

**DINCOLO DE 9-LA-17: EXPLORAREA FACTORILOR INFLUENȚI,
A IMPLICAȚIILOR PE TERMEN LUNG
ȘI A REZISTENȚEI ANGAJAȚILOR ÎN ATINGEREA ECHILIBRULUI
DINTRE VIAȚA PROFESIONALĂ ȘI CEA PERSONALĂ**

*Beyond the 9-to-5: Exploring influential factors, long-term implications and employee
resistance in the pursuit of work-life balance*

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Rezumat: Întrucât Echilibrul Muncă-Viață (WLB) este un concept destul de nou și nu sunt prezentate atât de multe idei în literatura de specialitate, în special despre populația română, această lucrare adună idei din articole științifice pentru a testa preferințele românilor cu privire la subiect. Pentru ca acest lucru să fie realizat, a fost elaborată o cercetare cantitativă pe baza unui chestionar folosit ca instrument de cercetare. Eșantionul a fost compus din angajați români din mai multe industrii, care și-au exprimat opiniile cu privire la programele pe care organizațiile le-ar putea implementa pentru bunăstarea angajaților lor în ceea ce privește legătura dintre muncă și viața personală, factorii de influență ai WLB, rezultate și consecințe, precum și experiența de muncă actuală și trecută pentru a testa mai multe teorii despre acest concept. În final, această lucrare va ajuta atât angajații, cât și organizațiile să înțeleagă motivele din spatele mai multor acțiuni și să le îmbunătățească atât munca, cât și viața în cadrul organizațiilor lor.

Cuvinte cheie: Echilibru muncă-viață, flexibilitate, epuizare, satisfacție profesională, satisfacție în viață

Abstract: Since Work-Life Balance (WLB) is quite a new concept and not so many ideas are presented in the literature, especially on the Romanian population, this paper gathers ideas from scientific articles, in order to test Romanians' preferences upon the subject. In order for this to be accomplished, a quantitative research was developed based on a questionnaire as a research tool. The sample was composed from Romanian employees from several industries, that expressed their opinions regarding programs that organizations might implement for their employee's well-being in regards to the connection between work and personal life, factors of influence of WLB, outcomes and consequences, along with current and past job experience to test several theories about this concept. In the end, this paper will help both employees and organizations understand the reasons behind several actions and improve both their work and life within their organizations.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, flexibility, burnout, job satisfaction, life satisfaction

JEL Classification: D23, J22, J24, J28, J81

REL Classification: 5G, 14A

1. Introduction

Work-life balance has been extensively studied in recent years since there is increasing competition among countries to experience economic growth, so more and more workers need help to achieve the right equilibrium between their personal and professional lives (Haar and Brougham, 2022: pp. 784-807). Because of the work's objective shifting from survival to personal recognition in this fast-changing world (Vyas and Shrivastava, 2017: pp. 194-200), work-life balance has gained increasing importance for the younger generation seeking to split their time equally among work, family, and personal life. Therefore, several studies try to point out the main positive outcomes of a balanced work-life and the negative effects of an imbalanced one, taking into account the health and wellness of employees, stress levels (Pillay, Riaz and Dorasamy, 2023), and psychological problems (Süß and Sayah, 2013: pp. 250-262) that might affect both personal and professional lives.

Nevertheless, little attention has been given to the Work-Life Balance in Romania. Therefore, this study was designed to explore which are the key factors that consolidate the equilibrium between the personal and professional life among Romanian workers and how their perceived work-life balance influences their resignation decision upon past jobs. Using a quantitative research method, the survey, this study aims to assess the factors of influence for work-life balance, the outcomes and consequences of work-life balance, and the employees' resistance based on the work-life balance of a company. Gathering Romanian employees' perspectives on work-life balance through a questionnaire, the paper stresses the importance of each individual allocating equal time, efforts, and dedication (Kelliher, Richardson, and Boiarintseva, 2019: pp. 97-112) to balance the responsibilities that each person plays in their personal and professional lives (Aloulou, Amari, Ramadan and Alboqami, 2023: p. 122312).

2. Literature Review

To better understand the topic and explore the concept of work-life balance, this chapter provides ideas about the subject, based on academic papers, studies and many other articles. Moreover, using these sources of research, this section provides theoretical information about positive outcomes of the work-life balance and negative consequences of the same topic, along with its factors of influence.

2.1 The concept of Work-Life Balance

In the past few decades, the connection between work and life has been frequently debated in order to find the perfect definition of the whole concept. From “balance”, to “interface” or even “situation”, the most expressive phrase that defines this subject was chosen to be Work-Life Balance or WLB (Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva, 2019: pp. 97-112). Therefore, WLB represents the individual's ability to equalize the roles that he or she has both in its personal life and in his or her working environment (Aloulou, Amari, Ramadan and Alboqami, 2023: p. 122312). While work-life interface and work-life situation refer more to particular circumstances of an individual, work-life balance highlights the balanced allocation of personal and work-related responsibilities considering the time, efforts and dedication of a particular individual (Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva, 2019: pp. 97-112).

As Haar and Brougham (2022) discovered during their research, it is very difficult to find the equilibrium between work and personal life these days. Depending on the compatibility between roles or the expectations of a manager or even that particular individual, the amount of time and energy could decrease in any moment (Süß and Sayah, 2013: pp. 250-262), a fact that could determine the degradation of health, relationships and many other problems. In order

to diminish the conflicts each individual is going through between work and life or avoid emotions interfering with the performance from one sector to the other (Pillay, Riaz and Dorasamy, 2023), both specialists and individuals should work upon measures to create a balanced and peaceful environment. Therefore, the specialists from organizations, for example the human resource specialists, need to learn about the environment in which the employees work on, to develop several policies in order to provide the proper care and assistance for their colleagues (Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva, 2019: pp. 97-112). This action will help organizations develop better relationships with their employees, because nowadays they better appreciate when their superiors recognize their worth and not think of them just as input providers (Khan and Fazili, 2016: pp. 20-25).

Keeping in mind that work is not only a source of survival, Vyas and Shrivastava (2017) discovered that work is rather a way through which an individual could find a strong feeling of fulfillment. Even though that this concept was primarily discussed among women and their preferences regarding childcare (Kelliher, Richardson, and Boiarintseva, 2019: pp. 97-112), studies have shown that lately, the work-life balance is more important for the youth (Süß and Sayah, 2013: pp. 250-262). Since they were raised in a modern world, more relaxed and comfortable, they demand the equality between work, family and their personal life (Delecta, 2011: pp. 186-189).

2.2 The positive outcomes and its factors of Work-Life Balance

In order to attain the satisfactory level of an individual regarding the balance between his or her work and its personal life, Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva (2019) discovered that the status of the individual in each social encounter or his or her devotion might positively affect its feeling and its life. Besides these, there are many factors that bring certain outcomes to each person's life. For example, positive input could be represented also by the "buffering effect", concept that explains how the stress or tension between roles could be reduced by having social support (Che et al., 2018: pp. 1061-1076) both from family and work colleagues.

Another factor that could positively influence the WLB of a person is having organizational programs specifically created to offer more flexibility to the work environment of a person (Kelliher, Richardson, and Boiarintseva, 2019: pp. 97-112). Studies show that flexibility along with organizational support with childcare increases the performance of the individual, which later on leads to shifts to higher positions, such as management (Pillay, Riaz and Dorasamy, 2023). This idea is also influenced through the access to technology. This way, the employees are not directly limited to a specific location, but could bring on their value from different places either if they are at home or in an office (Khallash and Kruse, 2012: 678-686). Moreover, taking care of the health and wellness of the employees is also a positive factor of the WLB. Therefore, encouraging them to travel and use their vacation days or support them to perform some sports could create the proper balance needed in any type of organization and industry (Todd and Binns, 2013: pp. 219-231).

By creating a safe and comfortable environment in which employees could fulfill their level of satisfaction while working, companies improve their performance and increase the loyalty of their employees, a fact that encourages an overall equilibrium. This idea was confirmed by Khallash and Kruse (2012) in their article, when they discovered that the countries from North have the world's minimum number of hours worked while leading the markets and being amongst the most ambitious and devoted countries.

Additionally, WLB exhibits a growing interest in the Romanian labor market since Romanian organizations make significant efforts to support their employees achieve balance between personal and professional lives. According to a study conducted by Țuclea, et al. (2017), Romanian workers enjoy the most the possibility of sharing the workload between

colleagues, part-time or flexible working schedule, and healthcare and assistance programs as opportunities created by the employer to better match professional objectives with personal interests. Although nowadays employees tend to have higher education and make more conscious decisions regarding workplaces, State, et al. (2019) suggest that the majority of 126 interviewed Romanian employees working in the tourism industry as part of the services sector struggle with overtime working and thinking of the job responsibilities outside working hours, which leads to less time spent with family or friends and an overall imbalance between work and the personal life.

2.3 The negative consequences and its factors of Work-Life Balance

Whereas there are several positive outcomes of a balanced and healthy Work-Life, the negative impact is also present in some of the worldwide employees' lives. Therefore, while flexibility and the access to technology encourage a healthy lifestyle, in some cases, organizations profit from this and might disrupt the boundary between work and personal life (Süß and Sayah, 2013: pp. 250-262). This way, companies might ask their workers to push overtime effort in order to finish all of their tasks in time, a fact that is not that healthy and could lead to other health issues. As Pillay, Riaz and Dorasamy (2023) proved through their research, more than half of their respondents consider that sometimes they invested more time into their work, rather than their time with their families, which led to conflicts in their private lives.

A very important idea that companies should always take into account especially in families with newborn babies is the level of workload. These factors should not be taken for granted, as Vyas and Shrivastava (2017) explained in their article that over one-eighth males with newborn babies dedicates his time for work more than sixty hours each week, which is too much for the period in which parents should be close to their children. Usually, when there is a constant higher level of workload at the job, parents that need to be closer to their young kids have difficulty in managing the stress between work and private life (Kelliher, Richardson, and Boiarintseva, 2019: pp. 97-112). This way, different health issues might occur in the employees' lives. For example, high level of stress or fatigue could constantly frustrate the individual (Pillay, Riaz and Dorasamy, 2023) or the lack of interest in both work life and private life could decrease the performance at work while having no motivation of doing better (Pillay, Riaz and Dorasamy, 2023).

Therefore, if organizations are taking for granted the Work-Life Balance, both companies and its employees will be affected, because not only will be a decreased percentage of job performance, but also the individual's health will be negatively exposed. The stress, anxiety, psychological problems (Süß and Sayah, 2013: pp. 250-262) or even drugs and alcohol usage (Delecta, 2011: pp. 186-189) are some of the illnesses that might occur when an imbalance exists between work and personal life.

State, et al. (2019) found that among a sample of 126 tourism workers in the Romanian market, interviewed face-to-face, 63% of them experience stress on different scales, which affects their balance between personal and professional matters and even creates health issues such as hypertension or cardiac diseases diagnosed for 13.5% of the respondents. However, despite the fact that stress has become increasingly concerning for the nowadays labour providers, Țuclea, et al. (2017) assumes that Romanian employees are good evaluators of their WLB and adaptable in their professional lives, preventing harmful issues such as burnout from happening. The following chapter tests the ideas discovered through the literature review by developing a quantitative research upon employees within Romania.

3. Research on Work-Life Balance

The following chapter presents the methodology of the study, along with the results of the quantitative research, discovering the Romanian employees' opinions regarding the subject and close to the end of the chapter discussing the limitations of the study. The research will focus on the outcomes and the consequences of a balanced or imbalanced Work-Life Balance, along with a survival analysis to test how long it will take until an employee will deliver its resignation based on the work-life conditions at his or her job.

3.1 Methodology

This paper aims to go beyond the subject and discover what the Romanian employees think about the primary factors that could lead to a balanced or imbalanced connection between work and personal life, along with the outcomes and consequences of those inputs. Along with these ideas, a survival analysis consolidates the research in order to understand if the factors that influence WLB affect the employees' decision to deliver their resignation to their organizations. To attain the purpose of this study, three main objectives were established:

- O1. Analysis of the factors of influence for work-life balance
- O2. Analysis of the outcomes and consequences of work-life balance
- O3. Analysis of the employees resistance based on the work-life balance of a company

This study is based on a quantitative research that uses the questionnaire as a tool and the sample being Romanian employees, no matter the industry they work in. The questionnaire, which is also represented in *Table 1* in the Annexes section, was developed in English for the purpose of this study and was distributed online through social media platforms, between 18th of December 2023 and 18th of March 2024, gathering an amount of 98 respondents. Continuing with the research, the following section presents the results of the study and the limitations that might lead to future improvement of the study.

4. Results of the research – Employees' perspectives upon the subject

After considering the ideas extracted from the literature regarding what Work-Life Balance really is, what are the factors that might influence it and what are the outcomes and consequences, quantitative research was developed in order to understand the Romanian population's opinions regarding the subject. The sample of this research was composed of 98 respondents, all from the Romanian territory. The majority of the respondents were women and only 38% being men. As Süß and Sayah (2013) discovered while researching the subject, the young generations are more interested in having a balanced work-life. Therefore, more than 42% of the respondents of the survey are between 20 and 30 years old, followed by 32% being from 31 to 40 years old. For this research, people from 18 up until 50 years old participated to this survey, which shows that the people over 50, that are closer to retiring, do not quite care about their satisfaction level regarding work-life balance or are not quite used with this subject.

In what regards the programs that the organizations use in order to satisfy the employees' needs between work and life, *Figure 1* shows the four most important chosen programs: *flexibility, employee health & wellness programs, maternity leave and part-time work*. As seen also in the literature, the flexibility is very popular among Romanian population, especially for young generations due to the fact that allows people to solve several and important problems while still working, idea that is also confirmed through the part-time work as another preferred opportunity for Work-Life Balance programs. Either if organizations allow their employees to work from home or offer them the possibility to begin their working hours before or after the program, the employees appreciate the ability to have this flexible time and avoid the stress and

the pressure of solving also other problems during the scheduled working time. Moreover, since the majority of respondents are women, having maternity / paternity leave is very important for the employees, because having a certain budget and being in the same time closer to their kids is very important for a healthy lifestyle and a happy family. Last, but not least, by having opportunities to apply for health and wellness programs, the individuals work upon their strength, fact that could increase their performance at work and in the same time help the organizations deliver a more qualitative product or service.

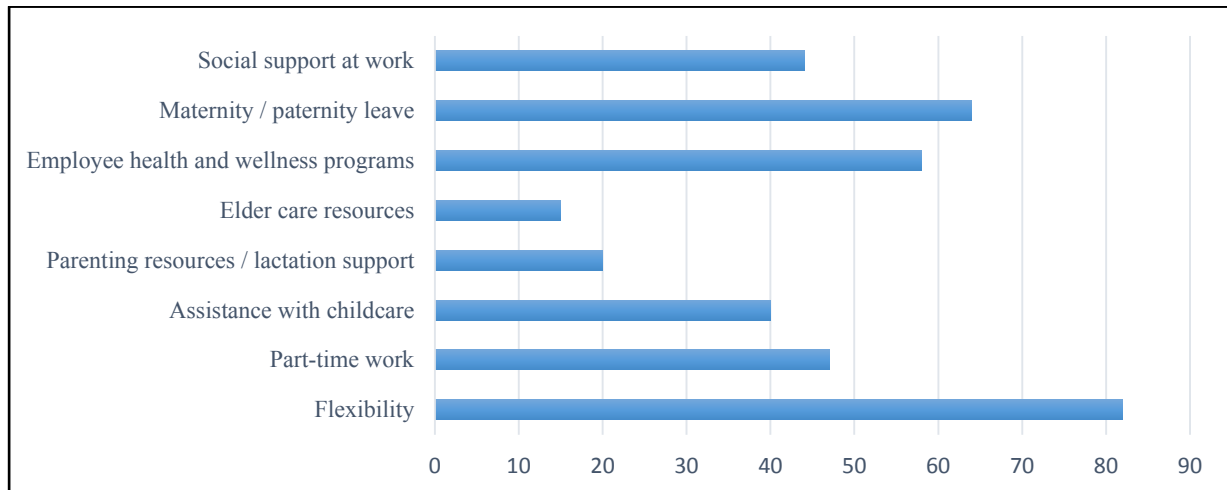


Fig. 1. The most important organizational programs that support work-life balance

Source: Authors' research

In the literature, there are a lot of factors that could influence the equilibrium between work and private life. Out of the provided factors extracted from the scientific articles, the most important ones that the respondents considered to have the highest influence on WLB were the *stress issues, the access to technology* and *to be offered a proper training*. In this context, the stress is a very important issue in an employee's life because it could affect his or her feeling, the performance and the overall view of the job. Although the access to technology could be either an advantage or a disadvantage for the employee, the majority of people treats this aspect with very important, maybe because the young generations is more used to technology and is in one way or the other dependent on it. If the employees are offered a proper training, they could better perform at the job, which will lead in a better efficiency of the work, no stressful situations and a healthier life.

Since the connection between work and life could be balanced or imbalanced, this research focused on both positive and negative influences of this concept, along with their outcomes and consequences, in order to attain the purpose of this study and better understand the subject. Therefore, *Figure 2* shows the most important outcomes that the respondents find to be of great satisfaction, if accomplished: *life and job satisfaction and career development and success*. In order to have an equilibrium between work and private life, individuals desire life and job satisfaction, because when there is a constant peaceful environment, there is a greater satisfaction of the overall experience. Moreover, when the boundaries between these two areas are respected, a healthy lifestyle is implemented, the career development increases, and the level of fulfillment is satisfied. Other outcomes presented in the analysis are quite close to each other, idea that shows how a balanced Work-Life could bring so many powerful outcomes to an individuals' life.

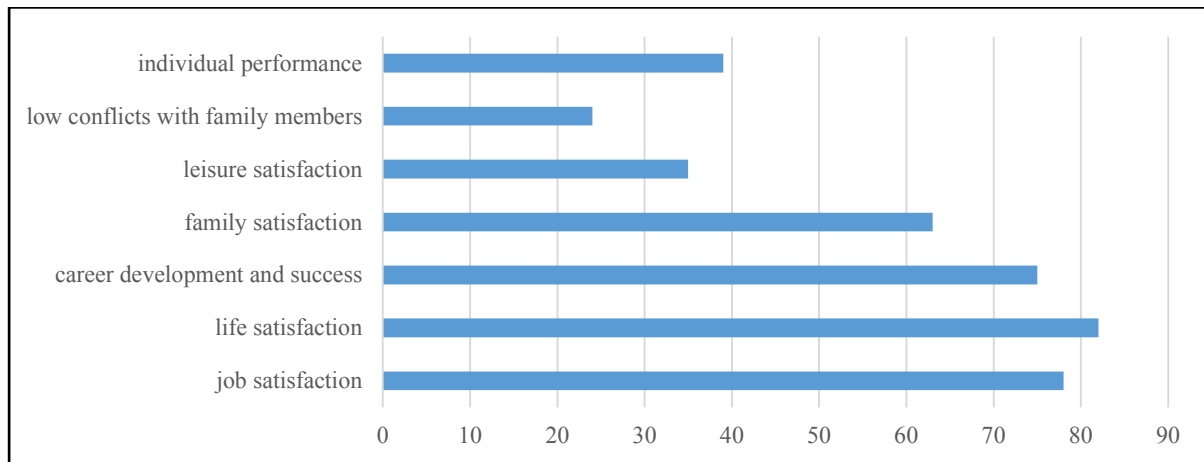


Fig. 2. Most important outcomes of a Balanced Work-Life

Source: Authors' research

In contrast to a Balanced Work-Life, the respondents that have participated in this study find that there could be several serious consequences of a disrupted WLB. *Figure 3* shows, in respondents' view, what results could exist when talking about negative interference between private life and work life. Hence, the most prominent effect is the *burnout*. As Maslach and Leiter (2016) explain in their paper, the burnout is defined by feelings of continuous exhaustion combined with strong negativity that stops the individual from being proactive and having a good level of satisfaction in their lives. Along with the burnout, which is quite a new concept also, the *stress and fatigue* work their way into the respondents' top most important consequences of an imbalanced WLB. These two health issues, along with an overall *poor health* represent for Romanian individuals very important problems that might be the cause of an unsatisfied relationship with their jobs or their families. Therefore, companies should try to pay attention to WLB and create a safe and healthy environment for their employees, in order to avoid reaching a stressful life and have predominantly poor health amongst their employees.

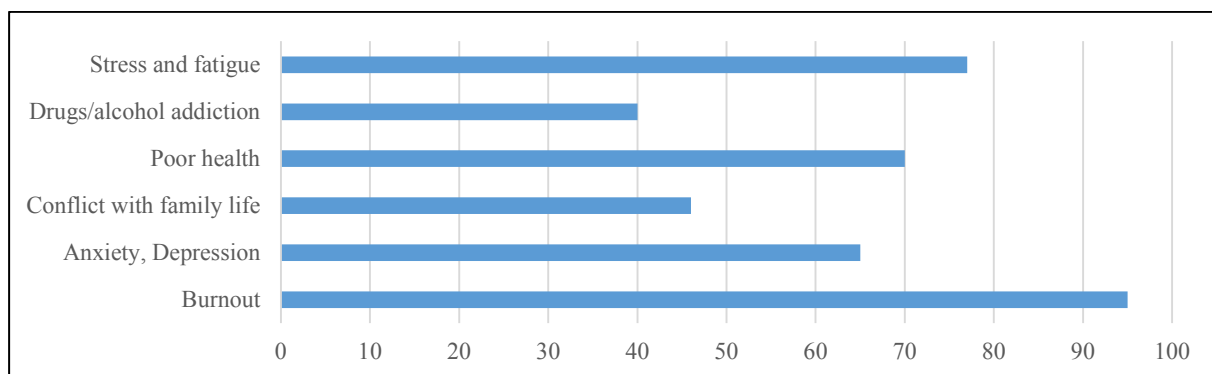


Fig. 3. Most important consequences of an Imbalanced Work-Life

Source: Authors' research

As an example of an activity that could either positively or negatively influence an individual's Work-Life Balance, working during the days-off or over the scheduled work-time could affect the level of satisfaction of an employee. Therefore, for this case study a sample of 98 respondents was considered in answering questions regarding their current job. Taking into account that the respondents that have participated in this section of questions are currently working in several industries such as tourism, transportation, marketing, IT, Finance, Oil & Gas, Banking and many others, most of them have junior, senior positions or management positions, the other part being self-employed.

Figure 4 shows the respondents' reasons why they chose to work during their free time, either if it is their own free will or they are pressured by their organizations. Out of these participants, 32% of those that worked overtime wanted to earn more money. This idea shows that the salaries they have are not quite satisfying and the only reason for them to work in their free time is to add more to their budget. In addition to this category, 26% of the participants are very conscious and they just wanted to finish what they needed to do, without any obligations or pressures from the organization.

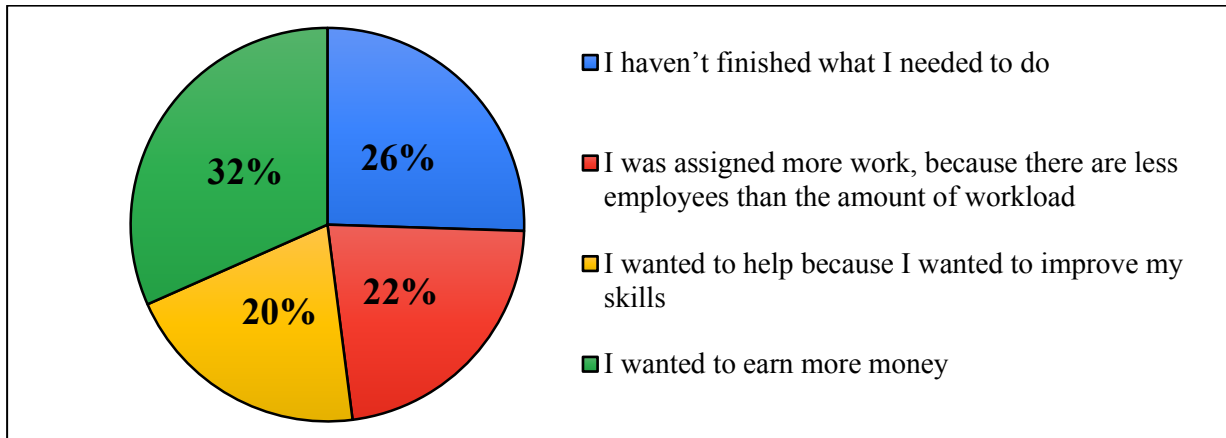


Fig. 4. Reasons for working during days-off

Source: Authors' research

Since most of the participants are at the beginning of their professional careers, explains the fact that more than 60% of the participants are working during their days off because they are consolidating their knowledge and they desire more money for a continuous and positive attitude both in personal and professional life.

Therefore, this example of activity could positively affect the WLB of an individual, because it could make him or her more responsible for his or her actions, while maintaining a proactive attitude towards a job performance. Consequently, this activity could negatively impact an employee's WLB, when the organizations use it to profit from their capacity and work more than they should, fact that could lead to health issues, burnout and many other problems.

To attain the last objective of the study, a survival analysis was developed using a Statistical online tool named DataTab. Using this survival analysis and the chi-square test, two theories are tested as follows:

H₀: The factors regarding Work-Life Balance, specifically amount of workload, level of flexibility and level of satisfaction, have no significant influence over the employees' resistance in a company.

H₁: The factors regarding Work-Life Balance, specifically amount of workload, level of flexibility and level of satisfaction, have a significant influence over the employees' resistance in a company.

To develop this analysis, the last job experience of the respondents was analyzed. Therefore, the results using the online tool show that the p-value is less than 0.05, which shows that the variables are statistically significant to the study. Moreover, the calculated chi square value is 20.33, which is higher than the critical value (7.815), which shows that the factors regarding the WLB have a significant influence over the employees' resistance in that company they used to work for and the null hypothesis should be rejected. This survival analysis was developed through Cox Proportional Hazard Model, which is represented in Figure 5 using the online tool.

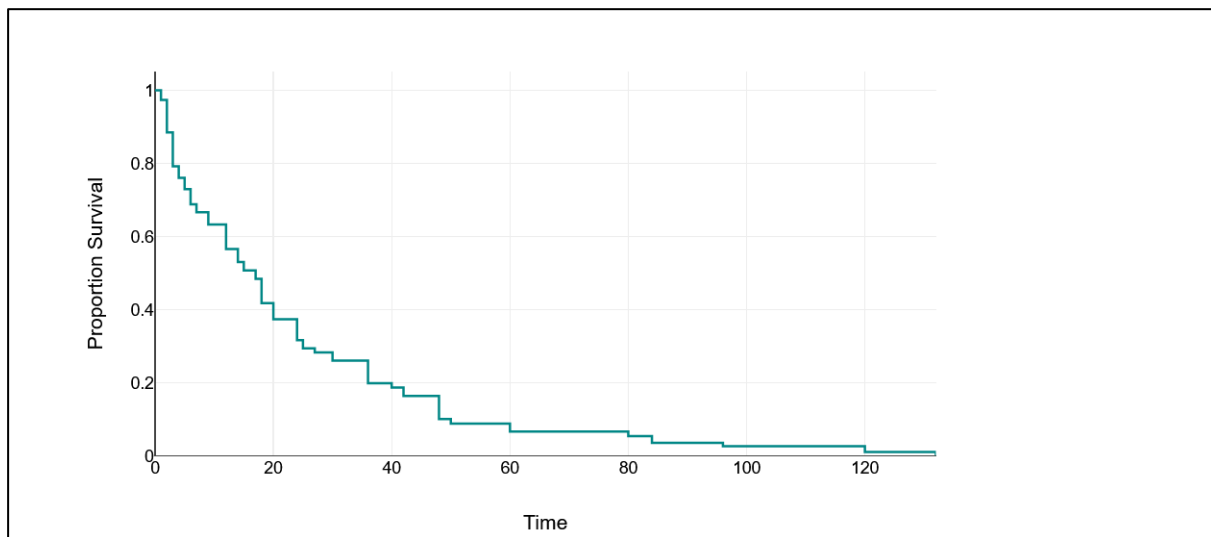


Fig. 5. Cox Proportional Hazard Model

Source: Authors' research data developed through online tool

When analyzing the p-value of each factor influencing the employees' resistance in a company, we can understand the most relevant factor that is considered by the employees when they decide if they want to continue working in a company or not is the level of flexibility (p-value is lower than 0.05) that the company is offering. The other two factors, specifically the amount of workload and the level of satisfaction do not influence considerably the employees' decision upon resignation (recorded p-values of 0.127, respectively 0.41).

Having this in mind, the analysis showed that, in this context, the factors influencing the WLB such as the amount of workload, the flexibility offered by the organization and the satisfaction of the employee do influence in one way or another the time the employee spends within an organization until the moment he or she resigns.

5. Limitations and future directions

While developing this study and researching about Work-Life Balance, this paper has encountered a series of limitations that do not represent weaknesses, but rather opportunities for future development of the research. The first limitation of the study was represented by the limited sample size of this research, fact that also brought difficulties in the development of the survival analysis. In future studies, a larger sample and a more varied one could be adopted, along with in-depth research on the type of analysis that could better test the employees' resistance in a company.

Moreover, researching the factors, outcomes and consequences of the WLB on several types of industries could be an opportunity to discover differences between the types of work an individual is developing. This way, a better study could bring a significant difference for both companies and their employees, to help them create a safe and peaceful environment.

6. Conclusions

To sum up, Work-Life Balance is a very new and important concept, which needs to be closely studied by both organizations and employees, because there are several factors that could influence the performance of the organization and the feelings of the employee in a negative or a positive manner. This paper aims to highlight ideas about what are the current generations looking for when discussing about the connection between private life and work

life, along with what are their preferences regarding the programs the organizations might implement in order to create a better environment for its employees, which will afterwards lead to a better performance of the company.

Insisting on flexibility programs, wellness program or maternity leave opportunity could help organizations prioritize their employees and make them feel understood since the majority of the study's respondents prefer these programs. Moreover, by applying the findings of this research companies could help individual accomplish job and life satisfaction, along with career development and success. If these such programs are not implemented, an imbalanced work-life style will persist and could lead to burnout, poor health and other illnesses such as stress and fatigue.

Finally, by improving the survival analysis and enlarge the sample used in this research, future studies could discover what are the individuals' factors of influence regarding work-life balance, when discussing about working period in an organization, until the moment of resignation. This way, companies could better understand what to prioritize and create a better work environment for their employees, which reflects further on in their personal lives.

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Annexes

The questionnaire was developed in English, due to the project's requirements.

Table 1

Structure of the questionnaire

<p>1. What is the organizational program that supports work-life balance that you consider the most important one? (multiple choice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Flexibility b. Part-time work c. Assistance with childcare d. Parenting resources / lactation support e. Elder care resources f. Employee health and wellness programs g. Maternity / paternity leave h. Social support at work <p>2. On a scale from 1 to 5, how important do you think are the following factors for the work-life balance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Social Support from family b. Organizational Programs c. Stress Issues d. Access to technology e. Work overload f. Family issues g. Social networking h. Managerial and team support i. Individual responsibilities j. Offering the proper training <p>3. In case of a BALANCED work-life, what are the most important outcomes? (multiple choice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. job satisfaction b. life satisfaction c. career development and success d. family satisfaction e. leisure satisfaction f. low conflicts with family members g. individual performance <p>4. In case of an IMBALANCED work-life, what are the most severe consequences? (multiple choice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Burnout b. Anxiety, Depression c. Conflict with family life d. Poor health e. Drugs/alcohol addiction f. Stress and fatigue <p>Current job section</p> <p>5. What job position do you currently have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Intern b. Junior c. Senior d. Manager e. Self-employed <p>6. How long have you been working on this position? (months) (OPEN Q)</p> <p>7. In what domain/industry do you work on? (OPEN Q)</p> <p>8. Have you ever worked during your days off (free time/ holidays)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No <p>9. What was or would be the reason to work in your day off (free time/ holiday)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I haven't finished what I needed to do b. I was assigned more work, because there are less employees than the amount of workload c. I wanted to help because I wanted to improve my skills d. I wanted to earn more money <p>10. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 - very dissatisfied; 5 – very satisfied), how satisfied you are with your work-life balance?</p>

Last job section

11. How long did you work at your last job (months)?
12. How much was the workload at your last job?
 - a. Very low
 - b. Low
 - c. Medium
 - d. High
 - e. Very high
13. On a scale from 1 - 5 (1 - very low flexibility; 5 - very high flexibility), how flexible was the last job?
14. On a scale from 1 to 5, how satisfied you were at your last job, highlighting the work-life balance in the company?

Demographic section

15. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Prefer not to say
16. How old are you?
 - a. < 20 years old
 - b. 20 – 30 years old
 - c. 31 – 40 years old
 - d. 41 – 50 years old
 - e. > 50 years old