

Challenges And Barriers in Achieving Work-Life Balance in the Hotel Industry

Akash Rawat^{1*}, Dr. Ravish Kukreti², Dr. Rakesh Dani³, Amar P. Dabral⁴

¹(Research Scholar) Department Of Hospitality

²(Assistant Professor) Department Of Hospitality

³(Associate Professor) Department Of Hospitality

⁴(Assistant Professor) Department Of Hospitality

Graphic Era (Deemed To Be University),
Dehradun, India

Abstract: The hotel industry is known for its demanding work schedules, which often disrupt employees' ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. This study is undertaken to discuss the challenges and barriers faced by hotel employees in achieving work life balance. To serve the objective descriptive research design was adopted. The research has collected data from 658 hotel employees working in the 44 hotels of four major cities of Uttarakhand state. The data analysis revealed that hotel employees are facing several challenges in achieving work life balance; however Seasonal Peaks and High-Pressure Periods, Long Working Hours, Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities and High Job Demands and Workload hindering their work life balance most. It is suggested to hotel management to implement work life balance programs in their hotels otherwise it will decrease the overall efficiency of hotels.

Key Words: Work life balance, Challenges, Hotel employees

Background:

The hotel industry is widely recognized for its dynamic, customer-centric nature and its significant contribution to global economic growth. However, it is also characterized by long working hours, irregular shifts, high employee turnover, and constant pressure to deliver excellent service—all of which pose substantial challenges to achieving a healthy work-life balance (WLB). Work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to effectively manage both work responsibilities and personal life commitments, a crucial factor in maintaining employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational productivity.

In the hotel industry, the demand for 24/7 service, seasonal workload fluctuations, and the expectation of availability during holidays and weekends create unique pressures on employees. Frontline staff, managers, and support personnel often find it difficult to disengage from work due to the unpredictable and labor-intensive nature of their roles. These occupational demands frequently lead to stress, burnout, reduced family time, and diminished quality of life, which can negatively affect job performance and increase turnover intentions.

Despite growing awareness of the importance of work-life balance, many hotels continue to struggle with implementing effective strategies to support their employees. Factors such as inadequate staffing, limited managerial support, rigid scheduling, and cultural expectations within the hospitality sector further complicate efforts to promote WLB. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges by disrupting normal work routines and increasing workloads due to staffing shortages and new health protocols.

Given the critical role of human capital in service delivery, understanding the specific barriers and challenges to work-life balance in the hotel industry is essential. This study seeks to explore these issues in depth, identifying key factors that hinder balance and proposing potential interventions that organizations can adopt to create a more supportive and sustainable work environment.

Review of Previous Literature

Recent studies continue to highlight the persistent struggle of hotel employees in managing work-life balance (WLB), despite growing awareness and discourse around employee well-being. Dorta-Afonso et al. (2025) found that even in post-pandemic recovery phases, hotel staff in South Asia reported intensified workloads and psychological stress due to understaffing and increased guest expectations. The study noted that while some hotels have introduced mental health support and flexible rosters, implementation remains inconsistent, and frontline workers feel excluded from decision-making processes regarding their schedules.

Lin et al. (2025) examined South Korean hotel chains and discovered that while corporate-level WLB policies exist, middle management often obstructs their enforcement due to concerns over operational efficiency. The researchers concluded that organizational culture and lack of accountability at the managerial level create a significant barrier for employees attempting to utilize flexible work options. Similarly, Khan & Sreenivasan (2024) investigated hotels in the Middle East and reported that rigid hierarchies and cultural expectations often discouraged staff, especially women, from prioritizing personal or family needs, further exacerbating work-life conflict.

Looking at European contexts, Grigoryan (2024) conducted a qualitative study on Spanish hotel workers and identified that inconsistent shift rotations and unpredictable overtime were key stressors that disrupted family and social life. Notably, their study highlighted that younger employees are increasingly unwilling to tolerate poor work-life conditions, pushing employers to reconsider outdated scheduling practices. In the same year, Astuti et al. (2024) focused on the Indian hospitality sector and emphasized that while hotel chains attempted to modernize HR strategies post-COVID-19, such efforts rarely reached lower-tier staff. Many employees viewed WLB as a “luxury” rather than a right, due to prevailing norms that glorify overwork in the industry.

In a study, Sun et al. (2023) explored the psychological toll of “emotional labor” in luxury hotels in the UK. They found that workers who frequently suppress personal emotions to maintain professionalism for guests are more prone to burnout and work-life dissonance. Emotional labor, when combined with long and irregular working hours, results in spillover effects that negatively impact personal relationships and mental well-being. This aligns with Aufa et al. (2023) findings in Singapore, where hotel employees reported “on-call fatigue,” stating that constant availability, even during off-hours, blurred the line between work and home life.

Budhiraja et al. (2022) studied hotels in Turkey and reported that high role overload and lack of perceived organizational support were directly associated with increased work-family conflict. Their study pointed out that only hotels with proactive human resource departments were able to mitigate this issue through wellness programs, staff rotations, and empathy-driven leadership. Similarly, Su & Zabitski (2022) investigated work-life conflict in Hong Kong’s hotel industry, where intense competition and high guest expectations compelled staff to prioritize work obligations, often at the expense of their personal lives. The study concluded that without system-wide changes, any intervention would be temporary and ineffective.

Work-life balance (WLB) has been a growing area of research, particularly in labor-intensive industries such as hospitality. According to Chandran & Abukhalifeh (2021) the hotel industry presents unique challenges due to its high-intensity, customer-facing operations that demand long hours and shift work. Employees often struggle to manage personal responsibilities, which leads to decreased job satisfaction and increased burnout. Research by Andrade et al. (2021) emphasizes that emotional exhaustion is prevalent among hotel staff, particularly frontline employees, as they are frequently exposed to demanding guests, irregular work schedules, and limited time off. Furthermore, Kaya & Karatepe (2020) found that high workloads and a lack of autonomy significantly hinder employees’ ability to maintain a satisfactory balance between their work and personal lives.

Several studies have pointed out organizational and cultural factors that exacerbate the issue. For instance, Sun et al. (2020) noted that managerial attitudes and workplace culture often fail to support flexible working

arrangements in the hospitality sector, despite growing calls for employee-friendly policies. Additionally, research by De Seram & Gnanpala (2019) highlighted that work-life imbalance can lead to a decline in service quality and higher turnover rates, which ultimately affect overall business performance. While some hotel chains have attempted to implement wellness programs or flexible scheduling, these initiatives often remain inconsistent or ineffective due to a lack of long-term commitment and structural support.

Despite the volume of research, most existing literature focuses either on general occupational stress or broader service industries, without delving deeply into the specific barriers to WLB in different tiers of the hotel sector (e.g., budget vs. luxury hotels) or geographic regions. Moreover, while the impact of work-life imbalance has been well-documented in terms of employee outcomes, less attention has been paid to the organizational and systemic challenges that prevent the adoption of WLB practices within hotel operations (Raharjo et al., 2019). There is also a scarcity of recent empirical research that addresses the post-pandemic context, where staffing shortages, health concerns, and changing workforce expectations have reshaped the nature of hotel work.

Research Gap

Although the existing body of literature has significantly contributed to understanding the challenges of achieving work-life balance (WLB) in the hotel industry, several critical gaps remain that this study aims to address. Many prior studies have explored WLB issues such as long working hours, irregular shifts, emotional labor, and lack of organizational support. However, these studies often present generalized findings without delving deeply into the specific challenges and barriers faced by employees at various levels and in different hotel roles. Thus, there is limited empirical work that provides a detailed and current understanding of the nature and types of barriers employees face today—especially in the context of post-pandemic shifts in labor dynamics. This directly informs Objective 1 of the current study.

Furthermore, while a few region-specific studies exist, comparative analyses between different cities or urban contexts are notably lacking. Existing research often focuses on single geographic locations, neglecting how factors such as urban density, cost of living, local labor laws, and city-specific tourism pressures may shape WLB experiences differently. This reveals a clear gap addressed in Objective 2, which seeks to examine the variability of challenges across different city environments.

Lastly, there is a paucity of research comparing WLB barriers across different categories of hotels (e.g., Three star, Four star, Five star, Five stardelux). Addressing this omission, Objective 3 seeks to compare how hotel classification influences employee experiences related to work-life balance.

Objectives

1. To study the challenges and barriers faced by hotel employees in achieving work life balance
2. To examine the difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different cities
3. To examine the difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different hotel categories.

Hypotheses

1. Hotel employees have not faced significant challenges and barriers in achieving work life balance
2. There is no significant difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different cities
3. There is no significant difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different hotel categories.

Research Methodology

- **Research Design:** Descriptive research design has been employed to study challenges and barriers faced by hotel employees in achieving work life balance
- **Sampling:** The population frame included all the hotels operating in Uttarakhand state, however the research has considered hotels which were categorized with three star and above rating, additionally research has focused only 4 major tourist destinations of state i.e. Dehradun, Mussorrie, Haridwar and Rishikesh. In total 658 hotel employees were interviewed.
- **Data Collection Tool:** Data was collected by using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was checked for reliability and validity before administration.
- **Data Analysis Tool:** The data has been analyzed in SPSS 21.0. For interpretation percentage analysis, mean, one sample t-test and ANOVA test has been used.

Analysis of Data

• Job Profile of Hotel employees

In the beginning of survey Hotel employees were asked to indicate few facts about their job as shown in table 1

- ❖ **District of Hotel:** out of the total sample 29.33% hotel employees were from Dehradun, 25.23% employees were from Mussorrie, 27.05% employees were from Haridwar and 18.39% employees were from Rishikesh.
- ❖ **Category of Hotel:** According to data 15.96% employees were working in three star hotels, 18.24% employees were working in four star hotels, 52.13% employees were working in five star hotels and 13.68% employees were working in five star deluxe hotels.
- ❖ **Service length of Hotel employees:** It was observed that 41.34% employees have yet not completed 1 year in the present hotel whereas 13.37% respondents have completed 1 to 5 years in present hotel. Approximately one fourth (23.71%) of the respondents have completed 6 to 10 years in the current organization and around 1/5th of the employees (21.58%) were serving the same hotel for last more than 10 years.
- ❖ **Monthly salary of hotel employees:** Maximum numbers of respondents (53.80%) have indicated the monthly salary of Rs. 25001 to 50000 followed by up to Rs. 25000 (23.10%). 13.07% employees were earning the monthly salary of Rs. 50001 to 75000 and rest of the respondents (10.03%) were earning more than Rs. 75000 per month.

Table 1: Job Profile of Hotel employees

District	N	Percentage	Service Length	N	Percentage
Dehradun	193	29.33	Less than 1 Year	272	41.34
Mussorrie	166	25.23	1 to 5 Years	88	13.37
Hridwar	178	27.05	6 to 10 Years	156	23.71
Rishikesh	121	18.39	Above 10 Years	142	21.58
Total	658	100	Total	658	100
Hotel Category	N	Percentage	Monthly Salary	N	Percentage
Three star	105	15.96	Up to Rs. 25000	152	23.10

Four star	120	18.24	Rs. 25001 to 50000	354	53.80
Five star	343	52.13	Rs. 50001 to 75000	86	13.07
Five stardelux	90	13.68	More than Rs. 75000	66	10.03
Total	658	100	Total	658	100

- **Challenges and Barriers faced by Hotel Employees in achieving work life balance**

Hotel employees were asked to indicate those challenges and barriers which they faced in achieving work life balance. The result is shown in table 2. The top most challenges faced by respondents in achieving work life balance were Seasonal Peaks and High-Pressure Periods (Mean=4.86, Rank=1), Long Working Hours (Mean=4.83, Rank=2), Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities (Mean=4.80, Rank=3) and High Job Demands and Workload (Mean=4.77, Rank=4). The barriers which significantly hindered the work life balance of hotel employees were ranked on 5th to 8th positions i.e. Irregular and Unpredictable Schedules (Mean=4.77), Limited Time Off (Mean=4.75), Lack of Proper Rest between Shifts (Mean=4.74) and Inflexible Policies for Personal or Health-Related Issues (Mean=4.69) respectively.

The few more challenges indicated by respondents in achieving work life balance were Limited Career Advancement Opportunities (Mean=4.68, Rank=9), Unpredictable Workload During Holidays and Weekends (Mean=4.68, Rank=9), Geographical and Logistical Constraints (Mean=4.64, Rank=10), Staffing Shortages and High Turnover Rates (Mean=4.63, Rank=11), Lack of Work-Life Balance Policies (Mean=4.62, Rank=12) and Limited Use of Technology (Mean=4.62, Rank=12).

Table 2: Challenges and Barriers faced by Hotel Employees in achieving work life balance

Challenges	Mean	S.D.	C.V.	Rank
Long Working Hours	4.83	1.818	0.38	2
Irregular and Unpredictable Schedules	4.76	1.766	0.37	5
Seasonal Peaks and High-Pressure Periods	4.86	1.755	0.36	1
High Job Demands and Workload	4.77	1.775	0.37	4
Limited Time Off	4.75	1.757	0.37	6
Lack of Work-Life Balance Policies	4.62	1.822	0.39	12
Staffing Shortages and High Turnover Rates	4.63	1.888	0.41	11
Limited Career Advancement Opportunities	4.68	1.909	0.41	9
Unpredictable Workload During Holidays and Weekends	4.68	1.860	0.40	9
Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities	4.80	1.819	0.38	3
Lack of Proper Rest Between Shifts	4.74	1.817	0.38	7
Geographical and Logistical Constraints	4.64	1.796	0.39	10
Limited Use of Technology	4.62	1.773	0.38	12
Inflexible Policies for Personal or Health-Related Issues	4.69	1.811	0.39	8

To measure the significance of challenges faced by employees in achieving work life balance following hypothesis has been taken in study:-

H₀1: Hotel employees have not faced significant challenges and barriers in achieving work life balance

H_a1: Hotel employees have faced significant challenges and barriers in achieving work life balance.

To test this hypothesis one sample t-test has been applied as presented in table 3. The values of all t-statistic are significant at 5% level of significance which leads to the rejection of null hypothesis so it can be concluded that hotel employees have faced significant challenges and barriers in achieving work life balance

Table 3: One Sample t-test result

Variable	Test Value = 4				Result
	Mean	t-value	degree of freedom	p-value	
Long Working Hours	4.83	11.733	657	0.000	Significant
Irregular and Unpredictable Schedules	4.76	10.993	657	0.000	Significant
Seasonal Peaks and High-Pressure Periods	4.86	12.592	657	0.000	Significant
High Job Demands and Workload	4.77	11.134	657	0.000	Significant
Limited Time Off	4.75	10.964	657	0.000	Significant
Lack of Work-Life Balance Policies	4.62	8.664	657	0.000	Significant
Staffing Shortages and High Turnover Rates	4.63	8.613	657	0.000	Significant
Limited Career Advancement Opportunities	4.68	9.168	657	0.000	Significant
Unpredictable Workload During Holidays and Weekends	4.68	9.325	657	0.000	Significant
Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities	4.80	11.338	657	0.000	Significant
Lack of Proper Rest Between Shifts	4.74	10.387	657	0.000	Significant
Geographical and Logistical Constraints	4.64	9.115	657	0.000	Significant
Limited Use of Technology	4.62	8.972	657	0.000	Significant
Inflexible Policies for Personal or Health-Related Issues	4.69	9.795	657	0.000	Significant

Level of Significance=5%

This study has interviewed the hotel employees working in four different cities of Uttarakhand so to measure difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different cities following hypothesis has been taken in study:-

H₀2: There is no significant difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different cities

H_a2: There is a significant difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different cities.

To test this hypothesis ANOVA test has been applied as presented in table 4. The values of all F-statistic are significant at 5% level of significance which leads to the rejection of null hypothesis so it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different cities

Table 4: ANOVA test result for City wise differences

Challenges	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Sum of Squares	F-Ratio	p-value	Result
Long Working Hours	Between Samples	59.759	3	19.920	6.173	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	2110.516	654	3.227			
	Total	2170.275	657				
Irregular and Unpredictable Schedules	Between Samples	89.52	3	29.840	9.959	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	1959.574	654	2.996			
	Total	2049.094	657				
Seasonal Peaks and High-Pressure Periods	Between Samples	121.269	3	40.423	13.891	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	1903.145	654	2.910			
	Total	2024.414	657				
High Job Demands and Workload	Between Samples	92.121	3	30.707	10.152	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	1978.227	654	3.025			
	Total	2070.348	657				
Limited Time Off	Between Samples	152.169	3	50.723	17.693	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	1874.955	654	2.867			
	Total	2027.124	657				
Lack of Work-Life Balance Policies	Between Samples	152.169	3	50.723	17.693	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	1874.955	654	2.867			
	Total	2027.124	657				
Staffing Shortages and High Turnover Rates	Between Samples	105.197	3	35.066	11.044	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	2076.525	654	3.175			
	Total	2181.722	657				

Limited Career Advancement Opportunities	Between Samples	71.799	3	23.933	6.898	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	2268.932	654	3.469			
	Total	2340.731	657				
Unpredictable Workload During Holidays and Weekends	Between Samples	74.666	3	24.889	7.016	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	2319.949	654	3.547			
	Total	2394.615	657				
Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities	Between Samples	90.949	3	30.316	9.079	0.016	Significant
	Within Samples	2183.811	654	3.339			
	Total	2274.76	657				
Lack of Proper Rest Between Shifts	Between Samples	90.411	3	30.137	9.487	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	2077.577	654	3.177			
	Total	2167.988	657				
Geographical and Logistical Constraints	Between Samples	104.461	3	34.820	11.299	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	2015.454	654	3.082			
	Total	2119.915	657				
Limited Use of Technology	Between Samples	77.831	3	25.944	8.538	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	1987.184	654	3.039			
	Total	2065.015	657				
Inflexible Policies for Personal or Health-Related Issues	Between Samples	53.373	3	17.791	5.538	0.001	Significant
	Within Samples	2100.999	654	3.213			
	Total	2154.372	657				

Level of Significance=5%

Further this study has considered different categories of hotels of Uttarakhand so to measure difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different categories of hotels following hypothesis has been taken in study:-

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different hotel categories

H_{a3}: There is a significant difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different hotel categories.

To test this hypothesis ANOVA test has been applied as presented in table 5. The values of majority of F-statistics are not significant at 5% level of significance which leads to the acceptance of null hypothesis so it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in challenges and barriers faced by employees in achieving work life balance working in different categories of hotels.

Table 5: ANOVA test result for Hotel Category wise differences

Challenges	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Sum of Squares	F-Ratio	p-value	Result
Long Working Hours	Between Samples	16.452	3	5.484	1.665	0.173	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2153.823	654	3.293			
	Total	2170.275	657				
Irregular and Unpredictable Schedules	Between Samples	23.613	3	7.871	2.541	0.055	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2025.481	654	3.097			
	Total	2049.094	657				
Seasonal Peaks and High-Pressure Periods	Between Samples	6.274	3	2.091	0.678	0.566	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2018.141	654	3.086			
	Total	2024.415	657				
High Job Demands and Workload	Between Samples	19.211	3	6.404	2.042	0.107	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2051.137	654	3.136			
	Total	2070.348	657				
Limited Time Off	Between Samples	19.086	3	6.362	2.072	0.103	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2008.039	654	3.070			
	Total	2027.125	657				
Lack of Work-Life Balance Policies	Between Samples	38.959	3	12.986	3.964	0.008	Significant
	Within Samples	2142.763	654	3.276			
	Total	2181.722	657				
Staffing Shortages and High Turnover Rates	Between Samples	89.722	3	29.907	8.689	0.000	Significant
	Within Samples	2251.009	654	3.442			
	Total	2340.731	657				
Limited Career Advancement Opportunities	Between Samples	59.578	3	19.859	5.562	0.001	Significant
	Within Samples	2335.038	654	3.570			
	Total	2394.616	657				
Unpredictable Workload During Holidays and Weekends	Between Samples	29.784	3	9.928	2.893	0.055	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2244.267	654	3.432			
	Total	2274.051	657				
Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities	Between Samples	25.654	3	8.551	2.604	0.051	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2148.055	654	3.284			
	Total	2173.709	657				

Lack of Proper Rest Between Shifts	Between Samples	26.453	3	8.818	2.693	0.045	Significant
	Within Samples	2141.535	654	3.275			
	Total	2167.988	657				
Geographical and Logistical Constraints	Between Samples	3.916	3	1.305	0.403	0.751	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2115.999	654	3.235			
	Total	2119.915	657				
Limited Use of Technology	Between Samples	2.652	3	0.884	0.280	0.840	Not Significant
	Within Samples	2062.363	654	3.153			
	Total	2065.015	657				
Inflexible Policies for Personal or Health-Related Issues	Between Samples	33.851	3	11.284	3.480	0.016	Significant
	Within Samples	2120.521	654	3.242			
	Total	2154.372	657				

Level of Significance=5%

• **Conclusion**

The excessive work load and multiple shifts have made the life of hotel employees pathetic, which is not allowing them to meet the personal and family targets. The research has studied the various challenges and barriers face by hotel employees in achieving work life balance and it was observed that Seasonal Peaks and High-Pressure Periods, Long Working Hours, Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities and High Job Demands and Workload hindering their work life balance most. It was further observed that hotel employees working in different cities are facing different challenges in achieving work life balance however hotel category wise no difference exists in intensity of challenges.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study highlight several important implications for hotel management, human resource practitioners, and policymakers aiming to improve work-life balance (WLB) for hotel employees.

First, the identification of excessive workload and multiple shifts as primary barriers underscores the urgent need for hotels to reassess staffing levels and scheduling practices. Implementing more balanced shift rotations and limiting overtime could help employees better manage their personal and family commitments, ultimately reducing stress and burnout.

Second, the prominence of seasonal peaks and high-pressure periods as significant challenges suggests that hotels should develop targeted strategies during these critical times. This could include temporary workforce augmentation, cross-training employees to distribute workloads, or introducing flexible work arrangements during peak seasons to alleviate pressure on staff.

Third, the finding that lack of support for family responsibilities is a key barrier emphasizes the importance of creating family-friendly workplace policies. Hotels might consider offering childcare support, parental leave benefits, or flexible scheduling options to accommodate employees' caregiving duties, thereby fostering greater employee satisfaction and retention.

Fourth, since employees in different cities experience varying challenges in achieving WLB, hotel chains and managers need to adopt location-specific approaches rather than one-size-fits-all policies. Factors such as local

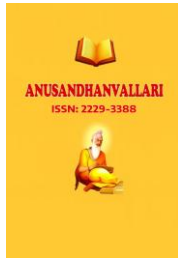
labor market conditions, cultural norms, and commuting times should inform the design of employee support programs tailored to the needs of each city's workforce.

Finally, the observation that hotel category does not significantly influence the intensity of challenges faced indicates that WLB issues are pervasive across the entire hotel industry spectrum. This implies that WLB interventions should be industry-wide rather than focused solely on specific hotel classes. Industry associations and regulatory bodies might play a critical role in setting standards and promoting best practices for employee well-being across all hotel categories.

Overall, addressing these implications can help hotels create a healthier, more sustainable work environment that not only enhances employees' quality of life but also improves service quality, reduces turnover, and supports long-term organizational success.

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