Family and career win-win in IT industry of China: Enlightenment from the exploration experience of work-life balance in Ireland.

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Abstract

Thesis Title: Family and career win-win in IT industry of China: Enlightenment from the exploration experience of work-life balance in Ireland.

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This study aims to alleviate the conflicts between work and life in China's IT industry. The researcher will refer to the Irish IT industry's contribution to the work-life balance. The researcher first constructed a theoretical framework for work-life balance, including two definitions of work-life balance and role theory. Since the two countries are involved, the social background and cultural background of these two countries also need to be considered.

The researcher used quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. Three hundred ten questionnaires were used to investigate the current work-life balance in China's IT industry and the work-life conflicts that need to be alleviated. Five interview participants explained the work-life balance in the Irish IT industry based on their work experience in IT-related companies in Ireland.

The results of the questionnaire show that the work-life balance of Chinese IT industry practitioners is at a low level. The primary performance is that there is almost no autonomy in work and time resources, long working hours, poor work arrangement flexibility, and pressure to support the family. The results of the interview showed that Irish IT industry practitioners have greater autonomy in work and time resources, flexible work arrangements, and a strong sense of boundary control between work and family, which can be attributed to organizations and Irish society has a positive attitude to work-life balance.

It should be noted that China needs to fully consider its specific situation when studying the successful experience of work-life balance from Ireland.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 background of this study

In today's context of globalization and the rapid development of technology and the economy (Grattan, 2010), the working environment and employee values will change dramatically. Work-life balance is a new need for employees, organizations and society in the context of emerging societies (Schwarzmueller, Brosi, Duman and Welpe, 2018). Therefore, studying the work-life balance is of great significance.

The research topic of this thesis is to explore how to help Chinese IT industry practitioners ease work and life conflicts. This study will draw on Ireland's successful experiences and research on this topic to find possible ways for Chinese employees to maintain a work-life balance.

The study of work-life balance has a relatively complete theoretical system, and the chief academic foundation-role theory is further extending into role conflict and role spillover (Ouyang, 2014). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argue that role conflicts come from three dimensions: time, stress, and behaviour. Rosabeth (1997) argues that role spillover theory is the ability of emotions, attitudes, skills, and behaviours to "overflow" into other roles and influence an individual's ability to perform other roles. Staines and Connor (1980) divide spillover effects into positive and negative. Duxbury and Higgins (2003) divide work-life conflicts into role overload and mutual interference between family and work.

On the other hand, the definition of work-life balance can be dividing into two categories: subjectivity and objectivity. Subjectivity emphasizes the individual's subjective perception of work-life balance, which is what Clark (2000) says is that work-life balance is related to maximum satisfaction under the premise of minimal role conflict. Objectivity emphasizes the objective influence factors of work-life balance, such as the balance of time, participation, and satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

China has developed rapidly after the reform and opening-up policy. After entering modern society, China's working environment has undergone tremendous changes. The working hours of workers have been extended, and the workload has increased dramatically. The conflict between work and life is getting worse in the IT industry, and this may lead to a continuous increase in employee turnover, employee burnout, and decreased employee loyalty. The reason for learning the work-life balance experience in Ireland is that Ireland has the title of Silicon Valley in Europe. There are many Internet-related companies headquartered in Dublin, and they can be used as reliable learning cases.

Since this study involves two countries, it is necessary to discuss the social and cultural contexts of the two countries. The cultural differences between the two countries can be seen very intuitively from Hofstede's cultural dimension. Such differences may affect the attitudes and practices of different societies and organizations in the work-life balance.

For Ireland's work-life balance experience, Chinese Internet-related companies need to dialectically viewed. China's IT-related companies should carefully choose their work-life balance measures and programs based on their specific circumstances.

1.2 structure of this thesis

The first chapter is an introduction, and this chapter will explain the research purpose and research value of this thesis. The second chapter is the literature review, and this chapter contains the theoretical framework of work-life balance, the social and cultural conditions of the two countries, and the current condition of work-life balance. The third chapter is the research aim and research questions, which will clarify specific research questions and enumerate sub-questions. The fourth chapter is the methodology, which will detail the research methods and the steps to conduct the research. The fifth chapter is the results and findings, which will include all research-related findings and appropriate analysis. The sixth

chapter is a discussion. Chapter six combines the research findings with the theoretical framework and combines theory with practice. The seventh chapter is the conclusion and recommendations. The purpose of chapter seven is to summarize the full text and propose possible solutions that can improve the conflicts between work and life in China's IT industry. Besides, the research questions presented in chapter three will be answered in the seventh chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter will present the main theoretical and academic foundations of work-life balance, including the results of research and exploration of work-life balance by Irish and Chinese scholars. This chapter also includes the experience in exploring the work-life balance, the social background, the cultural background, and the current condition of the work-life balance of the IT industry in Ireland and China.

2.1 relevant theoretical foundations of work-life balance

2.1.1 interpretation of work-life balance concept

Scholars have defined the concept of work-life balance with different perspectives. **Firstly,** from a subjective and objective perspective. From a perspective of personal subjectivity, the balance between work and family can be subjectively satisfied by an individual. It is the work-life balance defined by Clark (2000): the individual exerts subjective initiative and minimizes the conflict between work role and family role, to get the most extent of harmony and balance between work and life. Allen et al. (2008) believe that work-life balance is a feeling of satisfaction with the role that is important to someone. Frone (2003) combines two aspects of conflict and promotion. He believes that the work-family balance should include both conflict and promotion, namely, a relatively low level of role conflict and a relatively high role promotion. The work-life balance under the subjective

perspective will measure by the individual's psychological and physiological feelings. The balance between work and life depends entirely on the individual's subjective evaluation (Voydanoff, 2005).

On the other hand, Edwards and Bagozzi (2000) argue that the work-life balance premised on the coordination of different objective factors. The potential combination of different objective factors will balance both work and life. The work-related objective factors mainly come from five aspects: work requirements, working hours, work pressure, work overload and work flexibility. The family-related objective factors are the size of the family, the responsibility of caring for children, the responsibility for housework, the conflict with partners, the employment status of family members. Other objective factors are income level, family support and gender cultural differences (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000).

Work-life balance has also been defined by Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw (2003) as three measurable areas: time balance (the expected time spent on both roles is the same), participation balance (individuals have the same mentality for both roles' participation) and satisfaction balance (the individual's satisfaction with the work role and life role is the same). Greenhaus, Ziegert and Allen (2012) explored the differences between low-level and high-level employees' work-family conflicts and found that based on the impact of work resources, both high-level and low-level employees showed varying degrees of work intrusion into their family life. Therefore, work-related requirements are an essential variable in the work-life balance.

To sum up, the subjective perspective regards the relationship between the individual and the work-family balance as the key to the study, emphasizing the individual's subjective perception and evaluation of the role. However, subjectivity means that different people have different understandings and measures of role conflict and role balance. Different individuals are taking different ways of reducing role conflicts. This subjective measure is highly targeted and cannot cover all individuals.

The objective perspective subdivides the work-life balance into measurable factors, making the concept controllable and emphasizing the impact on objective factors of work-life balance. However, one-sided attention to objective factors and control processes may neglect individuals' feelings about work-life balance. Therefore, an intermediate point should found between subjective and objective perspectives.

Secondly, the concept of work-life balance can also define by other perspectives. Marks and MacDermid (1996) point out that everyone plays a different job role and family role. Work-life balance is a balance point between individuals in multiple roles. Harris and Foster (2008) emphasize that work-life balance needs the help of external forces, such as management and family support.

Combined with the above literature, this thesis defines the work-life balance as supported by external objective factors. The individual can play an individual initiative to autonomously allocate time, resources and energy to make work and life in balance.

2.1.2 role theory

Role theory holds that "role" refers to a pattern of behaviour that an individual is expected to be in a particular role (Ellen and Ozeki, 1999). In the management context of the IT industry, when the role of "programmer" is mentioned, people will have different expectations and associations for the behaviour pattern of the "programmer" role. Similarly, in the context of family life, people also have different expectations and associations about the behavioural patterns of the "father" role. In general, an individual has multiple roles and fulfils them.

In 1986, Biddle further elaborated that role behaviour is the result of an individual's perception of the role and the external expectations of the role. When the internal perception of the role matches the external expectations of the role, the role is considered to be balanced. Conversely, it may lead to role conflicts..

2.1.3 role conflict theory

Ouyang (2014) defines role conflicts as fulfilling one role's responsibilities that may affect the performance of other roles. She believes that the cause of the role conflict is that the time, energy and ability of the individual have an inevitable scarcity. As mentioned earlier, in order to take care of the family and fulfil the responsibility of the "father" role, an individual may sacrifice the time and effort of the "programmer" role. Individual's limited resources consumed in the needs of different roles, and conflicts cannot be avoided when the needs of various roles not met (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007). Hyman et al. (2003) pointed out that IT practitioners follow a rational, logical approach at work, but they become more emotional in the family role. Kanter (1977) believes that the field of work and non-work of programmers is "integrated" rather than "separated." That is, the boundaries between the working and non-working status are very vague, which leads to role conflicts.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) pointed out that role conflicts come from three aspects: time conflicts (times are required to fulfil different roles, but time is a limited resource. Programmers need to spend more time completing their work), stress conflicts (the sense of stress generated by one role affects the performance of other roles. The IT industry is a high-pressure industry, and the pressure in work is easily brought to family life by programmers, which may cause occupational boredom or health problems, seriously affecting the fulfilment of family roles) and behavioral conflicts (when an individual transitions from the current role to another role, if the individual is unable to adjust different role behaviour patterns in time, the behaviour will not match the role. It means that the programmer is not a good father, or the father is not a good programmer).

In other words, fulfilling a role requires consuming a limited amount of resources, including time, energy and ability. If limited resources do not meet different role requirements, different roles will compete for these resources and create role conflicts (Siber, 1974). Since individuals can perceive role conflicts, if they do not

deal with role conflicts, they may affect individual performance and life satisfaction (Clark, 2001). Therefore, there is a need to maintain a balance of an individual's resources between roles.

2.1.4 role spillover theory

When an individual is performing a role, the role's unique emotions, attitudes, skills, and behaviours "overflow" to other roles, affecting and interfering, increasing or impairing the individual's ability to perform other roles. It is the role spillover theory defined by Rosabeth in 1997. Furthermore, the spillover effect in the workplace employment relationship is mainly due to the employer's requirement that the employee is always on standby, and the limited time resources are almost entirely assigned to the work roles, resulting in the employee being unable to perform other roles. Spillover effects are not related to tasks and cannot be switch off (Fagan 2004. Perrons et al., 2006).

Staines and Connor (1980) further subdivide the spillover effect into positive and negative. Positive spillover means that under multiple role conditions, different resources (such as social resources) obtained by individuals have a positive effect on individuals' realization of other roles. Negative spillover believes that negative emotions and negative influences of a role interact between different roles. For example, the disharmony of "family" roles can affect the performance of work roles, increase employee pressure and affect employee performance.

For the role of work and family, Hochschild (2001) points out from another perspective that the role of family and work is precisely the opposite. Work provides individuals with a sense of stimulation, guidance, and belonging, and individuals can achieve themselves from their work. Moreover, the family becomes a place to do excessive things in a limited time, which may reveal that the work role is orderly and controllable. While the family role is difficult to control, the impact on a family role is more likely to spill over into work role.

Work-life conflicts will divide into three categories by Duxbury and Higgins

(2003): (i) "Role overload", which means that individuals do not have enough time and energy to perform their roles or that role requirements exceed the individual's affordability. (ii) "Work intrusion", which means that the work roles overflows and affects the performance of the family role. (iii) "Family invasion" means that family roles and family responsibilities affect work responsibilities and performance.

Spillover theory is considered to be a critical academic foundation for work-life balance. It explains the complex interrelationship between work role and family role, quantifies the concept of work-life balance, and provides relevant evidence for work-life balance improvement.

2.1.5 analysis of Factors Affecting Work-Life Balance

The factors affecting the work-life balance concentrated on the three fields: work, family and personal. The field of work mainly involves factors such as job characteristics, organizational support and leadership style; family factors include family support and family structure; and the personal field mainly studies demographic variables, five-factor model (OCEAN) personality research, and psychological capital.

2.1.5.1 work field

Factors that influence the work-life balance in the work field include the length of working hours, diversity of work, work autonomy, flexible work, work resources, and work requirements. For the study of flexible work, Hill (2001) argues that when individuals face the same amount of work, it is easier for people who are offered flexible work to achieve a work-life balance. Chen et al. (2007) found that work-sharing is positively related to work-life balance. In addition to implementing family-friendly policies, the support of managers and colleagues for employees is also conducive to promoting work-life balance. The research of Gillet and Kara (2013) shows that positive leadership styles can help employees

balance family and work roles. Managers only realize the importance of work-life balance, then they will introduce relevant policies for their employees (Mccarthy et al., 2010).

2.1.5.2 family field

Stress from the family, family involvement, and family structure will all affect work-life balance. Gao (2011) pointed out that when employees spend too much time and energy on the family, the family role will affect the work role and cause family-work conflicts. Burke, Weir and Duwors (1980) believe that married people face stronger work-life conflicts than unmarried people. The higher the number of children that need to raised, or the younger the child, the more time and effort employees need to invest in the family role, and the more likely they will face family-work conflicts (Greenhaus, Collins and Shaw, 2008). Grzywacz and Mark (2000) highlight that the emotional support of family can help employees to get a positive attitude into their work. In family support, the support of spouses and partners can play a significant role in achieving a work-life balance.

2.1.5.3 personal field

The personal field is more concerned with demographics, personality traits, and psychology. Demographics will focus on gender factors. Cinamon and Yisrael (2002) found that women suffered serious conflicts in work-life. Personality characteristic variables mainly include OCEAN personality and type A and B personality. Grzywacz and Mark's research in 2000 showed that conscientious personality is positively related to work-family conflicts and that there is a negative correlation between reciprocal personality and work-family conflict. Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000) argue that people with type A personality have a strong sense of initiative, self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. They are more capable than the type B personality to ease work-life conflicts. Optimistic personality makes it easier to achieve work-life balance (Aryee,

Srinivas and Tan, 2005). In other words, those who are optimistic and enterprising have enough psychological capital to promote work-life balance (Siu, 2013).

2.2 the premise of China learning from Ireland: a similar social background

It is precisely because China and EU countries (including Ireland) have similar social and workplace backgrounds that China can reference the results they have achieved in exploring the work-life balance (He, Tao and Liu, 2010). There are three main points in the concept of work-life balance that can discuss in a comparison between China and the West, and they are external dynamic factors, important driver factors and potential factors.

Firstly, the external dynamic factors that influence the balance between work and life are the dual changes in the modern work environment and emerging work requirements. Yue (2013) pointed out that the globalization and informatization process that began in the late 20th century caused significant changes in the economic, political and cultural aspects of European countries as a whole, and the family structure and demographic structure also changed accordingly. In the same period of China, Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening-up policy enabled China to join the World Trade Organization, and the institutional reform from the planned economy to the socialist market economy enabled the Chinese economy to achieve rapid development (Xiao and Cooke, 2012). According to the statistical report released by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in 2017, China's GDP has increased by nearly 10% from the initial implementation of the reform and opening-up policy (1978) to 2017.

After the millennium, the tremendous changes in modern society have concentrated workers' pressure on two aspects: the extension of working hours and the sharp increase in workload. The European Working Conditions Survey released in 2000 pointed out that in the workplace-related health issues, work pressure ranked second and showed a growing trend. The China Labor Statistics Yearbook (2005) clearly states that urban workers in China work an average of 45.5 hours

per week, while the statutory weekly working hours are 40 hours.

On the other hand, the development of informatization has made electronic information equipment an indispensable part of modern workplaces. It has made people no longer limited to do their job in the office. Workers can complete work anytime and anywhere through electronic information devices. The boundaries between work and life are increasingly blurred. Boundary blurring can lead to work invades life or life invades work (Byrne, 2005).

Secondly, participation structural changes in the labour market are considered to be essential drivers of work-life balance. Crompton (1999) argues that in the mid-20th century, the public generally believed that "standard workers" usually referred to men, and women were considered to be responsible only for caring for the family and for completing some unpaid work. Until the 21st century, more and more women in European countries (including Ireland) actively participated in the labour market, and the rate of women's participation in labour increased year by year. The survey data from Bergemann and van den Berg (2006) reflects this trend: the European female labour market participation rate has climbed 12.4% in 20 years (from 1984 to 2004). Gender inequality in the workplace directly or indirectly affects the balance of work and life. The importance of family roles may be ignored by men, while the unequal work roles and overburdened family roles may make women's work and life seriously unbalanced. Therefore, careful consideration of gender inequality at work, including the division of work and time allocation, is an entry point to alleviate structural work-life conflicts (Dey, 2006).

Influenced by the Confucian tradition of thought, the Chinese market is characterized by "male responsible for making money and women responsible for taking care of the family". Chinese women spend more than two hours on housework than men(An et al., 2008). According to the China Labor Statistics Yearbook (2006) issued by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, from 2000 to 2005, many women in China participated in employment, and the urban female

employment rate reached 37.9%. With women's labour participation rate gradually increasing, Chinese women have higher expectations for work-life balance. Modern women not only participate in family-related unpaid work but also start their careers. More and more women are pursuing equal pay for equal work and work-life balance (Yi and Chen, 2002).

Thirdly, some underlying factors also affect work-life balance, such as structural changes in the family and population, and the potential impact of Chinese and Western work culture and social culture. The ageing of the population is a severe dilemma faced by both Chinese and Western countries in the 21st century. Eurostat issued a report as early as 2004, stating that by 2050, Europe will have only 34% of the young workforce (20-59 years old), and the total fertility rate in the EU countries is lower than the standard population replacement rate of the United Nations.

According to the data bulletin of China's sixth national census (2011), the proportion of older people aged 60 and over has reached 13.3%. It is estimated that in 2030, the proportion of China's elderly population will exceed 20%. Liu (2012) found that since the implementation of the family planning policy in the 1980s, the average number of family members in China has decreased from 4.41 to 3.1, and the family structure has changed. The one-child policy has put more pressure on people born after 1980. They need to be solely responsible for supporting their parents and caring for their children, as well as facing enormous work pressures. The work-life conflict of this generation is severe (Yue and Zhu, 2013).

2.3 the current condition of work-life balance in China's IT industry

As one of the fastest-growing industries in China, the Internet IT industry has a large number of relevant practitioners. Compared with other types of industries, the Internet IT industry has the characteristics of rapid change, high work pressure, overtime, fierce competition and continuous optimization and restructuring of the industry (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). Li (2018) pointed out that compared with

Western countries (Americas and Europe), the working life of China's IT industry is seriously unbalanced. She emphasized in her research that in the context of China's rapid economic development, China's IT industry practitioners face higher job demands, more extended average daily workload and average weekly working hours. The '996' model of work (9 am to 9 pm, 6 days a week) has become the norm for Chinese IT practitioners. China's mainstream recruitment agency, Zhilian Recruitment, released a research report on China's '996' work model in 2019. The report shows that nearly 80% of China's employees have overtime work, and more than 70% of employees work overtime without compensation. The most serious occupations for overtime work are technical, research and sales and marketing. 30% of IT industry practitioners work overtime for more than ten hours per week (Zhong and Yuan, 2019).

Part of the reason for the emergence of China's '996' work model can attribute to China's completely different cultural background from Ireland. This thesis uses COUNTRY COMPARISON TOOL which is based on Hofstede's cultural dimension field to compare the cultural differences between China and Ireland and tries to find out the underlying reasons of China's overtime culture from the comparison results. The results of the comparison as follows:

Figure 1 Comparison of Chinese and Irish Cultural Dimensions
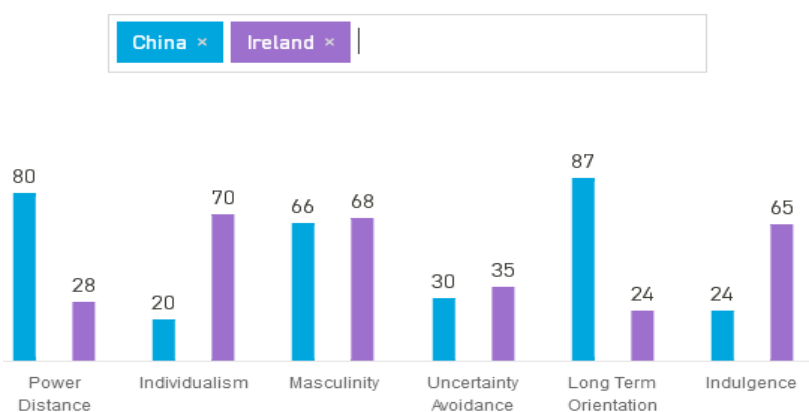
Source: Hofstede Insights (2019) COUNTRY COMPARISON TOOL [Online] Available at:
https://www.hofstede-insights.com/

Figure 1 shows that China's power distance is much higher than that of Ireland, indicating that Chinese society has a strict concept of engagement, preferring to adopt a vertically centralized management structure, and superiors have more power. The vertically centralized management structure leads to a high degree of rights inequality, so China's individualism tends to be lower than Ireland's. The performance in the overtime culture of the IT industry is that the boss advocates the employees' unpaid dedication, and the boss has absolute dominance over the task assignment and time resources of the employees. In other words, employees working overtime may force by the authority of organizational management.

Irish people prefer to focus on the current situation and develop appropriate short-term plans. The Chinese like to make long-term plans, and they like to look at the problem from a future perspective. In the complex and changing business environment of the IT industry, Chinese IT practitioners have to do more work to achieve long-term goals, which undoubtedly increases the workload of IT practitioners and leads to overtime becoming the norm (Wang and Wu, 2018).

2.4 work-life balance situation of IT industry in Ireland

Ireland's IT industry has the same characteristics as China, with a fast-paced work environment, high job requirements, and rapid industry changes. Therefore, the boundaries between the 'programmer' role and the 'family member' role are often blurred. It can easily lead to role conflicts. Employees with clear boundaries between different roles positively correlated with work-life balance satisfaction (Scholarios and Marks, 2004).

According to ABRIVIA's (2019) survey, the Irish IT industry generally believes that the key to reducing employee turnover is to achieve a balance of work and life, not compensation. More than half of the survey participants believe that work-life balance is the main reason they stay in the current organization. The OECD (2019) has done statistically found that the rate of long-term work by Irish people (5%) is much lower than the average of the OECD (13%). Most employers in the Irish IT

industry are aware of the importance of work-life balance for employees and organizations. Nearly 80% of companies have a telework policy, and more than 60% of organizations have a positive attitude toward telework policy. Under such a policy, many programmers are allowed to use their office equipment in the workplace. Flexible work arrangements are gaining more and more attention in the IT industry (McCarthy, Cleveland, and Hunter et al., 2013).

2.5 exploration experience of work-life balance in Irish Labor Law

The Irish Labor Law (2018) has contributed to the balance of work and life. The Employment (Misc. Provisions) Act 2018 revised the Organization of Working Time Act 1997, which sets minimum health and safety standards, including length of work (up to 48 hours per week, the time from the home to the customer's location should be considered as working time), each Daybreak (per 4.5 hrs/ 15 minutes, per 6 hrs/ 30 minutes, per 24 hrs/ 11 hrs) and holiday entitlement (4 weeks after 1365 hours of work per year, part-time employee's leave should account for 8% of the hours worked). Force Majeure Leave gives employees the right to take paid leave for force majeure reasons. Employees can take three days to leave in any 12 consecutive months, or 5 days in any 36 months of paid vacation, which allows employees to deal with urgent family matters on time and helps employees take responsibility for family roles.

The Parental Leave Act 2018 allows parents to apply for a consecutive 18-week (unpaid) holiday to look after their child before the child reaches the age of 8 (children with disabilities before the age of 16). The Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016 emphasizes the role of fatherhood in the family and children and improves work-life balance. The Act stipulates that a father may take two consecutive weeks of leave when the child is born or adopted (the employer is not obligated to pay the wages). The Maternity Protection Acts 1994-2014 pointed out that any unfavourable treatment of pregnant women would constitute gender discrimination. The purpose of maternity leave is to protect women's physical

health and the special relationship between women and children. Women can enjoy 26 weeks of unpaid maternity leave (but can receive maternity benefits), 16 weeks of extra leave and attend prenatal checkups.

Chapter 3: Research aim and research questions

As mentioned in the previous literature review, work-life balance can be defined as under the support of external objective factors, individual autonomous allocation of personal resources to balance the roles. Lower role conflicts enable balance and harmony between work and life (Clark, 2000). With the development of globalization, the working environment, the structure of the labour market and the demographic structure have changed accordingly (Yue, 2013), and the balance between work and life has become a new demand for all practitioners in various industries (Schwarzmueller, Brosi, Duman and Welpe, 2018). Work-life balance can improve employee performance and loyalty to the organization, as well as reduce the incidence of job burnout (Haar and Spell, 2004). The Irish and Chinese IT industries are emerging industries. Faced with enormous work pressures and complex industry requirements, IT practitioners' work and life conflicts are becoming more and more serious (Pradhan, Jena and Kumari, 2016).

This thesis aims to explore the family and career win-win strategies of Chinese IT industry practitioners. The work-life balance experience in the Irish IT industry will be the primary reference for authors.

The main research questions related to the purpose of the research are: how to alleviate the conflicts in the work and family life of Chinese IT industry practitioners?

Sub-questions:

- What is the current condition of work-life balance in the IT industry in Ireland and China?

- What are the policies for maintaining the work-life balance of the IT industry in Ireland?

- What and how can China learn from Ireland? How about the implementation cost?
- Is there any possible future research?
- What can the researcher (author) learn from this research process?

Chapter 4: Methodology

Section 4.1 of this chapter will describe the research methods used by the authors for research purposes and explain the reasons for using these research methods. Section 4.2 will introduce a complete research strategy and process.

4.1 introduction

Research methods mainly include quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis usually presented as experimental and investigative studies. Qualitative analysis is related to transactional nature and strategy and often presented as specific actions and case studies (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Section 4.1 will explain the following three concepts: research samples, research tools, and data analysis.

4.1.1 research samples

There is no doubt that the research sample must be highly relevant to the research topic. Martinez-Mesa et al. (2016) pointed out that determining the study sample should consider two aspects: the number of individuals included in the sample and the confidence of the sample. The sample should contain an appropriate number of individuals. If the number of individuals is too small, it will affect the accuracy of post-statistical inference and data analysis; if the number of individuals is too large, it will cost unnecessary analysis. On the other hand, the study sample should be highly representative to ensure the credibility of the sample, which is the source of reliable conclusions. Researchers also need to complete sample collection within a limited research cost and ensure that random errors are effectively controlled.

4.1.2 research tools

The source and access to academic information are related to the reliability and accuracy of the thesis. The primary access and tools can be: researching reliable academic journals, interviews, street surveys or online questionnaires (Martin, 2019). The quantitative analysis method mainly relies on collecting and analyzing reliable, objective data, and inferring the trend of things by observing the trends and changes of numbers. The quantitative analysis emphasizes data collection and quantitative analysis (Bryman, 2004). In order to minimize possible errors and deviations, data collection tools and research processes are highly standardized. The quantitative analysis method used in this thesis is the questionnaire survey. Qualitative analysis methods are generally used to explore an abstract concept, such as values, worldviews, personal attitudes, opinions, and behaviours, and to analyze the impact on individuals. The qualitative analysis methods used in this thesis are interviews and literature analysis.

4.1.3 data analysis

After obtaining the first-hand information of the questionnaire, it is necessary to statistically summarize the data according to different categories, and perform Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) analysis to determine the reliability and credibility of the data. Statistics can then be drawn through the charting tool to make it easier to analyze and draw conclusions. Objective data should support the ideas presented in the thesis.

It is also possible to refer to some second-hand data in the thesis. When selecting and using second-hand data, researchers need to determine whether the data is highly relevant to the research topic and the reliability and timeliness of the data source.

4.2 research strategy and process

This thesis will collect data in the form of the questionnaire and interview. The

questionnaire will be used to analyze the current condition of the work-life balance of Chinese IT industry practitioners. The interview will be used to collect successful experience in the work-life balance of the Irish IT industry.

4.2.1 questionnaire

This questionnaire divided into four parts. The questionnaire is detailed in Appendix 1. The four parts contain the basic situation, work-life balance scale, boundary control sense scale and working resource scale. The work-life balance scale uses Valcour's (2011) subjective assessment to measure the overall perception of the work-life balance of Chinese IT industry practitioners. The boundary control sense scale is based on the Kossek and Lautsch (2012) scale and uses a five-point scoring method. The higher the score, the higher the boundary control sense. The working resources scale refers to the definition of working resources by Bakker and Demerouti (2004) and the working resource scale template of Lu (2008). The scale consists of three parts: social support, work control and job development opportunities.

4.2.1.1 questionnaire structure

The first part is the basic situation questionnaire (Form A), which will investigate the basic situation of the respondents, including the gender, age, education level, marital status, number of children, current position, monthly income, Average weekly working hours.

The second part is the Work-Life balance scale (Form B). The content of this part includes satisfaction with the time allocation and energy distribution of work and life and satisfaction with the current work-life balance situation.

The third part is the boundary control sense scale (Form C). The main content is to investigate the boundary between the work and life of the respondents. Does the respondent have apparent conflicts of work and life, and whether the respondents can bear responsibilities of different roles in different fields.

The fourth part is the working resource scale (Form D), which can measure the distribution and utilization of the work resources of the respondents, and analyze whether the respondents can get help and support from the organization.

4.2.1.2 reliability and validity of questionnaire

The questionnaire will first test for reliability and validity. Reliability test and validity test ensure the credibility, effectiveness and stability of the questionnaire. The ability to demonstrate the results of the questionnaire data is sufficient and reliable data support for the thesis.

4.2.1.2.1 reliability test

The reliability test of the questionnaire in this thesis will use Cronbach's alpha (α). Cronbach's alpha (α) is a statistic and is the most commonly used measure of reliability. Usually, the value of Cronbach'α is between 0 and 1. If the α coefficient does not exceed 0.6, the scale is considered to be insufficiently reliable; when the α coefficient reaches 0.7-0.8, the reliability of the scale is good; $\alpha = 0.8$-0.9 indicates that the scale has perfect reliability.

The questionnaire of this thesis involves three scales. The variables involved in the three scales are work-life balance, boundary control sense and work resources — the reliability of these three scales measured in the following table. The reliability test results show that the α coefficients of the three scales are all above 0.9, indicating that the reliability of the three scales is relatively reliable.

Table 1 Reliability test results of three scales

scales and variables	cronbach's α	question No. (n)
work-life balance	0.902	5
boundary control sense	0.906	9
work resource	0.901	13

4.2.1.2.2 validity test

Validity test often defined as the extent to which a measurement tool can accurately measure what needs to be measured. This thesis will test the content validity and structural validity of the questionnaire.

First of all, Content validity refers to whether the item designed can match and represent the content or topic to be measured. The content of the questionnaire is highly related to work-life balance, and regarding the mature scales of domestic and foreign scholars, combined with the characteristics of IT industry practitioners. This questionnaire can match the research objectives of the thesis and provide relevant data support for the thesis. Therefore, the content validity of the questionnaire is good.

Secondly, Factor analysis can be used to analyze structural validity. Structural validity can reflect the degree of correspondence between structure and measured values. The questionnaire tested for validity using KMO values and Bartlett test values. The authors used SPSS 19.0 to validate the validity of the three scales (Work-Life Balance Scale, Boundary Control Sensibility Scale, and Work Resource Scale). The output is as follows. The KMO values of the three scales were all greater than 0.85, the significance level Sin value = 0.000 < 0.01, and the Sig values were all less than 0.05. The above description shows that the three scales have good structural validity and are suitable for factor analysis.

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett test of the Work-Life Balance scale

KMO value		0.866
Bartlett sphericity test	Approximate chi square	958.396
	Df	10
	Sig	0

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett test of the boundary control sense scale

KMO value		0.924
Bartlett sphericity test	Approximate chi square	1401.256
	Df	36
	Sig	0

Table 4 KMO and Bartlett test of the work resource scale

	KMO value	0.886
Bartlett sphericity test	Approximate chi square	1953.388
	Df	78
	Sig	0

The above content fully demonstrates that the validity and reliability of the questionnaire are good, and the statistical results of the questionnaire can support as data for the research of the thesis. The statistical result and analysis of the questionnaire will elaborate in Chapter 5.

4.2.2 interview

The interview part of this thesis uses the phenomenological research method. Phenomenological research is defined by Creswell (2014) as a research method in which researchers study the phenomenon by capturing the subjective experience of participants on a phenomenon. The phenomenological study only looks at the individual's current experience and attempts to describe it as unbiased as possible or without explanation. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is based on phenomenological research.

Since the purpose of this thesis is to draw on Ireland's work-life balance experience to try to alleviate the conflicts between work and life in China's IT industry, the setting of interview questions will consider from the current situation of work-life conflicts (results of questionnaires) faced by Chinese IT industry practitioners. The areas of interview questions will include organizational support, social support and family support, etc.

4.2.2.1 interview process

The interview took 15 days (from June 17 to July 1), and the interview time was from 21 minutes to 32 minutes. All respondents volunteered after fully

understanding the content and purpose of the interview. In order to ensure that the interview results are consistent and practical, all respondents will read an interview instruction before the interview begins. The instruction will explain the purpose of the interview, the interview questions, and the interview method. The interview instruction and interview questions detailed in Appendix 2.

The location of the interview is an appropriate and comfortable place to be decided by both parties. The researcher (author) will ensure that the personal information of the respondent is kept confidential. In order to minimize the bias to ensure the quality of the information collected during the interview, the researchers need to pay attention to controlling the tone and body language during the interview (Saunders et al., 2016).

The data and information collected are for academic research only.

4.2.2.2 pilot study

Before the formal interview, the researcher (author) will conduct a pilot study of the interview content. The investigator took a respondent to try to understand and answer the interview questions. The researchers modified and optimized the two questions based on the feedback from the respondents to make them more relevant to the research topic of the thesis. The pilot study increased the practicality and effectiveness of the interview content.

4.2.2.3 interview sample

The target group for the interview sample was the IT industry practitioner in Ireland. The method of selecting respondents is purpose sampling. The purpose sampling based on several factors that need to study as the criteria for selecting samples to meet the research objectives best.

The research goal of this thesis is to alleviate the conflicts between work and life of Chinese IT industry practitioners, so the interview participants should be similar to the situation of Chinese employees. Since the Chinese employees who surveyed

in the previous questionnaire aged between 24 and 34, the respondents in Ireland were between the ages of 24 and 37. Respondents came from different Irish IT companies and held similar positions.

A total of five respondents voluntarily accepted interviews with researchers, including two women and three men. Participants have local Irish staff and foreign employees. The specific information of the respondents is as follows:

Table 5 information of the respondents

Participant	Gender	Age	Family status	children	Job title	Tenure
A	Male	27	Cohabitation	no	Software engineer	3yrs + 2months
B	Female	28	Single	no	Software engineer	4yrs + 1month
C	Male	24	Single	no	Customer support	8 months
D	Female	35	Married	3	Java developer	5yrs
E	Male	37	Married	4	Cloud system engineer	7yrs + 4months

4.2.2.4 content analysis

Respondents' interview process recorded by the researcher (author). Interviews follow a certain logic, and the final thesis will use parts that fit the specific topic. Therefore, the respondents' responses were transcribed into textual forms by the researchers according to the thematic analysis method.

Thematic analysis can purposefully simplify the collected data and information, which is a highly flexible research method (Braun and Clarke, 2006). When doing thematic analysis, researchers need to pay attention to the use of objective language. There may be issues in the established theme that are inconsistent with the research objectives (Nowell et al., 2017). Researchers need to consider the above fully. The thematic analysis method follows the following steps:

The first step, in order to maintain the researcher's memory integrity of the interview process and content, the researcher should complete the transcription of the interview content within 24-48 hours after the interview.

The second step, the researcher needs to identify and compare the content of the transcribed content to find similar or consistent views and opinions.

The third step, the researcher needs to refer to some academic literature based on

the viewpoints and opinions found in the second step to formulate the theme and name the theme according to the research needs.

The fourth step, all the content is sorted according to the established theme.

The fifth step, the analysis of the interview content has been completed by the thematic analysis method. The researcher can find the corresponding interview content as evidence support according to different topics when completing the thesis.

4.3 ethic policy

A large amount of data and information needs to be collected during research and completion of the thesis, and there may be potential problems such as the disclosure of the privacy information of the respondent, the intervention of the questionnaire option, and the copyright of the relevant literature and journals.

Data can divide into first-hand data and second-hand data. First-hand data include questionnaires and interviews. The researcher (author) will respect and protect the privacy of the respondent when collecting first-hand data, and ensure that the personal information of the respondent is kept confidential. Before starting to collect data, the researcher should provide sufficient information about the research so that the respondents fully understand the research purpose, risks and benefits, and participate in the study voluntarily according to the principle of informed consent.

Second-hand data generally refers to documents, journals, and data that will be cited by researchers. When citing literature and journals, the researcher will respect and protect the copyright of the original author and properly quote the original author's research results. Avoid misinterpreting and misusing the original author's point of view. Researchers will also pinpoint the sources of references and journals to avoid plagiarism.

The researcher will strictly abide by the above ethical policies, and the supervisor will supervise the entire research process of the researcher.

Chapter 5: Results and findings

This chapter will elaborate on the results of the questionnaires and interviews in Chapter 4, and then the author will make an appropriate analysis to provide reliable evidence support for the thesis.

5.1 result and analysis of questionnaire

The author chose Beijing as the location for the questionnaire because Beijing concentrated 60% of the top 100 Chinese Internet IT companies. Also, Beijing is the capital of China. It will be representative of the study of work-life balance as a sample. This thesis selected about three hundred employees from some typical Internet IT companies as the research sample. A total of 310 valid questionnaires were received, and the effective rate of the questionnaire was 89%.

The questionnaire contains four parts: the basic situation of scale A, the work and life balance of scale B, the sense of boundary control of scale C and the working resources of scale D. This thesis will display the results of the questionnaire one by one and analyze it.

5.1.1 the basic situation

Here lists the basic situation of the research samples participating in the questionnaire. Contains statistics on age, gender, education, marital status, family status, etc.

Table 6 basic situation of research samples

sample distribution		total	
		number of people	%
gender	male	150	48.4
	female	160	51.6
age	≤24	80	25.8
	25-29	159	51.3
	30-34	42	13.5
	35-39	18	5.8
	40-44	7	2.3
	45-49	1	0.3
	50-54	3	1
workplace type	foreign	23	7.4
	joint venture	25	8.1
	state-owned	58	18.7
	private	204	65.8
number of children	unmarried	216	69.7
	0	23	7.4
	1	61	19.7
	2	9	2.9
	3	1	0.3

sample distribution		total	
		number of people	%
marital status	unmarried	216	69.7
	married	90	29
	divorced	3	1
	widowed	1	0.3
education level	≤junior high school	4	1.3
	high school	18	5.8
	college	55	17.7
	bachelor	163	52.6
	master	67	21.6
	doctor	3	1
current position	technical	109	35.2
	operational	30	9.7
	marketing	44	14.2
	administrative	96	31
	other	31	10
number of old people	0	159	51.3
	1	49	15.8
	2	74	23.9
	3	10	3.2
	≥4	18	5.8

This thesis proposes in the literature review that both men and women face the problem of imbalance between work and life. Therefore, the statistical data in Table 6 shows that the research sample of this questionnaire based on the principle of gender balance, with 150 males and 160 females. The male and female samples are evenly distributed, consistent with the sample presets of the thesis.

From the perspective of age distribution, the employees of the internet-related companies surveyed characterized by youthfulness, mainly concentrated at 34 years old and below. More than 90% of the participants in the questionnaire were younger than 34 years old. Employees aged 35 and over account for less than 10%. Among young employees, the proportion of people aged 24 and below is 25.8%, the employees aged 25-29 account for 53.5%, and the employees aged 30-34 account for 11.3%.

Because the IT industry has higher requirements for practitioners' academic qualifications and technical level, most of the questionnaire participants' qualifications are undergraduate and above (75.2% in total). The proportion of undergraduates is 52.6%, and the proportion of masters and doctors is 22.6%.

As mentioned earlier, the age of the IT industry practitioners is relatively young, so 69.7% of the participants in the questionnaire have unmarried marital status. Among married people, 24.4% have no children, and 75.5% have one or more children.

In terms of working hours, although China legally stipulates that the maximum working time per week is 40 hours, in reality, few companies can guarantee that employees do not work overtime. The time-out work of the IT industry is even more severe. In this questionnaire, 90% of participants have time-out work. Among them, the proportion of 40-43 hours per week is 31.6%, the proportion of 44-47 hours is 20.6%, the proportion of 48-51 hours is 16.1%, and even 21.3% of people worked more than 51 hours. Nearly 40% of respondents work more than 10 hours a day.

The turnover rate of employees in the IT industry is very high. According to this

questionnaire, more than two-thirds of the participants have experience in changing jobs. Among them, 42.9% of the respondents had two or more job-hopping experiences.

There are many different positions in the IT industry. Generally speaking, technical jobs have higher wages. The industry's monthly income gap is large, the minimum wage income is less than 3000 RMB, and the highest wage income can reach or exceed 40,000 RMB. The average monthly income is around 9000 RMB, which is higher than the overall average monthly income of Beijing (7706 RMB).

Some employees are willing to endure long hours of overtime is mostly due to the pressure of life and housing. The results of the questionnaire data show that 69.3% of the current housing rented or bank mortgaged, and only 30.6% of the people have their housing.

If employees spend too much time from their home to the workplace, it can easily lead to burnout and exhaustion. According to the results of the questionnaire, nearly 70% of people commute more than 1 hour a day, 34.8% of commuters spend more than 2 hours, and nearly 5% commute more than 4 hours a day.

5.1.2 mean value of each scale and ANOVA

The mean of the three scales (B, C and D) will briefly describe before the one-way ANOVA.

5.1.2.1 work-life balance (scale B)

The Work-Life Balance Scale has a full score of 25 points, and the overall mean is 15.3. In other words, only 38.1% of people have reached a work-life balance. From the overall situation, the level of work and life balance of IT-related practitioners is at a lower-middle level. The scores of this scale vary widely, with a minimum score of 5 points. Nearly 85% of people think that their work and life fit is weak, which indicates that employees' ability and external support have a weaker promotion effect on work-life balance.

Table 7 work-life balance mean value and standard deviation

items of scale B	mean	standard deviation
B1	3.00	0.885
B2	2.97	0.875
B3	3.17	0.781
B4	3.08	0.820
B5	3.07	0.839

In the further one-way analysis of variance, the thesis found that different ages, marital status, working hours and other factors have significant differences in employee work-life balance scores. The one-way analysis of variance for age to work-life balance is as follows:

Table 8 one-way analysis of variance for age

Dependent variable		sum of square	df	Mean square	F	sig
work-life balance	between groups	75.903	2	37.951	3.027	0.050
	inside groups	3849.594	307	12.539	/	/
	total	3925.497	309	/	/	/

As we can see from Table 8, age has a significant impact on work-life balance. Dividing the age into three groups and analyzing the work-life balance as a one-way analysis of variance showed that employees aged 25-29 had a work-life balance score lower than those aged 30 and above. The possible reason is that employees under the age of 30 have just started their careers and face greater pressures on life and work. These two aspects are difficult to balance.

Table 9 one-way analysis of variance on marital status

Dependent variable		sum of square	df	Mean square	F	sig
work-life balance	between groups	101.405	1	101.405	8.167	0.005
	inside groups	3824.091	308	12.416	/	/
	total	3925.497	309	/	/	/

Table 10 one-way analysis of variance for child status

Dependent variable		sum of square	df	Mean square	F	sig
work-life balance	between groups	52.233	1	52.233	4.154	0.042
	inside groups	3873.264	308	12.576	/	/
	total	3925.497	309	/	/	/

It can be seen from Tables 9 and 10 that marital status and child status have a significant impact on work-life balance. The one-way analysis of variance of marital status did not find that the unmarried person scored higher than the married

person, and did not find that the family without the child scored higher than the family with the child. It explains to a certain extent that marriage and child situations may not be the key factors leading to conflicts in employees' work and life.

Table 11 one-way analysis of variance for weekly working hours

Dependent variable		sum of square	df	Mean square	F	sig
work-life balance	between groups	357.232	5	71.446	6.087	0.000
	inside groups	3568.265	304	11.738	/	/
	total	3925.497	309	/	/	/

As can be seen from Table 11, the working time has a significant negative impact on the work-life balance. The work-life balance score decreased significantly as the weekly work time lengthened. Working more than 50 hours per week and the work-life balance score of fewer than 15 points may indicate that the long working hours of the IT industry are key factors influencing work-life balance.

5.1.2.2 boundary control sense (scale C)

From the scores of the boundary control sense scale, most employees know how to fulfil the responsibility of the work role and life role, and can distinguish between the two roles. However, the flexibility of working time arrangement is low.

Table 12 boundary control sense mean value and standard deviation

items of scale C	mean	standard deviation
C1	3.18	0.904
C2	3.22	0.941
C3	3.44	0.825
C4	3.24	0.886
C5	3.50	0.766
C6	3.29	0.844
C7	3.21	0.838
C8	3.27	0.841
C9	3.09	0.914

In the further one-way analysis of variance of demographic variables, the elderly in the family who need to be taken care of, the monthly income and the number of job-hopping have a significant impact on the sense of boundary control. The higher the monthly income, the stronger boundary control sense. On the other hand, the higher the monthly income, the higher the position of the employee, and the

stronger the work autonomy, the stronger the sense of boundary control. If there is an older person in the family who needs to be taken care of, the sense of boundary control will reduce. The more job hops, the more the employee's boundary control sense. It can be speculated that the reason for employee turnover is to find jobs with higher autonomy.

Table 13 one-way analysis of variance of boundary control sense

Control variable	Levene test	Homogeneity sig	ANOVA sig
Whether there is an elderly person	0.089	0.765	0.027
monthly income	1.949	0.073	0.032
Number of job hops	0.561	0.641	0.029

5.1.2.3 work resource (scale D)

The working resource scale has a full score of 65 and an average score of 43.46. From the view of scores, the scores of support for colleagues and leaders are higher, and the scores of job development opportunities and job control are relatively low. One-way analysis of variance for demographic variables shows that employee turnover has a significant impact on work resources. Whether there are older people in the family who need to be taken care of will also affect the work resources scores. The scores of families with older people are significantly lower, which indicates that employees with higher family pressure have higher requirements for work resources.

Table 14 one-way analysis of variance of working resources

Control variable	Levene test	Homogeneity sig	ANOVA sig
Whether there is an elderly person	0.481	0.488	0.031
Number of job hops	0.750	0.523	0.030

5.1.3 summary of the questionnaire

On the whole, the work-life balance of employees in the IT industry in Beijing is at a lower-middle level, and there is a big difference between different individuals. From the univariate analysis of age, young employees are more likely to have work-life conflicts than older employees. Young employees have just started their

careers, and their position is generally at the bottom of the organizational power structure, and it is challenging to have autonomy in the work-life balance. The univariate analysis of the marital status and child status indicates to a certain extent that marital status and number of children are not the main factors affecting the work-life balance of employees. The length of work time will directly affect whether employees have sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities for family roles. The IT industry generally has a long working time, and the flexibility of working hours is very poor. Employees with higher monthly incomes have a stronger sense of boundary control sense. The possible reason is that employees have higher status and have absolute autonomy over the allocation of time resources and working resources. From the analysis of demographic variables, the children born in the 1990s and 2000s after the implementation of the one-child policy in China need to take care of 2-4 older people. In addition to supporting the elderly, they also need to raise their children. Greater family pressures can also lead to an imbalance in work and life.

5.2 thematic analysis of interview

This section is about the thematic analysis of the interview. The determination of the theme will base on the results of the questionnaire on the current situation of the work-life balance of Beijing IT-related corporation. The selected theme will be in line with the core theme of this thesis: 'Try to alleviate the work-life conflict in the IT industry in China'.

The results of the above questionnaire show that the possible reasons for hindering the work-life balance among Chinese IT industry practitioners are: young employees have no autonomy in working resources and time resources; IT industry has longer working hours and less flexibility in working hours; Due to the influence of the one-child policy, employees face more significant pressure to support their families. The thematic analysis will follow the structure of the above topics and extend reasonably.

5.2.1 theme 1: Irish employees' perception of work-life balance

When interviewed about whether work and life are balanced, all respondents expressed satisfaction with the current work-life balance. Because different respondents are in different organizations and have different work backgrounds, they have different perceptions and measurement criteria for work-life balance. Work-life balance for Respondent A: *"My life is delightful. I am working hard to complete the task as a software engineer. After work, I have plenty of time to enjoy life with my girlfriend. My girlfriend never complained that I ignored her because we have a lot of time together."*

Respondents with children said: *"I feel that my work and life are balanced, sometimes they may affect each other, but I don't think it matters. I can leave the office after I finish my work and go to the creche to collect my children. We have enough time for my husband and children on weekends"* (Respondent D). Respondent E said: *"My job role does not conflict with my life role. I am a family-oriented person. The current company and work allow me to have enough time and energy to enjoy my family life. I am thrilled to accompany my children to grow up. Of course, I work very hard."*

Respondent C's feeling of work-life balance is: *"I don't have a child yet. I am currently renting in Dublin. I can leave after the prescribed off-hours. I can do what I want to do after work, such as painting. This is a time-consuming hobby. I also have time to travel short distances."*

Respondent B had worked in China for a short time. After comparing two working experiences, she told the researcher: *"I have been an intern in a relatively famous Internet company in China. I feel exhausted. When my group started a project, and the rest time of all the team members was severely compressed. We spent almost all of our time and energy around the work. I have to wait for the manager's call at any time. During that time, my mother was sick, and I did not have time to take care of her. I can only ask my cousin for help. After coming to Ireland, I felt a clear difference in work-life balance and corporate culture. I can get off work on time. I*

have my own private time, which makes me realize that my life does not only work.
"

5.2.2 theme 2: Employee autonomy in working resources

In contrast, employees of the Irish IT company have some autonomy over how work resources distributed, while Chinese IT industry practitioners have little autonomy in the same situation.

Respondent A stated that he could decide for himself what kind of work to complete and how to get the job done. *"Our company has a large task board, and it will paste all the tasks that need to be completed on the day. All employees can choose what tasks they want to complete. At the end of the year, supervisors decide the bonuses and dividends according to the workload of employees"* (Respondent A). Respondent B said: *"I can choose what I want to do. If the reasons are sufficient, I can apply for a different position, if that position has the work I want to do."*

The IT industry is a fast-changing industry that requires practitioners to be highly adaptable and continually improve their skills and expertise. IT industry practitioners need to accumulate experience from their daily work. *"I have rotated in different positions, so I have more experience in the face of some programs. In the face of the same bug that needs to be fixed, experienced programmers only need a short piece of code to solve However, novices may need to write more code because of lack of experience"* (Respondent D). *"Our company offers many learning opportunities to let us know the latest developments and expertise in the industry. If I want to try a new job, I can apply to my supervisor"* (Respondent E).

Whether the workload is reasonable or not will also affect the employee's working hours. Respondent C believes that she can get off work on time because the workload is reasonable, and she does not need extra time. Respondent A said: *"I can choose the work tasks I want to accomplish, and of course, I will consider whether I can complete them on time."* *"The urgency grade of the work tasks also*

allows us to reasonably estimate the time it takes" (Respondent B).

In order to enable employees to do their jobs better, managers will provide excellent logistics support as much as possible. *"Every Friday is a free learning day for employees. You can stay at your desk and write a program, or you can share your experiences with colleagues during the working hours on that day. You can also read the latest books and literature. If there are some new things you want to learn, you can apply for resources from your supervisor"* (Respondent E). *"The house I rented with my girlfriend is far from the company, so I applied to the supervisor for a bicycle subsidy. My application was approved, and I can enjoy the company's subsidy to buy a new bicycle at half price"* (Respondent A). Respondents A, B and E all said that they received office supplies and computers issued by the company when they entered the company. *"Professional computer equipment and smooth systems allow me to get the job done better"* (Respondent B).

5.2.3 theme 3: Employee autonomy in time resources

Respondents A, B, and D indicated that they were able to decide the time period for their work. *"I arrive at the company around 9:30 every day and leave at about 17:00. Our company does not have the mandatory time to arrive and leave, but in general, it is best to arrive before 10:00 in the morning"* (Respondent A). *"Our company requires employees to meet at least 7 hours of work time in the office, and there is no mandatory time to arrive and leave"* (Respondent B). Respondent D, who was also asked to work for at least 7-8 hours, said: *"I have many colleagues who will leave the office at around 15:00. Usually, they will go to enjoy afternoon tea with friends or go to the bar for a few beers. They come to the office very early and start working at about 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning."*

Respondent E said that because she needs to take care of her children, she will choose different working hours according to the situation. *"Normally I will choose between 8 am and 3 pm, so I have time to pick up the kids from school. Sometimes*

I will choose between 11 am and 6-7 pm, so I do not have to get up too early."

If an employee needs to leave in a hurry, the employee can easily take time off. *"If there is something urgent in my family, I can apply for emergency leave from my supervisor, and then my colleague will take over some work for me"* (Respondent E). *"I can check the shift schedule or exchange work shifts with my colleagues for emergency leave"* (Respondent C).

Regarding the long-term vacation, respondent A said: *"As long as I meet the conditions for applying for annual leave, I can apply for 27 days of paid annual leave at any time. This way I can flexibly arrange my vacation time."*

5.2.4 theme 4: Flexible work arrangement

Different organizations will introduce different flexible work arrangements to achieve the work-life balance of employees. These flexible work arrangements cover working hours, work styles and workplaces. Respondent A said that in addition to flexible working hours, the company also provided a three-day work option. *"In our company, you can choose to go to work from Monday to Friday, and you can also choose to work in the office for only three days a week. The rest of the time, you can work at home."* Respondent B told the researcher that they used the compressed hours option: *"I can apply for a total of 33 hours a week for four days so that we can have three days off."* Respondent E stated that employees of their company could apply for term-time working. This policy aimed at employees with young children. Respondent C told the researcher: *"I have full-time and part-time colleagues. Part-time employees do not work as long as full-time employees. Some of them work in other companies, mostly for technical assistance or consultant support."*

Respondents D and E stated that their company provides a work-sharing mechanism. *"Our work can be done by two or three people so that everyone has a small workload and can be responsible for what they do best"* (Respondent D). *"Work sharing in our company means that a job is done alternately by two or*

more colleagues. For example, a colleague who chooses to work in the morning completes a part, and a colleague who likes to work in the afternoon completes the rest" (Respondent E).

Workplace flexibility is also a key component of flexible work arrangements. *"Our company does not require employees to stay in the office. Some of my colleagues work in the office for three days a week, and then they work at home. If they need a group meeting, they will get in touch with the group online"* (Respondent A). *"As long as you can get the job done, our company does not mind where you have done"* (Respondent B). Homeworking is one of Respondent D ideal flexible work arrangement. Sometimes she cannot work in the office because of family reasons, and she will choose to work at home. She will attend if she needs to hold a group meeting. Respondent E said: *"There are only a small number of employees who can apply to work outside the office. They are usually senior engineers and managers. Our company encourages employees to work in the office with colleagues."*

5.2.5 theme 5: Corporate culture and working atmosphere

The attitude of the company to work-life balance will affect the employees' work-life balance and working atmosphere. Generally, companies with an excellent work-life balance will have a positive attitude towards it.

"The working atmosphere of our company is straightforward, and colleagues will help each other. We do not have an overtime culture, and we do not advocate overtime" (Respondent A). Respondent B said: *"We have pool tables, table football and PS4 games room. When we are tired, we can enjoy free coffee with colleagues and go to these facilities to relax. Compared with my previous experience working in China, very few people in Ireland will work overtime. It encourages me to finish my work with high quality because I know that I can enjoy my off-duty time after I finish."* Respondent C said that their colleagues are very harmonious, and the communication is very smooth and friendly. *"Probably, no one likes to work*

overtime. Why do you have to work overtime? It will only make employees burn out."

"Sometimes I might go to the office to do some work on weekends, but I do not think it is overtime. I go to work when I want to work, and I have enough energy to get the job done. Under the flexible work arrangement, I can better allocate the time and energy of my work and family. The company will not force me to work at the extra time" (Respondent D).

"We have families in addition to our work. Our colleagues and managers also agree with me. I have been working in the company for more than seven years. It is the culture and atmosphere of the company that makes me want to stay. The company rarely contact me outside of working hours, which makes me feel that there is a clear boundary between work and life" (Respondent E).

5.2.6 theme 6: Support from the family and society

Respondents D and E, who have children say that their families will provide excellent support to help them achieve a work-life balance. *"My husband is perfect. He will replace me when I can't pick up the children. He supports my work and will help me with the housework"* (Respondent D). *"My wife is a full-time wife. I am very grateful for her contribution to the family. She has taken care of our four children very well, and she can also take care of my parents. She is very good at housework and cooking. I can say that I don't have to worry about taking care of my family when I work. I love my wife and children very much. I am very grateful to her"* (Respondent E).

The Irish Labor Law sets out laws and regulations that are conducive to work-life balance, such as force majeure leave, maternity leave, parental leave, and paternity leave. Respondent D said: *"I enjoyed 26 weeks of maternity leave during my third pregnancy."* As a husband, Respondent E stated that he also applied for paternity leave and parental leave when his wife was pregnant, which made him not miss the birth and growth of the child. *"My father lived in Cork. He had a stroke last year. I*

applied for three days leave of force majeure and returned to Cork to help my
brother take care of him" (Respondent B).

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to try to alleviate the conflicts of work and life in China's IT industry by reference and learning the experience of the Irish IT industry on work-life balance. In the second chapter of the thesis (literature review), the author expounded the scholars' relevant theoretical research on the work-life balance. In this chapter, the author will discuss the main findings of the fifth chapter (results and findings) and the second chapter (literature review). This chapter will also cover the implications of the study of work-life balance and study limitations.

6.2 discussion of main findings link to academic theory

6.2.1 different perceptions of work-life balance

Many Chinese and foreign scholars have explained the concept of work-life balance from different angles. Subjective perspectives point out that the work-life balance can be subjectively satisfied by individuals (Clark, 2000). Frone (2003) believes that the work-life balance under a subjective perspective measured by the individual's psychological and physiological feelings. In analyzing the questionnaire from Beijing, the author founds that most of the IT industry practitioners in Beijing feel subjective that the boundaries between their work and life are blurred. In the interviews, Irish IT industry practitioners have subjectively expressed that their work and life are balanced and harmonious.

From an objective perspective, the premise of work-life balance is the coordination of different objective factors (Edwards and Bagozzi, 2000). Objective factors include three aspects: organization, family and individual. Greenhaus, Collins and

Shaw (2003) point to three areas that measure work-life balance: time balance, participation balance, and satisfaction balance. A discussion of the influencing factors will elaborate in 6.2.2. The objective perspective makes the concept of work-life balance measurable and controllable, which allows the questionnaire and interview to have specific measurement items and criteria. However, it should be noted that the individual's subjective perception of work-life balance also needs to be considered. Different individuals have different perceptions of work-life balance. For example, respondent A believes that work-life balance is enough time to spend time with his girlfriend; respondent C hopes to have enough personal time to paint and travel; respondent D and E hopes to have enough time to enjoy life with the family.

Role theory is an essential theoretical basis for explaining the balance of work and life. It can extend to the theory of role conflict and the theory of role spillover. "Role" refers to the behavioural pattern in which individuals are expected to be in a particular role (Ellen and Ozeki, 1999). The work role of Chinese IT industry practitioners has spent a limited amount of energy and time in the "996" mode of work, which leaves them with insufficient energy and time to perform the family role. Role conflicts arise when roles interact with each other to make them unable to perform role responsibilities (Ouyang, 2014).

The theory of role spillovers can better explain the sense of boundary control. When a person plays a role, the character's characteristics "overflow" to other roles, which affects and interferes with the performance of other characters (Rosabeth, 1997). Chinese IT industry practitioners are always on standby, and most of their limited resources are assigned to work role, resulting in the family role not being fulfilled. The unique behaviour, emotions and stress of the work role may "overflow" into the family role, leading to a blurring of the boundary between work and life. In contrast, the boundary between Irish IT industry practitioners' work and life are clear, their energy and time resources reasonably allocated to work and family roles, and there is little disruption between roles.

6.2.2 factors Affecting Work-Life Balance

The factors influencing the work-life balance can be divided into three levels: organization, family and society. These three factors are also the primary basis for the interview structure. At the organizational level, this thesis mainly explores the beneficial measures that organizations provide to IT industry practitioners in terms of job diversity, work autonomy and flexible work arrangements. As Hill (2001) argues, people who offer flexible work arrangements are more likely to achieve a work-life balance when faced with the same amount of work. Respondent A can choose the work he wants to complete from the work board. Respondent B's organization provides a compressed hours option. He can choose to work intensively for three to four days, and then freely allocate the rest of the time. Respondents D and E enjoyed the work-sharing mechanism, and one task was organically assigned to two or three employees to complete, which reduced the workload and shortened the completion time. Respondent D can also choose their preferred working hours so that she can meet the needs of family life.

Besides, a positive leadership style and a harmonious working environment can also promote work-life balance (Gillet and Kara, 2013). Most of the respondents said that their work atmosphere is very relaxed, and colleagues often help each other. The management of the organization where respondent E located has a very positive attitude towards work-life balance, which helps to improve employee loyalty and reduce employee turnover.

At the household level, this thesis argues that family support in both countries is good, and family support between individuals may vary. Family support emphasizes subjectivity, and different individuals have different levels of satisfaction and demand for family support. Grzywacz and Mark (2000) emphasize that family emotional support can help employees have a positive attitude towards their work. Respondents D and E with children have a greater reliance on family support.

At the social level, Ireland's labour law provides for a range of regulations that

promote work-life balance, such as force majeure leave, maternity leave, parental leave and paternity leave. Moreover, from the overall social culture of Ireland, Ireland does not have an overtime culture. Ireland encourages hard work but also focuses on family life.

6.2.3 Differences in social background between Ireland and China

The second chapter of the literature review illustrates the social background and cultural background of the two countries. It can be easily seen that there are some differences in the social and cultural background between Ireland and China.

In the context of China's rapid economic development, China's IT industry practitioners are facing greater workload and higher job requirements. According to the "996" status report of Zhilian Recruitment (2019), 80% of employees are working overtime. There has even been an overtime culture. However, according to respondents A, B, C, D and E, they believe that Ireland does not have a similar overtime culture.

According to Hofstede's cultural dimension, this is because China's power distance is higher than Ireland. Under this strict hierarchical culture, Chinese enterprises prefer a vertically centralized management structure. The decision made by the manager must perform unconditionally. On the other hand, Irish people like to make short-term plans. The work-sharing system of respondents D and E and the work board system of respondent A   based on short-term plans. The workload is moderate under the short-term plan, so the required working hours and energy are also moderate.

6.3 the implications of the study of work-life balance

The globalization of today's world and the growth of the economy have become the driving force for technological advancement and the proliferation of dual-work families (Grattan, 2010). In this context, the work environment and employee values will change dramatically. The work-life balance is the new demand of

employees and companies to meet new challenges and opportunities (Schwarzmueller, Brosi, Duman and Welpe, 2018).

From an organizational perspective, Haar and Spell (2004) emphasize that organizations need to clearly understand how employees view work-life relationships and influence their commitment and performance to the organization. Organizations that achieve a work-life balance have better performance and higher employee loyalty and satisfaction. Also, it can reduce employee turnover. According to IBEC (2018), nearly 30% of the 400 organizations surveyed focus on providing flexible work arrangements for employees, which is an excellent attempt to achieve work-life balance.

From an individual perspective, today's people are more concerned with careers that allow them to have a private space compared to the X and Y generation (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008). Especially in the IT industry, higher job requirements, generally longer working hours and a highly competitive work environment put programmers' performance pressures very high (Pradhan, Jena and Kumari, 2016). It means that programmers have a greater need for work-life balance. Work-life balance policies can help them cope with the complex and changing the work environment and social environment (Perlow and porter, 2009). The individual's time and energy resources are limited. Only by balancing the resource consumption of the work role and the family role, and reducing the role conflict, the individual will make a reasonable transition between the family and the work role to achieve the goal of each role.

On the other hand, long-term conflicts in work and life and lack of support from manager or family can lead to job burnout. Job burnout has a significant negative impact on employee performance and the overall business of the organization (Collins and Murray, 1996). Maslach et al. (2001) pointed out that job burnout is a mental illness and is associated with the unreasonable distribution of personal resources and role conflicts. Job burnout can hurt a person's mental health and thus reduce individual performance. More serious can lead to employees easily

conflicting with others and destructive behaviour. Parkes and Langford (2008) highlights that work-life balance can be associated with employees' 'happiness' and indirectly benefit the organization while helping to reduce job burnout and reduce work stress.

6.4 Limitation of the study

This study may have limitations in terms of universality. This study does not guarantee that the resulting work-life balance experience can be applied to all Internet-related companies in China, because IT industry respondents from Ireland belong to different companies, and the job requirements of similar positions in different companies may also differ.

China and Ireland have different social backgrounds and cultural backgrounds. China needs to fully consider the above two points when learning from the experience of Ireland.

Also, this study pays more attention to two of the three influencing factors of work-life balance: organizational perspective and family perspective. Researchers did not pay attention to personal perspectives.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to find out how to alleviate the conflicts between work and life in China's IT industry. The main source of learning is the IT-related company in Ireland. Before starting the in-depth study, the second chapter (literature review) of this thesis elaborates on some scholars' existing research results on work-life balance and explains the definition and influencing factors of work-life balance. At the same time, the researcher also compared the social background and cultural differences between China and Ireland. The literature review provides a sufficient theoretical basis for this study. Chapter 4

(methodology) explains the quantitative and qualitative analysis used in this study, including the questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire surveyed the current situation of China's IT industry. The interview explored the Irish IT industry's exploration experience of work-life balance. The fifth chapter (results and findings) analyzes the results of the questionnaire and conducts a topic analysis of the interview content. Chapter 6 discusses the connection between findings and the theoretical foundation. It is a process of combining theory with practice.

This chapter will answer the sub-questions listed in Chapter 3 (research questions). The summary and recommendations for this study will all include in the answers.

7.1.1 sub-question: what is the current condition of work-life balance in the IT industry in Ireland and China?

The researcher believes that China and the EU member states Ireland have similar backgrounds in society and the workplace. It is a prerequisite for China to learn the experience from Ireland. First, the external dynamics that affect the work-life balance are the dual changes in the modern work environment and emerging work requirements. Second, changes in the participation structure of the labour market are considered to be important drivers of work-life balance. Third, some underlying factors also affect the work-life balance, such as the structural changes in the family and population, and the potential impact of Chinese and Western work culture and social culture.

China's IT industry is developing rapidly, with rapid changes, high work pressure, long overtime hours, fierce competition, and continuous optimization of the industry (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). There is a conflict between the work and life of Chinese IT industry practitioners. Li (2018) pointed out that Chinese IT industry practitioners face higher job requirements, longer average daily workload and average weekly working hours. The "996" working mechanism means that overtime has become the norm in China's IT industry.

Ireland's IT industry has high requirements for work, and the industry is changing

rapidly. There will be conflicts between family roles and job roles, but organizations and society have a positive attitude and response measures to ease the conflicts between employees' work and life. ABRIVIA's (2019) survey result points out that the Irish IT industry believes that the key to reducing employee turnover is to achieve a work-life balance. Most employers in the Irish IT industry recognize the importance of work-life balance to reduce burnout and improve performance. Nearly 80% of companies have telecommuting policies, and more than 60% of companies have a positive attitude toward flexible work arrangements.

7.1.2 sub-question: what are the policies for maintaining the work-life balance of IT industry in Ireland?

According to the interviews of Irish IT industry employees in Chapter 5 of this thesis, the researcher summarized the relevant measures and policies developed by Ireland to maintain the work-life balance of IT industry employees.

(a) The autonomy of working resources:

Give employees the right to choose what work tasks they want to do. Such as a work task board;

Give employees the right to apply for a job change;

Allocate a reasonable amount of work;

Provide employees with excellent working resources support. For example, job rotation (accumulation of work experience), reasonable promotion;

Provide adequate logistical support to employees. For example, providing job-related learning resources for staff to upgrade skills, commuting subsidies, professional office supplies and a pleasant working environment, etc.;

(b) The autonomy of time resources:

Set flexible working hours, employees can choose their work schedule;

Develop a reasonable shift mechanism so that employees have enough time to balance family roles and job roles;

Set up a reasonable and convenient leave mechanism so that employees have time to respond to unexpected situations in family life;

Formulate a fair and reasonable annual leave mechanism;

(c) Flexible work arrangements:

Provide a compressed hours option. Employees only need to work for a specific number of hours to get free time;

There is no limit to the workplace, and employees can choose to work in the office or work from home;

Set up full-time and part-time positions;

Provide a work-sharing mechanism to reduce workload and shorten working hours;

Utilize Internet technologies such as online meetings and teleworking;

(d) Corporate culture and working atmosphere:

Take a positive attitude towards work-life balance and work hard to explore favourable measures for work-life balance;

Creating a helpful, relaxed and harmonious working environment will help employees improve their work efficiency and reduce burnout;

(e) Family and social support:

Family members understand each other and help each other;

The Irish government's labour law provides for holidays, including force majeure leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, etc. It gives employees a legal basis to maintain their right to work-life balance.

7.2 recommendations

7.2.1 sub-question: what and how can China learn from Ireland?

When formulating a work-life balance policy, it is necessary to fully consider the organizational background, organizational culture, and specific needs. It is not possible to blindly copy the experience of other organizations. Work-life balance can be achieved through many policies and practices. A successful work-life

balance policy must have management support. The corporate climate and management's attitude will directly determine whether a work-life balance policy can be successfully implemented in the organization (McCarthy et al., 2013).

Organizations can consider different perspectives and needs when formulating work-life balance policies. From the perspective of individual resources, organizations should consider individual time resources, energy resources and capabilities. The specific approach is to reduce employee working hours, flexible scheduling of work hours and work locations, and reasonable job assignments, that is, works that match the professional skills of employees (Gardy and Kerrane et al., 2008).

From the perspective of individual and family needs, managers should consider the health needs of employees (including physical and psychological), role transitions and vacation needs (Messieh, 2012).

From an organizational perspective, managers need to be aware that employees are the basic unit for creating a performance for an organization. When employees have high loyalty and organizational commitment, they create the most excellent performance. Managers should support employees in achieving work-life balance. Management can also introduce policies into the corporate culture, transforming the work-life balance into the company's daily work system. For example, some companies allow employees to work only four days a week (Fisher, 2014).

Specific work-life balance measures can refer to the contents of 7.1.2. Different organizations can choose specific measures based on actual conditions.

7.2.2 How about the implementation cost?

Implementation measures necessarily require consideration of costs. In terms of work resources, the organization's provision of work resource support and logistical support for employees will incur a cost. Reducing the workload of employees can lead to a reduction in the organization's output. Giving employees some autonomy may need to change China's long-standing vertical management

structure and hierarchy culture.

In terms of time resources, setting a flexible working time period and work schedule needs to consider the rationality of the schedule, and fully consider whether the employees can achieve the expected performance under such a timetable. There is also a need to consider whether there is a performance difference between different time periods, and performance differences may become the sunk cost of the organization. The shift mechanism, the leave mechanism and the annual leave mechanism all require scientific and rational planning. Managers need to consider whether there are enough employees on the day to get the job done. It is also a cost for managers to pay wages for paid vacation employees.

Managers need to be aware that sharing work mechanisms may have difficulties in the handover, inconsistent quality of work, and uneven assignment of work tasks. The above situation will undoubtedly increase the time, human resources and material cost of a work task. Introducing and maintaining Internet technology for online meetings and teleworking is also a cost.

Creating a relaxed and harmonious working environment requires the organization to pay for additional costs.

7.3 is there any possible future research?

Researchers believe that the next step for the Chinese IT industry to balance work and life should focus on the social level. Chinese society began late to understand and apply the work-life balance due to management models and cultural background (Yue, 2013). Achieving work-life balance requires not only the efforts of organizations and individuals but also the reform of China's social management structure. Higher power distances and vertically centralized management structures cannot be changed through organizations and individuals, and social support is the key. Work-oriented workplace culture and overtime culture are the products of China's unique development model. Changing people's ideas should start from a

social perspective.

7.4 what can the researcher (author) learn from this research process?

In the process of completing this thesis, the researcher completed the proposal and learned how to screen reliable literature journals and how to cite the literature correctly. In further research, the researcher learned how to analyze the questionnaire, how to conduct an interview, and how to use the topic analysis method to organize the interview content. Finally, the researcher knows how to combine the academic conclusions obtained with actual cases. In this study, the researcher has thoroughly experienced how a topic can turn into research results that can help Chinese IT companies through rigorous and scientific academic research methods.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: **questionnaire**

Questionnaire on the factors affecting the work and life balance of IT industry practitioners.

Dear Sir/Madam:

Hello, I am a graduate student in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland, and I am currently working on the work-life balance of IT industry practitioners. The purpose of my research is to understand the current situation and influencing factors of the work-life balance of Chinese IT industry practitioners. This survey is anonymous throughout the entire process. All the information you fill out will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic statistical analysis. Thank you for your filling and cooperation!

● 【Form A: basic situation】

1. Your gender

Male   Female

2. Your age (years old)

≤24   25-29   30-34   35-39

40-44   45-49   50-54

3. Your education level

≤Junior high school   High school   College

Bachelor   Master   Doctor

4. Your marital status (skip to corresponding question according to actual situation)

Unmarried (skip to 7)   Married (skip to 5)

Divorced (skip to 6)   Widowed (skip to 6)   Others

5. Your spouse's education level

≤Junior high school　　　　High school　　　　College

Bachelor　　　　Master　　　　Doctor

6. How many kids do you have

0　　　1　　　2　　　3

7. Your current position

Technical　　　　Operational　　　　Marketing

Administrative　　　　Other_____

8. The number of times you have changed jobs so far

0　　　1　　　2　　　3　　　4　　　≥5

9. How many hours do you work on average per week (hours)

＜40　　　　40-43　　　　44-47

48-51　　　　52-55　　　　＞50

10. Your workplace type

Foreign　　　　Joint venture　　　　State-owned　　　　Private

11. Your monthly income (RMB)

≤3000　　3001-5000　　5001-7000　　7001-9000　　9001-11000　　11001-13000

13001-15000　　　15001-20000　　　20001-30000　　　30001-40000

12. The total time (X) you spend on your way to work every day

X≤half an hour　　　　half an hour＜X≤one hour

one hour＜X≤two hours　　　　two hours＜X≤_____

x

13. Your access to current housing

Bank mortgage One-time payment Renting Organizational welfare

Inherit   Self-built house   Other_____

14. Number of elderly people who need to be taken care of

0   1   2   3 ≥ 4

● 【Form B: Work-Life balance scale】

B1. Your satisfaction with your time allocation of your work and family life:

(1)Very dissatisfied (2)Not satisfied (3)General (4)Satisfied (5)Very satisfied

B2. Your satisfaction with your energy distribution at work and family life:

(1)Very dissatisfied (2)Not satisfied (3)General (4)Satisfied (5)Very satisfied

B3. Your satisfaction with your daily work and family life fit:

(1)Very dissatisfied (2)Not satisfied (3)General (4)Satisfied (5)Very satisfied

B4. Your satisfaction with your ability to balance work needs with family needs:

(1)Very dissatisfied (2)Not satisfied (3)General (4)Satisfied (5)Very satisfied

B5. Your satisfaction with the current work-life balance environment:

(1)Very dissatisfied (2)Not satisfied (3)General (4)Satisfied (5)Very satisfied

● 【Form C: boundary control sense scale】

C1. I can handle the relationship between work and non-work areas in the way or style I like.

(1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)General

(4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

C2. When there is a conflict between work and non-work areas, I have the autonomy to decide how to choose.

  (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)General

  (4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

C3. I feel that I have the ability to handle the relationship between work and non-work areas.

  (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)General

  (4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

C4. I feel that I have received outside support (family and superiors, etc.) so that I can handle the relationship between work and non-work areas well.

  (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)General

  (4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

C5. I know how to perform the duties of work and non-work roles well.

  (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)General

  (4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

C6. When dealing with the relationship between work and non-work areas, I can choose the way I like.

  (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)general

  (4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

C7. When dealing with the relationship between work and non-work areas, I feel that I have full autonomy.

  (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)General

  (4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

C8. In some unexpected situations, I am also able to handle the relationship between work and non-work areas.

   (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)General

   (4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

C9. Whether it's a job role or a non-work role, I can decide how time is scheduled.

   (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)General

   (4)Consistent   (5)Very consistent

- 【Form D: working resource scale】

D1. I can ask my colleagues for help when I need them.

   (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

   (4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D2. My colleagues often help me.

   (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

   (4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D3. I am very happy to work with my colleagues.

   (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

   (4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D4. My superiors often help me solve problems at work.

   (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

   (4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D5. My superiors will consider my feelings at work.

   (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

   (4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D6. I have many channels to understand the completion of my work.

(1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

(4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D7. I can reasonably allocate my time at work.

(1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

(4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D8. I can participate in any work-related discussions.

(1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

(4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D9. I can get feedback in time after the work is completed.

(1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

(4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D10. My proposal for work can get attention.

(1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

(4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D11. My job gives me the opportunity to learn new things.

(1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

(4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D12. I have enough opportunities to improve myself at work.

(1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

(4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

D13. I have the opportunity to be promoted at work.

    (1)Very inconsistent   (2)Not very consistent   (3)Not sure

    (4)Most consistent   (5)Very consistent

【The questionnaire is over, thank you for filling out!】

Appendix 2: **Interview instruction**

This interview is a qualitative survey of how the Irish IT-related industry practitioners achieve a work-life balance. The main evidence comes from employees in the Irish IT industry.

<u>Research overview</u>

The main purpose of this study is to explore how the Irish IT-related industry practitioners balance work and life. The main support forces come from three sources: organization, family and society. What kind of attempts and efforts does the Irish IT company have to maintain the balance of work and life of employees? What contribution does the Irish society have made to protecting the work-life balance of employees? And what kind of support does the employee's family provide for work-life balance?

The study aims to synthesize the successful experience of the Irish IT industry in balancing the work and life of employees and to provide possible solutions to alleviate the conflicts in the work and life of employees in the IT industry in China. In addition, this study will also take into account the different social backgrounds and cultural backgrounds of the two countries.

<u>Research objective</u>

Explore the successful experience of Irish IT industry employees in working life balance.

Combine the social and cultural backgrounds of Ireland and China to select experiences that are appropriate for China.

Dialectical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each experience applicable to China.

Predict the cost and effectiveness of implementation of the experience applicable to China.

Research questions

What kind of support interview participants have gained for balancing work and life?

What policies and measures do interview participants consider to be effective in helping them alleviate work-life conflicts?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the above policies and measures?

Before interview

Before starting our interview, I want to thank you again for accepting my interview invitation. This interview is to understand the work-life balance of the IT industry in Ireland, and on this basis, to explore what support the industry practitioners have achieved in order to achieve a work-life balance.

I am very interested in learning from your perspective about what contribution your organization, your family and society have made to work-life balance. Our interview today will last for about half an hour.

Read consent form with participant

We will now confirm the consent form for the interview, which will include the purpose of the study, confidentiality obligations and possible risks of the study. The consent form is detailed in Appendix 3.

The entire interview process will be recorded, in order for the researcher (author) to better transcribe the interview. If you want me to pause or stop recording during the interview, please let me know.

If you have any questions before we start the interview, or during the interview, or after the interview, please contact me. My email address is included in the interview consent form.

Interview start

The interview will be conducted in accordance with the following question structure. Researchers may change questions or ask other inquiry questions during the interview to ensure a good process and results for the interview.

【Part A: Basic situation of participants】

1. How old are you this year?

2. Are you married? Or cohabitation?

3. Do you have children?

4. What is your current job title?

5. How long have you been in this company?

【Part B: Work-life balance】

1. Do you think your current work role is balanced with family role? Please specify.

2. What is the amount of time you spend working at work each day?

3. After you have finished your work, can you leave your work and enjoy your personal time?

4. Are you satisfied with the current working and living conditions?

【Part C. Organizational perspective】

1. What kind of management support policy does your current organization have for work-life balance?

2. What is the flexibility of your work schedule? Do you have autonomy in the arrangement of working hours?

3. Is your workload and work distribution arrangement reasonable? Is there a situation in which overtime can get the job done?

4. How do you think the development of technology (email, mobile office, etc.) has an impact on boundary control? How is your organization responding?

5. Does the title of the job affect the work-life balance?

6. What is your organization's attitude towards work-life balance? What kind of corporate culture and corporate atmosphere does the organization have for work-life balance?

7. If an organization can guarantee the work-life balance of employees, what do you think is beneficial to the organization?

【Part D. Family perspective】

[Determining what questions to ask based on the specific circumstances of the respondent]

1. Will your partner and family take turns taking care of the children?

2. Will your partner and family help you with housework?

3. What kind of support did your family give you?

【Part E: Social perspective】

1. Do you think Ireland has overtime culture?

2. Do you know any laws and regulations related to work-life balance in Ireland?

Closing

What else do you want to add before ending the interview?

Thank you for being able to participate in my interview today. The interview is over. If you have any questions about what we are discussing today, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Appendix 3: consent form

Study purpose

The purpose of this study is to find ways to alleviate work-life conflicts for the Chinese IT industry by exploring the experience of work-life balance in the Irish IT industry.

Confidentiality

This study will strictly abide by the confidentiality agreement. All information about the interview participants is confidential and all interview results will be used for research purposes only.

Study risk

There will be no risk in this study. Interview participants can pause the interview or withdraw from the interview at any time.

The signature below indicates:

I volunteered to participate in the interview and agreed that the researcher will record the interview and the interview results will only be used for research.

I understand:

This interview is for research purposes only. The interview complies with the confidentiality agreement. My personal information will not be recognized.

Signed by participant:_____ Date:_____

Signed by researcher:_____Date:_____

Researcher's contact details: yutingzhou1214@gmail.com