Pathway Leads - Management Consulting Pathway

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Our new home!

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My Background

Professor of Consulting and Business Ethics, DUBS

- 6 year consultant at KPMG, NL

- 15 year lead and founder of MSc Consulting, VU, NL

- Director VU Knowledge Hub for Consulting and PSF, NL

- Pathway lead MSc Management - Consulting, DUBS

Three books, many articles mostly on consultants'

- **Ethics:** consultant expertise, pressuring leadership, etc.

- **Dirty work:** work stress, uncertainties, work-life balance

- **Rhetoric:** legitimizer roles, rigor & relevance

During the Master in Management Webinar: Taster Module - Consulting

Please

- Turn your camera on during the session if you feel comfortable to do so

- Mute yourself when you are not talking

- Type any comments or questions in the chat

- OR raise your hand when you have something to say

Agenda

- Lecture - Work-Life Balance in Consulting

- Some information on the Consulting Pathway

Work-life balance in general

- ## What does WLB mean?
  - > Not very clear - opposite of « work-life conflict »

- ## Idea of "balance" is hard to define
  - > No objective norms, like '40 hours workweek'
  - > For some it is less, for others it is more
  - > WL Integration and separation strategies to improve balance

- ## Need for a subjective take on « work-life balance »
  - > WLB as perceived by individuals

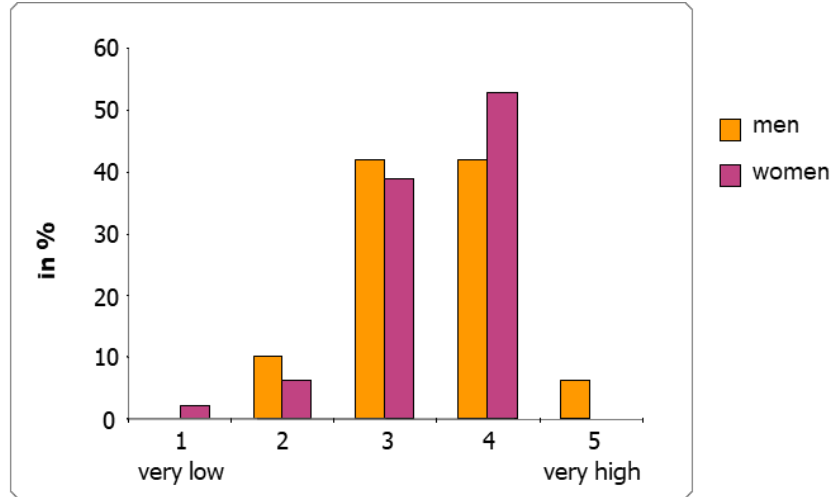# Work-life balance in consulting: cliché's

No problem for juniors …
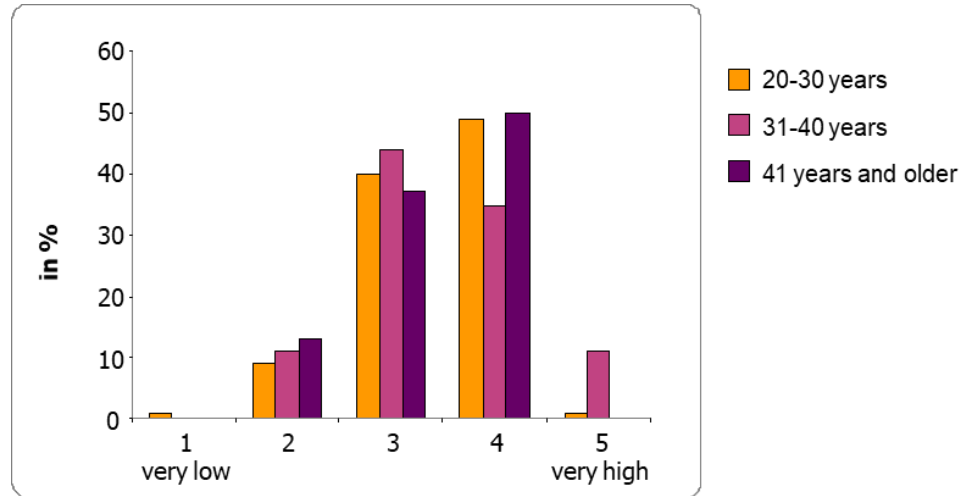
Age-related work–life conflict of consultants (Kaiser et al. 2011)

Work-life balance in consulting: cliché's (2)

No problem for men…

Work–life conflict of consultants according to gender (Kaiser et al. 2011)

Work-life balance: Quotes from consulting firms

Stress and work-life conflict perceptions are closely linked

- Still, consultancies end up high in rankings of the best companies to work for

You should be able to have a fantastic career and a full-life and do it in a way that works for you"

By **supporting work-life balance efforts**, mentorship programmes and support networks, management can help ensure that employees can keep their eye on the ball and **maintain a passion for work.**

accenture

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Work-life balance: How to control the conflict

- Via normative control in consultancies
  - Control in knowledge-intensive environments targets «ideas, beliefs, values and identities» (see Bouwmeester et al. 2021; Kärreman and Alvesson 2009; Noury et al. 2017)

There is a discourse around personal development stressing values like:

- Ambition, delivery, hard work, learning, career and promotion

VS. discourse around work-life balance stressing autonomy with values like:

- Resisting the dangers of working too much, appreciation of leisure

- Resistance gets neutralized: much talk about WLB, not much change…

Work-Life conflicts: the dutch consulting context

See: Bouwmeester et al., (2021): interview study with 24 millennials; 12 from Big 4; 12 from Big 3

WL Conflicts due to

- Project dynamics

  - Timing (deadlines, duration) and location (close by/abroad)

  - Nature of the work (not always relevant, not predictable)

  - Client expectation, demands

- Industry pressures

  - Performance standards in consulting, flexibility demands, business unit demands

- New technologies

  - Constant availability, increased connectivity, more interruptions

Strategy 1: normalizing the conflict

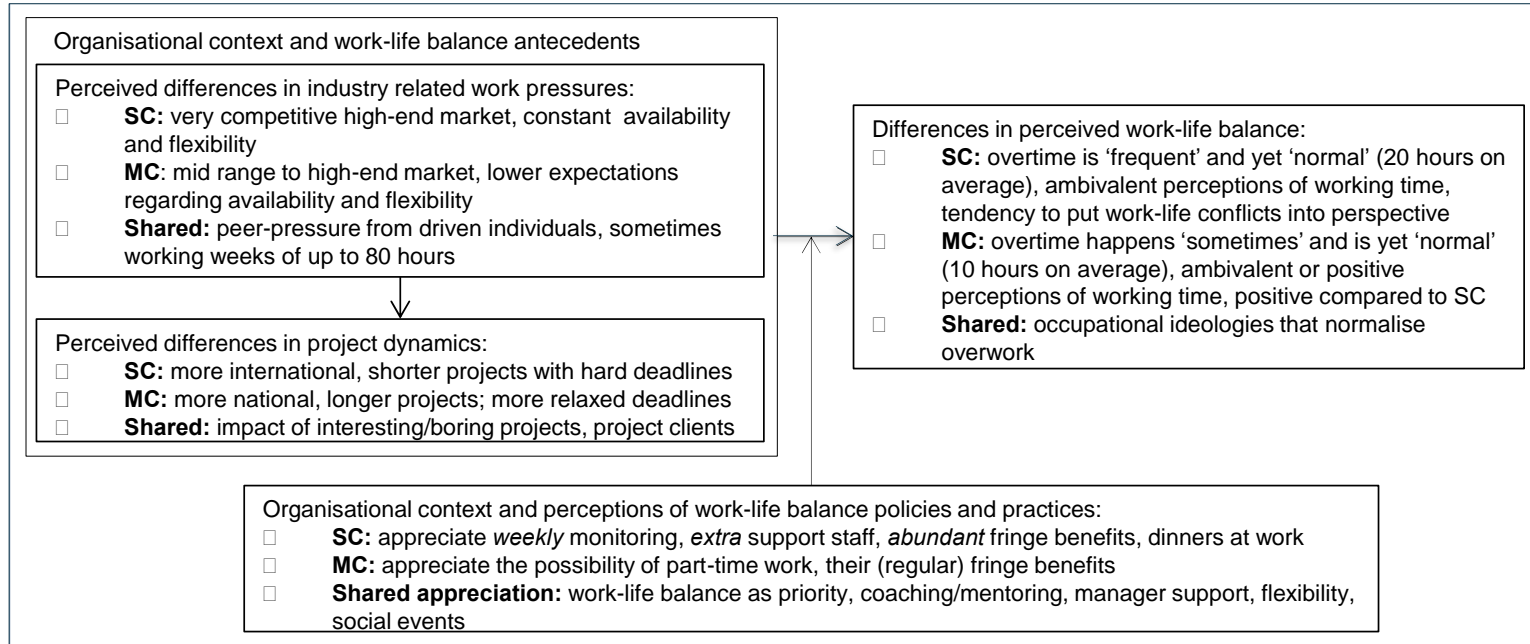*Normalization* of "consulting work-life" by

- Recalibration: "Consulting is like this, this is what clients expect" and, "in our field 60 hours is a very common working week" or:
  - SC12: "60 hours is doable, 70 is too much"

- Refocussing: "It's hard yes, but this way I also learn a lot" or:
  - SC2: "you can finish a lot of work when being abroad"

- Reframing: "in the light of your career the long working weeks *now* will pay off *later*" or:
  - MC4: the project is so interesting, it changes the perception of overworking

- The 'Dirty work' experience of WLC is 'softened' by normalization tactics

  - It is an individual coping strategy, but socially supported: you get used to think this way

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Strategy 2: Work-life balance policies in SC/MC

In addition many organizational policies!

	Times mentioned	
	Big 3/ strat.	Big 4/ MC
• Workhours (average per week)	60	50
• Supportive practices		
– Prioritising work-life balance, supported by manager, coach or mentor	24	19
– Monitoring (health, well-being)	11 (weekly!)	4
– Training programmes	2	8
• Compensatory practices		
– Giving back flexibility or extra time off	17	15
– Fringe benefits, support staff, social events	14	12

Work-life balance: strategy vs management consulting

Organisational context and work-life balance antecedents

Perceived differences in industry related work pressures:
- **SC:** very competitive high-end market, constant availability and flexibility
- **MC**: mid range to high-end market, lower expectations regarding availability and flexibility
- **Shared:** peer-pressure from driven individuals, sometimes working weeks of up to 80 hours

Perceived differences in project dynamics:
- **SC:** more international, shorter projects with hard deadlines
- **MC:** more national, longer projects; more relaxed deadlines
- **Shared:** impact of interesting/boring projects, project clients

Differences in perceived work-life balance:
- **SC:** overtime is 'frequent' and yet 'normal' (20 hours on average), ambivalent perceptions of working time, tendency to put work-life conflicts into perspective
- **MC:** overtime happens 'sometimes' and is yet 'normal' (10 hours on average), ambivalent or positive perceptions of working time, positive compared to SC
- **Shared:** occupational ideologies that normalise overwork

Organisational context and perceptions of work-life balance policies and practices:
- **SC:** appreciate *weekly* monitoring, *extra* support staff, *abundant* fringe benefits, dinners at work
- **MC:** appreciate the possibility of part-time work, their (regular) fringe benefits
- **Shared appreciation:** work-life balance as priority, coaching/mentoring, manager support, flexibility, social events

See also Kaiser et al. (2011): German WLB study; Noury et al. (2017): French WLB study

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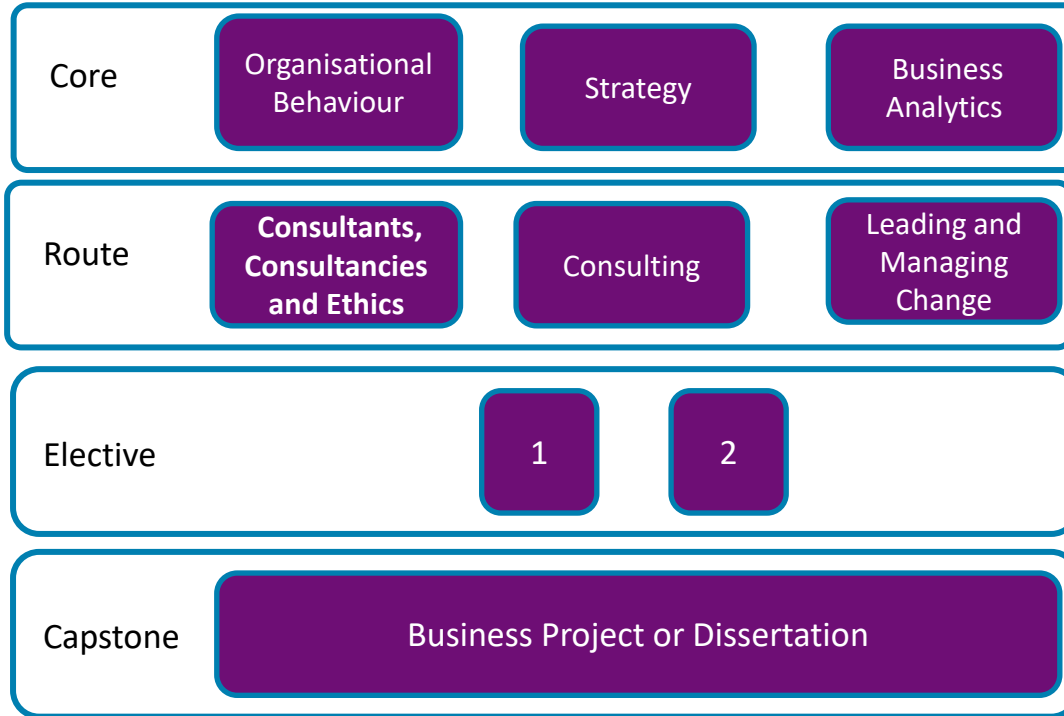AACSB ACCREDITED   ASSOCIATION AMBA ACCREDITED   EQUIS ACCREDITED

Work-life balance: used sources and further readings

– Bouwmeester, O., Atkinson, R., Noury, L., & Ruotsalainen, R. (2021). Work-life balance policies in high performance organisations: A comparative interview study with millennials in Dutch consultancies. *German Journal of Human Resource Management, 35*(1), 6-32.

– Bouwmeester, O., Versteeg, B., van Bommel, K., & Sturdy, A. (2022). Accentuating dirty work: Coping with psychological taint in elite management consulting. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, *36*(4), 411–439.

– Kaiser, S. Reindl, C. Stolz, M.K & Ringlstetter, M. (2011) Managing work-life balance in consulting organizations: issues and results. In IPOB (ed.) *The future of knowledge-intensive service work : Theory and practice of managing human and organizational resources.* Marburg, Metropolis : 243-294

– Kärreman, D., & Alvesson, M. (2009). Resisting resistance: Counter-resistance, consent and compliance in a consultancy firm. *Human relations, 62*(8), 1115-1144.

– Muhr, S. L., & Kirkegaard, L. (2013). The Dream Consultant: Productive Fantasies at Work. *Culture & Organization*, 19(2), 105–123.

– Noury, L. C., Gand, S., & Sardas, J-C. (2017). Tackling the work-life balance challenge in Professional Service Firms: the impact of projects, organizing and service characteristics. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, *4*(2), 149–178.

MSc Management (Management Consulting) Programme structure at a glance

Career & Professional Development

Core	Organisational Behaviour	Strategy	Business Analytics
Route	**Consultants, Consultancies and Ethics**	Consulting	Leading and Managing Change
Elective		1 2	
Capstone	Business Project or Dissertation		

Choose <u>two</u> from the list of electives available, for example* :

- Change Management
- Employee Reward Strategy
- Decision Making and Business Option Modelling
- Global Business
- Financial Management
- Multinational Finance
- International Study Tour
- New Venture Creation
- Responsible Business
- Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation

* Subject to change

Structure of teaching

- **Lectures** & **Seminars** (may need some advance preparation)
  - Practical Application and Experiential Learning
  - Interactive and Collaborative Learning Environment
  - International Exposure
  - Research-Led Teaching – See this taster module
  - Skill oriented curriculum
- **Assignments** depending on module - may be single or multiple, individual or group; essay, report or presentation
  - Formative vs Summative
- **Exams** (depending on module)
- A research **dissertation** or business **project** (summer)

Experiential and Interactive Learning

Masters International Study Opportunities

International Study Tours

- In today's business environment, students need the ability to operate in a highly competitive international environment.

- Offered across our Masters in Finance and Masters in Management programmes.

- Students travel to an international destination, visiting companies and prestigious institutions, working on a consulting project.

- Allows the opportunity to learn about local business culture and gain a critical awareness of the complexities involved in operating on the global stage.

- Business Analytics students attend the 'International Field Trip'.

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Why the Consultancy Pathway?

- If you want to start a career as consultant (ca. 40% of management students do so):
  - You strengthen your CV for this career with the pathway
  - You know where and how to apply (Big 3, Big 4, boutique, internal, etc.)
  - You know what to expect on the job (WLB, tech. developments like AI, SDG's, growing diversity)
  - You develop ethical awareness (public opinion, business jokes, cases)
  - You develop key skills, as demanded in consulting jobs
    - Analytical skills (critical essay writing, research methods, interview skills)
    - Presentation skills (pitching, debating, reporting like a consultant)
    - Social skills (group work, performing consultant roles)
    - Entrepreneurial skills (acquisition tasks such as finding interview partners and projects)

- You will have fun tasks and assignments – learning by doing
  - Optional: consulting pathway field trip to Amsterdam
    - You do a consultancy case study on a topic of your interest (careers, AI, ethics...)

- Do you have further questions?

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