

Working to Live or Living to Work? Coffee Shop Employees' Perspectives on Work-Life Balance

Vivian Osbert Lee¹, Vicky Sharon Lie², Erris Kusumawidjaya³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Ciputra Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: vosbertlee@student.ciputra.ac.id, vsharonlie@student.ciputra.ac.id, erris.kusumawidjaya@ciputra.ac.id

Abstract

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This study aims to understand the experiences of coffee shop employees in balancing work-life and personal life (Work-Life Balance / WLB) through a case study on Man of Culture. This study uses a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with four employees. The results show that work-life balance is defined as the ability to manage time, maintain boundaries between work and personal life, and is supported by work flexibility. In addition, the fulfillment of psychological needs in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), namely autonomy, competence, and social relatedness, has been shown to play an important role in supporting the creation of this balance. These findings indicate that work-life balance is not only influenced by the aspect of working time, but also by the psychological experiences of employees in the work environment.

INTRODUCTION

The world has entered the modern era, making work dynamics increasingly faster. And of course professional demands are also increasing. It is not surprising that the issue of balance between Work -Life Balance (WLB) is becoming increasingly important to be discussed. In previous research as described by Sutanto et al. (2024) WLB is widely discussed from a quantitative perspective to assess its impact on employee performance and job satisfaction. However, this approach often fails explore the subjective experiences and in-depth perceptions of employees in the sector hospitality, a sector known for its high work demands and unstable shift system uncertain.

Research by Adyatma (2023) and Natanael et al. (2023) shows that employees in the hospitality industry faces a major challenge in maintaining a balance between work life and work. professional and personal due to long working hours and emotional stress continuously. Other studies also highlight that WLB is not solely determined by distribution of time between work and personal life, but also by the level of emotional involvement and individual satisfaction in carrying out these two roles (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Therefore, in this context, an approach is needed. theoretically capable of explaining the internal dimensions of this balance, namely how individuals feel, interpret, and deal with work pressure in a psychological.

In an organizational context, employees are a valuable asset and often a key factor in organizational success (Teja & Oktavio, 2019). Therefore, understanding employees' experiences at work, including how they interpret and manage work-life balance, is crucial for deeper study. In this context, a theoretical approach is needed that looks not only at external aspects such as workload, but also at internal aspects related to individual psychological experiences.

One of the relevant theories in answering this issue is Self-Determination. Theory (SDT). SDT is a motivational theory that emphasizes that humans have three basic psychological needs: autonomy (freedom to act), competence (sense of able to do something), and social connectedness

(feeling connected to other people). When these three needs are met, the individual will be driven by intrinsic motivation, feel their work is meaningful, and experience higher psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This motivation that comes from within is an important key to creating a healthy life balance amidst the demands of professional life complex. In the context of WLB, the fulfillment of needs This psychological aspect is believed to play an important role in creating a balance in life. healthy, especially in high-intensity work sectors.

Several studies have shown that the application of SDT principles has been proven effective in improving the quality of work life. One of them is Kurniasih et al. (2023) which highlights that the fulfillment of psychological needs in the workplace is significantly helps employees in dealing with work pressure and caring life balance. For example, an employee who feels trusted to complete tasks independently (autonomy), have relevant skills (competence), as well as getting social support from colleagues and superiors (relatedness) social), tend to be more motivated and satisfied in their work and personal lives. On the other hand, employees who feel constrained, unappreciated, and less have positive interpersonal relationships, are more prone to stress and role conflict which has an impact on disrupting the balance of life.

In the hospitality industry, various businesses have varying operational characteristics and work pressures, including the food and beverage sector, such as coffee shops. Although often perceived as a more relaxed work environment, coffee shops still have complex work dynamics, primarily due to the high level of direct interaction with customers and the demand for consistent service. Therefore, this study focuses on key operational roles, namely baristas and senior baristas, who are directly involved in the entire service process, from product preparation and customer interactions to daily operational management. Unlike segmented work systems, the relatively small organizational structure in coffee shops encourages employees to multitask. This condition certainly makes the workload not only technical but also includes emotional and social pressures due to intense direct interaction with customers. Baristas, for example, are required not only to have technical skills in mixing coffee but also good communication and service skills. This improves the quality of interactions but also increases the demands for emotional involvement. On the other hand, the senior barista role has more complex responsibilities because it is involved not only in operations but also in product quality monitoring, team coordination, and decision-making during busy operational conditions. Senior baristas are required to ensure service standards are maintained while simultaneously assisting the team in dealing with work pressure, so that their workload encompasses technical, managerial, and emotional aspects simultaneously. Furthermore, shift-based work systems and long operating hours during peak hours also influence the dynamics of employee work-life balance. Therefore, understanding work-life balance (WLB) in the coffee shop context requires a contextualized approach and cannot be equated with other sectors. Using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the primary theoretical foundation, this study aims to understand how coffee shop employees interpret and manage their work-life balance, as well as how the fulfillment or neglect of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and social connectedness) plays a role in shaping their motivation, work perceptions, and well-being. With a descriptive qualitative approach that allows researchers to explore subjective experiences in depth, this study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of human resource management strategies that are more adaptive, contextual, and oriented towards the well-being of coffee shop employees.

The research location was Man of Culture in Makassar, a coffee shop that has been operating since 2024. This coffee shop carries a modern minimalist concept with an emphasis on

product quality and good interaction between employees and customers. This cafe also presents a slow bar concept that prioritizes the manual coffee brewing process with a focus on precision, quality of the brew, and creating a more in-depth and interactive coffee experience for customers. Customers can also choose coffee beans (beans) and flavor profiles according to their preferences. Of course, this concept requires employees to have a good understanding of the product and the ability to provide more personalized service to customers. Therefore, in practice, the implementation of the slow bar concept also adds to the complexity of the work, because employees are not only focused on service, but also on the accuracy of presentation and interaction with customers (multitasking). In addition, direct interaction with customers and the dynamics of the number of visitors, especially at certain times, demand physical and emotional readiness of employees in carrying out their work. This situation is relevant for examining the issue of work-life balance (WLB), as employees face work demands that require consistent performance, adaptability, and good time management. This situation has the potential to affect the balance between work and personal life, especially in terms of managing rest time, social relationships, and other personal needs. Therefore, Man of Culture Cafe is a relevant research object to illustrate the dynamics of work-life balance in the coffee shop industry, especially in the context of a flexible work environment that still has high operational demands. Furthermore, the selection of the research location also takes into account ease of access and the willingness of related parties to participate in this study.

Work-Life Balance (WLB) is a condition in which an individual can carry out their roles in work and personal life proportionally without experiencing conflict. According to Natanael et al. (2023), WLB reflects harmony between work responsibilities and personal well-being, especially when work does not interfere excessively with family life and personal time. In the context of the modern, dynamic workplace, the issue of WLB is increasingly important because pressures and expectations on employees continue to increase. This means that balance is not only about "how long to work," but also "how you feel and the quality of life while working." This study seeks to understand how employees from various roles interpret and manage this balance, using a theoretical approach that focuses not only on workload but also on the internal psychological dimensions that influence individual motivation and well-being. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a relevant theory in addressing this issue.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a motivational theory that emphasizes that humans are naturally driven to grow, develop, and act voluntarily based on the values they believe in. The strongest and most enduring motivation is intrinsic motivation, which is the drive that arises from within oneself, not because of external pressures such as orders, punishments, or rewards. Thus, SDT sees that humans will show their best performance when they feel in control of their actions, feel competent, and have supportive social relationships, Ryan & Deci (2020). In other words, there are three main psychological needs that must be met for individuals to achieve healthy motivation: first, autonomy, which is the need to feel that one has the freedom to choose and control one's own actions; second, competence, which is the need to feel capable and effective in carrying out one's tasks; and third, social relatedness, which is the need to feel connected and have warm and supportive relationships with others in one's social environment.

Discussed more deeply, within the SDT framework, autonomy, which refers to freedom of action, actually refers to the extent to which individuals feel they have control and freedom to determine how they work, make decisions, and express themselves at work. Previous research has also shown that granting autonomy has a positive impact on employees, as it allows them to work

flexibly and opens up opportunities for self-development, ultimately improving work-life balance (Taufick & Kurniawan, 2023). Meanwhile, competence refers to the basic psychological need to feel capable, effective, and confident in completing work tasks. Competence encompasses not only technical skills such as system usage, guest service, or completing daily tasks, but also encompasses an individual's subjective belief in their capacity to handle challenges and pressures in the workplace. Employees who feel competent tend to have high self-efficacy, are better able to manage work stress, and find greater meaning in their work. Conversely, employees who feel incompetent or insufficiently trained are more susceptible to fatigue, self-doubt, and even burnout, which ultimately disrupts their personal lives. Finally, there's the social connectedness aspect. Social connectedness is not only related to the existence of interpersonal relationships, but rather emphasizes the quality of these relationships, namely the extent to which individuals feel valued and accepted, have emotional closeness, and feel part of a group or community.

A study by Martela & Riekkari (2018) confirmed that autonomy, competence, and social connectedness are significantly related to a person's perception of meaning in work. In their studies conducted in various countries, these three needs consistently contributed significantly to employee job satisfaction and quality of life. They also emphasized that the meaning of work does not solely come from salary or position, but from how a person feels free, capable, and valued in their daily work activities. In an organizational context, when these three needs are met, individuals tend to experience increased intrinsic motivation that supports work-life balance. Conversely, a work environment that ignores these needs, such as a system that is too rigid, lacks recognition, or lacks social support, has the potential to cause psychological stress, emotional exhaustion, demotivation, and even burnout.

A study conducted by Inayati Kurniasih et al. (2023) also revealed that SDT is highly relevant for domestic work environments. They concluded that intrinsic motivation, formed from the fulfillment of basic psychological needs, plays a crucial role in helping employees achieve work-life balance, particularly in the hospitality sector, which is known for its busy, dynamic, and stressful workload. For example, if an employee is entrusted with completing tasks in their own way (autonomy), they simultaneously feel competent due to adequate training and expertise (competence), and have good social relationships with their colleagues and superiors (social connectedness). As a result, they feel proud and enthusiastic about their work. This, of course, will create a work-life balance that will also impact their personal lives. Conversely, employees who feel overly controlled, denied opportunities for development, and socially isolated are more susceptible to role conflict and work-life imbalance. However, the fulfillment of these psychological needs cannot be separated from the context of each individual's work. Each position has different roles and responsibilities; for example, in this coffee shop study, there were baristas and senior baristas. Therefore, understanding work-life balance cannot be generalized, but rather needs to be tailored to the characteristics of the work and the challenges faced by each individual. Within the SDT framework, organizations are required to be able to create a work environment that supports these three basic needs in each work unit specifically. By using SDT as the main theoretical foundation, this study views WLB not only as a matter of time management or workload, but as a form of psychological balance formed by daily experiences, social relationships, and systemic support in the workplace. This approach provides a more comprehensive and humane view of how employees can survive, thrive, and feel whole in facing the demands of work in the hospitality industry.

So far, studies on work-life balance in the Indonesian hospitality sector have been mostly... The majority still emphasizes aspects of workload, shift system, and work stress, with using frameworks such as Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) or Work-Family Conflict. This approach is useful for understanding external pressures, but it is not yet many studies have explicitly adopted Self-Determination Theory to examine life balance experience from the perspective of employees' internal psychological needs. Different with Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) which focuses more on the tension between workload and availability of organizational resources, as well as Work-Family Conflict (WFC) which highlights role conflict between work demands and family responsibilities, both approaches is more suitable for use in quantitative studies that measure the relationship between variables. Meanwhile, this study aims to explore subjective experiences and meanings personal aspect of the work-life balance that employees feel. In this context, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a more in-depth and humanistic, because it focuses on the basic psychological needs that shape individual motivation and well-being. Therefore, SDT is considered more appropriate for used in descriptive qualitative studies that seek to understand how employees in the hospitality sector interprets work-life balance personally, not just by measuring it. statistically.

METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to understand in - depth subjective experiences of employees in managing work - life balance (WLB). This approach was chosen because it is in line with the research objectives which aim to explore perceptions. personal data of respondents in a complex and non-manipulable social context. Moreover, because the theory used is Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and basic psychological needs, then qualitative approach is the most appropriate method for capturing meanings subjective holistically.

The research location was carried out at a coffee shop called Man of Culture. The research subjects consisted of four operational staff members selected purposively, all of whom have key roles in cafe operations, namely senior baristas and baristas. These two roles were chosen because they are functionally directly involved in the entire service process, from product presentation, interaction with customers (service contact), to delivering orders to customers. Senior baristas and baristas are not only responsible for maintaining product quality, but also for ensuring smooth daily operations and providing optimal service to customers. These roles, which encompass various tasks, require employees to be able to work multitasking simultaneously. By focusing the research on the roles of senior baristas and baristas, this study can explore more deeply how employees in these positions experience and manage work-life balance. In addition, all subjects were selected with adequate work experience in mind, so that the data obtained can reflect a more mature and reflective experience of the work dynamics in a coffee shop environment.

Informants were selected with a minimum of one year of service and consisted of one senior barista and three baristas. This time limit was determined based on two main considerations. First, theoretically, one year of service is considered sufficient to form a more mature and reflective understanding of work rhythms, work-life balance challenges, and organizational dynamics in the context of coffee shop operations. Second, empirically, although Man of Culture Cafe is classified as a relatively new business, employees with at least one year of service are considered to have sufficient experience in dealing with various operational

conditions, such as high operational costs, customer interactions, and multitasking work demands. Thus, informants who meet these criteria are expected to be able to provide more in-depth, relevant, and contextual information related to their experiences in managing work-life balance. In addition to interviewing employees, this study also involved interviews with the cafe owner as a supporting informant to obtain information about the business background, cafe concept, and work systems implemented, in order to enrich the research context.

The data collection technique was carried out through in-depth interviews lasting approximately 120 minutes online (Zoom). The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which was chosen because it is able to identify patterns of meaning related to aspects of autonomy, competence, and social connectedness as explained in Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The analysis process was carried out through several stages, namely data transcription by converting the interview results into complete text form, followed by a coding process to identify important parts relevant to the research focus. Next, the data were grouped into categories based on similarity of meaning, then developed into main themes such as work-life balance, autonomy, competence, and social connectedness. The final stage was carried out through data interpretation by comparing the research findings with previous research to gain a deeper understanding. Furthermore, the interview technique used a semi-structured guide with a total of 9–11 core questions (outside of the informant's identity), which were adjusted to the position of each informant. The interview questions were divided into several main topics. The first topic discussed the informants' understanding of work-life balance (WLB), which encompassed perceptions of work-life balance, experiences of imbalance, and ways to address it. Next, questions focused on the autonomy aspect, exploring the extent to which the informants had freedom in their work, including the ability to make decisions and the level of trust given by their superiors. Furthermore, the interview also covered the competency aspect, focusing on the informants' sense of competence, self-confidence, and skills in carrying out their work as baristas. Finally, the social connectedness aspect was discussed to understand how relationships between coworkers are formed, including the existence of trust, communication, and support in work situations, especially when facing work pressure.

To maintain the credibility and validity of the findings, this study employed several strategies, such as source triangulation by comparing information from informants with different roles, namely senior baristas and baristas. Informant confirmation (member checking) was also conducted, where the researcher asked informants to review the summary of the interview results to ensure the interpretation matched the experiences conveyed. The researcher also compiled an audit trail containing coding steps and decision-making during the analysis process, so that it could be traced and methodologically accounted for. In the analysis process, the interview results were interpreted through the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which encompasses three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and social relatedness. This approach was used to understand how coffee shop employees interpret work-life balance in a dynamic work context that demands diverse roles.

The competency indicators in this study were developed to capture employees' perceptions of their ability to perform tasks effectively and confidently. Interview questions focused on their confidence in managing challenging work situations. The division of competency indicators was adapted to the multitasking nature of coffee shop work. For example, baristas were assessed based on their readiness to handle rush hour, their ability to prepare coffee according to standards, and their skills in interacting directly with customers. Meanwhile, senior baristas were evaluated based

on their ability to maintain product quality, coordinate teams, and make operational decisions in dynamic work situations. With this approach, competency indicators are not only technical but also reflect psychological perceptions of self-efficacy, in accordance with the principles of Self-Determination Theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of in-depth interviews conducted with four informants consisting of one senior barista and three baristas, various findings were obtained regarding the experiences and meanings of employees regarding *work-life balance* (WLB) in the context of work in *coffee shops*. The interview data were then analyzed using a thematic approach by grouping informants' answers into several main aspects, namely understanding of *work-life balance*, autonomy, competence, and social connectedness in accordance with the *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT) framework. To maintain the confidentiality of identity, each informant was given a code, namely SB1 for senior barista, and B1, B2, and B3 for informants who served as baristas. The code is used in presenting interview excerpts in the research results section. Furthermore, the research findings are summarized in several tables according to the aspects that have been analyzed.

The first aspect analyzed in this study was employees' understanding of *work-life balance*. This aspect is crucial for understanding how informants interpret the balance between work and personal life based on their experiences. The interview results related to *work-life balance* are presented in Table 1 below.

Aspect	Theme Findings	Informant	Quote
WLB	WLB as the ability to divide work and personal time	SB1 (Senior Barista 1)	"Smart for work and personal time" (SB1)
WLB	WLB is achieved if personal matters are completed before work and vice versa.	B1 (Barista 1)	"Work is work, personal is personal" (B1)
WLB	WLB is achieved if there is a flexible work system	B2 (Barista 2)	"After work, you can still do other activities such as studying" (B2)
WLB	WLB means there is no overlap between work and personal life.	B3 (Barista 3)	"It must be balanced, nothing should be one-sided" (B3)

Table 1: Summary of Findings on the Theme of Meaning of *Work-Life Balance*

The second aspect analyzed was autonomy, which refers to the level of individual freedom to make decisions and determine how to work within the work environment. Interview results related to autonomy are summarized in Table 2 below.

Aspect	Theme Findings	Informant	Quote
Autonomy	Can make decisions independently and responsibly	SB1 (Senior Barista 1)	"We are moving to find our own raw materials" (SB1)
		B2 (Barista 2)	"We can make our own decisions when dealing with

			customers as long as we can be held responsible if something happens" (B2)
Autonomy	Freedom to work but still according to SOP	B1 (Barista 1)	"Free but there are still rules" (B1)
		B3 (Barista 3)	"Here we can follow our own work methods as long as they are in accordance with the SOP, because each person's work method is different" (B3)

Table 2: Summary of Findings on the Theme of the Meaning of Autonomy

The third aspect analyzed in this study is competence, which refers to the extent to which employees feel capable, confident, and effective in carrying out their tasks and facing the various demands of *the coffee shop environment*. Competence encompasses not only technical skills but also an individual's ability to adapt, solve problems, and handle work pressure. The interview results related to the competence aspect are summarized in Table 3 below.

Aspect	Theme Findings	Informant	Quote
Competence	Able to work according to role	SB1 (Senior Barista 1)	"I am able to become a responsible senior barista and can develop products (R&D)" (SB1)
Competence	Be confident in <i>your skills</i> and abilities	B1 (Barista 1)	"I am capable and confident in being a barista. I am confident in my <i>latte art</i> and <i>manual brewing skills</i> ." (B1)
		B3 (Barista 3)	"I feel I can provide good <i>service to customers</i> and also present products according to their preferences" (B3)
Competence	<i>Multitasking</i> capabilities	B2 (Barista 2)	"I am capable and confident in making products and presenting products to <i>customers</i> at the same time" (B2)

Table 3: Summary of Findings of the Theme of Competence Meaning

The fourth aspect analyzed was social connectedness, which relates to the quality of interpersonal relationships between employees in the workplace. This aspect reflects the extent to which individuals feel connected, accepted, and supported by their coworkers and the team as a whole. Interview results related to the social connectedness aspect are presented in Table 4 below.

Aspect	Theme Findings	Informant	Quote
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Social	There is an open relationship & a team that trusts each other	SB1 (Senior Barista 1)	“Our team is very open and I believe the key to a team's success is mutual trust” (SB1)
Social	Help each other at work and complement each other's shortcomings	B1 (Barista 1)	“The team helps each other, especially when dealing with orders that are rarely ordered” (B1)
Social	The team is willing to work together and communication is smooth	B2 (Barista 2)	"Fortunately, the team was happy to help each member so there were no mistakes" (B2)
		B3 (Barista 3)	“From the start it was determined that I had to work with the team and establish good communication” (B3)

Table 4: Summary of Findings on the Theme of Meaning of Social Relatedness

Based on the results presented in the table above, several response patterns are evident, demonstrating both similarities and differences in perspectives among informants. Therefore, the following section will provide a more in-depth discussion to interpret these findings based on the theoretical framework used in this study. This discussion is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how *coffee shop employees* interpret and manage their work-life balance.

1. The Meaning of *Work-Life Balance* by *Coffee Shop Employees*

Based on the results of interviews with four informants, it was found that *work-life balance* (WLB) is interpreted in various ways, but has a common thread, namely the individual's ability to manage and divide time between work and personal life proportionally. Informant SB1 interpreted WLB as the ability to "smartly divide work and personal time," which indicates that balance is understood as a skill in managing time effectively. This emphasizes that WLB does not occur automatically, but requires individual awareness and ability to manage priorities. In line with this, informant B1 emphasized the importance of a clear separation between work and personal life, as reflected in the statement "work is work, personal is personal." This view shows that WLB is not only related to time management, but also includes a clear psychological boundary between the two roles, so that they do not interfere with each other.

On the other hand, informant B2 highlighted the aspect of work flexibility as a key factor in achieving *work-life balance*. The informant stated that after work, there is still the opportunity to engage in other activities such as studying. This indicates that flexible working hours are an important element that allows individuals to maintain a personal life outside of work. Meanwhile, informant B3 defines WLB as a condition where there is no overlap between work and personal life, or in other words, "no one-sidedness." This view emphasizes the importance of an equal balance between the two aspects of life, without the dominance of one role. Interestingly, despite the variations in how they interpret *work-life balance*, all informants showed a similarity in seeing the importance of a balance between work and personal life. This finding indicates a similar awareness among informants regarding how *work-life balance* should be achieved. This is in line with the view that *work-life balance* is not only determined by the amount of time spent at work, but also by how individuals subjectively interpret and manage these roles. In this context, WLB is more psychological and perceptual, rather than simply a quantitative allocation of time. This aligns with research by Kalliath & Brough (2008), which states that *work-life balance* is determined not only by quantitative time allocation but also by an individual's perception of the balance between work and

personal life. This suggests that work-life balance is subjective and greatly influenced by how individuals interpret their roles.

Furthermore, flexibility in work systems and the provision of space for employees to continue pursuing personal activities demonstrate that the work environment plays a crucial role in supporting this balance. This is particularly relevant in the context of *coffee shops*, which have dynamic work environments while still providing employees with room for adaptation. Therefore, it can be concluded that *work-life balance* in this study is the result of the interaction between an individual's ability to manage time and roles, and a supportive work environment that provides flexibility and tolerance for personal needs. This allows employees to maintain optimal personal lives without neglecting work responsibilities.

2. The Role of Autonomy in Supporting *Work-Life Balance*

Based on the interview results, all informants indicated that they have a degree of autonomy in their work, although they remain within the boundaries of applicable standard operating procedures (SOPs). This autonomy is reflected in employees' ability to make independent decisions, determine work methods, and adapt actions to the situation they face in the field. Informant SB1, as a senior barista, demonstrated a higher level of autonomy, especially in urgent situations such as raw material shortages. In such conditions, the informant can immediately take the initiative without having to wait for direction from superiors. This demonstrates the organization's trust in the individual's ability to carry out their role. Meanwhile, other informants also feel freedom in their work, but remain within the framework of established rules. As expressed by informant B1, they are "free but there are still rules."

Furthermore, the autonomy perceived by informants is not absolute, but rather flexible and contextual. Informants B2 and B3 emphasized that freedom at work must still be accountable and adjusted to applicable work standards. This shows that autonomy in the context of a *coffee shop* does not mean unlimited, but rather directed freedom (*bounded autonomy*). From the perspective of *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT), this condition indicates the fulfillment of the basic need for autonomy, namely the feeling that an individual has control over the actions and decisions taken in their work. The fulfillment of this autonomy contributes directly to *work-life balance*. Employees who feel in control of their work are less easily pressured or forced to work. With flexibility in making decisions and organizing work methods, individuals can manage energy and time more effectively, thereby reducing the potential for conflict between work and personal life.

Furthermore, autonomy allows employees to adjust their work rhythm to their personal circumstances. This is crucial in dynamic work environments like *coffee shops*, where situations can change rapidly and require adaptive responses. Therefore, it can be concluded that autonomy plays a crucial role in creating *work-life balance*, as it provides individuals with the space to independently control their work without diminishing the organization's direction and structure. This balance between freedom and regulation is key to creating a healthy and sustainable work experience. These findings align with research by Taufick & Kurniawan (2023), which shows that job autonomy has a positive impact on *work-life balance* by increasing flexibility and individual control over their work. Furthermore, within the framework of *Self-Determination Theory*, Ryan & Deci (2020) assert that fulfilling the need for autonomy can improve psychological well-being and reduce work stress, thus contributing to the creation of work-life balance.

3. The Role of Competence in Supporting *Work-Life Balance*

Based on the interview results, all informants demonstrated a high level of competence in carrying out their roles as baristas and senior baristas. This competence is reflected in self-confidence, technical skills, and readiness to face various dynamic work situations, including multitasking conditions and operational pressure. Informant SB1 demonstrated competence that is not only limited to operational aspects, but also includes managerial and product development (R&D) capabilities. This indicates that competence at the senior level is not only related to

technical skills, but also the ability to think strategically and innovatively. Meanwhile, other informants emphasized confidence in technical skills such as *latte art*, *manual brewing*, and the ability to serve customers according to their preferences.

Informant B2 also highlighted *multitasking* as a competency, highlighting their ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, from creating products to serving them to customers. This demonstrates that competency in *the coffee shop context* is closely related to the ability to adapt to high and rapidly changing workloads. Within the framework of *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT), this reflects the fulfillment of the need for competency, namely the feeling of being capable and effective in carrying out tasks. As previously explained, individuals who feel competent tend to have high *self-efficacy*, thus being more confident in facing work challenges and emerging pressures. This fulfillment of competency has significant implications for *work-life balance*. Employees who feel capable in their work are less likely to experience excessive stress because they have confidence that the tasks at hand can be completed well. This reduces the psychological burden that can carry over into personal life. As outlined by previous research, employee competency or *self-efficacy* plays a crucial role in helping individuals cope with work demands and maintain a work-life balance. In the context of the *hospitality industry*, employees who have high levels of *self-efficacy* tend to be more able to manage work pressure effectively and maintain a work-life balance (Zhu et al., 2024).

Conversely, if an individual feels incompetent, work will become a source of ongoing stress, which can ultimately disrupt work-life balance. Therefore, competence can be seen as a protective factor that helps individuals maintain emotional and psychological stability. Furthermore, competence also contributes to improving the quality of the work experience. Employees who feel competent not only work to complete tasks but also feel satisfaction and meaning in their work. This aligns with the concept of intrinsic motivation in SDT, where individuals are driven by a sense of achievement and self-development. Thus, it can be concluded that competence plays a crucial role in supporting *work-life balance*, as it helps employees cope with work demands more effectively, reduces psychological stress, and increases self-confidence in carrying out their roles.

4. The Role of Social Connectedness in Supporting *Work-Life Balance*

Interview results indicate that social ties among employees in *the coffee shop environment* are very strong and positive. All informants emphasized the existence of working relationships based on trust, open communication, and a culture of mutual assistance within the team. Informant SB1 emphasized that trust is the main key to building a solid team, while other informants stated that they always help each other, especially in challenging work situations such as when dealing with complex orders or busy operational conditions. Informants B2 and B3 also highlighted the importance of good communication as a factor supporting smooth teamwork. These findings indicate that social relationships in the workplace are not only formal, but also have a strong emotional dimension. Employees do not just work as individuals, but as part of a team that supports and complements each other. From the perspective of *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT), this condition reflects the fulfillment of the need for social relatedness, namely the feeling of being connected, accepted, and having meaningful relationships with others. This social relatedness has a significant impact on *work-life balance*. Support from colleagues can be a source of emotional strength in dealing with work pressure, so that individuals do not feel burdened alone. In a dynamic work environment like *a coffee shop*, the presence of a supportive team is crucial for maintaining employee emotional stability. This aligns with previous research confirming that fulfilling the need for *relatedness*, which is the feeling of being connected and having meaningful relationships with others, is a crucial factor in creating a positive work experience and ultimately leading to *work-life balance* (Baka et al., 2025).

Furthermore, positive social relationships also create a comfortable and enjoyable work environment. This reduces work stress levels and increases job satisfaction, ultimately contributing to a work-life balance. Social connectedness also plays a role in building a sense of *belonging* in the workplace. When individuals feel part of a team, they tend to be more engaged

and have a more positive work experience, without feeling emotionally burdened. Therefore, it can be concluded that social connectedness is also an important factor in supporting *work-life balance*, as it provides emotional support, increases work comfort, and helps individuals collectively cope with work pressures.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions conducted, it can be concluded that work-life balance (WLB) among coffee shop employees is defined as an individual's ability to manage and balance their work and personal lives proportionally. This definition is not only related to quantitative time allocation but also includes the existence of clear psychological boundaries between the two roles and flexibility in carrying out activities outside of work. The results of the study indicate that employees generally do not experience significant conflict between work and personal life. This indicates that the work environment at the coffee shop has been able to support the creation of work-life balance through a relatively flexible work system and the provision of space for employees to continue pursuing personal activities.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), achieving work-life balance in this study is inseparable from the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and social connectedness. Autonomy is reflected in employees' freedom to make decisions and determine work methods, while remaining within the boundaries of operational standards. Competence is seen in employees' level of confidence in carrying out their duties and their ability to face dynamic work demands. Meanwhile, social connectedness is reflected in positive working relationships, open communication, and a culture of mutual support among team members. These three aspects interact to shape a positive work experience and support employee psychological well-being. When individuals feel in control of their work, feel capable of carrying out their duties, and have good social relationships, work pressure can be better managed so that it does not interfere with personal life.

Thus, the findings of this study indicate that work-life balance in the context of coffee shops is not solely determined by external factors such as working hours or workload, but rather is more influenced by internal and psychological factors formed from daily work experiences. This confirms that employee work-life balance is the result of the interaction between individual perceptions and the support of the work environment. In this context, coffee shop employees tend to "work to live," where work remains an important part, but does not dominate personal life, but rather runs in harmony and supports each other. As a new point of view, this study confirms that in the context of the coffee shop industry, which is characterized by flexible and dynamic work, work-life balance can be achieved not because of low work demands, but because of a balance between organizational flexibility and the fulfillment of employees' psychological needs.

However, this study has several limitations, namely the limited number of informants and the focus on one research location, causing the results of this study cannot be generalized widely to the entire hospitality industry, especially the coffee shop sector. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve a more diverse number of informants, cover various locations and types of businesses, and consider different methodological approaches and theories to gain a more comprehensive understanding of work-life balance.

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