

Is Work-Life Balance Legally Enforceable? Insights from Minimalist Values

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ABSTRACT

The current capitalistic society pushes materialistic nature that goes against minimalist lifestyle while indirectly encouraging overworking culture. This paper, thus, intends to discuss the essence of work-life balance within the context of minimalist views, which are feasible to be legally enforceable within Malaysia's legislature. It will highlight societal values on moderation that are not foreign to Malaysia yet have been drowned by the capitalist and maximalist drive, which prevents work-life balance; both by choice and by force against the employees. The literature review will then proceed to ground the current standing of literature and legal works pertaining to work-life balance within the context of minimalism while engaging with a comparative highlight towards the Nordic States including Denmark, Finland, and Sweden which successfully legalise work-life balance. Emphasis is also given on the current International Labour Organisation entanglement with Malaysian law to the concept of work-life balance. In this research, the paper will focus itself to the scope of doctrinal and juridical-normative by focusing on the effective method of comparison between the Nordic model, which can be adopted into Malaysian employment law. The findings demonstrate the acceptability of work-life balance culture among the newer generations in Malaysia, lack of welfare adaptation within Malaysian employment law, successful legal framework stemming from cultural appreciation to the minimalist work-life balance and struggling economic livelihood which abolish the capacity of work-life balance in many households. Thus, this paper recommends social media engagement to pressure the government, bill drafting in the Parliament, educational reform, and reinterpretation of the term 'life' within Article 5 of the Federal Constitution through judicial review are the appropriate suggestions of increasing the likelihood towards a legal enforceability on work-life balance. Hence, this research concludes that work-life balance is feasible to be implemented in the Malaysia legislature provided that it is emphasised by the masses of the public within an actual and adequate social necessity rather than an activist outcry.

Keywords: Work-life balance, minimalist, employment law, labour rights.

INTRODUCTION

"But seek, through that which God has given you, a home of the Hereafter, and (yet), do not forget your share in the world". The essence of balance was perpetuated in a minimalistic yet sufficiently compressed for the reader within the Quranic verse of Chapter 28, verse 77. This positive message of balance rang clearly even in other scriptures. In Ecclesiastes 3:1 from the Old Testament, King Solomon stated that "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven". Jesus, on the other hand, in Mark 6: 31, said "...Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat". This Abrahamic repetitive idea of balance may centre itself on the notion of both spirituality and real life, yet a patent aspiration to the work-life balance can be constructed with it as the foundation.

Such religious views may pose as mere idealistic, old wisdom; but their message on moderation is parallel with the minimalist view. Yet, the adaptation of a minimalist work-life balance, be it globally or in religious States is redundant in nature (Remote, 2024). This substantiates the issue of legal enforceability rising from the dilemma between efficient economic productivity and personal welfare (Marecki, 2024). Without grounds of rights and the optional capacity for its fulfilment, a maximalist effort is expected to generate profit with a return of minimum living fulfilment to the workers (Alessandrini, 2016). Ironically, the concept of work-life balance first flourished within Western values (Ramya, 2014). It cherishes mental stability through familial bonds and spiritual connection, catered as rightful individuals' enjoyment rather than waged responsibility. Resultantly, this conceptual necessity is carried forward in foreign nations and interpretively adapted to their own ethics and values (Asutay, Buana & Avdukic, 2014).

In "How Minimalism Can Help" (2018), minimalism was self-defined by Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus as a reflection of enlightenment and practicality of what truly matters in life. The view itself is not a cult-like extremism that drives a stake at the heart of consumerism but challenges the necessity of material gains that are unfulfilling as compared to the simplistic lifestyle. Undoubtedly, it creates a chain of questions against the practice of putting one's heart into employment that either hunts for endless wealth or neglects one's liberty or both in entirety. Hence, the main issue is clear: perhaps the minimalist way of life should be the foundation of living for a healthy work-life balance to sprout. After all, this paper intends to perceive this issue through a comparative outlook on European countries' work-life practices, such as in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland.

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Denmark was named as the country with the most optimum work-life balance in the world (OECD, 2024). This was due to the Danish community's different perception and mentality on the length of working hours. Globally, workers are numb to employers' expectations to work more hours, and Western society deems it honourable (Gomez-Baggethun, 2022). Danish culture, meanwhile, considers it a shameful act of time management failure to schedule one's work appropriately (Denmark.dk, 2025). The ingrained stereotype peculiarly creates a healthy environment that nurtures the development of self-respect and family bonds through personal, undisturbed hours (Johnsen, 2024). Furthermore, statistical data by the OECD finds that only 2% of Danes have to work regularly in a long-hours timeframe. Coupled with the flexible working hours, Danish citizens have made an undeniable custom of self-respecting employees, creating an example to many nations of a holistic lifestyle (OECD: Denmark, 2024). It thus showcases the necessity of self-respect and self-appreciation's normalisation in employment for it to be incorporated within the legal schemes.

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In Finland, this balance is not only culturally appreciated but also protected by strong legislative systems. The Finnish model combines statutory benefits, flexible work arrangements, and a social welfare system that prioritises employee well-being (Savage, 2019). These legal measures mirror broader social ideals, such as a minimalist ethos that emphasises simplicity, personal autonomy, and the importance of life outside of work (Llyod, 2020). Finnish labour rules give employees considerable parental leave, flexible work schedules, and the ability to change working hours to fit personal or family demands (Eurofound, 2022). These policies are based on a greater national commitment to social equality and human dignity, which encourages people to have meaningful lives beyond economic production. Furthermore, Finland routinely ranks well in worldwide work-life balance and happiness surveys, indicating a clear link between legal protections, minimalist cultural norms, and overall well-being (OECD: Finland, 2025).

The principle of the balance between work and life is also embraced in Sweden, with gender equality as its forefront nucleus (OECD: Sweden, 2025). This suits the Swedish term: *Lagom*, meaning “not too much, not too little,” “just enough” or “good enough,” depending on the context and international media have picked up the word, suggesting it might be the key to living a balanced life (Bergo, 2021). The majority of Swedish companies allow their staff to leave earlier on Fridays, and most offices will be closed a day before a public holiday in the spirit of preparatory celebrations. The major driving force is based on the State’s continuous stride to equalise the gender gap in the workforce for the country’s economic growth (Björk-Fant, Nordmyr & Forsman, 2024). These steps, for example, are exemplified in 1974, when replacement from gender-specific maternity leave to parental leave. This creates the possibility for both parents to stay at home with their children and, subsequently, for both parents to pursue a career.

However, this spirit of adaptation may not necessarily reach other states or be given a proper emphasis, which may include Malaysia. For example, the distinction made between ‘contract of service’ and ‘contract for service’ was established within the Employment Act 1955 and the Industrial Relations Act 1967. It becomes a double-edged sword that allows proper recognition to employees and independent contractors but gives rise to differing institutionalised rights that complicate legal, standardised work-life balance policies. Consequently, discriminative interpretation becomes rampant, with advocacy for rights on minimalist views in working life being left unheard (Linando, 2022). Thus, summarising Malaysia’s work-life balance as both poor and grim is not an exaggeration (Morhan, 2024). Further obsession with the workaholic attitude fuelled by low income further feeds the ignorance of the work-life balance sector by both private and public industries (Aono, 2024). Despite robust recommendations and solutions being provided by the International Labour Organisation, the leeway of necessary ratifications for them to be legally binding prevents an overall formation of employment rights and work-life balance in legal constructs (ILO, 2024).

Undoubtedly, this mentality strives for improvement and development but fails to validate minimalist moderation in livelihood. As a result, even the basic rights of sick leave, maternity leave, and rest hours are stretched thin to accommodate corporate demands or the burning drive of maximalist livelihood. In turn, a problematic conundrum appears on the possible adaptation and acceptance of the aforementioned foreign policies and culture into Malaysia despite the challenges en route.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reborn from the new administration, the Malaysian government's introduction to the concept of MADANI, which includes sustainability, well-being, respect, and courtesy under the reign of the Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim that allows an implied open-ended encapsulation of the idea of work-life balance (Abdullah, 2023).

Without doubt, the notion proposed by the Prime Minister itself was grand but idealistic in nature to be realised in such a short term. This is due to the absence of cultural integration of those abstract natures into Malaysians in an effective form other than informal familial teachings of morality at homes and formal civics education by teachers in schools (Chang, 2013). This limitation remains fruitful in ensuring the instillment of good qualities and worldviews in Malaysian youths that may carry into adulthood. However, its universality leaves little room for specific mentality to be taught, including employment expectation and rightful reaction to it in the general household. Ironically, an analysis of these teachings is published in a journal article whereby it was discovered that the very repetitive nurturing values in each generation are of a ‘hard-working’ attitude that later feeds on a toxic working environment and pushes aside work-life balance’s view (Yasin et al., 2021). Granted, this article has no intention to demonise the value of ‘hard-working’ but to highlight the failure of asserting boundaries between excessive hard work that denies self-respect and genuine hard work that is humanely responsible among Malaysian workers. Without the aspiration to stop oneself from a maximalist drive in the workforce, the cycle of non-existent work-life balance will continue as has been showcased in the above literature.

Emphasis on this matter would remain difficult, as the government is unable to portray the discrepancies in this matter in their engagement with the public when showcasing the working conditions. To illustrate, the Malaysian Investment Development Authority websites (2025) described the working conditions as

harmonious with high productivity while implying acceptable working hours by stressing its set time limit within normal working hours. While not necessarily dishonest, MIDA provided the facts in the form of content grace despite it may be seen as atrocious working conditions in others view. It paints the Malaysian working environment in an unfairly positive manner without providing proof while disregarding the notion of work-life balance and silently implying a normalisation to these settings, be it intentionally or not. Perhaps, the glorification of Malaysia's employment is a hastened blowing of its own trumpet when the Government of India, in its description of the working conditions of Malaysia, was absent of positive accounts. Rather, it represented a neutral tone of insisting on clarifications from the locals themselves in determining the truth (High Commission of India, 2025). After all, a study of 60 countries' work-life balance had placed Malaysia at the second worst position (Sinar Daily, 2024). It reflects poorly not only on the flaws of cultural normalisation to overworking employees but also on the desperate legal enforceability of the work-life balance that is now deemed insignificant. These repetitive scenarios can be seen in highly concentrated job industries, especially among the newer employees from the youths who are forced into the toxic maximality within employment routines by their superiors (MalayMail, 2024).

Interestingly, despite the overloading statistic of overworking among Malaysian workers, the youths are on the rise, expecting work-life balance to be the bare minimum provided by the employers and honoured thoroughly without the risk of being wrongfully dismissed (Sipalan, 2025). Such resistance is arguably at an early stage but remains unprecedented and has been opposed as described in the same news, whereby Fiona Low, president of the Malaysian National Association of Employment Agencies, had called out this new phenomenon as a result of a 'high sense of entitlement' from younger generations. It explains the negative view purported by the industry that seeks a steady, high stream of profit by villainising a reformation to the system with both their position and media influence. With the defeatist connotation of 'work-life balance' as 'entitlement,' 'spoiled,' and 'lazy,' it becomes much simpler to deter Malaysians away from the current, horrid condition. Thus, we are expected to remain grateful for meagre salaries and strenuous work while disregarding our own well-being. The silencing and accusing trends that have been on repeat in this fight towards work-life balance will never be won by the youths unless there is an intervention of legal proximity, which can only be fulfilled by the government due to the inability of society to fight these giant corporations, as had been shown earlier. Until the Malaysian government is able to stop from being defensive by highlighting their minute achievements towards employees' rights when the issue of its discrepancies, including on work-life balance, is brought up and admitting their own flaws on the issue, this matter would remain as a working draft that can be done at their own convenience (Basir, 2025).

Even when the International Labour Organisation (ILO) attempts to improve the employees' rights globally to a proper working condition that does not exclude work-life balance, it remains undeniable that it cannot supersede the sovereignty of the States, including Malaysia. The 19 Conventions and 1 Protocol that had been ratified by Malaysia out of 191 Conventions that had been formed by the ILO is not only unimpressive but also a clear proof of the non-binding ties of these resolutions, which bear little legal effect against independent countries. Furthermore, it must be noted that the ratified resolutions aforementioned were only in complete legal effect in the amount of 15, whereas the other 3 were abrogated and another one denounced. The absence of ratification to the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177) and Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1992 (No. 14) by the Malaysian government is sufficient proof that the current Malaysian administration has yet to find work-life balance significant enough to be legally regulated. The extent of hopelessness in the realisation of work-life balance as a result has reached the point whereby it is seen as a utopian dream that further discourages both the government and the people from pursuing it at a more aggressive level (Cheng, 2022). Chang Cheng, in his view within the analysis made on behalf of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies senior analyst, had further elaborated that the 'pro-employers' and 'pro-business' attitude is a legacy of the British occupation to the nation's administration that has yet to be abolished due to its deep roots (Kumar, 2022). In other words, unless there is a maintenance of the same drive for work-life balance that has been shown by the current young employees for the next few decades until the current workers are all replaced by them, the overworking trend will not disappear.

A development of trend is revitalised or begun by an adverse effect significant enough to the public's life, causing a stride of change to preferences or livelihood; with the concept of minimalism being inclusive to this order. A realisation of economic immaturity within one's own capacity, the burden of overbearing

responsibilities that attached itself to a maximalist lifestyle, or just the lack of fulfilment behind the general idea of a wealthy lifestyle are some of the causes that give traction to the minimalism ideology (Weinswig, 2016). Regardless of the reasoning behind it, they all bear an implied trait of similarity: tiredness, boredom, or draining. This cycle happens to be repetitive with an ending that is predictably regretful, as these very people, such as the CEO of Hijabistahub, Dato' Aliff Syukri who wished to downsize their livelihood after realising the commitment that comes with the sustenance of the luxury and opulence way of life that reaches millions of bills (Farizan, 2025). In contrast, minimalism, in all its grand promises and offers, provides no empirical evidence for its beneficial claims, yet remains relevant through the logical deduction of possible repercussions to its adoption, where a more sustainable life that is indiscriminate to all races and statuses is achievable as it caters to individuals' means and efforts (Kang et al., 2021). In the modern context where overconsumption is the norm, minimalism appears as a messianic message, not just as a mere growing bud to the beauty of simplicity, but also as a way of repossessing one's own autonomy (Hook et al., 2021). Undoubtedly, every person is responsible for their own selective choice, generally speaking, but the concept of minimalism that is simplistic by nature is now seen as paradoxically empowering, as it creates the feeling of security in retaking control to their own will through personal choice that is not influenced by others.

An extension to the said minimalism seeps into the ideology of work-life balance in the sense of the unglorification of overworking. It is by no means a call for a narrowed limitation placed upon others at a meagre bare minimum or an estoppel to self-improvement on personal economic stance, but rather a restraint to the damaging stress and conflict that arises from extreme working devotion (Sirgy et al., 2017). Work-life balance by itself has been defined with an inexhaustive accumulation of factors that affect an employed individual, ranging from job satisfaction and productivity to mental health and the overall effect of the employment on existing relationships with other people in one's life (Lahav, 2025). Thus, the concept of work-life balance in the context of minimalism should not be misconstrued in a contextual variant that is irresponsibly renouncing by the total concept of working, especially when Sirgy, in his paper 'Work-life Balance: An Integrative Review,' further elaborated the positive by-products of work for the employees, with the current emphasis that should be focused currently on the methods in bridging the said benefits over to our non-working life. The aforementioned non-working life was further elaborated to be inclusive upon personal time or better known from its unorthodox equivalent as 'me-time,' rather than just restricted family-time bonding, as the term 'life' itself is not restrictive. After all, such restriction being placed upon common interpretation and analogical examples is considered ironically neglectful when the concept of work-life balance itself is a reformation ideology to free people from the corporate shackles regardless of individuals. Yet those who are without family attachment are indirectly disregarded over the mere assumption of a lack of familial responsibilities that can be filled with a bigger employment burden, as these 'lone wolves' own personal care and rest are seen to be less significant and easily dismissed (Boutelle, 2017).

It is worth noting that the position of work-life balance would also be heavily affected by the 'genre' of employment that a person chooses. After all, a person who chooses to work within the umbrella of 'service for contract' or better known as gig workers are granted a flexible work capacity, granting an opportunistic standardisation of work-life balance. Yet, that unpredictable pattern resulted in lower pay and unprotected rights that are common in normal employment (Warren, 2021). From a different perspective, this effect is not necessarily optional, as it may also stem from an inherent, innate self in a volatile working environment. An illustration can be made to lecturers whose job scopes commonly require them to hold their class within an online setting. They are said to have a greater work-life balance than ever before, to the point that it was applied relatively throughout many universities courses even after the post-Covid necessity (Nur Azilah, 2018). On the other hand, a woman, specifically, in a legal industry has a far more terrible work-life balance due to not only the typical burden of litigations and legal work required to be completed, but also the pressure from high expectations by their employers stemming from unintended misogynist perception (Gomez, 2024). Simply put, the determination of work-life balance in Malaysia is generally based on one's own independent choice, but the backlash would also have to be taken, for better or worse. It is not completely hopeless, as that new young drive of 'enjoyment of life' along with the burn-out energy from working has reduced many employees to the mentality of 'work to live,' leading them to settle for mediocre pay or even threaten self-dismissal if their work-life balance are to be heavily disturbed (Yee, 2023). Such bravado, while commendable, is a luxury that can only be portrayed in normal corporate/office jobs that run from '9 to 5' rather than professional work such as lawyers, doctors and engineers.

It is a completely distinctive cultural practice when this working norm in Malaysia is being compared with States that highly appreciate the appropriation of work-life balance in the name of long-term productivity. This includes Sweden and Denmark as the top 5 praised sovereign countries that are small yet capable of achieving an institutionalised work-life balance through their own local administration (Ruggeri, 2024). Even Finland, that will be discussed throughout this paper, merely falls short at the 7th position, which remains highly commendable as it was being compared with the other 195 countries (Remote, 2024). It is even more impressive when it was revealed that there is a hesitancy among employers in Europe within the general understanding to implement a policy that is congruent to the work-life balance to suit the business fluctuation (Eurofound, 2015). In other words, such implementation was successful not only due to their own sovereignty of States but also for the lack of negative political attention that is directed to them within the European Union (Riedal, 2021). Ironically, these so-called 'Nordic states,' as stated in the same article, have built strong decisive positions within the European Council whereby they might enforce political pressure towards other European States in following their footsteps in administration and legalisation of human rights; work-life balance included. Thus, it must be considered that these Nordic states were accurate in their implementation of work-life balance for their countries to be a reference model or better known as the 'Nordic model' to other countries (McWhinney, 2023). After all, an inequitable work-life balance in the name of efficiency has not been shown to be a foolproof method of being at the top chain of the economic fluctuation, as demonstrated by South Sudan, which suffers from such consequences yet remains as the country with the worst economic ranking (Mohamed Salih et al., 2023). These Nordic states on the other hand, are in the top 48 countries with the highest economic revenue that is calculated through gross domestic product (Worlddata, 2025).

In reference to the first of these Nordic states with the highest economic stance between the three of them, Sweden has to be outlined and highlighted as the primary comparison to the work-life balance implementation in its country and in Malaysia. To start with, Sweden provides a unique background to explore the legal force of work-life balance, as it is a nation that values the concept of freedom and recreational pleasures at a more intimate level when compared to Malaysia, to the point of it being constitutionalised in their statutes (Savage, 2021). This was substantiated through a combination of a comprehensive legal basis with a national culture that is specially fuelled by the Swedish love for their tradition and the Swedish ethos of lagom, or "just enough." Lagom can be understood as the very antithesis of excessive work and laziness at the same time. To elaborate, it is a folk law that has been established for generations, to the point that it does not necessitate a genuine, legal formation due to its embedded acceptance within the Swedish people as 'common sense' (Shipleys, 2011). The philosophical idea behind lagom emphasises 'balance' as the optimal condition of living, whereby a stressful life is harmful and a relaxed, unbothered attitude is damaging (Nikel, 2019). This balance between mandate and cultural viewpoint offers perception into how approach and philosophy can cut across deeply as it carries into employees' interests even in modern settings. To be frank, the application of this lagom/balance in its representation of work-life reached a general consensus or at least was positively followed by the majority of the Swedish citizens, be it the employees and the employers alike. Thus, the existing legal system or policies in Sweden, particularly on workplace routines, are moulded by this cultural support that allowed a comprehensive practice throughout the nation. It must be taken into consideration that each person's perception of their own balance is different from another, and the implementations are widely applied successfully in the Swedish public sector, while the private sector possesses higher volatility that may cause some to take on longer hours and overtime, albeit still legally constrained to a small, allowed time frame (Peters, 2015).

Sweden's legislative environment has long been a stickler for honouring their commitment to work-life balance. To substantiate, the working hours in Sweden are set in the Working Hours Act, whereby the legally allowed and acceptable working time limit that is acceptable in both public and private bodies is a maximum of 40 hours per week, with overtime capped at 50 hours per month and 200 hours annually unless governed through collective agreements (Gustafsson, Brandsma, Arleskär, & McLoughlin Laewen, 2024). This legal limit not only ensures that employees are protected from excessive workloads but as an investment in satisfactory reciprocation that is translated through a more productive working attitude. Such a method was proven to be significantly effective, as improvement to healthcare services among workers who are employed for long, gruelling hours, like nurses, took a positive turn of better treatment towards patients, which also further reformed the organisation of attendance due to reduced sick leaves (Congregalli, 2018). In addition, Sweden also enforces generous vacation rights under the Annual Leave Act, which guarantees a minimum of

25 paid vacation days annually and mandates that four of these weeks fall between June and August (Gustafsson et al., 2024). Its implementation is enforced with strict encouragement despite the unused holiday being able to be carried to another time, as the time frame stated earlier is within the season of summer. This period is known to cause certain communities among the Swedes to suffer from a conditional depression during this period, making them depressingly unproductive and a danger to their own self (Charlemagne, 2007). Moreover, the Swedish Parental Leave Act entitles parents to 480 days of paid parental leave, with 90 days reserved specifically for each parent. That being said, maternity leave can be taken 60 days before the child's due date. This law not only supports work-life balance but also promotes gender equality by highlighting the paternal significance within a family structure that often neglects a father's involvement through the constraint of workloads (Gustafsson et al., 2024). These structures show that work-life balance is, to a great extent, legally enforceable in Sweden through the efforts of its responsible administration that are heavily influenced by their local tradition.

Beyond legal power, Sweden's workplace culture actively holds up employee personal welfare. Most employers furnish flexible working hours to their employees, which enables these employees to handle work as well as private responsibilities productively. Perhaps this is a key difference between the legal applications that are considered by Sweden when law-making procedures are exercised, as the employment responsibilities and private responsibilities are correlated with one another. As separation of the two led to an imbalance in workload that is often burdened towards women, most advice is often pointed towards compartmentalisation of work or an encouragement to husbands to step up that has been unsuccessfully adapted in many households (Muhammad Atif et al., 2018). The Swedish legal system abolished such excuses and unachievable alternatives by providing ample time for individuals to attend to their familial duty, be it as a spouse, a child, or a parent, without the risk of being legally disturbed by their employers in both the public and private sectors. The culture in Sweden also discourages excessive overtime and stresses efficiency within operating hours, as it merely reduces their overall productivity while reducing the workers welfare, making it pointless for an extended period of working hours just to earn some extra profits. Another key aspect in Sweden is their sick leave system, which is legally exercisable throughout the country. In this regard, employees will graciously receive 80% of their earnings for the first 14 days of sick leave, which is paid by the employer, and will be followed by government assistance through the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Gustafsson et al., 2024). This extensive safeguard that is simulated in tandem by both the private and government bodies permits employees to prioritize health without risking economic instability or mentally-guilt into working while being ill.

Another notable perspective of lagom within the Swedes is that it preaches minimalist values, at least in the sense that it is against the maximalist lifestyle by having 'just the right amount,' nothing more, nothing less. This cultural idea encourages moderation in all life aspects, including work (Bergo, 2021). Lagom supports the idea that excessive work or material gain should not come at the expense of well-being. After all, with the majority of the Swedish population adopting secular belief, a life dedicated to work is not viewed as righteous or honourable but rather an unappreciated, unrewarded lifestyle which is nothing but unnecessary, self-inflicted torment that profited the higher-ups alone (Sievert-Kloster, 2021). Therefore, certain minimalist, non-legal, working traditions are put in place to prevent oneself and future generations from falling into such a trap of employment. The fika tradition is one of them, whereby taking regular coffee breaks with coworkers prevents oneself from being stuck in a particular workload while muddling in excessive stress. It is not a mere break from work but also a short time to refresh and mingle, enhancing both mental health and workplace bonds (Harper, 2023). As a result, there is a detachment from a maximalist drive from the working condition among the employees as they are inadvertently practicing a placement of boundaries between the employment expectations and their mental capacity that can be responsibly expended for the sake of earning wages.

Next, a reference to Finland's adaptation to work-life balance through the scope of minimalism must also be taken into the spotlight. Finland's legislative design does not operate in isolation of their minute administrative interest but is deeply intertwined with its societal and cultural philosophy. A better specification of such a claim can be seen through its conveyance of effort within the Cultural Environment Strategy that highly focuses on an almost 'egocentric' priority of its own citizens' well-being (Council of Europe, 2018). This review is by no means a criticism of the said stance since all countries prioritise its own people, especially when the Finnish government does mould the strategy into a successfully comprehensive strategy that benefits

their people. Without doubt, the Finnish ethos that embraces minimalism is not acting as mere aestheticism but as a structural and legal approach to well-being and productivity that caters to liberal, modern ideology for the sake of an optimal environmental growth across all sectors, which inevitably includes employment (Finland Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). As a result, there is a cultural acceptance that grows without being necessitated by policy and law whereby a flexibility of working hours is given to employees with the baseline expectation for a fulfilment in working performance, even for those who work in typical office jobs (Ventoniemi, 2024). Resultantly, it became acceptably more common for Finns to do overtime, though it is based on personal preference of improving one's own economic development rather than a forceful desperation of monetary need, though there is recent non-legal persuasion from the anxious possibility of such mentality causing a reduction to the country's economy on a long-term basis (Kokkinen, Jalasjoki & Obstbaum, 2025). Even then, an approval for a paid extension of work outside of the agreed working hours is mandatory to be received from the employers, who would usually require a reasonable cause to justify the act (Tradenomi, 2024). This is due to the rate of overtime work reaching up to 150% to 200% of the daily salary rates, which, when taken into consideration of the losses that may be incurred by the employers along with the cultural acceptability to work-life balance, may lead to the employers being hesitant in granting it (Finland-Internago, 2024).

In further elaborating the legal implementation on employment, a reference to the Working Hours Act in Finland can be made, where it provides employees with the right to adjust their daily working hours by up to three hours to accommodate personal and family commitments (Eurofound, 2024). This flexibility is not only a reflection of workplace policy but also a representation of societal respect for individual autonomy and time management. The flexibility and adjustment authorised by the law afforded the guarantee of salary payment to individuals, thus allowing a multitude of necessary arrangements to be made, such as picking up children from schools, attending doctor's appointments, or a quick short rest. Consequently, it prevents an obsessive attachment to the workplace that will deteriorate to the point of disregarding individual well-being and family responsibilities (Maguire, 2023). An emphasis on this matter is deemed significant to the Finnish administration, as the employment ratio between men and women is of an approximate low gender disparity difference (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024). The paid and flexible working hours encourage participation of both genders in household obligations, which prevents an imbalance of involvement from a single parent or partner within the relationship; causing a strengthened bond to a minimalist value that signifies the importance of a simple but conducive unit of life. Moreover, Finland has institutionalized an extensive parental leave policy, with both parents eligible for a total of approximately 14 months of leave, emphasizing gender equity and shared responsibility in caregiving (Savage, 2022). To a certain extent, while it may slow down the productivity of the workplace due to the reduction of employees, the State as a whole may profit, as the involvement of both parents may generate revenue in the hospitality and services field to cater to a child or newborn need. At the same time, the 'cultural policies' have internalised empathy and understanding among employers, in which a rigid expectation of dedication to work is not only frowned upon but would have an adverse effect on the business itself due to such environment being deemed toxic and disapproved by other future employees or potential joint ventures.

In addition to these legislative protections, Finland's strong welfare infrastructure supports its workforce with access to high-quality childcare, healthcare, and mental health services. These provisions ensure that employees are not forced to choose between personal obligations and professional performance, a dilemma that continues to plague less progressive labour systems. It must be understood that such a quality balance between well-being and employment interest is hanging on the thread of high-income tax reaching up to 35%, but with a return of dividend for 30% along with the repurposing allocation of tax to this welfare infrastructure (Worldwide Tax Summaries, 2025). Its excellent implementation resulted in low corruption due to the sustainability of these legal accommodations that led to a productive welfare investment that lacks money laundering schemes, turning it into a cycle of positivity (Trading Economics, 2025). Notably, Finland's recurring top rankings in the OECD Better Life Index further validate the effectiveness of these integrated strategies (OECD, 2025). The Finnish model exemplifies how a deliberate convergence of minimalist values, social equity, and legal enforceability can actualize work-life balance not just as an ideal, but as an operational norm.

Moving on, Denmark by itself has consistently ranked among the top countries for work-life balance (WLB),

as evidenced by its low proportion of employees working extremely long hours (1% vs. 10% OECD average) and flexible working culture (OECD, 2024). It may have fallen short in recent time; standing tall at the third place among the countries that substantiate the greatest work-life balance, but it remains regular in both its reputation and execution of administrative excellency for the employment welfare.

In terms of workplace regulations, the Danish government is more facilitative than prescriptive. Unlike many other countries, Denmark has no statutory laws governing conventional working hours, instead leaving regulation to collective agreements or individual employment contracts (Boundless, 2024). The Danish employment paradigm is defined by strong union density, centralised bargaining, and limited wage dispersion. Negotiated agreements between the state, employers, and labour established a robust organisational stage for all aspects of employment (Warren & Hiltoft, 2024). This approach is consistent with the Nordic flexicurity paradigm, which balances labour market flexibility with strong worker rights (Nam, 2024). The capability of the general consensus upon work-life balance despite the limited presence of legislative enforcement is due to the strong cultural appreciation for the welfare of workers. It can be further argued that Denmark's sustainability of work-life balance is an opposite of Finland's methodology in centralising the agreement upon the public through legal substantiation. The government plays a vital role by promoting work-life balance by fostering flexible work arrangements such as remote work and adjustable schedules, which allow employees to better manage professional and personal responsibilities (OECD, 2024). Despite being only persuasive in nature, it is merely a reinterpretation and concurring position of the working culture based in Denmark that is known as 'Flexicurity' (Higginbottom, 2017). Flexicurity is a welfare culture governed by the collective conscience of society that prevents a mismanagement or an opportunistic setting to establish a capitalistic exploitation against workers, as they will be met with societal pressure.

Working hours in Denmark are mainly determined by sectoral collective agreements, with most industries adhering to a 37-hour workweek (Hemme et al 2025). Surprisingly, long working hours are not normal in Denmark, nor are they something to brag about (Warren & Hiltoft, 2024). The perception of the appreciation of time management is ironically rigid to their own flexible working hours, as they deemed unnecessary additional working hours to be a by-product of one's own incompetence. This flexibility extends even to the working environment, as the Danes' employers are not grounded with strict expectations of their workers' presence in the workplace (unless it is directly tied to the spec of their work) but rather focus upon the capability of the latter to complete their tasks, whenever or wherever it may be, within the framed duration (Danish Chamber of Commerce and Oxford Research, 2010). Only recently, legislative revisions have allowed a limited opt-out from the EU's 48-hour working time requirement, which includes Denmark as well, but are restricted to standby workers (e.g., emergency responders) that are regulated attentively due to the significance of these workers duties (Hemme, 2025). Nonetheless, careful consideration to the work-life balance is also expected, as these workers would not have functioned effectively in their duty without proper welfare substantiation, whereby the union agreement and individual assent are some of the more simplified required procedures in granting the said exceptions. Another factor which leads to flexibility in working hours is also attributed to the high trust established between the employers and their employees to the extent of allowing work from home or working at their optimal time of convenience. This benefits the working class, as the family prioritisation culture in Denmark is also one of the factors to this flexibility (Danish Chamber of Commerce and Oxford Research, 2010).

Other than that, parental leave policies by the government also improve WLB, with Denmark providing 52 weeks of paid leave that can be shared by both parents and used as needed until the kid reaches the age of nine (Gardner 2019). Employees also receive five weeks of annual vacation, with income held in separate accounts to prevent loss during job transitions (Danish Chamber of Commerce and Oxford Research, 2010). These measurements highlight Denmark's comprehensive approach to balancing work and personal life, which combines institutional support with cultural values such as autonomy and trust (Danish Chamber of Commerce and Oxford Research 2010). The most important factor in improving work-life balance in Denmark is the government initiative in high-quality childcare. As childcare is considered the first priority for children in Denmark, with high-quality childcare, it helps parents to work without worrying about the development of their kids (Warren & Hiltoft 2024). In terms of outside working hours, Danish workplace culture establishes a firm distinction between work and private life. While after-work socialising with coworkers is unusual, businesses frequently plan office activities to reinforce trust-based flexibility in work schedules (Danish

Chamber of Commerce and Oxford Research, 2010). This positive adaptivity catering to employees enables them, particularly parents, to meet childcare or personal interests that contribute to high labour participation rates for both men and women in an effort of reducing gender disparity in the equality of work (OECD, 2009).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper proposes a dual research methodology, which includes both doctrinal and juridical-normative, to comprehensively compartmentalise this research. The doctrinal methodology in the research paper focuses itself on pragmatic data that can be observed and statistically attested. Hence, the paper is not adamant to the quotation of multiple legislative sources and regulatory frameworks that are used in a comparative form between the Nordic states and Malaysia. The juridical normative approach, on the other hand is highlighted as a substantive method in focusing on the cultural aspect of the Nordic countries with regard to its appreciation that blossomed into the legislative data that can be doctrinally perceived as mentioned earlier. To clarify, the cultural-philosophical argument provided in this research cannot be thoroughly expressed within the doctrinal context that merely serves its purpose as an empirical, observational testament of factual accuracy. In simpler terms, this paper intends to adopt a research methodology that humanises the analytical perspective of the research without diluting any necessary disciplines in initiating a proper study.

FINDINGS

Michael Foucault stated in his book 'Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison' that '... normalisation became one of the greatest instruments of power at the end of the classical age.' Perhaps his demise in the 1980s prevents him from seeing the relevancy of normalisation even to this era, where it affects the whole concept of work-life balance on both legal and societal scale. This stance is based on our findings that will be focused within a narrowed scope of causation. References to the literature in the findings have been mentioned and elaborated under the 'Literature Review'.

The first finding that can be established is that Malaysia is divided into two groups of employees, consisting of either workaholics or moderately balanced workers who do not prioritize work over anything else. The contrast between the separatist distinction of these two groups is highlighted through their age status. This can be seen as the older generations are more loyal to their work and devoted their values to the proportionality of working hours, whereas the younger generation are more likely to find work-life balance. Such a finding can be implied through the comparative outlook between Sinar Daily's report that speaks of the terrible work-life balance among Malaysians and the Malaysian National Association of Employment Agencies' criticism of slothfulness against greenhorns who recently entered the workforce. This clearly shows that the youths understand the expendable nature of employees and wish to maintain a transactional relationship with their workplace without further elaborative commitments that they find no value towards. It was not only confirmed by their bolder demands against employers to fulfil their workers' rights according to the research made by Sipalan in 2025 but also by their fearless attitude to actually delve into personal enjoyment outside of working hours. Fiona Low's insult against the Gen Z for being spoiled in their view towards working is a direct reference to the latter's refusal from being overworked and taken advantage of by their superiors. However, outside of the two sides of extremity and moderation, by taking into consideration MIDA's report on Malaysia's employment, both of these groups have not caused any disadvantage to the working efficiency based on their silence to the issue. This substantiates that both factions are able to commit to their responsibilities, with the only difference being that the younger generations are not willing to go above and beyond at the expense of their own welfare.

The second finding that can be initiated is that the work-life balance difficulty to be made legally enforceable in Malaysia due to its dissimilarity from the Nordic States model. The insight from an interview done with a researcher, Chang Cheng, had revealed Malaysia's past occupational, long-term effect against its people on how working culture is viewed. As the laws were made from the mentality and culture surrounding employment deriving from a pre-colonial era that was underdeveloped, they are bound to be destructive and oppressive in nature against the ideology of work-life balance. As amendments and ratifications that are congruent to the work-life balance are few based on the evidential 19 Conventions and 1 Protocol that had been ratified by Malaysia out of 191 Conventions formed by the ILO, it is apparent that Malaysia is still adhering to a pre-colonial mentality that has yet to strive towards human rights in the field of employment

other than salary and physical health. Since work-life balance inclines its significance to mental health rather than physical, it remains foreign to the Malaysian legal culture that is already unkeen on emotional inclusivity to the lawful claims. Hence, employment is deemed as a favour sustained through monetary payment that requires devotion as reciprocity. In other words, provided that the employers paid the employees, especially overtime, the former are legally bound to 'slave' themselves for the work under the name of contractual obligations. Under the legal foundation in Malaysia, this is not viewed as an exploitation but a fair contractual agreement made between consenting parties who possess the capacity in making decisions. These views, hence, make it difficult to legally enforce work-life balance in Malaysia, as it would require changes in not only the employment law, but also contractual, business, and administrative law to name a few (these are only some examples, as the list is inexhaustive). Such an effect may shift the country's economic route that will not be favourable upon many employers as contention against work-life balance will be retaliated by using legal methodology surrounding 'national interest' and 'contractual duty'.

The third finding is that the work-life balance was successfully enforceable within the legal framework of the three aforementioned Nordic countries due to their existing culture that became the foundation of their law and economic path. The ideology of *lagom* from Sweden has been the catering module that ensures the sustainability of moderate and minimalist lifestyles in everything. From ways of living, attitude, and even employment; all being an inclusive aspect to the ways that enjoy life to the fullest in the simplest of virtue. This was the reason why the laws were made with the objectives of familial connectivity, according to Muhammad Atiff's study. A lack of ambitious extremity to working loyalty and monetary greed that existed from the start allows the Swedish government to enforce legal limitations, which prevents overworking without much or any resistance from its people, even among the employers in private institutions. The same can be said when we look into Finland's 2018 Council of Europe report that highlights the cultural prioritisation of the Finnish citizens. The government is built on the belief and willingness to change for the sake of the betterment of the people, even at the expense of taking losses. This was subjected to the evidence found on their Ministry of Education websites that states their adoption of a newer, liberal, modern approach for the increase of welfare of their people which would be extended to employment as well. Such a mindset allows the State to make changes to the system even at the risk of inconvenience if the outcome results in a positive naturalisation of happiness. This undoubtedly becomes the reason as to why Finland is similar to the likes of Sweden in its success to adopt work-life balance ideology into its legal framework, as the laws regulated around employment are very family-centric and flexible, whereby personal responsibilities may take precedence over work. Even Denmark, which was not exponentially reported for its legal effort on employment rights, underwent a positive work environment as declared by the Danish Chamber of Commerce and Oxford Research. This further proves that these countries are built upon virtuous values, which prevents them from suffering heavy losses from any economic transition, allowing them to continuously enjoy an efficient and prosperous livelihood in both minimalist lifestyle and balanced workload. The finding further demonstrates that these values are held upon in unity among their citizens, showcasing maturity and a long-sighted perspective which finds the balance between livelihood, national economy and welfare.

The fourth finding determined in this research is that the struggle of Malaysia with the work-life balance is not only based on the old-fashioned legal framework but can also be seen from the cultural and economic entrenchment. In comparison to Nordic countries, which can be said to have succeeded in rooting the minimalist values in their legal structures as well as their everyday life, Malaysia, on the other hand, is still burdened by the fragment of colonial employment mentality and also overly honoured the 'hard-working' culture in both legislative and layman level. Moreover, the legal structure remains to offer inconsistent protection towards the informal and gig workers, especially the distinction between 'contract of service' and 'contract for service.' Thus, this resistance is usually misinterpreted as the prerogative by the traditionalist, despite the younger generation voicing out actively about the demand for healthier boundaries that are set in black and white through legal affirmation. The vital point is that many Malaysians have been forced to do labours for more than the required hours just to make the pursuit of balance a distant idea. As stated by Warren in his paper in 2021, the current economic climate, which is plagued by small salaries, job instability, as well as the increase in living expenses creates the notion of work-life balance as more of a luxury than a right. Hence, while it may not be a consensus problem shared by every Malaysian, it remains as a general issue which facilitates the inability of choosing work-life balance as an option within one's livelihood. The workers are expected to make sacrifices of their personal well-being for financial necessity in the absence of strong

union power and extensive welfare systems. Therefore, the findings fortified that notwithstanding increased awareness, the practical implementation of work-life balance in Malaysia thus stays aspirational and severely limited by the systemic constraint.

The fifth finding can be established through the potential capacity of the work-life balance culture adaptability within Malaysian society, provided that there is a consistent push through it by the newer generations. As previously assessed, the newly graduated and fresh employees, also known as Gen-Z, had been criticized for their refusal to bow down to the current system, seeing it as a redress and oppression that is deemed intolerably exchanged for the only life they had. Based on the research committed by Basir in 2025, it is clear that there is a great possibility of reformation to the societal perspective on work-life balance provided that there is a continuous generational influence which will normalize a new norm that fits the employment environment and lifestyle in the Nordic countries. Yet, this is not a complete guarantee of it occurring in the future, nor is there certainty for its changes to influence the legislative format. However, the current trend of societal pressure, which forced legal legitimisation of the ILO's ratification in the likes of Work from Home applicability within the current economic drive may permit the chance of work-life balance to be made legally enforceable if proven to be essential to the current public interest. We find that a pessimistic view to the impossibility of work-life balance being legally enforceable in Malaysia would be a biased judgement, as the virality of culture may give rise to newer governmental action. The previously mocked existence of mental health problems died down as the government recognized its validity and dire acknowledgement, leading to the drafting of the National Strategic Plan for Mental Health 2020-2025. Perhaps a repetitive acknowledgement of the work-life balance may be successful in the near future, but the uncertainty of life gives room for further research to be made.

The sixth finding is a direct reference to the above finding, in which there is a clear indication of legal deficiency pertaining to employees' welfare, arguably an indication of an absence of the ideological work-life balance in Malaysia's legal system. A clear comparison can be made between Malaysia and the Nordic States legal enforcement on the employees' rights within the context of annual leave, overtime payment, maternity leave, and even the standardized legal sick leaves established an undeniable attention to the citizen's welfare by the latter government. This has yet to include the parental care law, overtime legal limit, and government assistance, which are legally enforceable throughout the Nordic countries but are not available in Malaysia. It must be noted that this is not a mockery or accusation against the Malaysian government being negligent with regards to employee rights, but a call to attention that there are certain areas of law that are not only lacking but remain insignificant to both the Legislative body and the Malaysian employers. After all, since the Legislative body is highly influenced by the outcry of the society and their own practice in making laws, it would be extremely difficult to draft these laws as relevant and compatible in Malaysia. This is due to no third-party bodies voicing up suggestions to the adoption of these newer laws, nor is there a sign of a laid-back attitude by the government based on the workaholic lifestyle led by the current Prime Minister, Dato Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim.

RECOMMENDATION

"To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often." A quote that is often attributed to Winston Churchill that indicates the striving of humanity in achieving perfection through growth and development stemming from the continuous generational progression. The same perspective must also be taken as we discussed the relevant recommendation that must be taken in the progression of legally enforcing work-life balance in Malaysia. The suggestions are grounded by theoretical and subjective suggestions with a high expectation of societal pressure into creating a route of acceptance to the ideology of work-life balance as a valid concern which must be addressed by the government. Nonetheless, it is a baby step which must be made as a catalyst in hopes for a more concrete recommendation to be made in the future.

The first recommendation that is to be suggested is an exposure to work-life balance to the general public in multiple forms of representation. While campaigns are the norms of suggestions that we are not necessarily repulsed against as part of the effort in enlightening the public towards the necessity of work-life balance, a more modern approach that is closely acceptable to the newer generations should be adopted as the main source of information. As current influencers in social media dominate the flow of market and lifestyle, it

should not be difficult to consider them as a great medium to convey the ideology of work-life balance while calling for its legal enforceability. Further political war in the social media that is fuelled by ‘cybertroopers’ that sided with both the government and the opposition can be taken advantage of pertaining to this matter. Roscoe Pound (1943) once perceived the balance of interest that caters to individual, public, and social interests, which are necessary to every aspect that can be inclusive upon work-life balance. That is the very talking point which is often neglected by the elitist and the higher-ups within the government that the people of Malaysia live through on a day-to-day basis. As the view of work-life balance is, by theoretical expectation, an endearing idea that would garner support from the citizens of Malaysia, these political influencers are to be approached to make contents in relation to it. Resultantly, the Government would be pressured into the societal demands in adopting more rights of employees within our legislatures, with the inclusion of work-life balance as its centres. One may argue that this is a deliberate attempt to cause disharmony and disruption in Malaysia, but it is an effective method that would result in either a pressurised and hastened action by the government or a culturisation to work-life balance by the Malaysians in the masses. This is within the existential gap of legal authority which the government may not be able to perfect as stated by Jurgen Habermas (1984) in his theory of communicative action that requires a public engagement to the fulfilment of these issues. As these contents are short in nature and more accessible to all walks of life in comparison to books, lengthy YouTube videos or rallying campaigns within busy working life, it would be far easier to penetrate and convince the society in adopting a new norm while pushing for its legal legitimisation. However, one has to consider the unsuccessfulness of this recommendation and maintain a broad application by concentrating on the social media influences solution without neglecting the other sources of spreading information on the work-life balance.

The second recommendation that can be made is through the bill presentation by a non-government organisation at the Parliament. This method may be a cliché expectation that is imposed upon a third-party body with hopes of improvement to the society by legal changes. However, it has been revived by a more approachable current government, as seen from the positive result received towards the recent Rasuah Buster’s speech in the Parliament (Sinar Daily, 2023). A Trade Union should be the representative of this matter, as they are the forefront of the employees’ rights. Not only do they possess the locus standi in highlighting the issues in the Parliament, but they possess an organized capacity to bring forth the issues of work-life balance as a valid concern that must be addressed. It would, however, require a reformation of the Trade Union to make it more accessible to the public knowledge for this recommendation to be successful. The reason being that there must be support that stands by the side of the Trade Union in supporting the narrative to the necessity of work-life balance implementation in a newer legislature. Ironically, the current stance of Marxism’s application in Vietnam which is incoherent to the capitalist mentality in Malaysia is the current solution in establishing a ‘socialist-oriented market economy’ that may be able to deeply root the view of work-life balance among Malaysians (Nguyen, 2021). This suggestion is by no means a recommendation nor a recognition of the communist ideology in totality, but a respectable and narrowed insertion that is coherent to creating a new law without contradicting the essence of the Federal Constitution as founded within its own Article 4. Not only is this recommendation not incoherent to the values of fundamental liberties, but it is a new reform that will open new floodgates to other welfare issues that direly need to be addressed other than work-life balance to be made legal within a constitutional framework.

The third recommendation shall be a compelling insight to the call of judicial review pertaining to the interpretation of the right to life under Article 5 of the Federal Constitution. Provided that a person is an employee, they would have sufficient locus standi in pushing the narrative of work-life balance within the context of the right to life. While it is dependent on the decision of the Court to decide towards the issue, nor is this recommendation is a guaranteed solution to the matter, it is a worthwhile suggestion that should be made as it is a far easier method in setting the foundation of legally enforcing work-life balance rather than through years of waiting in drafting a new law. As the word ‘life’ itself intersects in both the ideology and the provision, it would have been more peculiar had there been a refusal of these interpretations from coincided inclusivity to be brought and reviewed by the Court. The case of *Tan Tek Seng v. Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Pendidikan & Anor* [1996] 1 MLJ 261 had once led to the expansion in the meaning of life to include the capacity of livelihood within the context of its era. Within the current age where mental health has been validly recognized as a genuine concern and human rights variation pushed the boundaries of tolerance to the highest extent, it would not be excessive to expect the Court in expanding the definition of prohibition in depriving life

within Article 5 to extend the connectivity of its relation to work-life balance. A postmodernist thinker, Balkin (1993) once discussed the psychological aspect of law pertaining to its purposes that is shaped by one's views, which are highly influenced by their needs and 'self-inserted' definition. The Court itself has a history of changing legal application and its view of legal validity as seen in the recent case of Nik Elin and Lai Heng Beng. Thus, it is acceptable for an expansion to the definition of life to be made through the Court's review, which would take a longer timeframe if brought to the Parliament instead.

The fourth recommendation should be cantered upon educational reform. While it was proven difficult for the Legislative body nor the society at large to accept the necessity of work-life balance legalisation, it is possible to normalise the culture among the younger and newer generations. Policies that require a limitation to the extent of assessments and homework's, a more rounded inclusivity of the work-life balance values being taught in any relevant subjects and a nurturing and relaxing environment cultivated in school should be implemented. This will create an indirect influence on the young children to a culture that is similar to a work-life balance. Resultantly, these students who shall become the future employers and politicians will find the contradictory working lifestyle to the work-life balance they have been taught since childhood as problematic and requires a reformation to both societal and legal capacity. This is an adaptation to the proactive normalisation suggested by Engbo in his suggested reformation to the prison system, but at a larger scale with the same conclusive intent of the improved welfare (Van de Rijt, 2022). While this recommendation may take the longest to be fulfilled and requires a continuous practice, reassessment and modification through trial and error, it is the closest method in establishing a normalisation to work-life balance culture within a legal framework without infringing upon any fundamental liberties of Malaysian citizens.

These recommendations dealt with four levels of solution based in public, educational institutions, Parliament, and Court's settings. These are not necessarily new, groundbreaking recommendations nor is there a guarantee that any of these solutions will be materialised. Yet, it is the hopefulness of the goodness of mankind that we strive to be better and hope the same for others. Hence, each and every one of these recommendations must be moved and engaged at the same time to ensure the optimum result to increase the likelihood of actual and significant change to the work-life balance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, work-life balance in Malaysia is deeply tied to its view of welfare, leading to a limited legal enforceability that stems from the free-market trend which is further fuelled by the inactive push to the demands of it by the employees in the general masses nor is there a normalisation of work-life balance culture within the limited legal responsibilities of employees. However, a reformation to both the legislature and culture pertaining

to work-life balance is possible provided that a model of the Nordic State is taken into consideration by both the government and the people of Malaysia. It would not be sufficient in expecting an actual change to be made within a short time frame by the government, which established the need for the public's utilisation to the appropriation of the culture of work-life balance on a daily basis. Outside of legal enforceability, it is a mass and individual duty upon the imposition of workers' welfare in its effect against capitalism that drives the current market. Thus, work-life balance can be legally enforceable once the societal preparedness and acceptability to it is within the scope of the majority as it affects both the public and private body which may change the course of livelihood, economic flow, and welfare protection; for better or worse.

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