

From Work-Life Balance to Integration: Shifting Perceptions in High-Tech

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Abstract: This paper examines the shift from work-life balance rhetoric to work-life integration practice in high-tech, using Israeli firms closely coupled to United States time zones as a critical case. Drawing on a mixed-methods design that combines nineteen semi-structured interviews with engineers, product leaders, recruiters, and executives with survey data from 219 women across the Israeli high-tech sector, the study synthesizes classic lenses of work-family conflict and enrichment, boundary fit, and job demands-resources theory with current organizational realities such as hybrid work and return-to-office policies. The analysis identifies a practical core to integration: temporal equity. Outcomes depend less on total hours and more on four conditions operating together: usable schedule control, boundary fit between preferences and team routines, contained connectivity load so that evenings do not become shadow stand-ups, and credit decoupled from live presence through artifacts such as recorded demos, written kudos, and sponsor-of-record practices. Interviews reveal how Israeli-U.S. coordination creates a recurrent time-zone tax, how mental load extends beyond leave into daily logistics, and how simple routines (protected family bands with written exceptions, mirrored ceremonies across time zones, rota audits for late hours) reduce friction without slowing delivery. Men's planned co-ownership of care appears as a small but notable cultural shift. Quantitative data triangulate these themes: 72% of surveyed women cite work-life time constraints as the primary barrier preventing participation in professional meetups, and 36% report that personal obligations have prevented them from pursuing advancement opportunities. The paper contributes a clear, practice-oriented temporal equity lens on integration and specifies low-cost routines that teams can adopt. Managing when work happens and how recognition is earned, rather than only where work occurs, enables the same total hours to sustain careers without taxing family life.

Keywords: Work-life integration, work-life balance, women in technology, hybrid work, temporal equity

JEL Classification: J16, J22, J28, M12, O33

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the shift from work-life balance rhetoric to the everyday practice of work-life integration in high-tech. Balance language treated work and family as competing spheres and focused on managing clashes. Integration treats time, attention, and coordination as design variables and asks when work happens, who controls that timing, and who pays the family cost. Classic models of conflict and enrichment explain why demands and resources spill across roles, while boundary and border perspectives highlight the importance of fit between preferred and enacted boundaries. Job Demands-Resources and Conservation of Resources frameworks clarify why autonomy and recovery matter once connectivity blurs the edges of the day. Together, these ideas motivate a move from slogans to routines.

The empirical setting is Israeli high-tech, a sector that combines strong family centrality with close alignment to United States time zones. Women constitute approximately 33% of the Israeli high-tech workforce, and their share of senior leadership positions remains well below parity despite a 130% increase in R&D participation over the past decade (Israel Innovation Authority, 2024). Evening meetings, early-morning calls, and push-channel chatter after hours are common features of cross-Atlantic coordination. At the same time, firms have adopted hybrid arrangements and, in some cases, tighter return-to-office rules that renegotiate when, where, and how long people are expected to be visible. The gender pay gap in Israeli high-tech persists at approximately 17%, partly reflecting lower career mobility among women who tend to remain in the same company rather than switching jobs for promotion (Israel Innovation Authority, 2024). These cross-pressures make the setting particularly useful for understanding how integration succeeds or fails in practice. The question is whether timing is predictable and shared fairly, whether schedule control is usable without penalty, and whether recognition depends on being live and visible at night.

The study uses a mixed-methods design that combines nineteen semi-structured interviews with professionals in Israeli high-tech, spanning engineering, product, recruiting, people operations, and executive roles, with survey data from 219 women across the sector. The interviews surface concrete practices rather than abstract preferences, while the survey provides population-level triangulation of the qualitative themes. Three research questions guide the paper. First, how have perceptions shifted from balance to integration in the lived experience of high-tech workers, and what

does integration look like on a normal week. Second, which mechanisms best explain better outcomes in hybrid arrangements, with attention to boundary fit, schedule control, connectivity load, and how credit is assigned. Third, how do team and company choices interact with national or cultural context, especially in work tied to United States hours.

The main argument is that integration succeeds when time and credit are managed deliberately. At the individual level, people need visible and usable schedule control, along with partner planning and simple guardrails. At the team level, cadence must be predictable and fair, especially where time-zone overlap is required. At the organizational level, recognition needs to be attached to artifacts and outcomes so that live evening presence is not the currency of advancement. When these conditions are in place at the same time, the same total hours produce less conflict and more sustainable participation.

This paper contributes in three ways. Conceptually, it offers a temporal equity lens that unites boundary fit, schedule control, connectivity load, and credit design in a single frame. Empirically, it documents how workers describe a chronological arc within single careers, from assumed separation through ideal-worker norms and perk-saturated presence, into pandemic disruption and current integration. Practically, it specifies low-cost routines that teams can adopt: protected family bands with written exceptions, mirrored ceremonies across time zones, rotation and audit of late-hour burdens, and default use of recorded demos and written kudos so that visibility is not tied to the clock.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Work-life integration can be framed through boundary and resource lenses, translated into a practical focus on temporal equity: who controls time, how team routines fit individual preferences, how much connectivity load exists, and whether recognition depends on live presence. Each of these conditions draws on a distinct theoretical tradition.

Boundary and border theories explain how people prefer to separate or blend work and family roles and how mismatch creates friction. Ashforth, Kreiner, and Fugate (2000) introduce the concept of micro role transitions, arguing that people cross role boundaries many times per day and that the ease of these transitions depends on the flexibility and permeability of the boundary. Where boundaries are frequently violated, identity conflict and role strain increase. Clark (2000) extends this logic with border theory, distinguishing between strong and weak borders and showing that border-crossers who lack

control over permeability experience greater conflict. Together, these frameworks predict that integration works only when individuals can adjust the degree of blending at their own discretion.

A person-centered perspective reveals that boundary preferences are not uniform across workers. Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy, and Hannum (2012) identify distinct boundary management profiles using latent profile analysis, showing that some people segment tightly, others integrate freely, and still others cycle between modes depending on demand. The critical finding is that profile-environment fit matters more than any single boundary strategy: a segmentor placed in an always-on team experiences higher strain than an integrator in the same setting. This profile logic moves the conversation from organizational policy to team-level cadence design. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model predicts that usable autonomy and recovery opportunities buffer cognitive and coordination demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). In the JD-R framework, demands such as workload, time pressure, and emotional labor deplete energy, while resources such as autonomy, social support, and performance feedback sustain engagement. The model explains why formal flexibility alone is insufficient: if autonomy is granted but cannot be exercised without stigma, the resource does not buffer the demand. Applied to work-life integration, JD-R suggests that schedule control counts as a resource only when it is usable without penalty.

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory complements JD-R by focusing on loss dynamics. Hobfoll (1989) argues that people invest resources to protect against loss, recover from loss, and gain new resources, and that resource loss is disproportionately impactful relative to resource gain. COR predicts loss spirals: when connectivity and unpredictability drain time and attention repeatedly, individuals have less capacity to recover, leading to accelerating depletion. In the context of hybrid work, COR explains why the same total hours can feel sustainable or exhausting depending on predictability and recovery windows.

Evidence on telework and mobile communication clarifies the autonomy paradox. Allen, Golden, and Shockley (2015) conduct a comprehensive review of telecommuting research and find that remote work can lower role conflict when paired with autonomy, supportive supervision, and clarity on expectations, but that benefits fade when these conditions are absent. Barley, Meyerson, and Grodal (2011) show that email operates simultaneously as a source and symbol of stress, demonstrating how communication technology embeds work into non-work time through expectations of rapid response. Mazmanian, Orlikowski, and Yates (2013) identify

the autonomy paradox itself: mobile email tools promise greater control but simultaneously extend the temporal and social reach of work, creating norms of constant availability that professionals internalize even without explicit mandate. These findings shift attention from where work happens to when it happens and how predictable it is.

At the team level, temporal structuring theory shows that groups create and sustain temporal order through routines. Orlikowski and Yates (2002) demonstrate that teams "make" time through shared rhythms, ceremony timing, and agreed handoffs, and that these temporal structures shape coordination quality. Perlow and Porter (2009) provide experimental evidence that making time off predictable and required reduces overload without hurting performance, because the intervention resets group expectations rather than individual habits. Applied to hybrid integration, these findings suggest that protected bands, mirrored ceremonies across time zones, and rota fairness for awkward hours are the team-level conditions under which temporal equity can hold.

Cultural expectations also matter. Acker (1990) shows how the ideal worker is constructed through organizational logic that assumes full availability, disembodiment from care, and the absence of domestic obligations. This organizational logic is gendered: it rewards behaviors more available to those without primary caregiving responsibilities. Eagly and Karau (2002) extend this analysis through role congruity theory, demonstrating that leadership evaluations penalize individuals whose attributes are perceived as incongruent with the leadership prototype. When evaluation systems use presence as a cue for leadership potential, people who cannot join late-evening discussions face a visibility deficit that compounds over time.

Recognition practices constitute a missing but critical piece of the integration puzzle. Ibarra, Carter, and Silva (2010) distinguish between advice and advocacy, showing that sponsors broker opportunities, name contributors, and share risk at decision points, while mentors offer guidance without mobilizing institutional resources. When credit depends on live presence and informal access, asynchronous contributions become invisible. Linking recognition to artifacts (recorded demos, written kudos, authorship norms) allows remote and time-shifted contribution to count. Leslie, Manchester, Park, and Mehng (2012) provide complementary evidence that flexible work practices can backfire under availability norms, creating a flexibility stigma unless leaders redesign how contribution is evaluated.

Recent evidence on hybrid work informs current return-to-office debates. Bloom, Han, and Liang

(2024) report results from a large randomized trial showing that two days per week of work from home reduces voluntary turnover by approximately one-third with no measurable performance loss. This finding supports a focus on cadence, predictability, and fairness rather than a binary choice between remote and on-site. Eurofound (2023) documents both the gains and the risks of widespread telework, including digital fatigue and after-hours encroachment, and recommends right-to-disconnect safeguards as a complement to team-level practice. Work-family conflict and enrichment theories provide the foundational mechanism through which integration effects operate. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) identify three forms of inter-role conflict: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based, each arising when demands in one role make participation in the other difficult. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) complement this deficit model with enrichment theory, showing that resources acquired in one role (skills, psychological capital, social capital, flexibility, material resources) can improve performance and well-being in the other. Under enrichment logic, integration conditions that allow resources to flow across domains, rather than only demands, produce net positive outcomes. The temporal equity lens proposed here specifies the conditions under which enrichment dominates conflict: usable schedule control, boundary fit, contained connectivity, and artifact-based recognition.

Taken together, these twelve theoretical strands converge on a practical lens for work-life integration that centers temporal equity. Four conditions must hold simultaneously: schedule control that people can use without penalty, boundary fit between preferences and team routines, a contained connectivity load so push channels do not become shadow stand-ups, and recognition tied to artifacts and outcomes rather than live presence.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses a mixed-methods design to examine work-life integration in Israeli high-tech. The qualitative component draws on nineteen semi-structured interviews. Using purposive and snowball sampling, participants were recruited across engineering, product leadership, recruiting and people operations, and executive roles. All participants coordinate with United States time zones and have experience with hybrid or return-to-office arrangements. The quantitative component uses survey data from 219 women across the Israeli high-tech sector, collected through an online questionnaire that included both Likert-scale barrier

items (adapted from the Gender Bias Scale for Women Leaders, Diehl et al., 2020) and multi-select questions on participation barriers. The quantitative strand provides descriptive triangulation of the qualitative themes rather than hypothesis testing.

Semi-structured interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes each and were conducted in person or by video. The interview protocol focused on weekly cadence, overlapping windows and rotation schedules for late hours, after-hours messaging norms, schedule control, and how credit is communicated and tracked (recorded demos, written kudos, authorship practices). With informed consent, all interviews were recorded, translated from Hebrew to English with bilingual verification, anonymized using participant codes (P01 through P19), and stored securely.

The quantitative component draws on an online survey completed by 219 women working in Israeli high-tech. The survey instrument is an adapted version of the Gender Bias Scale for Women Leaders (Diehl et al., 2020), comprising 47 Likert-scale items scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) across multiple barrier constructs. In addition, the survey included a multi-select question asking respondents what prevents them from participating in professional meetups and conferences outside work hours. Response categories included work-life time constraints, work overload, lack of professional interest, distance or location, discomfort, cost, and an open "other" option. A separate question measured actual participation frequency on a five-point scale from "never" to "always." Respondents were recruited through professional networks and social media channels targeting women in Israeli high-tech. All responses were anonymous.

Transcripts were analyzed thematically following an inductive approach. The research team read transcripts closely, wrote short memos, marked recurring ideas, and grouped emergent patterns around a temporal equity lens: schedule control, boundary fit, connectivity load, and credit decoupled from live presence. Patterns were compared across roles and seniority levels, and counter-examples (for instance, heavy U.S. overlap with low evening load) were actively sought to challenge dominant readings. A second researcher reviewed a subsample of coded transcripts to strengthen dependability. The lead author works in Israeli high-tech and is a parent; to limit confirmation bias, disconfirming cases were prioritized and claims were kept at the mechanism level rather than firm-specific prescriptions.

Trustworthiness was addressed through four strategies. Credibility was established by selecting participants from diverse roles and organizations, using rich verbatim quotes to support each theme,

and conducting member reflections during interviews. Dependability was supported through a transparent coding audit trail and inter-coder review. Confirmability was maintained by documenting researcher positionality and actively seeking disconfirming evidence. Transferability is supported by detailed description of the Israeli high-tech context, enabling readers to assess applicability to other settings. The mixed-methods design strengthens the study by allowing quantitative data from 219 respondents to triangulate qualitative patterns from 19 in-depth interviews. Findings support analytic generalization, where the temporal equity lens and its four conditions can be evaluated against other empirical settings, rather than statistical generalization to a defined population.

FINDINGS

The findings organize around the four components of temporal equity identified in the theoretical framework: the baseline condition of hours and availability, time-zone coordination and its costs, boundary fit and schedule control, and how credit and recognition operate in hybrid settings.

Hours, Availability, and the Ideal-Worker Residue

Long hours and omnipresent availability still frame the baseline of working life. Several participants describe an ideal-worker residue that persists even when people embrace demanding roles or senior responsibility. As P07 puts it plainly: "I work a lot of hours." P01 reflects on the limits that parenthood imposed: "I personally felt that after becoming a mother, I couldn't keep up, I had to make trade-offs. I wasn't willing to sacrifice family time for work." P02 extends this observation to the structural level: "It is very, very hard to succeed and reach senior management roles when you're a mother with small children, unless you have a genuinely supportive partner who takes on the home domain." The pattern that emerges across accounts is that the timing of those hours, and who pays the timing cost at home, matters more than total volume.

Beyond leave or formal policies, many participants speak about mental load, the constant operational demands of daily logistics that make or break family life. P02 captures this: "When you become a parent, your life becomes a series of choices." The cultural script raises the bar on both fronts: "Even if a woman truly wants to advance, Israeli culture highly values both family life and extreme professional ambition. There's immense pressure to succeed in both" (P02). Multiple accounts reference the guilt cycle that accompanies these choices. As one participant puts

it: "Yes, there's a lot of guilt, especially when you have kids, I won't deny there were years of major guilt." Focus group participants reinforce this double bind: "I am always not enough, not a good enough mother and not a good enough worker" (FG1-P8). Coping often means deliberate trade-offs: "People always ask how I 'manage.' I always say, 'I don't.' There are a lot of balls in the air. I try to control which ones drop" (P15). Another focus group participant describes a more explicit division: "At home there's an extreme division of days. If it's my partner's day, I don't even answer the phone. But it requires fighting for it anew all the time" (FG1-P2). The aggregate picture is one in which hours do not by themselves determine outcomes: what matters is whether the temporal structure of work leaves enough room for the logistics of care.

Time-Zone Coordination and the Time-Zone Tax

The Israeli-U.S. time-zone gap repeatedly compresses family time into the evenings and pulls people into very early mornings. P04 recalls "working late nights constantly" because two team members were in California and the manager was in the United States, so priorities were U.S.-based. The same interview notes the daily trade-off: "I had to sacrifice my afternoons and evenings just to stay aligned with work. I lost my entire evening and family time, staying online late to align with U.S. teams. It wasn't sustainable" (P04). Others describe redesigning their day to absorb the overlap more cleanly: "Now, I shift my schedule later to overlap with the US, but I still have mornings with my family" (P16). In some teams, managers formalized the cadence: "I scheduled management meetings from 17:00 to 20:00 because the U.S. team is available" (P19). Where such decisions were explicit and shared, the time-zone tax became visible and therefore governable.

The tax falls unevenly. Several participants note that the same overlap window that senior men absorb as a mild inconvenience becomes a sharp conflict for women with young children, because the 17:00-to-20:00 band is the core caregiving window: dinner, baths, and bedtime. One interviewee frames the structural problem directly: "I realized I couldn't keep doing these late-night calls with the U.S. My family responsibilities increased, it was unsustainable." The focus group vignette of Yael, a VP of R&D, illustrates the compounding cost: the annual R&D conference runs its most important breakout sessions from 19:00 to 22:00 and the critical networking dinner is at 22:30. Yael has three children, attends morning sessions, and leaves by 17:30. Three conversations that shaped team strategy happened at the dinner she missed. The

time-zone tax, in other words, is also a visibility and career-capital tax.

Boundary Fit, Schedule Control, and Guardrails

Outcomes hinge on boundary fit, the match between how people prefer to manage roles and how their team actually works. Several narratives trace a move from burnout to more deliberate guardrails: "Work-life balance is important to me, I once burned out after working at a startup. I took a six-month break. Now, I try to set boundaries: avoiding late-night work, blocking out personal time in my calendar, not overloading myself" (P06). Leaders who signal room for discretion help align preferences with practice: "I allow flexibility for my team, I don't set strict rules about remote work" (P16). Where people could see and trust those boundaries, friction fell even when total hours remained high.

The shape of successful integration is less about generic flexibility and more about schedule control: visible and predictable choices about when work happens. Some participants describe explicit swaps that protect family time without lowering delivery: "I'm home in the evenings. I bathe [the kids]. And then I get back to my work later in the evening if necessary" (P18). Others emphasize that partnership is a practical enabler: "It's incredibly difficult to climb while raising kids unless you have a supportive partner" (P01).

Connectivity Load and the Presence Premium

Connectivity can quietly recreate the presence premium if left unmanaged. P10 sketches a communications environment where push channels become the real meeting: "We communicated through pings and almost never used email." P19 offers the implicit rule of advancement in such cultures: "Be present in leadership discussions, in social interactions, in high-stakes meetings." Without counterweights, evening quick syncs and real-time visibility stand in for impact. As one participant observes: "Remote work had real consequences. Less office visibility meant fewer promotions and leadership roles." Another describes a pattern in which routine decisions are made informally during hours when caregivers are absent: "I worked incredibly hard, but the key decisions happened over lunch breaks, where I wasn't present." The teams that avoided this drift tended to anchor credit to artifacts and plan for asynchronous participation rather than rewarding whoever could be online at 22:00.

The networking dimension compounds connectivity load. When informal professional capital accumulates after hours, women with caregiving responsibilities face a double deficit. P08 describes the mechanism explicitly: "When my partner sits in

the park he talks with another father about work, 'where are you in high-tech, what do you do?' They are building networks that we don't know how to build." P01 broadens the observation: "We don't have the army networks, we don't have the football match, we don't have the male-only beer after work, the poker nights, so many networking channels we simply don't have access to." P07 offers a label for the phenomenon: "The 'bro club', the men's club, though it doesn't have to be a formal men's club. Football after work, 'hey man, come on man, this guy.' They are mingling all day. They go for beers together and then sit on each other's boards." Survey data confirm the pattern at scale: among 219 respondents, the item "male colleagues socialize without me" received a mean score of 3.00 (SD = 1.22), with 34% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Credit, Recognition, and Career Design

The shift toward credit without constant availability runs through multiple accounts. P02 advises: "Document your successes, prove your value, and ask for what you deserve." Even late-stage career conversations show how uneven these moments can be: "Even as a manager, salary discussions were highly emotional. I've seen women cry during salary negotiations" (P11). Documented impact, routine kudos in writing, and clear criteria help de-link recognition from live presence. The focus group vignette of a mother who leaves at 16:00 and arrives at 08:00 captures the core tension: "In terms of output and quality of work, she was equal to three developers of the others who stay until 19:00." When evaluation systems track output rather than clocked hours, contributions by time-shifted workers become visible. When they do not, flexible workers experience what several participants describe as an out-of-sight penalty: reduced inclusion in high-profile projects, slower promotion cadence, and weaker sponsor relationships.

Men's co-ownership of care appears in scheduled routines rather than ad hoc help. P18 explains: "I'm home in the evenings. I make it a priority to be with my kids. Then I get back to my work later in the evening if necessary." P04 captures the prevailing pattern: "Men generally sacrifice their afternoons and then make it home for bedtime and the kids' nighttime routine." One male participant describes his approach: "I took a whole month off when my baby was born. No one made a big deal out of it, and I didn't want them to. Same goes for my female employees, they get six months of maternity leave, and that's fine." However, focus group participants note that the gender asymmetry in mental load persists even when hours are split: "I did not have the same focus as men who have 80 percent free capacity at home" (FG1-P2). "The price is 'time for

myself.' I don't have a single moment for myself. Everything is dedicated to management, motherhood, mentoring. I can't even remember when I last read a book that wasn't a management book" (FG1-P5). When norms of co-ownership are named and accepted on teams, evening caregiving stops being an exception that needs apology and becomes part of how the team plans time.

Career design moves, such as stepping back, switching tracks, or pacing across life stages, feature prominently. P04 describes a decisive reset: "I recently decided to step down from my VP role. I recently asked to leave my role, and just transition, but as an individual contributor rather than in a management role." Others recount pauses that preserved sustainability and growth: "I once burned out. I took a six-month break" (P06). "About six months ago, I stepped back from being CEO, I needed to handle something personal" (P12). P10 recounts how an abrupt setback became a turning point: "When I returned from maternity leave, I was called in for a termination meeting. I told myself, I'll reinvent myself. I want to be independent." The return from maternity leave is a recurring pressure point: "It's very hard to return from maternity leave in a competitive organization and the position you built over years is taken from you" (survey respondent). Another survey respondent frames the structural problem: "In practice, when a woman becomes a mother her career stalls for several years, and when a man becomes a father the impact on him is much less noticeable, even if he's a very involved father. It's simply different organizational expectations and different task prioritization." Focus group participants advocate systemic remedies: "A necessary intervention: mandatory paternity leave for men. If it's in the law, it will change the mindset of parenthood in society" (FG1-P10). Across these accounts, integration arrives as a bundle of temporal practices, guardrails, swaps, predictable overlaps, and credit practices that let people meet global coordination demands without paying for visibility with family time.

Quantitative Triangulation: Survey Evidence from 219 Women

Survey data from 219 women in Israeli high-tech provide descriptive triangulation of the qualitative themes. Table 1 summarizes the key items.

The most striking finding comes from a multi-select question asking respondents what prevents them from participating in professional meetups and conferences outside work hours. Among 219 respondents:

- 158 (72.1%) selected work-life time constraints (balancing work and family) - 103 (47.0%) selected lack of professional interest - 89 (40.6%) selected

work overload or long hours - 74 (33.8%) selected distance or location - 28 (12.8%) selected feeling uncomfortable attending such events

In terms of actual participation, 54.1% of respondents reported attending meetups never or rarely, 30.6% sometimes, and only 15.3% often or always.

These figures confirm what interview participants describe: the temporal equity deficit is structural and widespread. Nearly three-quarters of surveyed women identify work-life time constraints, not disinterest or discomfort, as the primary barrier to professional networking outside work hours. Over a third report that personal obligations have constrained their career advancement. The qualitative accounts of time-zone tax, evening compression, and mental load map directly onto these survey patterns. When combined with the exclusion items ($M = 3.00$ for "male colleagues socialize without me"), the data point to a compounding effect: women are both time-constrained and socially excluded from informal career-building opportunities.

DISCUSSION

This study reframes the move from work-life balance to integration as a problem of temporal equity: when work happens, who controls that timing, and at what family cost. Classic conflict and enrichment lenses explain why integration can both reduce friction and create value (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Boundary and border theories highlight the importance of fit between preferred and enacted boundaries (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000). The Job Demands-Resources model predicts that usable autonomy and recovery buffer the cognitive and coordination demands of hybrid work (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), and Conservation of Resources theory explains exhaustion when continual connectivity erodes recovery (Hobfoll, 1989). The interviews show how these mechanisms operate in daily routines and how simple practices convert flexibility into predictable cadence.

Individual-Level Mechanisms

Participants' practices demonstrate that schedule craftsmanship matters more than a generic promise of flexibility. Several describe the pull of the ideal-worker norm, captured in P07's statement "I work a lot of hours," and the need for guardrails after burnout (P06). People adopt micro-moves that JD-R theory would frame as adding resources against demands: outsourcing logistics, protecting family

windows, and planning with partners (P01, P15). The finding is consistent with COR theory: autonomy must be usable at the individual level to avoid loss spirals (Hobfoll, 1989). When schedule control exists on paper but cannot be exercised without stigma, the resource fails to buffer the demand, precisely as Bakker and Demerouti (2007) predict. The mental load accounts from focus group participants (FG1-P2, FG1-P5, FG1-P8) add a layer that single-interview studies often miss: even when formal schedules are equitable, the cognitive overhead of holding together logistics, caregiving, and team coordination consumes residual capacity that colleagues without primary care responsibilities retain.

Cultural and Contextual Currents

The Israeli context couples strong family centrality with high professional ambition, raising stakes on both sides (P02, P08). These dynamics echo Acker's (1990) analysis of how ideal-worker assumptions are gendered: organizations construct full availability as the default employee profile, and those who cannot meet that standard bear a credibility deficit. The survey item "My personal obligations have prevented me from pursuing opportunities for advancement" ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.36$) quantifies this deficit at the population level: over a third of 219 respondents agree or strongly agree that family obligations have constrained their careers. Israeli high-tech's distinctive position, a workforce in which women comprise only 33% of the sector and hold a disproportionately small share of senior roles (Israel Innovation Authority, 2024), amplifies the penalty because the ideal-worker prototype is constructed around a male-majority reference group. Men's planned co-ownership of care (P18) signals a gradual shift in what counts as acceptable professional behavior, supported by focus group participants who call for mandatory paternity leave (FG1-P10). This shift aligns with enrichment logic (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006): when caregiving becomes normalized across genders, the stigma cost of boundary enforcement falls, and resources generated in the family domain (planning skill, emotional regulation, time discipline) flow back into work performance.

Organizational Structures and Team Cadence

When work happens is a design choice. The interviews show that Israeli-U.S. overlap is the sharpest stressor: late-evening overlap was common and unsustainable for some (P04). Temporal structuring research predicts this outcome: teams that fail to formalize cadence leave temporal burdens to individual negotiation, which tends to reproduce inequality (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002).

Where managers formalized overlap windows and rotated awkward hours (P16, P19), the burden became visible and shareable. This finding aligns with the mixed verdict on telework: autonomy helps, but coordination costs and connectivity load rise unless team-level norms change (Allen, Golden and Shockley, 2015; Barley, Meyerson and Grodal, 2011; Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates, 2013).

Communication norms are pivotal. Without guardrails, evening channels become shadow stand-ups, the kind of risk flagged in right-to-disconnect reviews (Eurofound, 2023). When teams decouple credit from live presence through recorded demos, written kudos, and sponsor-of-record rotations, visibility no longer depends on being online at 22:00. This mechanism is consistent with enrichment logic: artifact-based recognition allows asynchronous contribution to count, transforming a structural penalty into a neutral feature of team design. Leslie, Manchester, Park, and Mehng (2012) provide supporting evidence: flexible work practices generate career premiums only when evaluation systems are redesigned to assess output rather than presence.

Toward a Multifaceted Intervention

A cross-level intervention package addresses more than a single policy lever. At the individual level, teaching schedule craftsmanship (visible calendar blocks, day-part swaps, explicit partner planning) converts abstract autonomy into a usable resource. At the cultural level, sponsoring alternative networks and normalizing co-ownership of care so that evening caregiving is standard rather than exceptional removes the stigma associated with boundary enforcement. At the organizational level, redesigning cadence through mirrored ceremonies across time zones, rota audits for late hours, protected family bands with written exceptions, and async credit by default addresses the structural conditions under which temporal equity can hold. To sustain these changes, teams can operationalize a lightweight Temporal Equity Index from existing tools (after-hours displacement, usable schedule control, rota fairness, and async share) and publish it in retrospectives alongside delivery metrics. This follows JD-R and COR logic: reduce avoidable demands, increase usable resources, and protect recovery.

The survey data reinforce the urgency of these interventions. When 72% of 219 women identify work-life time constraints as their primary barrier to professional networking, the problem is structural, not individual. The finding that 54% of respondents participate in professional meetups never or rarely, while 34% report that male colleagues socialize without them ($M = 3.00$), suggests a compounding

temporal-social penalty: women are both time-squeezed and excluded from the informal interactions where career capital accumulates (Ibarra, Carter and Silva, 2010). Over a third of respondents (35.9%) report that personal obligations have constrained their advancement, confirming the interview pattern of trade-offs described by P01 and P02. These quantitative patterns lend population-level weight to the qualitative finding that temporal equity requires coordinated intervention across individual, cultural, and organizational levels.

Limitations

The study is limited to Israeli high-tech and relies on self-reported experience. Transferability to other sectors and countries should be tested empirically. The qualitative sample of nineteen participants, while sufficient for thematic saturation, does not permit claims about prevalence; the survey data (N = 219) provide descriptive triangulation but were collected cross-sectionally and cannot establish causal relationships. Longitudinal designs would be needed to trace how temporal equity conditions evolve as organizations adjust return-to-office policies. Future work should operationalize and validate simple temporal equity measures (after-hours load, usable schedule control, rota fairness, share of async recognition) against outcomes such as retention, promotion, and well-being, and examine how different return-to-office designs interact with team cadence and boundary fit over time.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper traced the move from work-life balance rhetoric to work-life integration practice in high-tech. Classic theories help explain the shift: conflict and enrichment clarify why demands and resources cross role boundaries, boundary and border theories foreground fit, and Job Demands-Resources and Conservation of Resources explain why autonomy and recovery matter when connectivity is constant. The interviews show what has changed on the ground: hours remain high, but the pressure point is when work happens, who controls that timing, and who bears the family cost.

The core contribution is a temporal equity lens. Integration succeeds when four conditions are in place simultaneously: people have schedule control they can use without penalty, there is boundary fit between preferences and team routines, connectivity load is contained so evenings do not become shadow stand-ups, and credit is decoupled from live presence through artifacts like recorded demos and written kudos. Where these conditions hold, teams meet global coordination needs without taxing

family life. Where any one is missing, the time-zone burden and a presence premium reappear.

The interviews surface how integration operates in practice. Israeli-U.S. alignment pushes work into evenings or early mornings, yet predictable overlap windows and rotation of awkward hours make the burden visible and shareable. Mental load is long-running and operational, managed through outsourcing, calendar blocks, and explicit trade-offs rather than slogans. Some fathers describe planned co-ownership of care with time-shifting of later work, signaling a quiet cultural shift. People use career design moves, including temporary step-backs, track switches, and seasonality, to sustain participation without derailing growth.

Practically, the paper points to low-cost routines any team can adopt: explicit protected bands, mirrored ceremonies across time zones, rota audits for late hours, and default async credit mechanisms. A lightweight Temporal Equity Index, built from existing collaboration tools, can make time costs visible and auditable.

The path from balance to integration is practical rather than rhetorical. When time and credit are managed deliberately, the same total hours generate less conflict and more durable careers.

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Biographical sketch

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.
Survey Items Relevant to Work-Life Integration (N = 219)

Item	Construct	M	SD	Top-box %
My personal obligations have prevented me from pursuing opportunities for advancement	Self-limited aspirations	2.75	1.36	35.9
Male colleagues socialize without me	Exclusion	3.00	1.22	34.2
I feel welcome while attending social events with my male colleagues (reverse-coded)	Exclusion	2.03	1.01	9.5

Note. All items scored 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Top-box % = proportion scoring 4 or 5.