



Lisbon School
of Economics
& Management
Universidade de Lisboa

MASTERS IN MANAGEMENT (MIM)

MASTERS FINAL WORK

DISSERTATION

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND CAREER SUSTAINABILITY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK-LIFE ENRICHMENT AND BOUNDARY CONTROL

PEDRO GONÇALVES DOURADO DE ALMEIDA

FEBRUARY – 2026



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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly flexible, digital and boundaryless work environment, managing the interface between professional and personal domains has become a central challenge for career sustainability. Existing research suggests that Flexible Work Practices can function both as a resource and as a potential risk, depending on individuals' ability to manage boundaries, the organizational context and the support provided by leadership. However, the mechanisms through which flexibility translates into sustainable careers, as well as the conditions under which this relationship is strengthened, remain underexplored.

Drawing on Work-Life Border Theory and Boundary Theory this study examines the mediating role of Boundary Management and Work-Life Enrichment in the relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements and Career Sustainability. Data were collected through a structured survey from a sample of 135 currently employed individuals, and analysed using Structural Equation Modeling with SmartPLS.

The findings indicate that Flexible Work Arrangements are strongly associated with Career Sustainability, Boundary Management Control and Work Life Enrichment; Work-Life Enrichment also showed a positive impact on Career Sustainability; conversely the impact of Boundary Management Control was less pronounced.

These results highlight the potential of Flexible Work Arrangements to drive sustainable careers by fostering Work-Life Enrichment and Boundary Management Control, offering valuable insights for both theory and practice.

Keywords: Boundary Management Control, Flexible Work Arrangements, Career Sustainability, Work-Life Enrichment

JEL CODES: C83; J22; J24; J81; M12; M14

RESUMO

Num contexto de trabalho cada vez mais flexível, digital e sem fronteiras de trabalho claramente definidas, a gestão da interface entre os domínios profissional e pessoal tornou-se um desafio central para a sustentabilidade das carreiras. A pesquisa existente sugere que as Práticas de Trabalho Flexível podem funcionar tanto como um recurso como um potencial risco, dependendo da capacidade dos indivíduos para gerir as suas fronteiras, do contexto organizacional e do suporte proporcionado pela liderança. No entanto, os mecanismos através dos quais a flexibilidade se traduz em carreiras sustentáveis, bem como as condições sob as quais essa relação é reforçada, permanecem insuficientemente explorados.

Com base na Teoria da Fronteira Trabalho-Vida e Teoria das Fronteiras, o presente estudo analisa o papel mediador da Gestão de Fronteiras e do Enriquecimento Trabalho-Vida na relação entre as Práticas de Trabalho Flexível e a Sustentabilidade de Carreiras. Os dados foram recolhidos através de um inquérito estruturado, junto de uma amostra de 135 indivíduos atualmente empregados, e analisados com recurso à Modelação de Equações Estruturais com SmartPLS.

Os resultados indicam que as Práticas de Trabalho Flexível estão fortemente associadas à Sustentabilidade de Carreiras, ao Controlo da Gestão de Fronteiras e ao Enriquecimento Trabalho-Vida; o Enriquecimento Trabalho-Vida revelou igualmente um impacto positivo na Sustentabilidade de Carreiras; por sua vez, o impacto do Controlo da Gestão de Fronteiras mostrou-se menos expressivo.

Estes resultados evidenciam o potencial das Práticas de Trabalho Flexível para levar a carreiras sustentáveis, ao fomentar o Enriquecimento Trabalho-Vida e o Controlo da Gestão de Fronteiras, oferecendo contributos relevantes tanto para a teoria como para a prática.

Palavras-Chave: Controlo da Gestão de Fronteiras; Práticas de Trabalho Flexível; Sustentabilidade de Carreira; Enriquecimento Trabalho-Vida.

CÓDIGOS JEL: C83; J22; J24; J81; M12; M14

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ABBREVIATIONS

BMF: Boundary Management Fit
CSM: Career Self-Management
FWE: Family-to-Work Enrichment
FWA: Flexible Work Arrangement
HRD: Human Resource Development
JEL: Journal of Economic Literature
OCB: Organizational Citizenship Behaviour
SCS: Subjective Career Success
SDG: Sustainable Development Goal
SET: Social Exchange Theory
SMEs: Small and Medium Enterprises
STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
WFE: Work-Family Enrichment
WFH: Work from Home
WLB: Work-Life Balance
WLE: Work-Life Enrichment

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Boundary management has become a central concept in organizational behaviour research, particularly as contemporary work arrangements increasingly blur distinctions between work and nonwork domains (Cobb et al., 2022; Reissner et al., 2021). The contemporary world of work is characterized by increasing flexibility, digital connectivity and blurred boundaries between professional and personal domains (Allen et al., 2021; Kossek et al., 2012).

Technological advancements and the widespread adoption of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), such as remote work, hybrid models and flex time, have reshaped traditional employment structures by expanding employees' autonomy regarding when and where work is performed (Smite et al., 2023; Soga et al., 2022). While such flexibility is often portrayed as a strategic organizational resource that enhances autonomy and adaptability, it simultaneously introduces challenges related to boundary permeability, technostress and role interference, particularly in contexts characterised by constant connectivity and high performance expectations (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022; Vohra et al., 2024). As a result, flexibility emerges not as an unequivocal benefit, but as a structurally embedded condition whose outcomes depend on how boundaries are managed and supported.

Within this evolving context, the concept of career sustainability has gained prominence as a multidimensional framework encompassing health, happiness and productivity across the lifespan (De Vos et al., 2020). Sustainable careers extend beyond objective indicators of progression to include subjective career success (SCS), meaningful engagement and long-term employability (Koekemoer et al., 2020; Van Der Heijden et al., 2020). As careers become increasingly self-directed and embedded within dynamic life systems, individuals are required to actively regulate resources, transitions and role demands in order to maintain viable career trajectories over time (Hirschi et al., 2022; Müller et al., 2022). In this sense, sustainability depends not only on structural opportunities but also on individuals' capacity to align professional and personal domains in a coherent and adaptive manner.

Flexibility may contribute to career sustainability when it functions as a resource that enhances autonomy, facilitates resource transfer and supports Work-Life Enrichment (WLE) (Allen et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2025). However, according to Conservation of Resources theory, the mere availability of resources does not guarantee positive

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outcomes; rather, benefits emerge when individuals are able to regulate and protect these resources effectively (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Shifrin & Michel, 2022). In this context, Boundary Management Control, defined as the perceived ability to manage the permeability and flexibility of work-life boundaries, constitutes a critical personal resource that determines whether flexibility results in enrichment or in strain (Cook & Sawhney, 2025; Kossek et al., 2012). Individuals who perceive higher boundary control are more likely to preserve energy, prevent role conflict and facilitate positive cross-domain spillovers, thereby strengthening the foundations of sustainable careers (De Vos et al., 2020; Oteng & Ngo-Henha Eyono, 2024).

Simultaneously, WLE has been identified as a key mechanism through which resources accumulated in one domain enhance functioning in another (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kalliath et al., 2020). Enrichment generates resource-gain spirals that foster job satisfaction, engagement and SCS, which in turn reinforce the health, happiness and productivity dimensions of career sustainability (Koekemoer & Olckers, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2025). Nevertheless, enrichment processes are contingent upon contextual supports and individual capacities, and may be constrained by structural inequalities, rigid organizational norms or limited autonomy (Santos, 2020; Vohra et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding how flexibility translates into sustainable careers requires examining both boundary management mechanisms and enrichment processes simultaneously.

Despite the increasing number of research on FWAs, boundary management, sustainable careers and WLE, limited studies have integrated these constructs within a single explanatory framework, leaving important theoretical and empirical gaps. Building on this need for consolidation, the present study brings these perspectives together to explore how flexibility interacts with boundary regulation processes and resource-enhancing mechanisms to shape long-term career outcomes, in contemporary work contexts. Grounded in Work-Life Border Theory (Clark, 2000) and Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), the framework acknowledges that employees continuously negotiate temporal, spatial and psychological boundaries according to their preferences for segmentation or integration (Nippert-Eng, 1996), while also responding to organisational norms and contextual conditions. Based on these foundations, this study aims to answer the following research question: *How do FWAs lead to sustainable careers through boundary control and WLE?*

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The study is structured into three key sections: the Introduction and Literature Review, which provides the context of the problem; the Methodology and Results, presenting the empirical model; and the Discussion and Conclusion.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Boundary Management

Boundary management refers to how individuals establish, maintain and manage the separation or integration between their work roles and personal life domains (Cobb et al., 2022; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Boundary management practices are crucial in the current academic context, with increased autonomy; spatio-temporal flexibility in the workplace, where individuals have autonomy to decide where and when they work; and growing managerial demands, blurring work-nonwork boundaries, and requiring individuals to actively regulate work intensity and preserve well-being while sustaining performance (Reissner et al., 2021).

Two foundational perspectives sustain the field: Work-Life Border Theory (Clark, 2000) and Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000). Although conceptually distinct, both frameworks contribute to a unified understanding of how individuals actively construct, negotiate and maintain boundaries, to preserve balance and psychological well-being.

Clark (2000) Work-Family Border Theory introduced the idea that individuals act as “border crossers” who transition between the distinct domains of work and family. These domains are separated by psychological, physical and temporal borders whose permeability and flexibility determine the ease with which elements from one domain spill into the other. Permeability, along with flexibility and blending, combines to determine the overall strength of work-family borders, with highly impermeable and inflexible borders considered strong, while more permeable and flexible borders seen as weak, reflecting how individuals and organizations manage the separation or blending of these domains. Balance is achieved when individuals experience satisfaction and effective functioning in both domains while minimizing conflict and strain, emphasizing the role of border keepers, such as managers or family members, that shape boundary permeability by imposing expectations and norms that either facilitate or hinder individuals’ ability to manage roles effectively (Clark, 2000).

In addition to this framework, Ashforth et al. (2000) propose a more fluid and dynamic approach through Boundary Theory, which emphasizes the ongoing regulation of boundaries in response to situational demands. Boundaries are conceptualized as psychological, temporal and spatial demarcations that individuals use to differentiate roles and identities; these boundaries are continuously adjusted in response to external pressures and shifting personal circumstances.

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Despite their conceptual differences, both theories converge on a critical insight: boundary management is shaped by individual agency. People vary in their preferences along a segmentation-integration continuum (Nippert-Eng, 1996), with segmenters preferring clear separation between life domains and strict borders to minimize interference, and integrators opting for role blending to create coherence between roles (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000).

Although these foundational models initially positioned segmentation and integration as opposing orientations, more recent studies highlight the interdependent and context-dependent nature of boundary management (Weiss & Ortlieb, 2025). Individuals do not commit to a single orientation but instead shift between segmentation and integration in response to situational pressures, job demands, family responsibilities, professional norms, or personal values. Weiss & Ortlieb (2025) argue that segmentation may restrict excessive integration (e.g., avoiding overcommitment), enable purposeful integration (e.g., creating space for deep work), or even be facilitated by integration (e.g., working late to secure uninterrupted personal time later). Similarly, integration is often driven by professional norms, heavy workloads, passion for work, or flexible arrangements, whereas segmentation emerges from the need for recovery, efficiency and personal commitments (Weiss & Ortlieb, 2025). Together, these patterns illustrate that segmentation and integration function not as static traits but as adaptive strategies individuals mobilize, sometimes using segmentation to protect recovery after intense integration, and at other times embracing integration to maximize efficiency when personal and work demands intersect (Weiss & Ortlieb, 2025).

The evolution of boundary management studies also incorporates the processual and negotiation-oriented perspective advanced by Kreiner et al. (2009). These authors conceptualize boundary work as an ongoing effort to maintain alignment between personal preferences and external demands. Their model introduces four categories of tactics: behavioral, temporal, physical and communicative, that individuals employ to restore congruence when boundaries are violated. Kreiner et al. (2009) show that when individuals experience boundary incongruence, misalignment between their preferences and external expectations, they are more likely to encounter work-home conflict. In response, they adopt restorative tactics (Table 1) that help re-establish balance and reduce strain.

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Table 1 - Boundary Work Tactics

Tactic Classification	Description	Examples
Behavioral Tactics	Involving social practices and conscious choices to decrease incongruence, violations and conflict	Leveraging technology (e.g., caller ID or unified calendars); invoking triage to prioritize urgent demands
Temporal Tactics	Strategic manipulation of time to create boundaries and manage temporal demands	Blocking off work hours, banking time, or taking deliberate time off
Physical Tactics	Manipulating tangible aspects of the environment to define or blur boundaries	Creating separate workspaces or managing physical artifacts (e.g., key rings, calendars)
Communicative Tactics	Verbal and nonverbal strategies to clarify boundary preferences	Setting expectations with stakeholders or confronting boundary violators

Source: Kreiner et al., 2009

Boundary management has been reconceptualized through a person-centred approach, suggesting that individuals combine multiple boundary-related characteristics into distinct profiles rather than simply positioning themselves along a linear segmentation-integration continuum (Kossek et al., 2012). Boundary management styles are defined through the interaction of cross-role interruption behaviours, identity centrality and, most critically, perceived boundary control, the subjective ability to regulate the timing and direction of boundary crossings (Kossek et al., 2012). This study identifies six profiles, showing that well-being is influenced less by whether individuals integrate or segment roles and more by the degree of control they perceive over boundary enactment, with high-control profiles (fusion lovers, dividers, family guardians, eclectics) exhibiting better work-schedule fit, lower psychological distress and reduced turnover intentions regardless of style, while low-control profiles (reactors, job warriors) are consistently associated with strain, conflict and negative work and family outcomes (Kossek et al., 2012).

Recent research extends these theoretical foundations by highlighting the relevance of contextual and technological factors. Digitalization, mobile technologies and hybrid work arrangements have intensified boundary blurring, making boundary management increasingly complex (Allen et al., 2021; Reissner et al., 2021). The growing emphasis on adaptability reflects a broader shift in boundary management research, which increasingly recognizes that individuals must develop their own flexible strategies to sustain well-being in complex and changing work environments (Reissner et al., 2021).

2.1.1 Boundary Management in Contemporary Work Contexts

The rise of remote and hybrid work has brought boundary management to the centre of organizational behaviour research (Allen et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, employees were forced into unplanned and prolonged boundary renegotiations that revealed both the potential and the limitations of flexibility. Allen et al. (2021) argue that individuals with strong segmentation preferences experienced higher levels of work-nonwork balance when working from home, often relying on temporal routines (e.g., fixed schedules), dedicated spaces (e.g., home offices) and symbolic detachment behaviours (e.g., closing laptops or removing work items) to maintain separation, which proved particularly effective in enhancing balance, especially when supported by segmentation skills and favourable home environments with fewer household members; contrary to expectations, integrators reported poorer work-nonwork balance than segmenters, since segmenters were better prepared to manage role blurring when faced with a complete overlap of boundaries.

The emphasis on context aligns with De Gieter et al. (2022), who introduce the concept of Boundary Management Fit (BMF), which refers to the alignment between individuals' boundary preferences and organizational support systems. High BMF is associated with lower work-family conflict, greater satisfaction and improved performance. Conversely, misalignment, such as integrators in highly segmented cultures, can lead to stress and identity strain.

At a broader level, boundary management can be understood within a whole-life career self-management perspective, in which individuals are required to integrate personal goals, contextual constraints and available resources across life domains, in order to sustain long-term well-being and career satisfaction (Hirschi et al., 2022). From this viewpoint, individuals continuously coordinate goals, action plans and behaviours while responding to evolving role expectations, resources and barriers, with ongoing monitoring and feedback functioning as critical mechanisms that enable adaptation to life changes and shape boundary outcomes through the interaction between individual agency and structural conditions (Hirschi et al., 2022).

2.2. Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) refer broadly to organizational practices that grant employees discretion over when, where and how work is performed, encompassing

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temporal flexibility (e.g., flex time), spatial flexibility (e.g., remote work, telework) and hybrid combinations of both (Harrop et al., 2025; Vohra et al., 2024). Within the context of Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), FWAs operate as structural boundary conditions that can either facilitate or constrain individuals' capacity to regulate the permeability and flexibility of work-nonwork boundaries (Harrop et al., 2025; Vohra et al., 2024).

Hyland (1999) offers a foundational theoretical contribution to the flexible work literature by conceptualizing FWAs not as isolated practices but as multidimensional structures whose effects depend on the interaction between availability, individual preferences and actual use. Through a Structure-Affect-Outcome model, Hyland (1999) demonstrates that FWAs do not directly influence business outcomes such as turnover and performance; instead, their effects are mediated by employees' affective reactions, particularly perceived organizational support.

Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) - a pattern of voluntary behaviour in which individuals act based on the anticipation of future benefits arising from others' responses, even though such benefits are not explicitly specified at the moment the exchange takes place - Hyland (1999) argues that flexibility operates as a discretionary signal of organizational care, fostering reciprocity in the form of commitment and reduced turnover intentions. The impact of FWAs is contingent upon preference alignment, with stronger positive effects emerging when flexible options match employees' needs (Hyland, 1999).

Contemporary research increasingly positions FWAs, particularly remote and hybrid work, not as temporary accommodations but as enduring structural features of contemporary employment relationships (Smite et al., 2023). Based on evidence from technology firms across multiple countries, flexibility has shifted from a discretionary benefit to a standard expectation, reflecting a renegotiation of the psychological contract; in this context, restrictions on flexibility are often perceived as illegitimate, and strict return-to-office policies can compromise employee engagement and retention (Smite et al., 2023). However, preferences for flexibility are not homogeneous. Smite et al. (2023) also show that managers and early-career employees may prefer office-based work due to coordination needs, socialization and inadequate home working conditions, whereas senior employees and those with long commutes show stronger preferences for working from home. These findings underscore the importance of avoiding uniform flexibility

policies and instead, recognizing heterogeneity across roles, career stages and personal circumstances.

FWAs also function as boundary-spanning resources that help employees conserve physical and psychological resources (Shifrin & Michel, 2022). These authors differentiate between forms of flexibility: temporal flexibility (flex time) shows more consistent associations with reduced physical health complaints than spatial flexibility (flex place), suggesting that control over time may be more significant for well-being than control over location. Nevertheless, the combination of both temporal and spatial flexibility produces the most positive outcomes for boundary management and career satisfaction, as this dual flexibility gives employees greater agency in structuring their work around personal needs (Harrop et al., 2025).

Moreover, various authors identify an “availability versus use” paradox, whereby the mere availability of FWAs generates stronger health and psychological benefits than their actual use, as the perceived sense of choice and control, central to boundary management, enhances well-being while persistent flexibility stigma and unsupportive organizational norms may lead the enactment of FWAs to blur boundaries rather than protect them (Harrop et al., 2025; Hyland, 1999; Shifrin & Michel, 2022).

The literature shows that well-designed flexibility systems can generate positive organizational and individual outcomes. For instance, a results-oriented model such as “smart working”, which removes constraints related to both time and place, has been shown to enhance employee well-being and productivity without increasing effort or reducing wages (Angelici & Profeta, 2024). By dissociating performance from physical presence, smart working reduces stress, sleep deprivation and mitigates boundary erosion, illustrating that flexibility can function as a genuine resource when embedded in output-based management cultures rather than virtualized attendance.

Therefore, FWAs are understood not as uniformly beneficial resources but as structural mechanisms whose effects depend on individual preferences, leadership behaviours, organizational norms and contextual support, resonating the central theme that boundary management requires alignment between personal strategies and contextual constraints (Harrop et al., 2025; Vohra et al., 2024).

2.2.1 Pos-Pandemic, Remote Work and the Stress of Blurred Boundaries

While FWAs are often framed as resources that enhance autonomy, work-life balance (WLB) and well-being, recent research highlights their inherently ambivalent nature,

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emphasizing that flexibility simultaneously introduces risks related to boundary blurring, technostress and intensified availability expectations (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022; Soga et al., 2022). In line with this, Soga et al. (2022) conceptualize flexibility as a heterogeneous and contested phenomenon, identifying remote work, spatiotemporal work, on-demand work and self-directed work as distinct clusters with divergent implications. Although flexibility may increase autonomy, it often introduces new forms of surveillance, work intensification and cost-shifting from organizations to individuals, particularly through digital connectivity and blurred spatial boundaries. These dynamics disproportionately affect groups that deviate from the “ideal worker” norm, reinforcing gendered and socio-economic inequalities (Soga et al., 2022).

Remote work, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, also illustrates the dual nature of FWAs. Although remote work theoretically enhances autonomy through flexplace and flex time, empirical evidence reveals that many employees faced intensified workloads, spatial constraints, technostress and increased caregiving responsibilities (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). These pressures made it difficult to maintain temporal, physical and psychological boundaries, leading to heightened work-family conflict.

The abrupt and unplanned transition to working from home, often under lockdown conditions, left employees with limited resources to manage competing role demands effectively, with minimum preparation (Vaziri et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). This transition became even more challenging as many employees had to manage caregiving duties while learning to work from home at the same time (Vaziri et al., 2020).

These challenges were unevenly distributed. Research consistently shows that women, caregivers and employees living in small or shared housing environments faced greater boundary permeability and reduced boundary control during the pandemic (Kossek et al., 2021; Soga et al., 2022). The reconfiguration of the home into a multifunctional work site intensified role overlaps and constrained opportunities for recovery, exacerbating work-life conflict (Soga et al., 2022). In this sense, remote and flexible work can increase the risks of disconnectedness, emotional detachment and even burnout, thereby intensifying the conflict between work and family life (Petitta & Ghezzi, 2023). FWAs therefore require active cultivation of psychological connection, social inclusion and supportive communication to prevent resource depletion and negative spillovers (Petitta & Ghezzi, 2023).

Vohra et al. (2024) argue that in the post-pandemic context, FWAs increasingly prioritize organizational efficiency and scalability, thereby transferring greater

responsibility for boundary management and well-being to employees, unless this shift is counterbalanced by supervisory support, formalized policies and cultural norms that legitimize disconnection.

At the same time, the pandemic prompted organizations, and Human Resource Development (HRD) scholars and practitioners to re-evaluate assumptions about remote work and leadership. This crisis exposed deficiencies in organizational support, leadership communication and employee development practices, calling for greater attention to the psychological and relational dimensions of remote work (Bierema, 2020; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Instead of treating FWAs as self-regulating systems, there is a need for active managerial involvement in defining expectations, supporting employees' boundary control and promoting social inclusion (Bierema, 2020; Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

2.3 Career Sustainability

Career sustainability has become a key concept in contemporary career studies (Müller et al., 2022), reflecting the need to understand how individuals maintain meaningful, healthy and productive careers over time, through a continuous negotiation of boundaries across life domains, aligning personal values, available opportunities and contextual demands (De Vos et al., 2020; Van Der Heijden et al., 2020).

Sustainable careers are defined as “sequences of career experiences” that unfold over time, shaped by the individual and characterized by continuity, meaning and a sense of direction (De Vos et al., 2020). Central to this conceptualization is the HHP triad: health, happiness and productivity, which interact dynamically as individuals adapt to shifting job demands, relational contexts and life-course circumstances (Curado et al., 2023; Greenhaus et al., 2024). These indicators are interdependent, productivity, achieved at the expense of well-being or satisfaction, cannot be considered sustainable, challenging traditional performance-centred notions of career success (Curado et al., 2023).

Sustainable careers can be defined as a multi-contextual phenomenon shaped by interactions across micro (individual), meso (organizational) and macro (societal) levels (Müller et al., 2022). Complementing this perspective, employability can be understood through a capability-based approach, where individuals thrive when they can realize what they value, and convert available resources into meaningful opportunities (Gürbüz et al., 2024). Misalignment between personal values and organizational conditions consistently

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compromise sustainability, underscoring the importance of supportive work environments, social resources and organizational policies (Gürbüz et al., 2024).

Career sustainability is seen as a dynamic and lifelong process, where the individual is an active agent, whose skills, motivations and beliefs interact with contextual enablers, such as family, supervisors and organizational practices, across multiple transitions and social spaces (Karaca-Atik et al., 2024). From this perspective, 21st-century skills, including problem-solving, collaboration, communication and adaptability, are not merely tools for labour market entry but essential mechanisms for sustaining well-being, engagement and productivity over time.

Career sustainability is achieved by linking happiness, health and productivity to job satisfaction, well-being and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which refers to employees' voluntary actions that support and help their colleagues, extending beyond the formal requirements of their job roles (Curado et al., 2023). Through cluster analyses, the study identifies distinct sustainable and non-sustainable career profiles, providing evidence that the integration of these indicators is critical for long-term viability.

Similarly, Chin et al. (2022) extend the concept from a hedonic perspective to a more focused on personal growth, self-realization and meaning approach, framing career sustainability through four interrelated dimensions: resourceful, flexible, renewable and integrative (Table 2).

Table 2 - Four dimensions of Career Sustainability

Resourceful	This dimension reflects individuals' capacity to mobilize and optimize their personal and professional resources to secure employability and economic stability, particularly in volatile labour markets, thus highlighting sustainability as a proactive rather than passive state.
Flexible	The flexible dimension refers to an adaptive orientation towards learning and change, enabling individuals to remain relevant by embracing new roles, tasks and opportunities in uncertain environments.
Renewable	The renewable dimension emphasizes the importance of recovery, reflection and reinvention, capturing the idea that sustainable careers must allow for periodic renewal to prevent exhaustion and obsolescence.
Integrative	The integrative dimension addresses the individual's ability to synthesize diverse experiences and knowledge into a coherent career narrative, reinforcing identity, coherence and long-term development.

Source: Chin et al., 2022

These dimensions emphasize the proactive use of personal and professional resources, adaptability to change, recovery, reinvention and the synthesis of experiences into a

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coherent career narrative, elements that have been empirically associated with higher career sustainability and psychological well-being (Chin et al., 2022).

Sustainability is also mediated by boundary management and proactive behaviours. Schweitzer et al. (2023) reconceptualize career sustainability as an intrapersonal process in which individuals continually align past experiences, present needs and future aspirations through cyclical self-examination.

Sustainable careers require alignment between individual agency and contextual enablers, implying that organizations, peers and family members are active stakeholders in career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2020).

Contextual resources, such as family-supportive supervision and work-supportive family, act as passageways that stimulate proactive career crafting, enhancing person-career fit and ultimately supporting health, happiness and productivity (Kilic & Kitapci, 2024). In a complementary approach, the integration of nonwork orientations is emphasised, showing that integrating personal life, family and community roles allow individuals to exercise agency and actively manage resources (e.g., time and energy), in order to enhance person-career fit, foster enrichment and reduce work-nonwork conflict, particularly among younger workers adopting a whole-life perspective (Hirschi et al., 2020).

Practical mechanisms for sustaining careers are also evident in organizational interventions. For instance, targeted learning opportunities, particularly when reinforced by supervisor support, enhance both employability and performance, illustrating how contextual enablers can compensate for individual differences in openness and proactive behaviours (Bozionelos et al., 2020). These insights can be integrated within the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) framework, proposing that sustainable careers arise from mutually beneficial interactions between employees and organizations, with career crafting strengthening the alignment between employability and long-term career success (Donald et al., 2024). Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre (2020) also contribute to this discourse by examining Reduced-Load work arrangements, highlighting the need for collaborative job redesign to maintain well-being, productivity and career progression while challenging the traditional “ideal worker” norm.

*2.3.1 Relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements and Career
Sustainability*

Given the centrality of boundary alignment in career sustainability, FWAs provide a critical structural mechanism through which individuals manage role demands and resources (Harrop et al., 2025). Hybrid work, flex time and flex place arrangements enable individuals to recalibrate temporal and spatial boundaries, reducing conflict and facilitating WLB (Harrop et al., 2025). Harrop et al. (2025) argue that perceived flexibility enhances psychological empowerment, enabling employees to manage role pressures proactively. When employees experience autonomy and control over their work arrangements, they are better positioned to maintain career energy, satisfaction and long-term engagement.

Research demonstrates that flexible practices support sustained career outcomes by mitigating exhaustion and enhancing adaptive capacity. Hybrid work arrangements have been found to enhance well-being by allowing employees to align work demands with their personal rhythms, thereby reducing strain and the risk of burnout (Junça Silva & Lopes, 2025). In a similar perspective, flexible organizational systems contribute to sustainable careers by enabling individuals to reorganize boundaries across life domains and preserve critical resources, such as time, energy and relational support (Müller et al., 2022).

Conversely, inflexible work structures often inhibit sustainable career development by restricting autonomy, increasing conflict and hindering adaptability (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). The absence of flexibility reduces individuals' capacity to adjust to life course changes, leading to accumulated strain and decreased career satisfaction (De Vos et al., 2020). However, organizations that implement structured flexibility practices, accompanied by clear norms, leadership support and boundary guidance, enable employees to develop resilient, meaningful and productive career paths, promoting well-being and career sustainability (Willett et al., 2024).

H1: FWAs positively influence career sustainability.

2.4 Boundary Management Control

2.4.1 Relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements and Boundary Management Control

Flexible practices provide structural conditions that either enable individuals to enact their preferred boundary management control or pressure them to adopt alternative patterns. Hybrid work, flex time and flex place arrangements increase the degree of control individuals have over when and where they work, thereby enhancing their ability to regulate boundary permeability and flexibility (Junça Silva & Lopes, 2025). When employees enjoy temporal and spatial autonomy, they are more capable of aligning enacted boundaries with their preferred styles, whether those imply creating stricter segmentation or practicing selective integration (Harrop et al., 2025).

The expansion of flexible work practices, such as teleworking and flexible schedules, has given employees greater responsibility in managing the boundaries between their professional and personal lives (Kossek et al., 2012). Organizations should go beyond merely providing formal flexibility policies and place stronger emphasis on fostering employees' sense of control over how these boundaries are managed (Kossek et al., 2012). Based on these authors, flexibility initiatives, when not accompanied by perceived boundary control, may be of limited benefit, particularly for individuals with strong family or non-work commitments.

From a resource-based perspective, FWAs can support boundary management control by enabling employees to allocate time, energy and attention more effectively across life domains (Shifrin & Michel, 2022).

Harrop et al. (2025) highlight that perceived flexibility, rather than actual usage, plays a crucial role in empowering individuals to orchestrate boundary arrangements. Employees who perceive high levels of flexibility are more likely to implement boundary tactics that reflect their personal preferences, reducing incongruence between preferred and enacted boundaries (Kreiner et al., 2009). This alignment is essential for minimizing work-life conflict and sustaining well-being.

However, the effectiveness of FWAs depends heavily on organizational norms and expectations. During remote work transitions, the absence of clear norms regarding availability led to excessive integration and boundary blurring, regardless of individuals' segmentation preferences (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Similarly, significant reductions in boundary control were observed among women in STEM during the

pandemic, reinforcing the idea that FWAs can weaken boundary management control when organizational support is insufficient (Kossek et al., 2021).

Therefore, it's essential that HRD practitioners prepare managers, leaders and staff for FWAs through targeted training, provision of adequate resources and guidance on boundary management techniques (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

FWAs also change the temporal and spatial organization of work, increasing the need for individuals to actively regulate boundaries between domains (Allen et al., 2021; Weiss & Ortlieb, 2025). While flexibility provides structural discretion, its benefits depend on employees' perceived ability to control the timing and permeability of role transitions (Kossek et al., 2012). In telework and hybrid contexts, organizational flexibility can strengthen boundary management control when supported by supervisory behaviours and environmental stability (Carvalho et al., 2025).

H2: FWAs positively influence boundary management control

2.4.2 Relationship between Boundary Management Control and Career Sustainability

Boundary management control plays a crucial role in shaping long term career outcomes by influencing how individuals manage demands, protect personal resources and pursue meaningful career goals (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2020). Its importance becomes particularly salient in contemporary careers, increasingly characterized by permeability between professional and private domains, where sustainability depends less on linear advancement and more on individuals' capacity to regulate role boundaries over time (De Vos et al., 2020).

Boundary control (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2020) and whole-life alignment (Hirschi et al., 2020) act as the primary mechanisms that shield employees from resource depletion and conflict (Van Der Heijden et al., 2020), thereby creating the "dynamic fit" necessary for sustained engagement and long-term productivity (Kilic & Kitapci, 2024). Career sustainability is explicitly framed as the continuous alignment between health, happiness and productivity, dimensions that are directly influenced by individuals' capacity to regulate the permeability and flexibility of work-life boundaries (De Vos et al., 2020). From this perspective, boundary management control operates not merely as a balancing technique, but as a central agentic process through which individuals preserve resources, prevent burnout and sustain employability across the life course.

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Career sustainability emerges from individuals' ability to balance demands and resources across multiple life domains, including work, family and leisure (Müller et al., 2022). Management of boundaries is crucial in this process: individuals who effectively regulate boundary permeability and flexibility are better equipped to maintain energy, preserve well-being and pursue long-term goals. Organizational practices, such as FWAs, supportive leadership and individualized career paths, enhance sustainability by facilitating boundary alignment rather than imposing rigid structures (Müller et al., 2022). Similarly, Hirschi et al. (2022) conceptualize boundary management as a core component of whole-life career self-management, through which individuals proactively coordinate goals across work and nonwork domains, thereby sustaining career viability in the face of shifting role demands and life-stage transitions.

Müller et al. (2022) further highlight that individuals operate within interconnected micro (individual), meso (organizational), and macro (societal) systems. At each of these levels, boundary conditions shape career experiences, as presented on Table 3.

Table 3 - Boundaries across dimensions

Dimensions	Boundaries
Micro (Individual)	Psychological resources such as adaptability, identity coherence and resilience, support boundary transitions.
Meso (Organisational)	FWAs, leadership behaviors and clear career paths systems establish boundary affordances or constraints.
Macro (Societal)	Labor market structures, gender norms and policy regimes influence individuals' capacity to sustain viable career pathways.

Source: Müller et al., 2022

Career sustainability can be seen as life-span trajectories and as a shared responsibility between individuals and organizations (Van Der Heijden et al., 2020). Research indicates that individuals must actively engage in boundary management by balancing demands, protecting recovery time and pursuing skill development; at the same time, employers must support this process by offering flexible work practices, reasonable workloads and customized career pathways (Van Der Heijden et al., 2020). Poor boundary management, whether due to organizational overload, role blurring, or lack of support, raises risks of burnout, disengagement and turnover (Van Der Heijden et al., 2020).

Segmentation-oriented individuals may experience greater psychological detachment during nonwork periods, preserving energy necessary for career continuity and long-term

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resilience (Allen et al., 2021). On the other hand, integration-oriented individuals may benefit from enhanced resource spillovers, stronger relational networks and increased meaning across domains when contextual conditions support healthy integration (Wan et al., 2022). Positive cross-domain resource flows enrich work and personal life, supporting the happiness and productivity components of career sustainability (Kim et al., 2024).

Kim et al. (2024) develop a four-factor measurement model capturing the multidimensionality of career sustainability: meaning perception, relationship building, environmental awareness and skill acquisition. Meaning perception reflects internal coherence and alignment between personal values and career direction, while relationship building underscores the importance of social capital and supportive boundary structures. Environmental awareness captures individuals' ability to interpret and adapt to external boundary conditions, and skill acquisition ensures long-term employability through continuous learning.

These dimensions converge with the notion that boundary fluidity, the capacity to shift adaptively between segmentation and integration, is particularly advantageous in modern careers, enabling individuals to respond flexibly to evolving work and life demands while preserving sustainability (Reissner et al., 2021). This adaptive perspective is further reinforced by evidence showing that stable full-time and substantial part-time trajectories characterized by consistent boundary structures, yield higher levels of satisfaction, health and productivity, whereas fragmented employment pathways (e.g., unemployment) reflect boundary disruption and lower levels of sustainability (Udayar et al., 2025).

Organizational signaling is equally important, the mere availability of training opportunities, independent of actual participation, encourages older workers to extend their working lives (De Grip et al., 2020). This finding highlights the importance of perceived organizational support and expectations when individuals negotiate long-term career decisions. However, such signals must be credible: when organizations experience financial instability, employees interpret training opportunities with greater skepticism, perceiving them as efficiency-driven rather than supportive. Overall, these insights underscore that sustainable careers depend as much on perceptions, trust and relational boundaries as on structural policies (De Grip et al., 2020).

Boundary management control, has been identified as a critical personal resource that protects employees from burnout, role overload and psychological strain (Kossek et al., 2012). When individuals are able to regulate interruptions and manage transitions, they preserve cognitive and emotional resources necessary for sustained engagement and long-

term performance (Cook & Sawhney, 2025; Mueller et al., 2025), which is aligned with the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), where such control prevents resource depletion, and supports gain spirals that contribute to health and career sustainability (Carvalho et al., 2025).

H3: Boundary management control positively influences career sustainability.

2.5 Work-Life Enrichment

Work-Life Enrichment (WLE) refers to the extent to which experiences in one life domain (work or family) improve the quality of life in the other domain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). It represents the positive counterpart to work-life conflict and has become an essential explanatory mechanism in contemporary work-life research. Greenhaus & Powell (2006) presents a theory of work-family enrichment (WFE) that positions work-life roles as resource generators rather than competitors, advancing an expansionist view where role participation can create a gain spiral that supports long-term career functioning. The authors identify five transferable resources that can flow between domains: skills/perspectives, psychological/physical assets (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism, health), social capital, flexibility and material resources.

WLE can unfold in two directions: work-to-family enrichment (WFE), in which experiences at work enhance functioning in the nonwork domain, and family-to-work enrichment (FWE), in which family experiences positively influence performance at work (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Enrichment occurs through instrumental (direct application of resources to another role) and affective (positive emotions in one role improving functioning in another) pathways, contingent on boundary conditions such as role salience, perceived relevance and normative compatibility (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Building on this foundational theory, more contemporary studies corroborate that work can function as a resource-generating domain that enhances employees' personal lives through developmental, affective and psychological capital pathways (Agrawal & Mahajan, 2021; Kalliath et al., 2020). Drawing on Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), it has been shown that skills, positive affect and self-esteem acquired at work can be transferred to the family domain, creating resource gain spirals that ultimately foster higher job satisfaction (Kalliath et al., 2020). Employees' positive affect and fulfilment can spill over to partners, improving relationship satisfaction and

overall well-being, through harmonious work passion, a form of intrinsic and voluntary engagement with work, that enhances enrichment by fostering emotional and cognitive resources that benefit family life (Wan et al., 2022).

Research increasingly highlights the combined role of individual agency and contextual resources in shaping WLE. Employees have been conceptualized as active agents who intentionally transfer work-derived resources to the family domain, introducing the notion of WFE self-efficacy to capture individuals' confidence in their ability to enact such transfers (Heskiau & McCarthy, 2021). Complementing this view, it has been demonstrated that workplace resources, particularly social support, interact with personal attributes, such as strengths use and harmonious passion, thereby reinforcing the positive spillover of skills and affect from work to home (Nguyen et al., 2025).

2.5.1 Relationship between FWA and Work-Life Enrichment

FWAs have been seen as strategic organizational resources capable of fostering WLE, rather than merely operational benefits (Harrop et al., 2025). The authors consider flexibility as a mechanism that enables employees to mobilize psychological, temporal and relational resources, thereby enhancing positive spillovers between work and non-work domains; FWAs function as synergistic resource systems, with perceived availability of flexibility serving as a psychological safety net that promotes boundary management, energy conservation and social reciprocity. The simple sense of choice and control, central principles in boundary management, appears to contribute more strongly to well-being than the specific arrangement adopted.

Organizational support and job characteristics are recognized as vital enablers of WLE. Perceived organizational support enhances enrichment by strengthening protective resources (decent work) and mitigating depleting factors (burnout) through a chain mediation process (Xu & Zhao, 2024). In terms of FWAs, temporal flexibility is highlighted for autonomy protection, while spatial flexibility, despite its resource potential, can increase role blurring and demand intensification (Kim et al., 2020). Consequently, WLE depends on pre-existing organizational and personal resources, revealing potential inequities in resource constrained environments (Harrop et al., 2025). Work hours also play a crucial role in shaping enrichment (Pak et al., 2022). Moderate work hours generate energy that supports WLE, but excessive workloads deplete resources and increase conflict (Pak et al., 2022). Research highlights that enrichment is fundamentally an energy-based process, dependent on the availability of surplus

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resources that can be transferred across domains (Pak et al., 2022). This underscores the importance of sustainable workload structures in enabling WLE.

Flexible practices act as a resource-generating system, through which flexibility strengthens perceived autonomy and temporal agency, reduces stress and facilitates cross-domain enrichment (Purnawan et al., 2025). These authors emphasize that enrichment arises not from the policy itself but through psychological empowerment, highlighting flexibility as a tool for subjective role satisfaction and strategic organizational transformation. They also note that contextual factors, such as, technological readiness, supportive culture and societal norms, critically shape WLE outcomes, with uneven access potentially limiting benefits in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) or less digitally mature settings.

Flexibility has been conceptualized as a paradoxical practice: while formalized arrangements expand autonomy and satisfaction, informal or “catch-up” flexibility can increase boundary permeability, role blurring and stress spillover (Kim et al., 2020). Empirical evidence shows benefits of flexible schedules and some benefits of working from home; although working from home to catch up on work, it has disadvantages for worker well-being (Kim et al., 2020). Moreover, unequal household responsibilities, particularly along gendered lines, may constrain WLE, underscoring that access to enrichment is contingent upon structural and social conditions (Kim et al., 2020).

Flexibility also acts as a job control system that reallocates time and energy across work and personal life, supporting WLE through enhanced role satisfaction, reciprocal engagement and reduced role pressure (Kumar et al., 2023; Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021). Yet, both studies show that flexibility also raises boundary permeability, which can intensify stress and work-to-life conflict. Its benefits are conditional, varying by contract type, life stage and demographic factors, meaning enrichment is not equally accessible to all employees.

The activation of FWAs for enrichment outcomes depends significantly on leadership communication (Willett et al., 2024). Flexibility becomes meaningful only when intentionally mediated through relational support and role coordination; without such communicative mechanisms, policies rich in autonomy may fail to translate into actual enrichment, particularly in hybrid or moderately flexible contexts (Willett et al., 2024).

Existing research, claims that WLE emerges when resources generated in one domain positively transfer to another (Kalliath et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2025). FWAs may facilitate such transfer by allowing employees to redistribute time and energy according

to situational demands, thereby enabling positive spillovers (Allen et al., 2021; Hyland, 1999). However, enrichment is not an automatic consequence of flexibility; it depends on the alignment between preferences, support and contextual conditions (Mueller et al., 2025; Oteng & Ngo-Henha Eyono, 2024).

H4: FWAs positively influences WLE

2.5.2 Relationship between Boundary Management Control and Work-Life Enrichment

WLE depends on the degree to which individuals allow resources - emotional, cognitive, temporal and relational - to transfer across life domains, a process shaped by boundary management styles and perceived boundary control (Cook & Sawhney, 2025; Mueller et al., 2025). Recent research increasingly converges on the idea that enrichment outcomes depend less on boundary style itself and more on individuals' perceived control over boundary enactment and the contextual conditions that support or constrain such control (Bella, 2023; Cook & Sawhney, 2025; Mueller et al., 2025).

Recent evidence shows that both segmentation and integration can enable enrichment in life when aligned with individual values, intrinsic motivation and organizational boundary support (Oteng & Ngo-Henha Eyono, 2024). Drawing on the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), Oteng & Ngo-Henha Eyono (2024) argue that organizations that legitimize flexible and negotiable boundaries, stimulate reciprocal commitment and diligence, reinforcing enrichment indirectly through loyalty-based exchanges, even when WLB is unstable. Their findings also indicate that WLB moderates career success, but not commitment, suggesting that enrichment may result from direct social exchanges rather than overall boundary harmony.

Although integration is commonly assumed to enhance enrichment via high permeability, empirical findings increasingly challenge its universal benefits. Segmentation preference has been positively associated with stronger work-nonwork balance and reduced boundary violations, particularly in work from home (WFH) and hybrid contexts, where clearer boundaries help individuals protect surplus energy and recovery time, both prerequisites for enrichment (Allen et al., 2021; Enid et al., 2025; Mathur et al., 2024). Segmentation is thus framed not only as a preference but as a developable capability, supported by needs-supplies fit (e.g., a dedicated home office enabling segmentation) and demands-abilities fit (Allen et al., 2021). This approach has been reinforced by conceptualizing boundary-setting as a preventive strategy against

burnout and chronic stress, describing WLB as a form of “metaphorical medicine” that sustains resilience and long-term effectiveness in demanding work environments (Bella, 2023). At the same time, enrichment processes may be constrained when environmental resources, such as adequate physical space or financial conditions, cannot be realistically secured, a limitation that appears particularly salient for early-career employees engaged in remote work (Allen et al., 2021).

The importance of perceived boundary fit, rather than style alone, is emphasized by Mueller et al. (2025), who show that enrichment increases when individuals perceive alignment between preferred and enacted boundaries. Misalignment generates cognitive dissonance, role conflict and reduced enrichment. Based on Action Regulation Theory, their findings introduce a “fit spiral”, in which increased perceived boundary fit strengthens positive affect, satisfaction and well-being, which further improves boundary capability.

Boundary control has been identified as a stronger predictor of enrichment than segmentation or integration alone, given that enrichment depends primarily on individuals feeling in command of the direction, timing and frequency of role transitions, while involuntary boundary crossings operate as forced transitions that disrupt cognitive switching processes (Cook & Sawhney, 2025); dedicated office spaces moderate interruptions and enable clearer mental role delineation.

Boundary control partially mediates the relationship between organizational practices and WLE; however, segmentation enactment weakens the positive effect of organizational support on perceived boundary control: employees who already segment effectively, derive less incremental enrichment from formal organizational practices (Geraldes et al., 2025).

WLE is not only a result of individual boundary strategies, but rather emerges from the dynamic interplay between organizational resources, motivational processes and perceived boundary control (Nguyen et al., 2025). The authors conceptualize WLE as the outcome of a flow of resources, whereby contextual resources, especially social support, interact with individual attributes to generate positive spillovers from work to home; strengths use, for instance, represents a key boundary condition that amplifies enrichment (Nguyen et al., 2025).

H5: Boundary Management Control positively influences WLE

2.5.3 Relationship between Work-Life Enrichment and Career Sustainability

WLE represents an important role in fostering sustainable careers by enhancing well-being, supporting meaningful engagement and sustaining performance over time (De Vos et al., 2020). Enrichment allows individuals to accumulate psychological and social resources through the positive interplay of professional and personal domains, which enhances resilience, reduces strain and maintains long-term motivation. These resources accumulation processes, directly contribute to health, happiness and productivity, which constitute the core indicators of sustainable careers (De Vos et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2025).

Research shows that WLE operates as a dynamic, multi-level mechanism that supports career sustainability by activating resource-gain processes across work and non-work domains. WLE has been shown to enhance job satisfaction and work engagement indirectly through Subjective Career Success (SCS), when examined from a work-home resource perspective (Koekemoer et al., 2020). In this process, skills, perspectives and positive affect accumulated across life domains contribute to resource-gain spirals that reinforce psychological energy and support long-term role functioning (Koekemoer et al., 2020). Building on this rationale, job crafting has been identified as a key mediating personal resource through which enrichment is translated into sustainable outcomes, as WLE stimulates proactive adjustments to job demands and resources, thereby strengthening SCS and promoting ongoing career viability (Koekemoer & Olckers, 2025). From this standpoint, sustainable careers are not simply preserved by minimizing work-life conflict, but are actively developed through resource-driven engagement and self-directed career management processes (Koekemoer & Olckers, 2025).

WFE is associated with cumulative resource accumulation, as it fosters the development of skills, positive affect and personal capital that protect against burnout and reduce turnover intentions, thereby reinforcing longer-term organizational attachment (Kalliath et al., 2020). At the same time, the sustainability of these enrichment-based gains depends on contextual conditions, given that perceived supervisor support strengthens resource-gain spirals, whereas structural constraints, such as long working hours or rigid performance norms, may limit the extent to which enrichment translates into durable career outcomes (Kalliath et al., 2020).

The motivational and agentic dimensions of WLE are further developed through the concept of enrichment self-efficacy, defined as individuals' belief in their capacity to

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intentionally mobilize work-derived resources to enhance functioning in non-work roles (Heskiau & McCarthy, 2021). Evidence indicates that when employees are able to effectively transfer resources and receive appropriate training, they experience higher job satisfaction and greater meaningfulness, both of which are essential for sustaining long-term career engagement (Heskiau & McCarthy, 2021). In parallel, WFE has been conceptualized as a bi-directional process through which skills, psychological resources, social capital and flexibility circulate across domains, positively predicting career satisfaction and indirectly reinforcing life satisfaction, thereby linking sustained career fulfilment to broader well-being (İplik & Ülbeği, 2021). Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these enrichment dynamics may be constrained by structural inequalities, including unequal domestic responsibilities and limited institutional support, which disproportionately affect women and individuals in precarious employment situations (Heskiau & McCarthy, 2021; İplik & Ülbeği, 2021).

From a broader sustainable career perspective, WLE must be situated within a whole-life and life-span framework. Sustainable careers are more likely to emerge when individuals sustain high levels of engagement across both work and nonwork domains, thereby fostering enrichment while minimizing chronic role conflict (Hirschi et al., 2020; Van Der Heijden et al., 2020). Enrichment is generated not only through work roles but also through nonwork activities, which foster transferable resources such as self-efficacy, adaptability and resilience, that can be reinvested in career development (Hirschi et al., 2020; Van Der Heijden et al., 2020). From this perspective, WLE depends on the alignment between personal values, accumulated career experiences and organizational support systems that enable individuals to integrate these domains coherently over time.

Beyond the individual level, organizational and contextual support significantly influence how WLE translates into sustainable careers. Collegial and organizational support for work-life integration has been identified as a primary predictor of career satisfaction, particularly in high-stress professional contexts (Johnson et al., 2020). While individual strategies, such as, schedule modifications, had limited impact, structural and cultural support amplified the benefits of enrichment, especially for women, highlighting the socially co-constructed nature of sustainable careers (Johnson et al., 2020). Thus, WLE is most effective when individual agency is complemented by enabling organizational structures.

Lastly, a broader perspective further indicates that the effective management of professional and personal roles through WLB, a construct conceptually aligned with

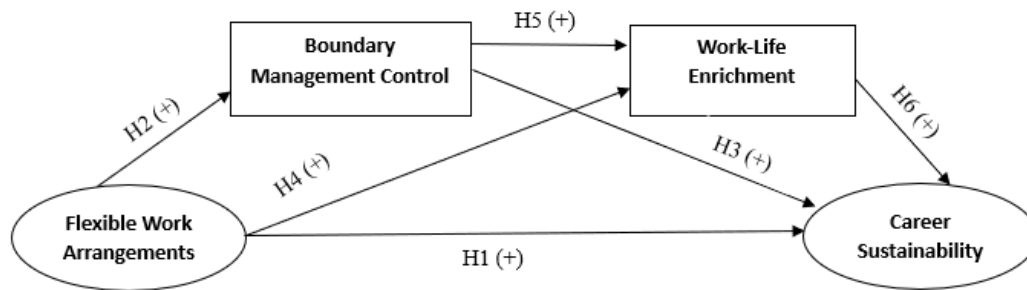
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WLE, is positively associated with career satisfaction, reduced burnout and stronger long-term retention intentions (Perera et al., 2025). These findings suggest that enrichment processes unfold into sustainable careers, when organizations actively implement supportive practices, such as flexible policies, mental health initiatives and leadership behaviours that legitimize boundary regulation (Perera et al., 2025).

H6: WLE positively influences Career Sustainability

Drawing on the insights developed throughout the Literature Review, this study follows the research model presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Research Model



Source: Own Elaboration

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This study followed the Research Onion framework proposed by Saunders et al. (2019) to structure its methodology. The research was grounded in a Positivist Philosophy, which emphasizes the analysis of observable and measurable realities to generate reliable data through hypothesis testing (Saunders et al., 2019). Within this perspective, positivism ensures objectivity, with the researcher remaining detached from the subject through data collection and analysis.

In line with positivism, this study used a Deductive Approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), focusing on testing hypotheses based on established theories, particularly Work-Life Border Theory (Clark, 2000) and Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000). This approach allows to test causal relationships between variables and analyse results using quantitative data (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, it maintains the researcher's independence from the subject being studied and it allows the results to be statistically generalized, from small sample sizes (Saunders et al., 2019).

The study used a survey as its research strategy (Punch, 2013) collecting quantifiable data through structured questionnaires distributed to employees. A cross-sectional time horizon was adopted since the data was gathered at a single point in time (Wang & Cheng, 2020), making it possible to examine the relationships between variables efficiently (Saunders et al., 2019).

The research followed a Quantitative Mono-Method approach, using Linear Regression Analysis to examine the relationships between the constructs: Boundary Management Control, Flexible Work Arrangements, Career Sustainability and Work-Life Enrichment (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2019). The data was treated numerically and analysed statistically to ensure consistent and reliable results.

For greater analytic precision, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted using SmartPLS software. SEM allows the modelling of complex cause-and-effect relationships, especially with latent variables and constructs measured through multiple items (Hair et al., 2017). It allows for the evaluation of both direct and indirect relationships, maximizing the variance explained in dependent variables (Ali et al., 2018).

SmartPLS (PLS-SEM) was selected as the analytical technique because it is particularly suited to the objectives and structure of the present study. Firstly, this research seeks to examine the predictive relationships between Flexible Work Arrangements, Boundary Management Control, Work-Life Enrichment and Career Sustainability,

aiming not only to test theoretically grounded hypotheses but also to assess the model's explanatory and predictive power (Hair et al., 2019). Given that the proposed framework integrates four constructs and six direct and mediating relationships, PLS-SEM is appropriate for estimating complex structural models while maximising explained variance in the dependent variable.

Secondly, the model includes latent constructs measured through multiple indicators, requiring an approach capable of handling measurement error while simultaneously assessing the structural paths (Hair et al., 2019). As this study builds upon established theoretical perspectives, namely Work-Life Border Theory, Boundary Theory and the sustainable careers framework, while integrating them into a unified predictive model, PLS-SEM is consistent with research designs that extend and refine existing theoretical propositions (Hair et al., 2019). Moreover, considering that the target population of this study may limit the attainable sample size, PLS-SEM is particularly advantageous due to its suitability for small to medium samples, while remaining robust with larger datasets (Hair et al., 2019). Finally, given the cross-sectional survey design and the potential presence of non-normal data distributions, PLS-SEM provides robust estimates without imposing strict distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2019).

3.1 Sample

The data for this study were collected between January 16th and January 31st, 2026, via the distribution of a questionnaire through social media platforms. The sample was non probabilistic, as the primary objective was to obtain a heterogenous representation across various sectors, enabling a broader understanding of the phenomenon's generalization within diverse national organizations (Asiamah et al., 2022). The dissemination method used was the snowball method and of the 163 questionnaires started, incomplete questionnaires (28), were excluded. Following the data cleaning procedures (Saunders et al., 2019), the final dataset comprised 135 complete and valid responses.

The sample consisted of 135 employees holding or not leadership positions, with majority of respondents belonging to the age group of 25 to 34 years (29.63%). The largest proportion of respondents are male (53.33%). In terms of professional experience, 57 respondents (42.22%) reported having more than 20 years of work experience, whereas only 8 respondents (5.93%) indicated less than one year of experience.

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Regarding the seniority at their current organization, 44 respondents (32.59%) reported a seniority between 1 and 5 years, which was the most represented group in the sample. Table 4 provides a detailed demographic breakdown of the sample.

Table 4 - Sample Demographics

		f	%
Age	18 to 24 years old	14	10,37%
	25 to 34 years old	40	29,63%
	35 to 44 years old	22	16,30%
	45 to 54 years old	33	24,44%
	Over 55 years old	26	19,26%
Gender	Male	72	53,33%
	Female	63	46,67%
	Other	0	0,00%
	Prefer not to say	0	0,00%
Professional Experience	Less than 1 year	8	5,93%
	Between 1 and 5 years	31	22,96%
	Between 6 and 10 years	16	11,85%
	Between 11 and 15 years	14	10,37%
	Between 16 and 20 years	9	6,67%
	Over 20 years	57	42,22%
Seniority at the Organization	Less than 1 year	23	17,04%
	Between 1 and 5 years	44	32,59%
	Between 6 and 10 years	27	20,00%
	Between 11 and 15 years	4	2,96%
	Between 16 and 20 years	8	5,93%
	Over 20 years	29	21,48%

Source: Own Elaboration

3.2 Measurements

The predominant method for collecting data is the use of questionnaires, given their efficiency and cost-effectiveness in obtaining substantial amounts of information (Mazikana, 2023). For the purposes of this research, a survey was designed comprising five sections: Sociodemographic Data; Boundary Management Control; Flexible Work Arrangements; Career Sustainability; and Work-Life Enrichment. The items present in the survey were randomized, to reduce response biases (Saunders et al., 2019).

The instruments incorporated into this survey were chosen due to their flexible structure and previous validation, which allows them to be adapted to various applications across different contexts and research designs (Chin et al., 2022; Hyland, 1999; Kacmar

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et al., 2014; Kossek et al., 2012). The items of the scales were all translated into Portuguese, using the back translation method, by individuals who were proficient in both Portuguese and English, to facilitate the collection of responses. All survey sections were measured using six-point Likert scales and included only closed-ended items. Most constructs were assessed on a six-point agreement scale: 1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Slightly Disagree; 4 – Slightly Agree; 5 – Agree; 6 – Strongly Agree. The exception was the Flexible Work Arrangements scale (Section 2), which used a six-point frequency scale: 1 – Never; 2 – Less than once per month; 3 – Once or twice per month; 4 – Once or twice every two weeks; 5 – Between one and three times per week; 6 – Four or five times per week.

The scale used to assess Boundary Management Control was the multidimensional scale proposed by Kossek et al. (2012). This scale builds upon the original questionnaire introduced by Kossek & Lautsch (2007). The full instrument includes seventeen items organized into five dimensions: five items for nonwork interrupting work behaviours, based on modifying items from Kossek & Lautsch (2007); five items for work interrupting nonwork behaviours, based on modified versions of the article from Kossek & Lautsch (2007); three items for boundary control by reviewing similar existing measures such as the psychological job control scale from Kossek et al. (2006); finally work identity and family identity, both with two items each, scales taken from Kossek et al. (2006).

To measure the effects of Flexible Work Arrangements, a scale developed by Hyland (1999) was used, containing 24 items in total, distributed across three dimensions inside the workplace flexibility: eight items for available flexibility; eight items for preference for flexibility; and eight items for use of flexibility.

To assess the Career Sustainability measure, it was used the multidimensional scale from Chin et al. (2022), which comprises four dimensions with three items each: resourceful; flexible; renewable; and integrative. The reliability of this scale was acceptable, as Cronbach's alpha was 0.921.

The Work-Life Enrichment measure uses the Work-to-Family Enrichment scale of Kacmar et al. (2014), based on the original WFE scale developed by Carlson et al. (2006). In this study, only the nine items related to the WFE dimension were used. This measure proved to be reliable and confirms a strong relationship between WLE and Career Sustainability. The consistency, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was of 0.907.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

4.1 Measurement Model

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the structural model, several key measures were examined, such as, consistency, convergent validity, discriminant validity and collinearity diagnostics (Hair et al., 2019). These indicators were grounded in previously validated empirical measures and assessed through the application of SEM-PLS techniques. In this study, it was used a reflective (or effect) measurement model which is characterized by a causal direction running from the latent construct to its indicators, meaning that changes in the underlying construct produce changes in the observed measures; the construct is viewed as an independent entity (e.g., an attitude or trait), and its items are manifestations that share a common theme and are interchangeable. As a result, removing or adding items does not alter the conceptual meaning of the construct (Coltman et al., 2008).

Within the scope of this model, the indicator loadings, which reflect the bivariate correlations between each construct and its respective items, should preferably be above 0.5, although values above 0.7 are generally considered more robust (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2019). The literature identifies Cronbach's alpha (α) as the lower bound, while Composite Reliability (CR) marks the upper bound, with values above 0.7 required for both. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which is used for evaluating the convergent validity of the constructs, should be above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity was also assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, which should be below 0.9 to be considered valid (Hair et al., 2019). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is used to evaluate the collinearity of the indicators, which should be below 5 to be statistically significant. Items with VIF values above 5 or loadings below 0.5 should be eliminated (Hair et al., 2019).

The results showed that the loadings of most of the items from Boundary Management Control measure were below 0.5 and, consequently, were removed, remaining only items 1, 2, 4 and 5. In addition to these, items 2, 5, and 14 from the Flexible Work Arrangements scale and item 6 from Career Sustainability were also removed due to loadings below 0.5. Furthermore, items 16, 18, and 22 relating to Flexible Work Arrangements, item 11 of Career Sustainability, and items 2 and 8 of the Work-Life Enrichment measure were also removed, as they had VIF values above 5, indicating multicollinearity issues in the sample, which was a determining factor for their elimination (Hair et al., 2019).

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In general, the results were in line with the limits suggested in the literature for Boundary Management Control ($\alpha=0.822$; CRa=0.865; AVE=0.635), Career Sustainability ($\alpha=0.921$; CRa=0.926; AVE=0.587) and Work-Life Enrichment ($\alpha=0.907$; CRa=0.917; AVE=0.648). As for Flexible Work Arrangements, the scale can also be considered valid, even though the AVE value does not exceed the established threshold of 0.5, it is quite close ($\alpha=0.940$; CRa=0.953; AVE=0.495).

Regarding the correlations between variables, the discriminant validity measure was used, and it was observed that all relationships between variables have HTMT values below 0.9, which means they are valid (Hair et al., 2019).

4.2 Structural Model

Following the assessment of the quality of the measurement model, a structural model analysis was conducted, examining the predictive capacity of the proposed relationships between the constructs (Hair et al., 2019). The bootstrapping algorithm of SmartPLS was applied in order to estimate the extent to which the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables (R^2), the direct effects of the variables (regression coefficients) and the PLSpredict algorithm to evaluate the model's out-of-sample predictive relevance through the assessment of Q^2 values (Hair et al., 2019).

The predicted variable, Career Sustainability ($R^2 = 0.418$), presents a R^2 value above 0.3, indicating a moderate and acceptable predictive power (Hair et al., 2019), and confirming that 41.8% of the variation in responses for Career Sustainability is explained by the combined influence of the other three independent variables.

Regarding the Q^2 predictive values, the results indicate positive values for most parameters; although item 5 of Boundary Management Control, items 4 and 6 of Work-Life Enrichment, and item 2 of Career Sustainability exhibit negative values, the model still demonstrates acceptable predictive power, as the majority of items for the predicted variable meet the required threshold for predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019).

The results indicate positive relationships between pairs of variables, including Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) and Career Sustainability (CS) (H1). Although a threshold of $p < 0.05$ is widely adopted, literature acknowledges that significance levels are not absolute and can be adjusted based on the specific research context (Kwak, 2023); thus, the p-value observed in this relationship is accepted as statistically significant. Furthermore, the relationships between FWA and Boundary Management Control (BMC)

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(H2); FWA and Work-Life Enrichment (WLE) (H4); and between WLE and CS (H6) are all positively related and statistically significant (significant p-values) (Hair et al., 2019), as shown in Table 5. Conversely, findings suggest that no significant relationship was found between BMC and CS (H3), and between BMC and WLE (H5).

Table 5 - Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Relationships	β	T Statistics	p value	Results
H1	FWA -> CS	0.147	1.805	0.071	Supported
H2	FWA -> BMC	0.393	5.426	0.000	Supported
H3	BMC -> CS	-0.018	0.233	0.816	Not Supported
H4	FWA -> WLE	0.254	2.767	0.006	Supported
H5	BMC -> WLE	0.043	0.352	0.725	Not Supported
H6	WLE -> CS	0.594	9.688	0.000	Supported

Source: Own Elaboration

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

The current work aimed to understanding the interactions between Flexible Work Arrangements, Career Sustainability, Boundary Management Control and Work-Life Enrichment. Regarding H1 which represents the relationship between FWAs and Career Sustainability, the findings reveal a positive and statistically significant correlation ($\beta = 0.147, p < 0.10$). Although the p-value slightly exceeds the conventional 0.05 threshold, literature acknowledges that statistical significance should not be interpreted rigidly and may be context-dependent (Kwak, 2023); therefore, this relationship is considered supported. These findings are aligned with research, suggesting that flexibility enhances long-term employability, well-being and career viability by increasing autonomy and control over work arrangements, which in turn enhances individuals' capacity to maintain health, happiness and productivity over time, the core dimensions of sustainable careers (De Vos et al., 2020; Van Der Heijden et al., 2020). Furthermore, perceived flexibility enhances psychological empowerment, strengthening long-term engagement and adaptive capacity (Harrop et al., 2025); hybrid work arrangements contribute to well-being and reduce burnout risk, both of which are essential for sustaining career trajectories (Junça Silva & Lopes, 2025). However, the relatively modest effect ($\beta = 0.147$) suggests that flexibility alone may not fully explain career sustainability, reinforcing arguments that structural practices require alignment with contextual and personal resources to generate durable outcomes (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022; Willett et al., 2024).

Concerning H2, the findings reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between FWAs and Boundary Management Control ($\beta = 0.393, p < 0.05$), which supports the hypothesis and is consistent with the literature. Flexibility expands individuals' responsibility and opportunity to regulate boundary permeability and timing, highlighting perceived boundary control as the central determinant of well-being (Kossek et al., 2012). Hybrid and flexible arrangements increase temporal and spatial autonomy, strengthening individuals' capacity to align enacted boundaries with personal preferences (Harrop et al., 2025; Junça Silva & Lopes, 2025). From a resource-based perspective, Shifrin & Michel (2022) suggest that flexibility enables more effective allocation of time and attention across domains, thereby enhancing boundary control. The literature also acknowledges that flexibility does not automatically guarantee control in the absence of clear norms and support (Kossek et al., 2021).

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Regarding H3, which proposed that Boundary Management Control positively influences Career Sustainability, the results indicate a negative and statistically non-significant correlation ($\beta = -0.018$, $p > 0.05$); thus, this hypothesis was not supported. These results diverges from established literature, which predominantly suggests that boundary control protects employees from resource depletion and burnout, thereby sustaining long-term engagement (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Kossek et al., 2012). Although Müller et al. (2022) argue that managing boundaries across life domains is central to preserving energy and adaptability over time, the lack of statistical significance in this relationship, within the current study, suggests that the hypothesized effect may not consistently manifest across contexts. The absence of a significant influence might be explained by the fact that individual boundary control alone, although protective at a daily level, does not directly translate into broader career sustainability unless supported by organizational and contextual enablers (Van Der Heijden et al., 2020). Similar conclusions have been reported in studies, such as Okay-Somerville & Scholarios (2014), who present the concept of Career Self-Management (CSM), which includes boundary management between work and non-work domains, and argue that individuals' attempts to manage or reshape career boundaries often do not yield improvements in career progression or subjective career quality when structural constraints and labour-market rigidities dominate.

Regarding H4, the results demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between FWAs and Work-Life Enrichment (WLE) ($\beta = 0.254$, $p < 0.05$), supporting the hypothesis. These findings align with Greenhaus & Powell (2006) expansionist perspective, which conceptualizes work and family roles as potential resource generators for each other, rather than competing demands. The results also prove that flexibility acts as a synergistic resource system that enhances autonomy and enables positive spillovers across domains (Harrop et al., 2025). Previous literature also suggests that FWAs reallocate time and energy across domains, strengthening reciprocal engagement and reducing role pressure (Kumar et al., 2023; Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021). However, it is important to note the paradoxical nature of flexibility; while formalised flexible arrangements enhance satisfaction, informal “catch-up” flexibility can intensify boundary blurring and stress (Kim et al., 2020).

Regarding H5, which proposed that Boundary Management Control positively influences WLE, the findings indicate a positive but statistically non-significant effect ($\beta = 0.043$, $p > 0.05$). Although perceived boundary control is considered a stronger

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predictor of enrichment than boundary style alone (Cook & Sawhney, 2025), enrichment fundamentally depends on the active transfer of resources across domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Enrichment also increases when individuals perceive boundary fit, suggesting that alignment rather than control itself may be the decisive factor (Mueller et al., 2025). These results also suggest that while boundary control may reduce involuntary interruptions and cognitive strain, enrichment requires extra resources and motivational engagement (Nguyen et al., 2025; Pak et al., 2022). Overall, boundary control may act as a protective mechanism, but enrichment appears to depend more strongly on positive resource generation than on regulation alone (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Lastly, regarding H6, the results reveal a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between WLE and Career Sustainability ($\beta = 0.594$, $p < 0.05$). These results, represent the strongest effect in the model and fully supports the hypothesis. These findings are strongly aligned with sustainable careers theory, which are described as dynamic processes supported by continuous resource accumulation across life domains (De Vos et al., 2020). WLE has been shown to enhance job satisfaction and work engagement through the mechanism of Subjective Career Success, reinforcing individuals' long-term capacity for meaningful role functioning (Koekemoer et al., 2020). Enrichment also generates upward resource-gain spirals that protect against burnout and foster stronger organizational attachment, thereby supporting long-term retention and well-being (Kalliath et al., 2020). Sustainable Careers perspectives further highlight that when individuals sustain engagement in both work and nonwork roles, enrichment processes strengthen adaptability, resilience and long-term career viability (Hirschi et al., 2020; Van Der Heijden et al., 2020).

Work-Life Border Theory (Clark, 2000) characterizes individuals as “border crossers” who actively navigate the physical, temporal and psychological boundaries separating work and personal life. The strong effects of FWAs on both WLE and Career Sustainability align closely with this theoretical perspective, demonstrating that structural flexibility enables individuals to adapt boundaries in ways that foster satisfaction and engagement across domains. The findings further support Clark's proposition that positive cross-domain flows emerge when employees are able to realign boundary permeability and flexibility in accordance with their personal needs, thereby preserving well-being and facilitating long-term career functioning. At the same time, the non-significant effect of Boundary Management Control on Career Sustainability suggests that effective boundary outcomes may not rely exclusively on individuals' perceived

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control, indicating that the structural affordances embedded in FWAs can compensate for lower levels of personal agency in boundary regulation.

Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) provides a complementary perspective by conceptualizing boundaries as dynamic, fluid constructs shaped through ongoing interaction between personal preferences, contextual demands and social expectations. The strong relationships observed between FWAs, boundary control and WLE reinforce this theory, illustrating that individuals continuously negotiate and adjust boundaries in response to shifting work conditions. However, the absence of significant effects in H3 and H5 suggests that perceived boundary control alone may not be sufficient to activate enrichment or sustainability processes, particularly in environments characterized by high structural flexibility. These results extend Boundary Theory by emphasizing the prevailing influence of contextual and resource-based mechanisms, such as autonomy, temporal discretion and supportive norms, over purely psychological perceptions of control. In this sense, the findings underscore that boundary regulation is not only an individual capability but a collectively process dependent on organizational affordances and structural conditions.

These insights enrich the literature, by positioning FWAs as structural catalysts that support the dynamic interplay between agency, context and resource accumulation, enabling individuals to sustain the health, happiness and productivity, the core dimensions of career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2020).

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study highlights the significant impact of Flexible Work Arrangements in shaping sustainable career trajectories in contemporary work contexts, by demonstrating that flexibility operates as a structural resource that enhances Career Sustainability, particularly through the activation of Work-Life Enrichment processes. While Boundary Management Control was positively influenced by FWAs, its direct impact on Career Sustainability and WLE was not statistically supported, suggesting that flexibility translates into sustainable outcomes primarily when it generates positive cross-domain resource flows rather than only through perceived control over boundaries.

The findings reinforce the idea that sustainable careers are not merely the result of structural flexibility, but emerge from the dynamic interaction between individual agency, contextual affordances and resource accumulation processes. WLE proved to be a key explanatory mechanism linking flexibility to long-term health, happiness and productivity, thus supporting the view that positive spillovers across domains are central to sustaining engagement and well-being over time. At the same time, the absence of a significant direct relationship between Boundary Management Control and Career Sustainability invites a more nuanced interpretation of boundary processes, suggesting that control alone may be insufficient if not accompanied by meaningful resource gains or supportive contextual conditions.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes theoretically by integrating Flexible Work Arrangements, Boundary Management Control, Work-Life Enrichment and Career Sustainability within a single explanatory framework grounded in Work-Life Border Theory and Boundary Theory. Throughout this research, it was examined how structural flexibility, individual boundary regulation and cross-domain resource processes combined, influence sustainable career outcomes, positioning this study as a significant academic innovation. By setting flexibility as a structural boundary condition and boundary management control as an agentic mechanism operating within that structure, this research advances a more systemic understanding of how contemporary careers unfold across permeable domains. By empirically examining how FWAs relate simultaneously to boundary control, WLE and career sustainability, the study extends these theories beyond their

traditional focus on conflict and balance, highlighting instead their relevance for long-term career trajectories.

The findings offer theoretical nuance by demonstrating that Boundary Management Control does not automatically translate into Career Sustainability or WLE in a direct manner. Instead, the evidence suggests that boundary control operates within broader structural and relational contexts, reinforcing the view that sustainable careers emerge from the interplay between individual strategies, organizational support and resource accumulation processes. By identifying the differential strength of the relationships among flexibility, boundary control and enrichment, this study contributes to refining theoretical models of work-life dynamics, encouraging future research to look more closely at how different contextual realities, such as organizational culture, leadership practices, family structures and labour market conditions, shape the way boundaries are managed and careers are sustained across multiple levels of analysis.

6.2 Practical Contributions

The findings of this study also offer relevant practical implications for organizations seeking to promote sustainable careers in increasingly flexible and boundaryless work contexts. As the results demonstrate that FWAs are positively associated with Career Sustainability and WLE, organizations should move beyond viewing flexibility merely as an operational or cost-efficiency tool and instead position it as a strategic resource for long-term human capital development. In line with Work-Life Border Theory (Clark, 2000) and Boundary Theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), flexibility should be implemented in a way that genuinely enhances employees' perceived control over temporal and spatial boundaries. Three concrete actions organizations may consider are:

- Design flexibility policies that prioritize perceived control rather than mere availability. Organizations should ensure that employees experience real discretion over when and where they work, accompanied by support and clear norms regarding availability and disconnection. Communicating explicit expectations about response times and after-hours contact can prevent involuntary boundary crossings and strengthen Boundary Management Control, which is essential for translating flexibility into sustainable outcomes.
- Avoid “flexibility stigma” and normalize the use of FWAs across hierarchical levels. When flexibility is culturally legitimized and not associated with lower

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commitment, reduced productivity, or career penalties, employees are more likely to use it strategically to preserve energy, manage transitions between work and life, and sustain long-term engagement.

- Promote autonomy-based management and avoid micromanagement practices. Organizations should move away from excessive monitoring and control-oriented supervision, particularly in remote and hybrid contexts, and instead foster a culture grounded in trust, autonomy and accountability. By granting employees discretion over how they organize their tasks and time, organizations strengthen perceived boundary control and reinforce intrinsic motivation, both of which are central to sustainable performance and increased productivity.

Given that WLE emerged as a significant predictor of Career Sustainability, organizations should also actively cultivate enrichment processes rather than focusing only on reducing work-life conflict. Enrichment arises when resources such as skills, positive affect and social capital are transferred across domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), and when individuals are supported in aligning work demands with personal values and life rhythms. Thus, fostering enrichment requires not only structural flexibility but also relational and cultural support. Three possible actions include:

- Promote manageable workloads and realistic performance expectations. As enrichment depends on surplus energy and resource availability, excessive workloads can undermine the positive spillover effects of flexibility. Sustainable performance management systems should balance productivity goals with recovery opportunities.
- Encourage strengths use and job crafting. Allowing employees to shape aspects of their roles in alignment with their competencies and motivations can amplify enrichment and reinforce career meaning, thereby strengthening long-term sustainability.
- Train managers to recognize and support boundary diversity. Employees differ in segmentation and integration preferences; equipping managers with awareness and communication skills enables them to support individualized boundary strategies, increasing perceived fit and psychological safety.

Although Boundary Management Control did not show a strong direct effect on Career Sustainability or WLE in this study, it remains a foundational mechanism for protecting well-being and preventing resource depletion. Therefore, organizations should invest in

boundary management education and support systems that enhance employees' perceived control, even if its impact is primarily indirect through enrichment processes.

At a broader level, this study contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). In line with SDG 8, the findings reinforce the importance of promoting productive employment conditions that are not only performance-driven but structurally supportive of sustainable career trajectories. By demonstrating that well-designed FWAs can enhance career sustainability, particularly when accompanied by WLE mechanisms, the study underscores how organizations can foster long-term productivity, employability and engagement without reinforcing excessive work intensification. Simultaneously, the research aligns with SDG 3 by evidencing that sustainable careers depend on preserving psychological resources, preventing burnout and enabling healthy boundary regulation. Strengthening enrichment processes and reducing boundary strain contribute to emotional stability, recovery capacity and sustained well-being, thereby supporting healthier working lives across the lifespan rather than short-term performance gains.

6.3 Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the contributions of this research, some limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample, although heterogeneous in terms of age, professional experience and seniority in the organization, was collected through a non-probabilistic snowball method, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across sectors and national contexts. Moreover, the sample is not fully representative of all industries and did not capture perspectives from all regions of Portugal equally. Future research could strengthen the generalizability of these findings by examining these dynamics across a broader range of geographical regions and organizational contexts, replicating the model with larger and probabilistic samples, and conducting cross-cultural comparisons to better understand how institutional and societal factors influence the relationship between flexibility, boundary management, enrichment and sustainable careers.

Second, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference and does not capture the dynamic evolution of boundaries and careers over time. Given that Career Sustainability is inherently longitudinal and processual, future studies could adopt longitudinal or diary-based methodologies to better understand how flexibility practices and boundary strategies unfold across different life and career stages.

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Third, future studies could benefit from incorporating qualitative methodologies to explore more deeply the complex relationships between the core variables under analysis. Whereas quantitative approaches are primarily concerned with testing relationships and identifying statistical patterns, qualitative research allows for a richer and more contextualized understanding of how these phenomena are experienced and interpreted by individuals. By acknowledging the interaction between participants, researchers and the broader organizational setting, qualitative designs are particularly suited to uncover subtle processes, meanings and contextual influences that may remain hidden in strictly positivist, survey-based approaches.

Fourth, although this study focused on FWAs, Boundary Management Control and WLE as key explanatory mechanisms, additional variables may further illuminate the complexity of sustainable careers. Contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership support, workload intensity or psychological empowerment could strengthen or weaken the effects identified in this research. Exploring multi-level models that integrate individual, organizational and societal dimensions would provide a richer understanding of how sustainable careers are constructed in boundaryless work environments.

The present study underscores the importance of viewing flexibility not as an isolated organizational policy, but as a structural condition embedded within broader boundary negotiation processes. By demonstrating that Work-Life Enrichment functions as a mediating mechanism associated with career sustainability, this study contributes to advancing both theoretical and practical debates on how organizations can foster long-term well-being and productivity in increasingly digital and permeable work contexts. It invites future scholars to continue examining how individuals actively construct sustainable careers within evolving boundary configurations, where autonomy, support and resource alignment remain fundamental.

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ANNEXES

Annex A - Questionnaire



O questionário que se segue insere-se no âmbito de um projeto de investigação para obtenção do grau de Mestre em Management (MIM) pelo ISEG - Universidade de Lisboa.

O projeto de investigação encontra-se a ser desenvolvido pelo aluno Pedro Gonçalves Dourado de Almeida, com orientação do Professor Doutor Tiago Rodrigues Gonçalves, e procura analisar as perceções de práticas de flexibilidade no trabalho, que os indivíduos têm e como estas influenciam o controlo de fronteiras entre o trabalho e vida pessoal.

No questionário serão-lhe solicitadas respostas a diferentes questões, assim como breves análises de afirmações cuja resposta deverá refletir a sua experiência e opinião pessoal.

A sua participação é indispensável, pelo que pedimos que responda da forma mais verdadeira possível às questões.

Não há respostas certas nem erradas.

Agradecemos muito a sua participação.

Todas as informações recolhidas são consideradas de carácter confidencial e têm objetivos puramente académicos. Os dados não serão usados para fins comerciais ou de consultoria.

Todos os dados recolhidos serão também tratados de forma agregada, garantindo anonimato e confidencialidade das respostas.

Serão eliminadas todas e quaisquer formas de identificar os respondentes.

Muito obrigado!

Tempo estimado de resposta: 10 minutos

Declaro ter mais de 18 anos de idade. Fui informado sobre os objetivos da pesquisa atual e concordo em participar.

☐ Eu consinto e desejo prosseguir

☐ Eu não consinto

Está empregado atualmente?

☐ Sim

☐ Não

Faixa Etária

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55+

Género

☐ Masculino

☐ Feminino

☐ Outro

☐ Prefiro não dizer

Experiência Profissional (Anos de Carreira)

☐ Até 1 ano

☐ Entre 1 e 5 anos

☐ Entre 6 e 10 anos

☐ Entre 11 e 15 anos

☐ Entre 16 e 20 anos

☐ Mais de 20 anos

Antiguidade na Organização atual

☐ Até 1 ano

☐ Entre 1 e 5 anos

☐ Entre 6 e 10 anos

☐ Entre 11 e 15 anos

☐ Entre 16 e 20 anos

☐ Mais de 20 anos

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Boundary Management Control

BMC

O seguinte segmento apresenta um conjunto de afirmações relativas a comportamentos na vida pessoal e no local de trabalho. Utilizando a seguinte escala, 1 - Discordo Totalmente a 6 - Concordo Totalmente, indique o quanto estas afirmações o/a descrevem.

	1 - Discordo Totalmente	2 - Discordo	3 - Discordo Ligeiramente	4 - Concordo Ligeiramente	5 - Concordo	6 - Concordo Totalmente
Eu cuido de necessidades pessoais ou familiares durante o trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu respondo a comunicações pessoais (por exemplo, e-mails, mensagens de texto e chamadas telefônicas) durante o trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu não penso na minha família, amigos ou interesses pessoais enquanto trabalho, para poder concentrar-me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quando trabalho em casa, cuido de responsabilidades pessoais ou familiares durante o tempo de trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu monitoro comunicações pessoais (por exemplo, e-mails, mensagens de texto e chamadas telefônicas) quando estou a trabalhar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu levo trabalho para casa regularmente	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Respondo a comunicações relacionadas com o trabalho (por exemplo, e-mails, mensagens de texto e chamadas telefônicas) durante o meu tempo pessoal fora do trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu trabalho durante as minhas férias	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Permito que o trabalho me interrompa quando estou com a minha família ou amigos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Normalmente levo materiais de trabalho comigo quando participo em atividades pessoais ou familiares	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu controlo se consigo manter o meu trabalho e vida pessoal separados	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu controlo se tenho limites claros entre o meu trabalho e a minha vida pessoal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu controlo se combino as minhas atividades profissionais e pessoais ao longo do dia	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
As pessoas veem-me como alguém altamente focado no meu trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu invisto grande parte de mim mesmo no meu trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
As pessoas veem-me como alguém muito focado na minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eu invisto grande parte de mim mesmo na minha vida familiar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Flexible Work Arrangements

FWA

O seguinte segmento apresenta um conjunto de práticas de flexibilidade no âmbito profissional. Utilizando a seguinte escala, 1 - Nunca a 6 - quatro a cinco vezes por semana, em que medida cada uma das seguintes práticas se aplica ao seu contexto profissional.

	1 - Nunca	2 - Menos de uma vez por mês	3 - Uma a duas vezes por mês	4 - Uma a duas vezes a cada duas semanas	5 - Entre uma a três vezes por semana	6 - Quatro a cinco vezes por semana
O máximo que a minha organização me permitiria alterar os horários de início e fim do meu dia de trabalho devido às minhas preferências/necessidades pessoais é	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Idealmente, eu mudaria os horários em que começo e termino o meu dia de trabalho devido às minhas preferências/necessidades pessoais	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Na verdade, eu altero os horários em que começo e termino o meu dia de trabalho devido às minhas preferências/necessidades pessoais	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O máximo que a minha organização me permitiria alterar o local onde realizo o meu trabalho devido às minhas preferências/necessidades pessoais é	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Idealmente, eu mudaria o local onde realizo o meu trabalho devido às minhas preferências/necessidades pessoais	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Na verdade, eu mudo o local onde realizo o meu trabalho devido às minhas preferências/necessidades pessoais	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O máximo que a minha organização me permitiria reduzir as minhas horas após um longo dia ou semana de trabalho seria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Idealmente, eu reduziria as minhas horas de trabalho após um longo dia ou semana de trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Na verdade, eu reduzo as minhas horas de trabalho depois de trabalhar um dia ou uma semana longa	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O máximo que a minha organização me permitiria trabalhar a partir de um local alternativo, após um longo dia ou uma longa semana de trabalho seria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Idealmente, eu trabalharia num local alternativo após um longo dia ou uma longa semana de trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Na verdade, eu trabalho num local alternativo depois de um longo dia ou uma longa semana de trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O máximo que a minha organização me permitiria variar o meu horário de trabalho é	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Idealmente, eu variaria o meu horário de trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Na verdade, eu altero o meu horário de trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O máximo que a minha organização me permitiria variar o local onde realizo o meu trabalho é	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Idealmente, eu variaria o local onde realizo o meu trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Na verdade, eu altero o local onde realizo o meu trabalho	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O máximo que a minha organização me permitiria determinar o meu horário de trabalho com base nos projetos em que trabalho, em vez das horas que me são atribuídas para trabalhar, é	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Idealmente, eu determinaria o meu horário de trabalho com base nos projetos em que trabalho, em vez das horas que me são atribuídas para trabalhar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Na verdade, eu determino o meu horário de trabalho com base nos projetos em que trabalho, ao invés das horas que me são atribuídas para trabalhar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
O máximo que a minha organização me permitiria determinar o meu local de trabalho com base nos projetos em que trabalho, em vez do local ao qual estou designado para trabalhar, é	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Idealmente, eu determinaria o meu local de trabalho com base nos projetos em que trabalho, em vez do local para o qual sou designado para trabalhar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Na verdade, eu determino o meu local de trabalho com base nos projetos em que trabalho, e não no local para o qual sou designado	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND CAREER SUSTAINABILITY: THE MEDIATING
ROLE OF WORK-LIFE ENRICHMENT AND BOUNDARY CONTROL

Career Sustainability							Work-Life Enrichment						
CS							WLE						
O seguinte segmento apresenta um conjunto de afirmações relativas a opiniões sobre o trabalho. Utilizando a escala apresentada, 1 - Discordo Totalmente a 6 - Concordo Totalmente, indique o seu grau de concordância com cada uma das afirmações, tendo em conta a sua perceção acerca da sua carreira.							O seguinte segmento apresenta um conjunto de afirmações que avalia em que medida a sua vida profissional interfere ou afeta a sua vida pessoal. Utilizando a escala apresentada, 1 - Discordo Totalmente a 6 - Concordo Totalmente, indique o seu grau de concordância com cada uma das afirmações.						
	1 - Discordo Totalmente	2 - Discordo	3 - Discordo Levemente	4 - Concordo Levemente	5 - Concordo	6 - Concordo Totalmente	O meu envolvimento no meu trabalho...	1 - Discordo Totalmente	2 - Discordo	3 - Discordo Levemente	4 - Concordo Levemente	5 - Concordo	6 - Concordo Totalmente
A minha carreira permite-me ter um bom nível de vida	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Ajudar-me a compreender diferentes pontos de vista e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira faz-me sentir feliz porque utilizo bem os meus recursos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Ajudar-me a adquirir conhecimento e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira faz-me sentir que tenho um futuro brilhante	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Ajudar-me a adquirir competências e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira permite-me buscar novas oportunidades	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Deixo-me de bom humor e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira permite-me aprender continuamente coisas novas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Faço-me sentir feliz e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira dá-me muita flexibilidade	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Faço-me sentir animado e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira oferece-me oportunidades para atualizar as minhas competências	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Ajudar-me a sentir-me preenchido a nível pessoal e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira dá-me a oportunidade de reavaliar as minhas capacidades	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Dá-me uma sensação de realização e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira permite-me reinventar-me ou reposicionar-me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Dá-me uma sensação de sucesso e isso ajuda-me a ser um melhor membro da minha família	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A minha carreira permite-me integrar informações obtidas de diferentes fontes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐							
A minha carreira permite-me avaliar criticamente as informações obtidas de diferentes fontes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐							
A minha carreira desenvolve a minha capacidade de absorver informações e conhecimentos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐							

Annex B - Measurement Model

Measures/Items	Item Load	α	CR	AVE	VIF
Boundary Management Control					
BMC1	0.886	0.822	0.865	0.635	1.980
BMC2	0.858				1.998
BMC4	0.736				1.541
BMC5	0.691				1.742
Career Sustainability					
CS1	0.616	0.921	0.926	0.587	1.848
CS2	0.752				2.283
CS3	0.742				2.518
CS4	0.779				2.159
CS5	0.763				2.304
CS7	0.778				2.893
CS8	0.840				4.402
CS9	0.769				2.293
CS10	0.797				2.852
CS12	0.805				2.857
Flexible Work Arrangements					
FWA1	0.698	0.940	0.953	0.495	2.263
FWA3	0.729				2.651
FWA4	0.739				2.886
FWA6	0.841				3.737
FWA7	0.799				2.858
FWA8	0.508				2.134
FWA9	0.689				2.195
FWA10	0.754				3.639
FWA11	0.516				2.401
FWA12	0.680				2.973
FWA13	0.668				2.551
FWA15	0.729				2.526
FWA17	0.587				2.800
FWA19	0.749				2.714
FWA20	0.637				3.150
FWA21	0.786				3.835
FWA23	0.654				2.785
FWA24	0.795				3.329

**FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND CAREER SUSTAINABILITY: THE MEDIATING
ROLE OF WORK-LIFE ENRICHMENT AND BOUNDARY CONTROL**

Work-Life Enrichment					
WLE1	0.641	0.907	0.917	0.648	2.502
WLE3	0.695				2.728
WLE4	0.812				3.486
WLE5	0.860				4.231
WLE6	0.863				4.392
WLE7	0.867				4.360
WLE9	0.865				3.528

Annex C - HTMT of the variables

	Boundary Management Control	Career Sustainability	Flexible Work Arrangements	Work-Life Enrichment
Boundary Management Control				
Career Sustainability	0.168			
Flexible Work Arrangements	0.396	0.289		
Work-Life Enrichment	0.194	0.667	0.279	

Annex D - Structural Model

Measures/Items	Q²
Boundary Management Control	
BMC1	0.119
BMC2	0.136
BMC4	0.032
BMC5	-0.003
Career Sustainability	
CS1	0.049
CS2	-0.010
CS3	0.062
CS4	0.082
CS5	0.000
CS7	0.019
CS8	0.012
CS9	0.030
CS10	0.070
CS12	0.048
Work-Life Enrichment	
WLE1	0.048
WLE3	0.078
WLE4	-0.022
WLE5	0.012
WLE6	-0.004
WLE7	0.006
WLE9	0.048