



Navigating Work-Life Balance and Career Advancement: Exploring Gender Equality Among Female Employees in Contemporary China

Lai Kuen Shirley Law

University of South Wales, Australia

Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of work-life balance and career development among female employees in China, particularly within the context of rapid economic growth and evolving gender roles. Following the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, public awareness of gender inequality has increased, highlighting the need for effective strategies to support women in balancing professional and domestic responsibilities. Drawing on over 50 qualitative interviews with female employees at both managerial and non-managerial levels, the research explores how traditional gender ideologies, organizational structures, and cultural expectations influence women's professional advancement. The findings reveal that despite increased labour force participation, women continue to face significant barriers to promotion due to persistent biases and the perception that family responsibilities hinder their work commitment. The study emphasizes the importance of work-life balance as a critical factor in enabling female career development. It highlights the role of family-friendly policies and equitable human resource practices in mitigating gender disparities and fostering inclusive workplace environments. By identifying the sources of stress and structural obstacles faced by women, the research provides actionable insights for organizations aiming to support female talent. The insights also gained offer practical implications for business leaders, policymakers, and human resource professionals aiming to enhance gender equity and organizational performance. The study further contributes to broader discussions on gender equality in the AsiaPacific region and offers a foundation for future cross-cultural research. Ultimately, promoting work-life balance is not only essential for individual well-being but also instrumental in unlocking the full potential of female employees and advancing gender equity in the workforce.

Keywords: career advancement; economic development; family-friendly policies; gender bias; organizational culture