whose commitment in one life domain usurps a great deal of time, energy, and commitment at the expense of other life domains. These individuals are likely to experience a low degree of role enrichment and a high level of role conflict, resulting in a low level of life satisfaction (Table 1).

The engaged-but-conflicted individuals are likely to experience a low level of life satisfaction for the following reasons. *First*, they are likely to have a low degree of role enrichment because their commitments to various social roles are not balanced. Although they may be able to meet the expectations of one social role, they may fail to meet the expectations of another social role. *Second*, they are likely to experience a high level of role conflict because of role overload and lack of balance across different roles (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Rau and Hyland 2002). They are overly committed to a demanding social role that consumes resources from other life domains. Lack of balance across different social roles is likely to generate role conflict. Role conflict is

associated with a low level of life satisfaction (Edwards and Rothbard 2000; Fu and Shaffer 2001; Holahan and Gilbert 1979; Parasuraman et al. 1992; Sturges and Guest 2004). They cope with role conflict using coping strategies such as segmentation (e.g., separating work life from family life) and compensation (e.g., investing resources in family life to compensate for dissatisfaction experienced in work life) (e.g., Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Judge and Watanabe 1993; Kossek et al. 2006).

Thus, one can argue that the engaged-but-conflicted individuals are likely to experience a low level of life satisfaction. Although they may extract a certain level of satisfaction from those social roles domain they engage in, this satisfaction is likely to be ameliorated by role conflict. Based on this discussion, we can formally describe the engaged-but-conflicted individuals as follows: *The engaged-but-conflicted individuals are likely to experience a low level of life satisfaction; they experience a low degree of role enrichment and a high level of role conflict across life domains.*

The Disengaged Individuals

The disengaged individuals are those who are not committed to important social roles. They are not engaged in any particular life domain and experience *social alienation* in life. As a result, they do not experience much satisfaction in any significant life domain, which becomes evident in very low levels of life satisfaction (see Table 1).

The disengaged individuals are likely to experience a very low level of life satisfaction because they are less likely to experience positive affect in any salient life domain. To maximize life satisfaction, one should engage in multiple life domains in a balanced way to facilitate positive affect spillover with minimal role conflict. Yet, the disengaged individuals do not engage in any significant social role, thus failing to meet role expectations.

Research on alienation is highly consistent with the notion that “alienated types” are a different breed of people: they experience work-life balance very differently from the other three groups (the “fully engaged types,” the “partially engaged types,” and the “engaged but conflicted types”) (e.g., Greenhaus et al. 2003). The concept of *negative balance* captures the motivational essence of the “alienated types.” Negative balance refers to the notion that the individual does not invest much time or energy in both work and family roles, which is associated with life dissatisfaction. In sum, we can formally describe the disengaged individuals formally as follows: *The alienated-type individuals are likely to experience a very low level of life satisfaction; they experience very low degree of role enrichment, and a low level of role conflict across life domains.*

Psychological Dynamics of Work-Life Balance

To reiterate, the lessons learned from the research on role commitment, positive spillover, role conflict, and social alienation helped us develop an integrated model of work-life balance (with the resulting identification of four groups of individuals varying in work-life balance) described in the preceding section. Our challenge now is to develop a set of principles that can shed more light on the psychological dynamics of the model. In doing so, we will use concepts of the psychology of human development,

particularly human motivation and the work of scholars such as Maslow (1954, 1970), McClelland (1961), Herzberg (1966), and Alderfer (1972). We will focus on three major principles: (1) satisfaction spillover across life domains, (2) need satisfaction limit from a single domain, and (3) satisfaction of the full spectrum of human developmental needs—basic and growth needs.

The first is the *principle of satisfaction spillover across life domains*. An individual's overall life satisfaction is increased when satisfaction from one life domain spills over to other life domains with little role conflict or interference. This is due to vertical and horizontal spillover effects on overall life satisfaction. Thus, to maximize life satisfaction, one should engage in multiple life domains in a balanced way to facilitate positive affect spillover with minimal role conflict across life domains and to minimize negative affect and negative spillover effects. This implies that individuals should engage in work life in a balanced way so that positive affect at work could spillover to family life and other domains. In addition, one should make sure that role expectations in those domains do not conflict with one another.

The second principle is the *principle of need satisfaction limits from a single life domain*. An individual's overall life satisfaction is high when the individual engage in multiple domains (work and family life domains) in a balanced way. Engaging in only one domain (e.g., work life domain) would not contribute much to overall life satisfaction because satisfaction in a single life domain can contribute only a limited amount to satisfaction. Increases in satisfaction in a life domain serve to increase overall life satisfaction, but in a decreasing marginal rate and subject to a threshold. Thus, one may engage in multiple life domains to achieve a high level of overall life satisfaction. High engagement in a single life domain with little or no engagement in other life domains does not contribute much to overall life satisfaction.

The third principle is the *principle of satisfaction of the full spectrum of human developmental needs*. This principle posits that one's overall life satisfaction is high when satisfaction in multiple life domains covers the full spectrum of human developmental needs: satisfaction with basic needs as well as growth needs. Satisfying a specific need only in a single life domain does not contribute much to overall life satisfaction. This implies that one should engage in multiple roles in an attempt to meet the full spectrum of developmental needs (both basic and growth needs). Now let us explain these three principles in more detail and make an attempt to relate them to our model of life satisfaction.

The Principle of Satisfaction Spillover across Life Domains

The principle of satisfaction spillover states that an individual overall life satisfaction is increased when satisfaction from one life domain spills over to other life domains with little role conflict or interference. In other words, life satisfaction through satisfaction spillover can be heightened given two conditions: (1) when the individual engages in multiple life domains, and (2) when he or she has balanced roles across life domains with little-to-no role conflict.

Engagement in Multiple Life Domains People are more satisfied with life when the source of the satisfaction derives from engagement in *multiple* life domains than a

single domain (Barnett and Baruch 1985; Sieber 1974; Thoits 1983). The underlying rationale here is that involvement in multiple roles can be beneficial in several ways: (1) knowledge and skills in one role are used in another role; (2) success in one role can offset failure in another role; (3) the individual has a broader frame of reference that may help the person deal with others; (4) the individual's self-image becomes increasingly complex to reflect environmental demands; (5) the individual has a greater repertoire of social support extracted from the multiple roles; and (6) positive affect in one role leads to positive affect in another role. Empirical research has demonstrated that individuals engaging in multiple life domains are likely to experience a high degree of spillover and resulting a high degree of overall life satisfaction (Barnett and Baruch 1985; Crosby 1991; Kandel et al. 1985; Wethington and Kessler 1989).

Little-to-no Role Conflict People are more satisfied with life when there is little or no role conflict across different life domains. This is because role conflict prevents positive spillover of satisfaction in one life domain to another. When people are fully engaged in multiple roles without role conflict, they are likely to experience a positive spillover of affect from one life domain to another, thereby may experience a high level of life satisfaction. Marks and MacDermid (1996) found that individuals who were more "role balanced" and enjoyed "every part of their life equally well" reported less role overload, had higher self-esteem, and lower depression levels. Balanced individuals experience little-to-no role conflict because they are fully engaged in their roles; thus, they do not allow situational stressors to detract their role performance. They do this by developing routines that allow them to meet the demands of their various roles in the long run. (cf. Marks et al. 2001).

In sum, one can argue that one's overall life satisfaction is high when the when one engages in multiple life domains and when one has balanced roles across life domains with little-to-no role conflict. Here is a formal statement of the *principle of satisfaction spillover across life domains: Work-life balance is characterized by a high level of engagement in varied social roles with little-to-no role conflict resulting in high level of satisfaction in multiple domains considered important by the individual, which in turn contributes to increased life satisfaction.*

To fully appreciate how this principle works, the reader should try to understand two important concepts: needs satisfaction limits and satisfaction of basic-plus-growth needs. The two concepts of life balance (need satisfaction limits and satisfaction of survival plus growth needs) are all grounded in the need satisfaction approach to subjective well-being (e.g., Sirgy 2002, pp. 34–36; Sirgy 2012; Sirgy and Wu 2009). This approach is developed using concepts based on Maslow (1954, 1970), McClelland (1961), Herzberg (1966), and Alderfer (1972). We explain these two concepts in greater detail below.

The Principle of Need Satisfaction Limits in a Single Life Domain

The basic tenet of the need satisfaction approach (e.g., Alderfer 1972; Herzberg 1966; Maslow 1954, 1970; McClelland 1961) is that people have a variety of developmental needs they seek to fulfil (developmental needs such as biological, safety, social, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge, and beauty-related needs), and the more they satisfy

these needs the more they feel good about their lives. That is, those who are more successful in satisfying their developmental needs—through successful engagement in various social roles—are likely to experience greater happiness and life satisfaction than those who are less successful in role engagement.

Social psychologists such as Kurt Lewin (1951) and organizational psychologists (e.g., Danna and Griffin 1999; Rice et al. 1985; Seeman 1967) have long recognized that affective experiences are segmented in “life spheres” or what quality-of-life researchers refer to as *life domains* (Diener 1984). Thus, a person may have affective experiences segmented in relation to work, education, family, health, friends, and romantic relationships, among others. Affective experience (conscious, subconscious, and unconscious) is likely to be divided into life domains, and within each domain the person has deep-seated cognitions reflecting these experiences in that domain. Note that although most life domains are organized and structured around one related set of needs (biological, safety, social, etc.). For example, leisure life involves a set of activities dealing with social needs. Those activities serve not only to satisfy one’s social needs but also a variety of other needs such as the need for aesthetics and creativity (see Table 2). The life domains shown in the table are for illustrative purposes only. They are not meant to capture all life domains.

We believe that the psychological explanation of how balance contributes to subjective well-being is directly related to the *principle of need satisfaction limits*. We maintain that satisfaction from one life domain can contribute only a limited amount of positive affect to subjective well-being because need satisfaction from one life domain is limited—any given life domain covers only a subset of developmental needs, not the full range of needs.

It should be noted that life satisfaction is not simply cumulative positive minus negative affect—irrespective of the source. It is the satisfaction of human developmental needs, the full range of needs—not a handful of selected needs. One cannot

Table 2 Developmental Needs Satisfied through Activities Organized in Terms of Life Domains

	Health life	Love life	Residential life	Family life	Social life	Leisure life	Work life	Education life	Spiritual life
Biological needs	Most	Most	Most	Most	Some	Some	Most	Least	Least
Safety needs	Most	Most	Most	Some	Some	Some	Some	Least	Least
Social needs	Some	Most	Some	Some	Most	Most	Some	Some	Some
Esteem needs	Least	Some	Some	Least	Some	Some	Most	Some	Some
Actualization needs	Least	Some	Least	Least	Least	Some	Some	Most	Most
Knowledge needs	Least	Least	Least	Least	Least	Some	Some	Most	Most
Aesthetics needs	Least	Least	Least	Least	Some	Most	Some	Most	Most

“Most,” “some,” and “least” indicate the extent to which those activities in a specific life domain are successful in satisfying a specific developmental need. For example, the table shows that safety needs can be “most” satisfied through the health, love, and residential life domains and “least” satisfied in the educational life domain

substitute positive affect related to one need with another need. To illustrate the satisfaction limit with an arithmetic example, suppose that a woman's level of life satisfaction is 50 (on a scale varying from -100 to +100). This means that she is moderately happy with life. The source of this moderate degree of happiness comes from five key domains—work, leisure, family, community, and neighborhood. Focus on work life. She has +15 points of satisfaction. The satisfaction limit in the work domain is +10. In other words, only 10 out of the 15 could contribute to life satisfaction. She is +5 over the limit in her work domain. Only so much of that satisfaction can contribute to her overall life satisfaction.

The notion of satisfaction limits is somewhat akin to the behavioural economists' notion of *declining marginal utility* (Diener et al. 2008). The analogue is essentially satisfaction from income. Satisfaction from income is quite high when the individual has little or no income. However, as the individual gains increasing levels of income, the satisfaction from income diminishes. To ensure the individual can maintain a set level of happiness (or life satisfaction), relying on income will not do it. The individual has to engage in other roles and life events that can generate other sources of satisfaction. It is that multiple sources of satisfaction are effective in optimizing happiness.

There are a number of measures of subjective well-being that are based on the notion that life satisfaction is the sum of the satisfaction of various life domains and possibly moderated by the salience of these domains (e.g., Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell et al. 1976; Frisch 2006; Headey and Wearing 1992). The sum composite of all the domain satisfaction correlated highly with general life satisfaction. The nomological validity of domain measures of life satisfaction provides evidence to the theoretical notion of the need satisfaction limit. That is, those who are happy the most seem to be satisfied with multiple life domains in which each domain contributes to the satisfaction of different developmental needs (Valliant 1977).

In sum, work-life balance contributes to life satisfaction because of the satisfaction limit that people can derive from social roles related to a few life domains. People have to be involved in social roles that contribute positive affect in multiple domains to satisfy the full spectrum of human developmental needs. This is due to the fact that different life domains tend to focus on different human developmental needs. As such, the principle of need satisfaction limits in a single life domain can be formally stated as follows: *There is a satisfaction limit that people can derive from social roles related to a few life domains. People have to be involved in social roles that contribute positive affect in multiple domains to satisfy the full spectrum of human developmental needs. This is due to the fact that different life domains tend to focus on different human developmental needs.* Now we turn to the third and last principle, namely the principle of satisfaction with the full spectrum of human developmental needs.

The Principle of Satisfaction with the Full Spectrum of Human Developmental Needs: Both Basic and Growth Needs

This principle states that an individual's overall life satisfaction is high when satisfaction from life domains covers the full spectrum of human developmental needs.

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) have argued that multiple role participation may result in high levels of subjective well-being through an *additive effect* of positive affect stemming from multiple roles. For example, satisfaction with work plus satisfaction with family are likely to contribute more to subjective well-being much more so than satisfaction in only one of these life domains.

Fredrickson and Losada (2005) have empirically demonstrated that people who flourish (have a high level of subjective well-being) tend to experience a ratio of 4.3 of positive to negative affect, whereas normal people average a 2.5 ratio. People who languish (low levels of subjective well-being) have a much lower ratio of positive to negative affect. The authors argue that negative emotions reflect survival needs (e.g., biological, safety, and economic needs), whereas positive emotions reflect growth needs (e.g., social, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge, and aesthetics needs). Survival needs are associated with the reduction of negative affect much more so than the enhancement of positive affect. Conversely, growth needs are associated with the enhancement of positive affect more so than the reduction of negative affect. Human flourishing, in turn, is associated with a high ratio of positive to negative affect. Both positive and negative affect are necessary because increased positive affect reflects the satisfaction of growth needs, and decreased negative affect reflects the satisfaction of survival needs.

Much research has been done to demonstrate this principle in the context of organizational psychology and management. For example, the two-factor theory (Herzberg 1966) posits that job satisfaction is affected by two sets of factors, namely hygiene and motivation factors. Hygiene factors are related to survival needs (e.g., pay, working conditions, collegiality, and corporate policies). In contrast, motivation factors are related to growth needs (e.g., achievement programs, recognition awards, career advancement opportunities, corporate ownership, and profit sharing). The two-factor theory argues that job satisfaction can be enhanced by developing conditions and programs at work that serve to satisfy *both* survival needs (i.e., biological, safety, and economic needs) and growth needs (i.e., social, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge, and aesthetics needs).

Additional evidence of this principle comes from research in industrial/organizational psychology on work-life balance. For example, research in that area has found that organizational values supportive of work-family balance (and organizational work-family balance programs) can bring about balance between work and family life (e.g., Burke 2003; Madsen 2003). Work-family balance programs include alternative work schedules, telecommuting, wellness classes, and caregiver services. Furthermore, factors in the family domain (e.g., spousal support) play a significant role in reducing work-family conflict (Bedeian et al. 1986). The basic idea here is that life satisfaction can be enhanced significantly through successful performance at work (satisfaction of higher-order needs). However, employees cannot be highly successful if they neglect their health and family responsibilities. Health and family responsibilities are related to lower-order needs. Therefore, work-life balance programs are designed to enhance life satisfaction by helping employees become successful at work while helping them take care of their health and family responsibilities.

Additional suggestive evidence of the viability of the principle of satisfaction of survival-plus-growth needs come from cultural psychology. Consider the concept of the “Ying and Yang,” which is popular in East Asian cultures. The Ying and Yang concept

posits that life satisfaction can be achieved by maintaining a good balance between positive and negative emotions (Kitayama and Markus 2000). The adage is to remain calm, undisturbed, and not agitated. Thus, the Ying and Yang is balance between fulfilment of physical (lower-order needs) and spiritual needs (higher-order ones). Kitayama and Markus (2000) report findings from Japan about correlations between positive and negative affect. These correlations were mostly positive and significant (in contrast to negative correlations among U.S. subjects).

Further cross-cultural evidence of the combined effect of both basic and growth needs on life satisfaction comes from studies that examined the relationship between income and happiness. For example, Veenhoven (1995) hypothesized that money enhances happiness when it contributes to the satisfaction of basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, and clothes). Study findings indicate that within societies there is a relationship between income and satisfaction at the lower end of the scale only, and that relationship is strong in poorer countries and weak in rich countries. Oishi et al. (1999) found that satisfaction with self-esteem and with freedom were stronger correlates of life satisfaction in richer nations.

In sum, the *principle of satisfaction of the full spectrum of human development needs* posits that one's overall life satisfaction is high when satisfaction from life domains covers the full spectrum of human development needs. Formally stated: *Subjective well-being can only be attained when both survival and growth needs are met. High levels of subjective well-being cannot be attained with satisfaction of basic needs or growth needs alone. Both needs have to be met to induce a high level of subjective well-being.*

Theoretical Propositions Spurring Future Research

In this section, we make an attempt to develop a set of theoretical propositions based on preceding discussion. Such theoretical propositions are designed to spur future research in this area.

Determinants of Work-Life Balance

As shown in Fig. 1, there are three theoretical approaches (or programs of research) that focus on the determinants of work-life balance, namely role commitment theory, role conflict theory, and social alienation theory. These three programs of research indicate that work-life balance can be increased when individuals are full committed to their social roles (role commitment theory), experience low role conflict (role conflict theory), and reduce their experience of social alienation (social alienation theory). If so, then the determinants of work-life balance is essentially threefold.

First, guided by role commitment theory, one can argue that individuals with high work-life balance are likely to experience a high level of balanced commitment in multiple roles across life domains. High role commitment reflects the notion that people spend their time and energy in ways meeting their various human developmental needs across the various life domains. High role commitment does not necessarily mean investing exactly the same amount of time and energy across social roles in different

life domains. Rather, it reflects investment of time and energy to meet human developmental needs. An individual's commitment to his or her social roles increases as role performance bears fruit and produces reward.

Second, guided by role conflict theory, one can argue that individuals with high work-life balance are likely to experience minimum role conflict across various life domains. Role conflict involves competing demand in work and non-work roles (e.g., meeting the demands placed on one's job makes it difficult to meet family demands) (cf. Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). In other words, people experience role conflict when they perceive demand of their various social roles being incompatible. Time and energy invested in work life interferes with time and energy needed to meet demand of other social roles. Thus, it is fair to say that individuals with high work-life balance are likely to experience a low degree of role conflict.

Third, guided by social alienation theory, one can argue that individuals with high work-life balance are likely to experience low levels of social alienation or disengagement in life's multiple roles. Work-life balance necessitates engagement in life on different fronts. Alienation leads to depression, a condition which is exactly the opposite of life satisfaction. Based on the preceding discussion, we propose the following:

Theoretical Proposition 1 Work-life balance can be increased by increasing balanced role commitment across social roles in multiple life domains.

Theoretical Proposition 2 Work-life balance can be increased by decreasing role conflict across social roles in multiple life domains.

Theoretical Proposition 3 Work-life balance can be increased by decreasing alienation in social roles in multiple life domains.

Relationship Between Satisfaction with Work Life and Non-Work Life Domains

The theory of positive spillover hints at the fact that people characterized as high in work-life balance experience a high degree of positive transfer of affect, skills, and experiences between work life and non-work life. That is, individuals with work-life balance are likely to experience a high degree of affect transfer, role enrichment, and role integration for the following reasons. *First*, individuals with work-life balance are likely to experience positive affect transfer of satisfaction in various life domains. Thus, one can argue that individuals with high work-life balance are likely to experience a high level of positive affect transfer across life domains because their life domains are not compartmentalized. Compartmentalization is used only to prevent contagion of negative affect. *Second*, individuals characterized as high in work-life balance are likely to experience role enrichment. As their roles are likely to be mutually compatible, experiences in one role should further heighten satisfaction in another. For example, they are likely to have family support in relation to their work roles, and vice versa. Thus, their experience in one role is likely to improve the quality of other compatible roles. Compatible roles tend to reinforce one another. *Third*, individuals with high

work-life balance are likely experience a high level of integration across their social roles. Role integration facilitates transfer of positive affect, skills, and experiences. Based on the discussion, we propose the following.




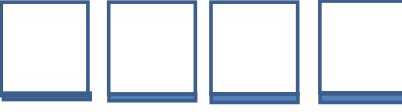
Theoretical Proposition 4 Individuals with high work-life balance are likely to experience a high degree of positive affect transfer, role enrichment, and role integration.

The Effect of Work-Life Balance on Life Satisfaction

Now let's make an attempt to put it all together. Table 3 revisits the four types of individuals: the fully engaged, the partially engaged, the engaged but conflicted, and the disengaged (see Table 3).

As previously stated, the *fully engaged individuals* are likely to have the highest level of life satisfaction. They are likely to experience positive affect from the various

Table 3 Explaining the Life Satisfaction Effect

Type of work-life balance	Degree of commitment/engagement cross life domains	Expected results
Fully engaged individuals		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High role enrichment • Balanced (positive spillover) • Low role conflict • High life satisfaction (high and low need satisfaction)
Partially engaged individuals		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate role enrichment • Balanced (some spillover) • Low role conflict • Moderate life satisfaction (some need satisfaction)
Engaged but conflicted individuals		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High role enrichment in some domains • Low role enrichment in other domains • Unbalanced (no spillover) • High role conflict • Low life satisfaction (low need satisfaction)
Disengaged individuals		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low role enrichment in all domains (alienation) • No role conflict or spillover • Low life satisfaction (no need satisfaction)

roles and life domains they are engaged in. And positive affect is likely to spillover to other life domains with little-to-no role conflict. These experiences are likely to lead to high level of life satisfaction. Why? These individuals are likely to experience satisfaction of the full spectrum of developmental needs from multiple life domains. Formally stated, the fully-engaged individuals with little or no role conflict are likely to experience high level of life satisfaction because they are likely to experience a high level of satisfaction of a broad range of developmental needs (both basic and growth needs) across social roles across life domains (see Table 3).

As previously described, the *partially engaged individuals* are likely to experience high-to-moderate levels of life satisfaction. They are likely to experience positive affect from some of the life domains they are engaged in. And the experiences of positive affect are likely to spillover to other life domains with little-to-no role conflict. As these individuals are engaged in some life domains, they are likely to experience a moderately high level of need satisfaction from these domains. These individuals can obtain only a certain degree of need satisfaction from a single life domain. Formally stated, the partially engaged individuals are likely to experience a moderate level of life satisfaction because they experience only a moderate level of satisfaction across the full spectrum of developmental needs across life domains. See Table 3.

The third group of individuals, the *engaged-but-conflicted* type, are likely to experience a moderate level of life satisfaction. They are likely to experience positive affect from some of the life domains they are engaged in. Yet, the experiences of positive affect are less likely to spill over to other life domains because they experience role conflict. Specifically, the engaged-but-conflicted individuals are likely experience a low (or low-to-moderate) level of life satisfaction because they experience low satisfaction across the full spectrum of developmental needs across salient life domains (see Table 3).

The fourth group involves individuals who experience *social alienation* and anomie in life. We described these individuals as disengaged (i.e., they don't care much about anything or anyone; they carry on to simply survive and to avoid pain). They do not experience much satisfaction in any significant life domain, which is further manifested in very low levels of life satisfaction (see Table 3). Why? The alienated-type individuals are likely experience a very low level of life satisfaction because they experience very low need satisfaction across the spectrum of developmental needs across life domains. Based on the preceding discussion, we propose the following.

Theoretical Proposition 5 Individuals differing in degree and scope of engagement in life domains (the fully engaged individuals, the partially engaged individuals, the engaged-but-conflicted individuals, and the disengaged individuals) experience life satisfaction differently. Specifically, the fully engaged individuals experience a high level of life satisfaction, followed by the partially engaged individuals, the engaged-but-conflicted individuals, and the disengaged, respectively.

The work-life balance model proposed in this paper should motivate future research. Future study should empirically test the model. The model recognizes that work-life balance policies should be distinguished as a function of the type of employee experiencing a certain level of engagement in multiple roles. Studies can be designed to identify these four types of individuals and track their life satisfaction over time. In doing so, researchers should develop measurement instruments that would identify and

reveal these distinctions. As such, we may be able to test the principles of work-life balance explicitly. Furthermore, a program of research can be initiated to systematically determine organizational, cultural, personality, and situational factors that are hypothesized to influence engagement in life domains. Such research should help further develop and fine-tune work-life balance policies and programs.

Conclusion

In this paper we reviewed the literature on work-life balance and identified four major research streams: balanced role commitment, positive spillover, role conflict, and social alienation. The major lessons learned from the four research streams is that work-life balance can be achieved through two means: enhancing the positive conditions of work-life balance (i.e., programs and policies designed to increase role commitment and positive spillover in various work and nonwork roles) and mitigating the negative conditions (i.e., programs and policies designed to reduce role conflict and social alienation).

Based on our understanding of the positive and negative factors affecting work-life balance, we then developed a life satisfaction model that distinguished among four types of individuals: (1) those who are fully engaged in life (total engagement in social roles contributing significant positive affect in multiple life domains), (2) those who are partially engaged (total engagement in social roles contributing to significant positive affect in one or few domains), (3) those who are engaged but conflicted (engagement in two or more social roles involving role overload and role conflict causing low levels of domain satisfaction and life satisfaction too), and (4) those who are disengaged from life (not engaged in any of their social roles). We argued that the fully engaged group is likely to experience the highest level of life satisfaction (with high levels of role enrichment and low levels of role conflict), followed by the partially engaged group, the engaged but conflicted group, and those who are disengaged from life, respectively.

We then set out to explain the psychological dynamics of the model. In doing so, we articulated three principles. The first is the principle of satisfaction spillover across life domains. This principle states that an individual's subjective well-being can be increased when satisfaction from one life domain spills over to other life domains with little role conflict or interference.

The second principle focuses on need satisfaction quota. That is, total engagement in a single role may contribute only a limited amount of need satisfaction because of the satisfaction limit—people can derive only a limited amount of satisfaction from a single role. People have to be involved in social roles that contribute positive affect in multiple domains to satisfy the full spectrum of human developmental needs. Why? This may be due to the fact that different social roles tend to focus on different human developmental needs.

The third principle qualifies the second principle by explicitly translating the concept of the full spectrum of human developmental needs into basic and growth needs. Succinctly put, role engagement contributes to life satisfaction because subjective well-being can only be attained when both survival and growth needs are met. High levels of life satisfaction cannot be attained with satisfaction of basic needs or growth needs alone. Both needs have to be met to generate a high level of life satisfaction.

We then used these three principles to explain the relationship between the levels of role engagement and life satisfaction. The fully engaged are individuals who are totally engaged in various social roles. These individuals are likely to experience high levels of life satisfaction. This may be due to the possibility that they experience high levels of satisfaction in multiple life domains considered important enhancing the likelihood of satisfying the full spectrum of human developmental needs (both basic and growth needs). The partially engaged are engaged in restricted social roles. They are likely to experience a moderate level of life satisfaction. This may be due to the possibility that they experience high levels of satisfaction in a few domains considered important making it likely to meet certain developmental needs but not others. The engaged but conflicted individuals experience overload in certain social roles creating conflict in others. They are likely to experience low levels of life satisfaction. This may be due to the possibility of negative affect spillover from domains involving role overload to others causing low satisfaction in domains considered important making it less likely to adequately satisfy most of developmental needs. Finally, the disengaged individuals are those who lack engagement in any meaningful social role. They are likely to experience very low levels of life satisfaction. This may be due to the possibility that they experience low levels of satisfaction in most domains considered important, making it least likely to satisfy most of the developmental needs.

Policy Implications

To promote work-life balance, the following policies are recommended. *First*, individuals should be *fully engaged* in various life domains and make an effort to avoid social alienation. A high level of engagement across multiple roles should help satisfy the full spectrum of developmental needs. It is also important for individuals to engage in multiple roles because there is only so much satisfaction they can extract from a single role. *Second*, individuals should be fully committed to varied social roles in a *balanced* way. Balanced commitment across roles and domains should facilitate spillover of positive affect and skills. Imbalanced commitment could result in role conflict, which is mostly likely to adversely impact life satisfaction.

Specifically, for the “fully engaged” types, the prescription here is to maintain and reinforce what they are doing. They are engaged in work and nonwork roles and are successful in their role performance, resulting in a high level of life satisfaction. Policy makers should attempt to maintain those programs and policies that seem to serve these individuals well. In contrast, policy makers can do more for the “partially engaged” types. These people experience a moderate level of life satisfaction mostly because they are not engaged in multiple and varied roles. They are successful in their limited social roles, and this success does bring about a limited amount of domain satisfaction that spills over to life satisfaction. However, these individuals can increase their life satisfaction by allowing themselves to be involved and engaged in other roles that may help meet the full spectrum of human developmental needs—both basic and growth needs. Thus, the workaholic who is married to his or her job may be encouraged to get involved in leisure and social activities that may also produce successful role performance and much satisfaction related to different needs (different from those that are met through job performance alone).

With respect to the “engaged but conflicted” types, much of the traditional organizational policies involving structural and cultural work-life support apply here (Kossek et al. 2010). Examples of structural work-life policies and programs include job redesign to enable flexible work schedules, teleworking and virtual arrangements, reduced workloads, and other non-traditional work arrangements; occupational safety and health initiatives to reduce stress related to work and nonwork issues; formal policies on absenteeism, vacations, and sick times that support non-work roles; and enhanced childcare and eldercare benefits. Examples of cultural work-life support policies and programs include training supervisors to increase social support of non-work demands and foster positive organizational norms toward non-work roles.

Lastly, the “disengaged” types are the most challenging to deal with. Workers who are disengaged in their work and non-work roles can best be helped through professional counselling services. Life coaches and counsellors can aid the disengaged by attempting to help them refocus on work and non-work roles likely to lead successful role performance. Successful role performance is important in this regard because rewards and resources do follow from successful role performance. These rewards and resources are likely to motivate them to embrace these roles into their personal identity and self-concept, which may lead to satisfaction in certain domains, ultimately contributing to some degree of life satisfaction.

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