

An Approach to Work-Home Balance in Romania

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Abstract In this study, we aimed to research the specific of work-home balance in a collectivity of workers of Romanian nationality. Through the snowball sampling technique, we distributed an English-Romanian back-translated questionnaire. The sample constituted conveniently had 300 participants ($M_{age} = 41.55$ years, $SD = 12.02$). The results obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis indicated good fit properties of a bi-factorial model of work-home balance ($\chi^2(4, 275) = 1.95$, $p = .74$, $GFI = 1.00$, $AGFI = .99$, $CFI = 1.00$, $FMIN = .007$, $RMSEA < .001$, Hoelter $CN = 1862$, $p = .01$). Further on, through linear regression analysis, we researched the skill in work-home balance and the satisfaction with work-home balance in relation to the characteristics of the organizational setting and to health. The findings revealed that the organizations may protect from high rates of illness and of turnover through the work-home balance of the individuals activating inside of these. We discuss the implications of these results.

Keywords Work-home balance, Confirmatory factor analysis, Romania

1. Introduction

Developing practical abilities in reference to the modalities of alleviating stress predisposes a worker to harmonious living. People acknowledged this since long time ago. A proof is the Latin dictum, "It is a measure in everything" (Horatio, Satire 1, 1, 106-107).

Previous research findings unveil an enhancing function of work-home balance in rapport to the health status and to the satisfaction with job and with the private life (e.g.[1][2]). The potential of the people to experience satisfaction and to benefit from a sound functioning condition is ubiquitous. Work-home balance and health constitute socio-individual factors that sustain the production of quality outcomes for an organization[3].

In the pursuit of this study, we aim to uncover a gap in the knowledge from until present referring to the mechanism of work-home balance of the individuals living in Romania, a country that surpassed recent socio-economic transitions. From our best knowledge from until present, the studies published in English language and researching this topic in this population are unavailable. Yet, from empirical observations, we may affirm that the workers in Romania are mentally preoccupied with the maintenance of the success associated to the fulfillment of the responsibilities derived from the main roles (i.e. employee, spouse, parent) enacted in their life.

2. Theoretical Background

Through the availability of work-life practices and benefits, an organization provides a base for an optimal adaptation of the employees. An optimum between resources and requests is necessary.

2.1. Work-Home Balance

In a plethora of research studies, published in English language, the authors of these referred to the concept of "work-family balance" to represent the optimal modality through which the people engaged in paid activities succeed to manage adequately the multiple responsibilities of their daily life (e.g.[1][2][4]). In another previous study, other authors[5] stated that the terms "life" and "home" are synonymous. Through the syntagm "work-home balance", we refer to a state of mind of the people engaged in paid activities on the job. Moreover, work-home balance is a state of satisfaction (e.g.[1][4][6]). According to the latter source, the actualization of it implies the development of a behavioural modality to facilitate a smooth commuting between the main domains of life, work and home. Thus, we also refer to the skill in work-home balance.

2.2. Working Time

The workers have limited resources available for pursuing the activities related to job. Time represents an asset that an individual may manipulate in the service of the self and of the organization. If there is a correspondence between the "inputs" and the "outputs" in performing the work-home related activities, than a person is experiencing

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balance rather than conflict or negative interference of the domains of life ([4][7]). Through this, practical modalities of prevention of the illness (i.e. physical, mental) inside the working organizations may develop.

According to relative recent data[8], the average weekly work time in Romania was of 40 hours and the maximum number of time spent on the job was of 48 hours per week. In this study, we use the term of normal work time to circumscribe the limit of daily eight hours, the interval that a person has available to engage in paid activities. The prolonged work time is a term that comprises the changes in the standard norm of daily eight hours spent with the fulfillment of the job responsibilities (i.e. the nine to 12 hours duration of the work-day and the week-end work).

2.3. Health and Turnover

If, during a relative short length of time, a person dedicates multiple resources to the fulfillment of the activities in a domain of life (i.e. work or home) than this constitutes in a risk-factor of the maintenance of a good functioning condition. The extension of the work time enhances the propensity of an individual toward illness (e.g.[9]). A state of work-home balance has a preventive value in rapport to potential undesirable consequences of the extended work hours on the well-being of a person.

Yet, through internalizing the formal and the informal rules of the organizational culture, the individuals may also commit to provide quality services without endangering their health. Moreover, the desire to continue to engage in paid services for the same organization may determine them to engage in pursuing over work time[10]. Thus, through providing quality services, they may re-fill energetically. In contrast to the passive and to the active intention to turnover from the organization (e.g. delay of the realization of the deadlines; posting curriculum vita to job announcements), there are the attachment to the organization and the stability on the job. Through the latter mentioned, a person contracting paid work has a proactive attitude in relation to the workplace, adhering and contributing to the accomplishment of the goals of the organization.

Henceforth, in this study we research if the concept of work-home balance has a practical correspondence in the reality of the people in Romania, engaged in paid activities on the job. In the case that it does, than we assume that it should prove to have construct-validity in relation to the time spent on the job, to the mental illness and to the characteristics of the organizational setting referring to job stability and to organizational attachment. Briefly, in rapport to the considered outcomes, the work-home balance should prove an opposed function to the work time.

3. Hypotheses Model

Work-home balance and the bi-directional conflict between work and family are counterpart facets of the work-life interface (e.g.[4]). Moreover, in the condition of

prolonging the hours dedicated to the fulfillment of job activities, a worker may experience negative interference of work into family (e.g.[11]) and imbalance[12]. Increases in the normal time spent on the job will probably have a negative effect on work-home balance (hypothesis 1, H1).

Further on, the mental worries that occur in the minds of the individuals especially during performing week-work have a biological correspondent in the increases of the levels of cortisol[13]. Moreover, a frequent crossing-over the normal work-time limit established through the organizational policies constitutes a precondition for the ill-being of the workers and of their family (e.g.[14]). The long work hours represent a main cause for the experience of strain that may determine severe dysfunctions[15]. Increases in the normal time spent on the job will probably have a negative effect on health (hypothesis 2, H2).

The family-friendly policies (e.g. relative flexible time arrangements, in-site care for the child) confer to the working individuals the opportunity to realize qualitative outcomes on the job and to continue to remain in the same organization (e.g.[3][16]). Through these, the organization supports the actualization of the developmental needs of the employees. Increases in the normal time spent on the job will probably have a negative effect on job stability and on the attachment to the organization (hypothesis 3, H3).

A condition of an autonomous functioning inside and outside the work-office is the exposure to opportunities that facilitate a smooth work-life intercourse. Through fulfilling the needs in a socially desirable manner, a work-home balanced person may maintain the subjective well-being[17]. Moreover, the implementation of organizational regulations that consider the rhythms of life provides the workers to a chance of preventing the appearance of symptoms of severe depression (e.g.[3][6]). The realization of a desirable interplay between office and outside office (e.g. family-chimney) activities implies an accord among the provisions, the supplies and the mentally projected goals related to various aspects of the daily living of a worker. Moreover, an intermingling of the activities in a manner that is correspondent to a hierarchical actualization of the needs impedes a worker to experience anxiety (e.g.[2]). In taken altogether the above research facts, we derive the following hypothesis according to which the state of work-home balance will probably have a positive effect on health (hypothesis 4, H4).

The internalization of the organizational values constitutes a premise for the commitment of a person to the workplace. In the condition of overloads of stress and conflict or negative interference of the domains of life, the propensity of the individuals to leave a workplace for another may actualize into the practical behavior[18]. Therefore, work-home balance will probably have a positive effect on job stability and on organizational attachment (hypothesis 5, H5).

4. Method

In the elaboration of the measurement instrument of this study, we used the back-translation procedure. The questions were English-Romanian back-translated. The percent of fit, representing the conceptual validity of it, was of almost 90%. The entire length of the initial questionnaire was of over 100 items. For half of the sample, we presented one order of the items and for the other half, another order. The reverse was between the items referring to paid (i.e. work) and to unpaid (i.e. outside work) domains of activity of a person. We kept in this study only the relevant data in rapport to the research hypotheses.

All the questionnaires that we distributed through the snowball sampling technique (i.e. asking our acquaintances, relatives and friends to roll it on the theirs acquaintances, relatives and friends) contained a face-sheet stating that the personal information (e.g. name of the workplace) remain confidential. It also stipulated that the participation in this study is voluntarily. Yet, in order to feel motivated to complete the questionnaire, some of the participants might have had received through our acquaintances, relatives and friends the verbal incentive according to which, on the basis of the prevailed answers and through the author of this study, they may access a general description of the research results of this study.

The gathering of the data was during the early months of the year 2010. We yielded a statistically significant minimum of 30 respondents to the questionnaire from each of the following domains of activity: IT programming, architecture, education and research in engineering, language and religion.

From a total of 400 distributed questionnaires, we received 311 filled-in questionnaires. After the participants returned these, we introduced the data in the statistical program for social sciences (SPSS). In so doing, we observed that we received from the participants incomplete answers (i.e. missing data). Through the deletion of the missing data found for the measurement scale of work-home balance, we constituted the convenience sample of this study of 300 participants. A concise description of the characteristics of this sample are as following: 140 (51%) females, 127 (46.2%) males, 85 (31%) married, 185 (67%) unmarried, almost half of the sample (152 participants, 55%) working between seven and eight hours on day and almost a quarter of it (80 participants, 29.10%) engaging in paid activities for a duration of nine to ten hours daily, almost half of it (121 participants, 44%) university graduates, having completed the upper studies level of education and 73 of them (26.50%) master graduates. At the moment of the completion of the questionnaire, less than half of the sample (119 participants, 43%) had no children and 88 participants (32%) had one child.

The main reasons for which the calculus of the sum of the aforementioned percents entering in the composition of this sample is below 100 are the rounding and the missing data.

A detailed description of the content of the items and

further characteristics of the measurement instrument of work-home balance may be found in the next section. The answer format of these items was on a five-point Likert type of scale. The codes ranged from 0 (least) to 4 (very much) for the items whose content was a measure for the satisfaction with work-home balance and from 0 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree) for the items whose content was a measure for the skill in work-home balance.

In this study, we also included to examine other variables. Thus, we measured the time spent on the job through two questions: "How many hours do you work on a day?" and "Do you work during week-ends or days off?" The first question had the following codes of answer: 1 (less than four hours), 2 (between four and six hours), 3 (between six and eight hours), 4 (between eight and 10 hours) and 5 (between 11 and 12 hours). For the second question, the codes of answer ranged as following: 0 (yes), 1 (sometimes) and 2 (no). We measured the stability on the job through the question: "Do you think you will need to change your job during the following three to six months?" This had codes of answer that ranged as following: 0 (yes), 1 (I do not know) and 2 (no). The measure for the organizational attachment was the affirmation: "I feel attached to my workplace" and the participants offered their answers on a five-point Likert-type of scale that had codes ranging from 0 (less) to 4 (very much). We derived the measure of mental illness from a previous study[19], but we changed the format of answer as following: 0 (less than once in a year), 1 (less than once in a month), 2 (about once in a month), 3 (almost weekly) and 4 (almost daily). The value of the reliability coefficient Cronbach alpha that we found for the depression scale of this instrument was $\alpha = .86$ and for the anxiety scale, $\alpha = .81$.

5. Results

In conducting the confirmatory factor analysis, the results revealed that, inside the sample extracted from Romanian population, the work-home balance has a two-factorial structure. In the construction of the model, from a poll of 28 items designed to measure the work-home balance, we selected the simplest one that had the lowest value of the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), but which proved to have a large applicability. The alternative models had the following values of the AIC: 1338.33, 928.35 and 155.68. Eventually, after extraction, in the final model, the value of AIC was equal to 23.95. The fit properties of the final structural model, examined in Amos program, are: $\chi^2(4, 275) = 1.95$, $p = .74$, GFI = 1.00, AGFI = .99, CFI = 1.00, FMIN = .007, RMSEA < .001, Hoelter CN = 1862, $p = .01$. The value of the covariance between the two factors, satisfaction with work-home balance and skill in work-home balance is equal to the value of .81, $p < .001$. The first factor, satisfaction with work-home balance, comprises two items. In order, these are: "Family and close friends feel contentment about the way I divide my resources between paid work and personal life" ($\beta = .73$,

$R^2 = .54$, $e_1 = .36$) and “I feel contentment with my performance in job and in home related duties” ($\beta = .80$, $R^2 = .65$, $e_2 = .25$). The value of the reliability coefficient Cronbach of this factor is $\alpha = .74$. The skill in work-home balance is the second factor of the measurement scale that we developed. It comprises three items. In order, these are: “I have the ability to function well in my professional life and in my private life even in the condition of numerous demands that come simultaneously from both” ($\beta = .87$, $R^2 = .75$, $e_3 = .15$), “I am able to adapt to the problems needed to be solved in my professional life which appear simultaneously with problems needed to be solved in my

off-work life” ($\beta = .75$, $R^2 = .56$, $e_4 = .24$) and “I succeed to take care of the aspects related to my work-life as well as to my family, social and leisure life” ($\beta = .82$, $R^2 = .66$, $e_5 = .20$).

Further on, we mention that, according to [20], if the value of the indicator of Hoelter CN surpasses the initial size of the sample plus half of it, which is the case of the model of work-home balance developed in this study, then, based on it, we may be able to withdraw reliable predictions available for the population from which we extracted the sample.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlation matrix

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Satisfaction with work-home balance	2.50	0.76	–							
2 Skill in work-home balance	2.97	0.66	.62 **	–						
3 Time on the job	3.39	0.74	-.16 **	-.22 **	–					
4 Supplementary work hours	1.31	0.68	.07	.13 *	-.40 **	–				
5 Job stability	1.50	0.60	.12 *	.12 *	-.03	-.13 *	–			
6 Organizational attachment	2.78	0.96	.23 **	.22 **	.01	-.15 *	.24 **	–		
7 Depression	0.95	0.84	-.30 **	-.37 **	.20 **	-.18 **	-.10	-.20 **	–	
8 Anxiety	1.33	0.86	-.32 **	-.36 **	.20 **	-.16 **	-.03	-.19 **	.63 **	–

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Results obtained in examination of the hypotheses through linear regression analysis

Predicted relationship	β	R^2	Hypotheses model
Time on the job > Satisfaction with work-home balance	-.15 *	.02	Supported H1
Time on the job > Skill in work-home balance	-.19 ***	.05	Supported H1
Supplementary work hours > Satisfaction with work-home balance	.01 ns	.02	Not supported H1
Supplementary work hours > Skill in work-home balance	.05 ns	.05	Not supported H1
Time on the job > Depression	.15 *	.05	Supported H2
Time on the job > Anxiety	.15 *	.05	Supported H2
Supplementary work hours > Depression	-.12 *	.05	Supported the reverse of H2
Supplementary work hours > Anxiety	-.10 ns	.05	Not supported H2
Time on the job > Job stability	-.10 ns	.03	Not supported H3
Time on the job > Organizational attachment	.05 ns	.02	Supported H3
Supplementary work hours > Job stability	-.17 **	.03	Supported H3
Supplementary work hours > Organizational attachment	-.13 *	.02	Supported H3
Satisfaction with work-home balance > Depression	-.30 ****	.09	Supported H4
Satisfaction with work-home balance > Anxiety	-.32 ****	.10	Supported H4
Skill in work-home balance > Depression	-.37 ****	.13	Supported H4
Skill in work-home balance > Anxiety	-.37 ****	.13	Supported H4
Satisfaction with work-home balance > Job stability	.12 *	.02	Supported H5
Satisfaction with work-home balance > Organizational attachment	.23 ****	.05	Supported H5
Skill in work-home balance > Job stability	.12 *	.01	Supported H5
Skill in work-home balance > Organizational attachment	.22 ****	.05	Supported H5

Note. ns, not significant, **** $p < .001$, *** $p < .005$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$

For 95% confidence interval, the results of the *t*-test for the comparison of means indicated that, for the items of this scale, there are no significant gender differences between men and women¹.

The mean and the standard deviation of each variable of study, together with the values of the two-tailed Pearson correlation coefficient between each of the two, main variables of this study, may be found in Table 1.

We illustrate in Table 2 the results obtained in the examination of the hypotheses through linear regression analysis. As we may notice, the findings conferred partial support of the first three hypotheses, H1, H2 and H3 and integral support of the last two hypotheses, H4 and H5. Thus, although, the time spent on the job has, in conformity to our expectations (H1), a negative effect on the work-home balance, the supplementary hours dedicated to the accomplishment of the job activities during official days-off, contrary to our expectations (H1), do not affect the state of work-home balance of the individuals. Further on, as we expected (H2), the time spent on the job has a positive effect on the symptoms of mental illness, but, unexpectedly in rapport to the predictions of the hypothesis H2, the time dedicated to the fulfillment of the job activities during official days-off may have a preventive value in rapport to the appearance of the symptoms of depression of the workers. Yet, the urge to work during official days-off has a negative impact on the desire of the individual to continue to work for the same organization. In addition, since the effect of the increases in the normal time spent on the job on the outcomes referring to the commitment to the workplace is not significant, in taken altogether, these findings conferred partial support of the hypothesis H3. Moreover, we notice (see Table 2) that the state of work-home balance of the workers constitutes a protective factor of their mental health and of the turnover from the organization. Thus, these findings conferred integral support of the last two hypotheses, H4 and H5.

From the above, we may conclude that the likelihood of a person to maintain a good functioning condition inside the workplace and to continue to develop paid activities there is strongly related to the experience of satisfaction with work-home balance and to the development of the skill in work-home balance.

6. Discussion

From the prevailed results, we may affirm that the state of work-home balance emerges at the confluence between the perceived ability of an individual to combine in a desirable manner the responsibilities of the roles and the

satisfaction derived from the accomplishment of activities, including leisure. Moreover, the modality of engagement in the realization of paid activities may affect the work-home balance of a person. Thus, the extension of the weekly working time may be a cause of work-home imbalance. Further on, it may determine dysfunctions at the individual level and at the organizational level. As the results showed, in the condition of a relative underdevelopment of the skill in work-home balance, the nervousness and the inner unstableness of an individual tend to accentuate. In addition, even if a person succeeds to maintain the work-home balance during the pursuit of work during official days-off, the engagement in paid job activities during official days-off affects the propensity of that person to remain in the same organization. Therefore, in the attempt of prevention of the rates of turnover, the work-home balance of the individuals represents a resource for the organizations. In brief, the rates of illness in the work-offices and the prospects of changing the workplace in the near future may decrease as a function of the experience of work-home balance.

Among the limitations of this study we enumerate: the relative small size of the sample, the cross-sectional design and the self-reported instrument of measure. In addition, in reference to the formulation of the items, we mention the phrasing of these in terms of “contentment”. Although the model fitted well into the collected data, we should acknowledge that, in spite of the fact that at the common sense level of the language, people may use the words “contentment” and “satisfaction” interchangeably, as almost perfect synonyms, at profound level of a psycho-linguistic analysis of the meaning and of the context, the two concepts refer to qualitatively different emotional states of mind[21]. Contentment is a more complex emotion than satisfaction. According to this source, the former implies more cognitive appraisals than the mere affective experience, which is a characteristic of the latter.

In concluding, we summarize the main findings of this research through which we consider that we have contributed to the extension of the knowledge on the topic of work-home balance. Firstly, we mention that in spite of the fact that in a comparative survey[22] the authors found that in the workplaces in Romania the modality in which the individuals conceptualize the work-home balance is “relative stable”, through this study we showed that keeping in equilibrium the main roles of life is a complex rather than a simple process. Moreover, it represents a reality of the Romanian people engaged in the production of quality, paid outcomes. Secondly, in this population, in rapport to the maintenance of work-home balance, of health and of the actual workplace, the weekly hours on the job and the official days-off on the job have a different function. In this regard, we believe that the implementation of trainings of time-management and of life-skills would be beneficial for both, the individuals and the work-offices. Thus, the cases of malpractice that may be a possible result of the individual stress derived from the extension of the time on

¹ Note. In regard to other variables of this study, we observed that there are significant gender differences between men and women, showing a higher mean of women than that of men for the supplementary work hours [$t(288) = -3.12, p < .005; N_{\text{men}} = 136, M_{\text{men}} = 1.18; N_{\text{women}} = 154, M_{\text{women}} = 1.42$]. Also, the results of the *t*-test indicated that men had a higher mean than women for the time spent on the job [$t(288) = 3.42, p < .005; N_{\text{men}} = 136, M_{\text{men}} = 3.55; N_{\text{women}} = 154, M_{\text{women}} = 3.25$].

the job may be avoided. Thirdly, in the attempt of preventing mental illness inside the workplaces and in that of protecting an organization from poor functioning caused by high rates of the fluctuations of the personnel, the balance of roles of an individual weights in importance.

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