

WORK-FAMILY BALANCE: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES**Raluca RUSU****„Nicolae Balcescu” Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania
rbalasoiu@yahoo.com**

Abstract: *This article presents some aspects of theory and research on work-life balance. It starts by exploring why work-life balance has become an important topic for research and policy and then examines some of the traditional perspectives of the concept, outlining some of its implications for the work place. Finally, the topic is presented by a number of variables used in European Quality on Life Survey, 2016 conducted by EU Agency for Improvement of Living and Working Condition, Eurofound.*

Keywords: Work-family balance, positive work-family balance, quality of life

1. Introduction

The issue of the relationship between man and organization is encountered, as a red thread, throughout the entire history of the analysis of organizations. Almost all the explanatory-interpretive models that refer to the two entities bring up, explicitly or implicitly, the nature of the relationship between man and organization, and especially ways of improving and optimizing it. Thus, several authors have tried to look at this relationship through various lenses (for example: the psychological contract theory, the organizational support theory, the theory of the congruence between the individual and the organization) all being founded on the paradigm of the social exchange based on the idea of the functioning of the norm of reciprocity between the organization and the employed. There is always an "understanding" between the organization and the individual in which each undertakes to "give" something and to "receive" something else, the purpose of this

exchange being to combine the organizational goals with the interests of the employees. The discussion about work-family balance is also situated in this context. If the organizations want to keep talented and motivated employees, especially if they are part of Generation Y, the generation born between 1982 and 2000, and who greatly value flexibility and autonomy at work, it is necessary that they invest in human resources strategies to help them achieve this work-family balance. [1] Despite the positive aspects of the work-family balance, both for the individual and for the organization, the concept has not been thoroughly researched until recently, so the definitions are not consistent with each other and the proposed measurement tools are problematic.

As a result, in this paper we will review a series of conceptualizations of the work-family balance concept and examine the relationship between the work-family balance and the quality of life, an important indicator of the well-being of the

individual. In the second part of the paper we present a series of comparative results between Romania and the European Union regarding a series of indicators that measure the work-family balance, processed according to the European Quality of Life Survey, 2016, the survey conducted by the European Agency for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Eurofound.

2. The meaning of work-family balance

The work-family balance reflects an individual's orientation towards the different roles he performs in life, that is, it presents itself as an inter-role phenomenon [2].

Contrary to the view that individuals organize their roles hierarchically, which leads to the emergence of a negative role balance, in which individuals are less involved in certain roles, Mark and MacDermid (1996) suggest that individuals can and should be equally involved in their roles, they should maintain a balance between the multiple roles encountered in the postmodern society [3].

Kirchmeyer (2000) states that living a balanced life means "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains (professional and personal)" and that "doing so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains"[4].

A similar point of view, belongs to, who sees the work-family balance as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict" [5].

These definitions have a series of common points. First of all, the idea of equality between professional and personal roles; none is more important than the others. If we imagine a pair of scales, balance means that neither of the two pans is higher than the other. Secondly, the definitions of work-family balance involve two components of equality: the inputs and the outputs. The inputs refer to the personal

resources that individuals engage in performing their roles, namely, attention, time, involvement and commitment, which means that the positive balance occurs when these investments are at a high level in all the roles played by the individuals. In terms of results, the most important one that appears in the definitions of the work-family balance is satisfaction. The positive balance involves getting an equal level of satisfaction both in the professional roles and in the family ones and the negative balance suggests that there is a low level of satisfaction in each role. One can not say that an individual has achieved work-family balance if he is substantially more satisfied by one role than by another. [6]

In conclusion, exist three components of the concept, which have also been used as variables in the operationalization of the concept in empirical research: the time balance — the same time allocated for performing professional and personal roles; the involvement balance — the same level of psychological involvement in the professional and the personal roles, and the satisfaction balance — an equal level of satisfaction achieved from performing the roles.

In order to emphasize the idea of the importance of the positive balance between the roles of the individual, we propose next a chronological review of the most important conceptualizations of the work-family balance. As one can see, the most recent definitions of the concept, bring into discussion the idea of the positive correlation with the well-being of the individual, which leads to an increase in the quality of the life of the individual (Table 1). Next, we will discuss this idea briefly.

3. Work-family balance and quality of life

Organizations need to be aware of the needs of the individuals and to provide them with flexibility, allowing them to combine the professional part of their lives with the

personal one in order to achieve the objectives in both spheres.

The benefits gained from obtaining a balance between the professional and the personal roles can be divided into two categories, organizational and individual benefits. The most important organizational benefits are: reduction of absenteeism, increased efficiency, organizational commitment, involvement in civic is positively correlated with the quality of life from several points of view. First, it can be a protective factor for individuals when certain negative situations arise in one of the areas of life, as they consider that both areas of life are equally valuable. The work-family balance makes the individual less overloaded; each role is viewed in a more relaxed manner. Due to the fact that individuals are involved in both roles, they will not let emergency situations stop the achievement of role performance. Individuals develop a certain routine that helps them meet the requirements of the roles, to avoid the inter- and the intra-role conflicts. Consequently, the absence of conflict and stress can lead to an improvement in the quality of life of the. The results show that, women experience tiredness due to work more than men, and particularly young women under the age of 34. Two-thirds of women under 34 claim to be too tired from work to do household jobs at least several times a month. With regard to difficulties in fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent at work, in 2016, 41% of women under 34 claim this. For men, the 35–49 age group experience the greatest difficulties with work–life balance: 61% report being too tired to carry out household duties after work while 42% have difficulties in fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent at work.

The third dimension, measures whether respondents have difficulties in concentrating at work because of family responsibilities, something which occurs

organizational behaviors — loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, personal development of employees. From a personal point of view, the most important benefits are autonomy, low levels of stress, better mental and physical health.

According to Barnett and Hyde (2001), the work-family balance is

individuals [8]

4. Work-family balance in Europe

Eurofound's European Quality of Life Survey analyze living conditions and people's social situation, and explores issues pertinent to the lives of European citizens, including Romania, from September 2016 to March 2017.

The problems related to work–life balance were measured on three distinct dimensions by asking respondents whether they: are too tired from work to do household jobs; experience difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent at work and if they have difficulties concentrating at work because of family responsibilities.

less often than problems for home and family tasks. Nevertheless, the incidence of it occurring at least several times a month almost doubled for all age groups considered between 2007 and 2016 and younger and middle age groups experienced it most.

The countries where this imbalance has increased most substantially since 2007 for both men and women are Croatia, the Czech Republic and Romania. In these countries, very few women work part time (5% or less of the EQLS respondents), the average working hours for women are relatively high (average working hours per week in all jobs are 43, 43 and 46 hours, respectively, for the three countries) and in all three countries a substantial share of women (16%, 21% and 28%, respectively, as measured by the EQLS) work over 48

hours per week.

With regard to factors affecting all three indicators of work–life balance, the most evident relation is found with the number of hours worked. The strongest association is between working time and family responsibilities, with 23% of respondents working less than 30 hours per week claiming to have this difficulty at least several times a month, 31% of those working 30–39 hours experiencing this difficulty, 40% of those working 40–49 hours, and 59% for those working in excess of 50 hours per week. [9]

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, labour market pressures, new forms of work organisation, and technological progress that sometimes contribute to the blurring of boundaries between private and working lives are among the factors that affect the balancing of work and life. And country differences regarding work–life balance reflect the disparate welfare arrangements in European countries.

This paper was edited by Gabriela Lica Mihaila.

Table 1. Work-family balance definitions [7]

Author	Definition
Kofodimos (1993)	The work-family balance refers to the capacity of the individual to adequately manage their professional and personal lives.
Clark (2000)	The satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum role conflict.
Hill et al (2001)	The extent to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance temporally, emotionally and behaviorally, the demands of paid work and the family responsibilities.
Feldstead (2002)	The work-family balance refers to the ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to find a pace that will enable them to combine their work with responsibilities, activities and aspirations of a different nature.
Frone (2003)	The low levels of interrole conflict and high levels of interrole facilitation represent work-family balance.
Clarke, Kock and Hill (2004)	The balance between the amount of time and effort that one dedicates to work and personal activities in order to maintain a sense of harmony in his/her life.
Coffey and Tombari (2005)	Work-life balance deals with the <i>creation</i> and implementation of a <i>organizational culture helping</i> men and woman to satisfy work demands <i>through</i> a broad <i>range of policies, programmes</i> and resources.
Amstrong (2006)	The work-family balance practices are concerned with ensuring a goal for the employees to balance what they do at their workplace with the responsibilities and the interests outside the workplace.
Kalliath and Brough (2008)	The work-family balance is the individual perception that work and personal activities can be compatible.
Perez-Sanchez and Galvez-Mozo (2009)	The need to reconcile work, family and personal life.
Veiga (2010)	Harmonizing the relationship between work and other activities, such as housekeeping, childcare, leisure, social activities, etc. which is essential to maintain a healthy and balanced life.

References

- [1] Benito-Osorio Diana, Munoz-Aguado, Laura and Villar, Laura The impact of Family and Work-Life Balance Policies on the Performance of Spanish Listed Companies, *Management*, Vol.17(4), pp. 214-236, 2014.
- [2] Marks,S., R., and MacDermid, S.M. (1996) Multiple roles and the self: A theory of role balance. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58, 417-432, 1996.
- [3] Marks,S., R., and MacDermid, S.M. (1996) Multiple roles and the self: A theory of role balance. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58, 417-432, 1996.
- [4] Kirchmeyer, C. Work-life initiatives: Greed or benevolence regarding workers time. In C. L. Cooper and D. M. Rousseau (Eds.) *Trends in organizational behavior* (vol.7, pp.79-93). West Sussex, UK:Wiley, pp.81, 2000.
- [5] Clark, S. C. Work/family border theory:A new theory of work/family balance. *Human Relations*, 53 (6), pp 349, 2000.
- [6] Benito-Osorio Diana, Munoz-Aguado, Laura and Villar, Laura The impact of Family and Work-Life Balance Policies on the Performance of Spanish Listed Companies, *Management*, Vol.17(4), pp. 214-236, 2014.
- [7] Benito-Osorio Diana, Munoz-Aguado, Laura and Villar, Laura The impact of Family and Work-Life Balance Policies on the Performance of Spanish Listed Companies, *Management*, Vol.17(4), pp. 214-236, 2014.
- [8] Barnett, R.C.,and Hyde, J. S. Women, men work and family An expansionist theory *American psychologist*, 56, 781-796, 2001.
- [9] Eurofound (2017), European Quality of Life Survey 2016: Quality of life, quality of public services, and quality of society, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.