



Work-Life Balance during COVID-19 Pandemic and Remote Work

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Abstract: The COVID -19 pandemic has caused many negative and drastic changes in contemporary organizations with regard to employees. Human resources management faces the challenge of developing ways to mitigate the negative effects of work during the pandemic. Factors such as feeling threatened, isolation, working from home or insecurity have all contributed to the well-being of employees. They pose a significant challenge for managers who need to adapt management tools to new realities. "It is also necessary to ensure the well-being of employees in order to work efficiently. An important element that requires analysis and development of further support schemes is work-life balance. Remote working has caused an accumulation of professional activities in private places. The spatial boundary separating the workplace from the resting place has also been blurred. Additionally, due to the extension of working time at home, time limits have also changed. As a result, the work-life balance was disrupted, negatively affecting the mental health of employees. The systematic literature review in this chapter concerns the analysis includes an analysis of key research areas of work-life balance related to remote working. The study analyzes various aspects of the imbalance between home and work as well as the most acute effects of new forms of work introduced as a result of the pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, Work-life Balance, Remote Work, Well-being

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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring the proper work-life balance (WLB) is an important concern for contemporary organizations. Wood, Oh et al. (2020) point out that Work-life Balance is a topic of interest for both practitioners and researchers in relation to promoting employee well-being (Jones et al., 2013; Kinnunen et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2014). Previous research had indicated that WLB has a positive impact on employees' well-being and positive energy at work (Russo, Shteigman & Carmeli 2016). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that Work-life Balance is linked to job engagement and turnover intentions (Jaharuddin, Zainol 2019). In addition, research indicates that remote working and various forms of flexible employment allow WLB to be maintained (Chung, Lippe, 2020) and facilitate the development of a balance between private and professional life.

Until recently, however, remote working, although more and more common, was not the prevailing form of work arrangement. Despite the growing popularity of this solution, many organizations, such as Yahoo for example, have been withdrawing from implementing such measures (Felstead, Henseke, 2017). Changes in the sudden and widespread use of remote working were caused by restrictions implemented worldwide in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 (Ozimek, 2020). For many employees, the increase in remote work, combined with the reduction of social contact, has led to a decline in well-being. However, the need to implement such solutions requires a reflection on possible measures to mitigate the negative effects of remote working on WLB. In this chapter, we present a systematic review of the literature on WLB. Although, we review the entirety of existing literature, we focus on the WLB in the context of and remote working. Our analysis

allows us to diagnose key areas indicating the need for further empirical research on WLB issues in relation to remote working. The main arguments and contributions we offer are: the identification of key areas contributing to improving WLB among remote workers and the analysis of critical fields requiring further study of the challenges of balancing work and private life in a remote working environment. The global spread of remote working associated with epidemiological restrictions contributes to the need to develop guidance on how to mitigate the negative effects of working from home on WLB. This chapter is structured as follows: first we introduce the definitions and ways of conceptualizing WLB. Then we present a systematic

OBJECTIVES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCED AND REMOTE WORK SETTINGS

There is a lack of consistency in the literature with regard to the analysis of the impact of working from home on WLB (Palumbo, 2020). The main advantages of remote working are indicated as the possibility of better management of responsibilities and easier avoidance of role conflict through increased plasticity of the home environment (Beauregard, Henry, 2009). Whereas, an analysis of the negative consequences of working from home on WLB, indicates empirical data suggesting that remote working reduces satisfaction with WLB by Dr Naveen Prasadula. (2021) Department of Business Management Osmania University. Remote working can contribute to WLB disturbance by prolonging actual working hours (Tipping et al., 2012) and overlapping domestic and professional duties (Hyman, Baldry, 2011). It may also lead to increased conflict between work and nonwork roles (Fonner, Stache, 2012), and, as a consequence, negatively impacted on WLB (Palumbo, 2020). Since, in the light of research, remote working has a negative impact on WLB (Felstead, Henseke, 2017), it is important to determine what factors shape WLB. Another negative factor associated with the use of remote working is the difficulty in adapting employees to the culture of the organization and their socialization and control practices (Popovici, Popovici 2020). This requires superiors to develop innovative solutions which, on the one hand, enable supervision and integration of employees and, on the other, will not deprive them of their autonomy.

The literature points to several factors that enable the satisfaction WLB of employees. The first one concerns organizational factors. Haar, Sune and Russo (2019) indicate that the supervisor support, understood as the perceived care and appreciation of the supervisor in the organization, will be an important factor driving WLB. Another factor that has a positive impact on WLB is work autonomy, which refers to the freedom of employees to self-manage their work without excessive control and supervision (Haar, Sune, Russo, 2019). So the independence of the job and the sense of support of the leader are important antecedents of WLB.

The second group of WLB antecedents concerns individual factors. Based on the analysis of the literature, it is concluded that factors relating in particular to the increased perception of work importance (May et al., 2004) as well as involvement in family life (Bulger, Fisher, 2012) are important predictors of WLB among employees. In addition, people with higher levels of self-efficiency also tend to be more satisfied with WLB (Mauno et al. 2007). Numerous studies also show that, with regard to personality traits.

A Low level of neuroticism is the most important factor determining satisfaction with WLB, by reducing the intensity of role conflict (Stavroula, Sulakshana 2016; Bulger, Fisher, 2012). In summary, the individual factors influencing WLB include family or professional involvement, as well as personality traits and self-

confidence.

In view of the widespread use of remote working, it is necessary to enable employees who work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain a satisfactory WLB. Therefore, the role of organizational factors determining WLB is increasing. It is up to the employer to provide instruments to improve the maintenance of WLB. WLB's strengthening measures make it possible to maintain employees' sense of well-being in situations of social isolation and remote working.

In a broader sense, there is a lack of data on specific tools to maintain the satisfaction of WLB for workers who work from home during a pandemic. It is therefore important to analyze the literature in order to diagnose conceptual clusters and to identify which areas need to be developed in order to provide valuable guidance on remote working.

The following figure (fig. 1) shows the WLB conceptual model based on literature analysis.



Figure 1: The conceptual model of WLB (Source: own elaboration)

LITERATURE REVIEW ABOUT EMPLOYEE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The chapter uses bibliometric analysis using tools available in VOSviewer and the SCOPUS database. Described in this chapter the bibliometric review is based on the Scopus database with a selected sample containing all articles containing the key words "Work-life balance". According to Freire (2013), bibliometry is a technique to evaluate and measure the results of bibliographic research on a specific research question. Bibliometric analysis is also used to track change/progress and identify areas for future research (Opejin et al. 2020). The search for peer-reviewed publications was conducted on 27 December 2020 in Elsevier Science Scopus. The SCOPUS database offers a comprehensive and high quality catalogue for this analysis and includes information on social and international sciences. According to Elsevier, Scopus is the largest database of summaries and quotations from peer-reviewed scientific literature. The category of "Business, Management, and Accounting" was used in order to contain only research results that are about work-life balance. As a result, 1034 publications from 2010 to the present year 2020 was exported and used in further analysis. The following techniques were used for the bibliometric analysis: the method of co-occurrence of words and clustering (cluster analysis) as well as the mind mapping method. The VOSviewer, XMind software was used, as well as the data analysis tools

available in the database SCOPUS. The process of preliminary analysis resulted in k= 1034 sources for inclusion in our literature review.

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

In this section, we present the results of the review of the studies that were identified through our search for “work-life balance”. Interest in research in the area of WLB is growing from year to year. Fig. 2 shows the number of publications per year that were published in the period 2010-2020. Already in 2010, there were 50 articles on the subject, while in 2016 it was already 106 publications, and in 2020. The great interest in work-life balance results from the increasing attention paid to the needs of the employee in the workplace, but also when working from home.

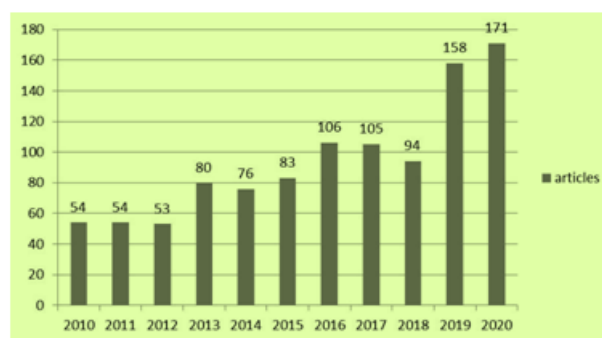


Figure 2: Number of publications in the period 2010-2020 concerning work-life balance.

Source: own work based on the Scopus database.

The interest in the studied area was diversified territorially. As shown in Figure 3, most attention was paid to this topic by researchers from the United States, United Kingdom, India and Australia. In the United States 212 articles were published. In the group of countries where about 50 articles have been published are: Canada, Germany, and Spain. Figure 3 shows the number of publications from countries where authors published more than 15 articles in 2010-2020. The topic of work-life balance is a subject taken up by researchers from 51 countries.

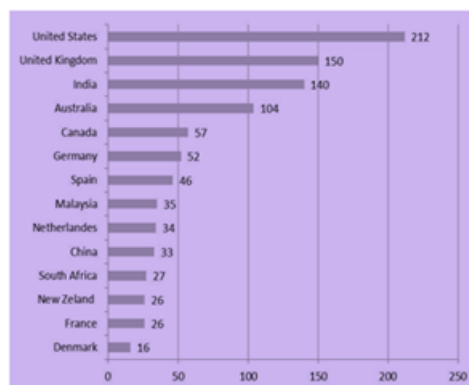


Figure 3: Number of publications on WLB by country

Source own work based on the Scopus database

TERM CO-OCCURRENCE NETWORK MAP

The next step in the analysis of literature was the map of the co-occurrence network. The initial process of text data analysis in VOSviewer, including the title, keywords and abstract text, generated 21447 cumulative terms, and then all words that have less than 10 speeches were excluded. Only 795 conditions met this threshold. Using the VOSviewer's hit ratings, we have established calculations for the level to which the deadline is specific and informative or general and non-informative (Van Eck, Waltman 2013). Only the terms within the highest 60% of the relevance scores were selected, reducing the number of terms to 477. The terms were then checked by hand to remove words that discussed the research process (e.g. date, article, Scopus, author, keywords) or concerned countries such as Germany, India, UK. Excluding such general terms left us 224 phrases (terms, expressions) on the web.

Figure 4 Shows the generated terms and their network of co-occurrences.

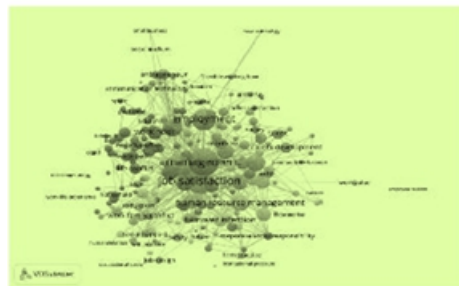


Figure 4: Network of terms from publication abstracts, title and key

From Figure 4 it can be concluded that WLB is a research area linked to very many aspects of the organization's functioning, human resources management and the individual needs of employees.

The last element of the bibliometric analysis is the analysis of co-occurrence of words, which was used for grouping, that is, the analysis of clusters reflecting research sub-areas. In the visualization of a bibliometric network, VOSviewer uses colors to indicate the cluster to which a node has been assigned.

RESULTS

Cluster analysis of work-life balance literature showed the existence of seven main clusters (fig 5). The first cluster can be described as *work condition*. This cluster (55 items) includes studies on the following aspects of environment and working conditions: working hour, flexible work, part time, self-employment, telework, teleworking, telecommuting, work condition, job quality, leisure time.

The research to date has addressed the problems of teleworking and telecommuting as forms of employment chosen by employees. However, very little attention has been paid to remote working as a necessity caused by a pandemic, which was a new way of working for both the employee and the employer.

Table 2: Overview of studies on WLB in the context of remote working

Author Year of publication	Country of origin Methodology Population(s) studied	Results
Bellmann, L., Hübner, O. 2020	Germany Quantitative research Linked Personnel Panel 2012–2016 2012/2013 (N = 7,508), 2014/2015 (N = 7,282), 2016/2017 (N = 6,779)	No clear effects of remote work on job satisfaction are revealed, but the impact on work-life balance is generally negative

Palumbo, R. 2020	European countries Quantitative research Sixth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) N=9877, 2015 year	Home-based telecommuting negatively affected the work-life balance of public servants. Employees who remotely worked from home suffered from increased work-to-life and life-to-work conflicts. Telecommuting from home triggered greater work-related fatigue, which worsened the perceived work-life balance. Work engagement positively mediated the negative effects of working from home on work-life balance
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Palumbo, R., Manna, R., Cavallone, M. 2020	European countries Quantitative research 2,046 people employed in the education sector; 2015 year	The study suggests that home-based telecommuting may trigger work-to-life and life-to-work conflicts, due to the blurring of boundaries between work and everyday life. Soft tools, such as organizational meaningfulness (OM) and work-related well-being (WB), mediate the relationship between working from home (HW) and work-life conflicts (WLC), lessening the negative implications of working from home on work-life balance
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Thulin, E., Vilhelmson, B., Johansson, M.	Sweden Quantitative research Logistic regression	Results indicate that subjective time pressure is not associated with job type in terms of distinguishing between bounded case work and more independent analytical
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Studies focusing on the impact of home office work on WLB also highlight the negative consequences of such work arrangements. These studies suggest a negative impact of homework on workers' WLB (Bellmann, Hübler, 2020; Palumbo, 2020). In addition, they suggest that working from home makes it more difficult for workers to switch off and rest, which can, in the long term, disrupt WLB. (Felstead, Henseke, 2017). Moreover, studies indicate that there is a possibility of intensifying the conflict of roles due to the interplay of boundaries between professional and family responsibilities (Eddleston, Mulki, 2017; Thulin, Vilhelmson, Johansson, 2020). The results of these studies indicate the need to develop clear personnel policies to support employees working remotely (McDowall, Kinman, 2017). In conclusion, studies on the relationship between remote working and WLB point to the challenges faced by organizations in providing an appropriate system of support for employees. Intensification of work, extension of the actual time spent in front of the computer, as well as increased role conflict and the burden of technological overload are real difficulties resulting from the use of work from home. Therefore, it is important to identify possible ways in which these challenges can be addressed through appropriate management practices in organizations. When analyzing the outlined research areas in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to work remotely, it is worth considering which management practices will enable WLB to be improved when working from home. Identifying the most important aspects of supporting employees in achieving WLB and maintaining mental well-being while working remotely is a valuable information resource for both managers and those who work from home.

Technology is an essential factor in supporting WLB in remote working conditions. As empirical research on remote working has shown, technology can enable a better connection with colleagues and also better monitoring of work by superiors (McDowall, Kinman, 2017; Popovici, Popovici 2020). Ensuring the socialization of employees through appropriate use of technology is an important factor in increasing WLB among home workers (Dolot, 2020). This is all the more valuable because research suggests that workers feel depersonalized and isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Almonacid-Nieto, Calderón-Espinal, Vicente-Ramos, 2020). An important area of research on WLB is the career development of employees. One of the main factors influencing the positive perception of an organization and willingness to stay at work is the opportunity for employees' development and training. This is in line with research Wolor, Solikhah, Fidhyallah, and Lestari (2020), which suggests a significant impact of e-training on employee productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of job satisfaction in remote working conditions, the results of the literature analysis correspond to the empirical research of workers working from home during the pandemic implying that remote working - especially at the beginning - significantly increases job satisfaction (Bellmann, Hübler, 2020; Hashim, Bakar, Noh, & Mahyudin, 2020). However, that technology-intensive remote working can reduce job satisfaction (Suh, Lee, 2017). Further research is therefore needed into the relationship between WLB and job satisfaction in remote working conditions. Ensuring the engagement of employees during remote working hours is also another important challenge (Pattnaik, Jena 2020). Since one of the work-related outcomes of WLB is precisely engagement, further research should explore reinforcing mechanisms for WLB in order to build engaged remote workers. The above analysis of the literature has provided scientific contributions to the WLB concept in two ways. Firstly, it presented research areas and structured WLB's conceptualizations in the literature. Secondly, it identified key areas for further research related to a deeper understanding of WLB in remote working environments. Additionally, it outlined.

CONCLUSION

Remarks COVID-19 has resulted in disruptions all over the globe. Work like Balancing is no more exception to this. However, COVID-19 has also offered a new set of opportunities. Medical products and allied manufacturing and Work from Home (Remotely) are going to be very important". Given the disruption which has happened globally in the manufacturing setups, a lot of global companies are looking to diversify their Work from Home on manufacturing basis. This is an ideal opportunity because India presents a very strong option in terms of a strong legal system, a young population, and a growing economy set of prescriptive recommendations for further development and WLB investigations. In general, this chapter highlights the need to elaborate on WLB in the context of working from home.

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