EMPLOYEES' WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IN SERBIA

Nemanja Berber, Agneš Slavić, Dimitrije Gašić

University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Economics in Subotica, Serbia

Abstract: Work plays a very important role in the lives of people, companies, and society, in general. Individuals value work for the income it provides, but also because it contributes to self-esteem and personal happiness that people feel when they put their competencies to work. Work is important from the point of individual well-being, but it also forms the cornerstone of economic and social development. However, as a very common phenomenon, not only in our country, but in other countries, too, is that work can prevail in the workers family and private life. Many employees may feel unable to make an adequate balance between their work and private life. Because of this, frustration often arises among them as they are aware that they do not spend enough time with their family, or are neglecting their personal needs. In the same time, families are facing with reduced functionality and alienation of family members. The main aim of this paper is to investigate the level of work-life balance in Serbia, and its relation to job stress. The methodology of the research consists of theoretical and empirical analysis. Theoretical research is based on a literature review, while the empirical research is based on the answers of 291 employees from different organizations in Serbia. The data were collected in October 2023. The analysis is performed by implementing PLS-SEM to investigate the relations between work-life balance and job stress, and by descriptive statistics to investigate the level of work-life balance in Serbia.

Keywords: Work-life balance, human resources, stress, job satisfaction, Serbia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) is one of the most investigated variables in contemporary management and psychological research and theory. Researchers have been performing different investigations on the relation between WLB and other human resources (HR) and organizational practices and employee attitudes, such as flexible working arrangements (Hayman, 2009; Chung et al., 2020); job satisfaction, and job stress (Haar et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2020; Arulodss et al., 2021; Sharma & Tiwari, 2023); turnover intentions and turnover (Thakur & Bhatnagar, 2017; Giauquve et al., 2019; Maharani & Tamara, 2024), and many others. Research has also demonstrated that work-life balance plays an important role in individual's well-being, such as health satisfaction, family satisfaction, and overall life satisfaction (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). WLB is defined as “the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s
current life priorities” (p. 326). It is an important aspect that many employees take into account when they are thinking about their current and future roles and positions in the company. It is not just about the time they spend on the job, but also the level of energy, willingness, and abilities that they can use for their private lives.

The popularity of WLB has increased due to several reasons. Work plays a very important role in the lives of people, companies, and society in general. Individuals work for the income it provides, but also because it contributes to their self-esteem and personal happiness when they put their competencies to work. It is important from the point of view of individual well-being, but it also forms the cornerstone of economic and social development. However, what is a very common phenomenon, both in our country and in other countries, is that work can prevail in the family and private life. Many employees can feel unable to make an adequate balance between work and private life as they need to work too much to earn a larger amount of money, to reach a higher level in the management of a company, or because work tasks are too complex or challenging so they need to commit more time and energy to solve them. Because of this, frustration often arises as people are aware that they do not spend enough time with their family, or they neglect their personal needs. On the other hand, reduced functionality and alienation of members occur in the family, too. WLB has numerous advantages. It can enhance employees’ job and life satisfaction, commitment, and engagement, but also reduce stress and burnout, and especially turnover. People can feel a higher quality of their lives. “Employees with WLB intellect their lives are pleased both inside and outside of career and they get to know least conflict struggle among work and non-work roles. From a business perspective, encouraging WLB may fascinate recruits, aid lessen turnover and absenteeism, and upsurge the probabilities of workers enthusiastically involved in “pro-social” behaviors that rise beyond and away from their job necessities” (Nadhiya & Sareena Umma, 2022, p. 37).

The main aim of this paper is to investigate the level of work-life balance in Serbia, and its relation to job stress. The methodology of the research consists of theoretical and empirical analysis. Theoretical research is based on a literature review, while the empirical research is based on a sample of 291 employees from organizations in Serbia. The data were collected in October 2023. The analysis is performed by implementing PLS-SEM to investigate the relations between work-life balance and job stress, and by descriptive statistics to investigate the level of work-life balance in Serbia.

The paper consists of five sections. The introduction is presented in section one. Section two is related to the theoretical background, explaining the problem of work-life balance and the development of hypotheses. The third section represents the methodology of the research, presenting the sample, procedures, data collection, and questionnaire. The fourth section are results of the data analysis, accompanied by a discussion, while the fifth section consists of conclusions, and theoretical and practical implications of the research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Some of the factors that have influenced the growing need for work-life balance are (Rashmi & Kataria, 2022, p. 1028):

(1) profound changes in the labor market,
(2) modification of gender roles,
(3) more contribution of women in the labor force,
(4) augmented prevalence of dual-earner couples,
(5) single parents in the workforce,
(6) longer working hours,
(7) 24/7 communication technology obscuring the lines between work and non-work, (8) increasing desire for the quality of life.

WLB is the harmony between two completely different roles that an individual performs and is becoming more and more popular in modern conditions. Work-life balance involves two key dimensions, a) role engagement in work and nonwork life and b) minimal conflict between work and nonwork roles (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). The balance is achieved when the employee is equally engaged in and satisfied with his work and family roles. WLB incorporates the following three mechanisms: time balance (equal time devoted to work and family), involvement balance (equal involvement in work and family), and satisfaction balance (equal satisfaction with work and family) (Greenhaus et al., 2003, p. 510).

According to Sirgy and Lee (2018), work-life balance is achieved when “people are fully committed in their various social roles in work and nonwork life. Individuals with work-life balance engage in multiple roles, and experience satisfaction from multiple roles by effectively distributing time and effort across these roles in salient life domains. Individuals engaged in multiple life domains are likely to experience augmentation of power, prestige, resources, and emotional gratification from their multiple roles like role privileges, overall status security, resources for status enhancement, and enrichment of the personality and ego gratification” (p. 234). It is a matter of establishing a balance between the work activity and the personal life of the workers, to avoid the conflict of roles (Lamane-Harim et al., 2023), as the interference between work and personal life causes difficulties to individuals as a result of pressures between both roles. Figure 1 represents an integrative framework for the research of WLB.

Figure 1. An Integrative Framework of Work-Life Balance (Sirgy & Lee, 2018, p. 233)

Without further explanation of the concept of WLB, the question concerning the effects of WLB on employees and organizations we find more important for this paper. The assessment of the key consequences of work-life balance focused on health, attitudes, and work outcomes in both the work and non-work domains (mainly in the family). These family and business outcomes include affective conditions, such as dissatisfaction and anxiety, but also behavioral outcomes, such as absenteeism, tardiness, and poor performance (Brough et al., 2014, p. 2725).

A balance between work and personal life can result in higher productivity in an organization through increased individual performance of employees (Konrad & Mangel, 2000;
Bloom et al., 2009; Abioro et al., 2018). Balance between work and private life reduces the risk of stress, fatigue, and sickness and prevents better individual well-being.

The causes of the imbalance are various, there are many of them, and based on several previous research, it was determined that they can be described in the following way. Authors Brough et al. (2014) synthesized previous research findings and discussed the occurrence of both, work and family demands as key negative antecedents of work-life balance. More precisely, the perception of sufficient time to meet acute work and family demands is an important issue. Family demands are increased both by the volume of dependent obligations (taking care of children, elderly parents, seriously ill spouses, and other family members) and by specific acute situations that produce intense demands, such as the birth of a baby or sudden serious illnesses of spouses, parents or other members families, as the combination of reduced available time and increased work and family demands creates additional stress for many working parents. In cases of acute family demands, many employees report that where formal provisions for leave from work are available, such leave provision is usually insufficient to adequately respond to these additional family demands, thereby increasing levels of role stress and work-life imbalance (p. 2752).

In their review, authors Allen et al. (2000) described the existence of three groups of consequences of work-life balance (p. 280):
- work-related outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, turnover intentions, absenteeism, and performance);
- non-work outcomes (e.g., marital, family, and life satisfaction and family performance) and
- stress-related outcomes (e.g., psychological strain, burnout, and substance abuse).

Relations between work-life imbalance/conflict and psychological distress consistently identified a strong positive relationship: increased conflict was associated with increased psychological distress. The experience of strain influenced the levels of work-life conflict. Research has also shown that the relationship between work-life balance and employee turnover is generally stronger compared to the relationship between job satisfaction and balance. This strong association between work-life balance and turnover behavior is explained by the decision of chronically imbalanced employees to seek alternative employment with a more "family-friendly" employer (Brough et al., 2014, p. 2726). Sirgy and Lee (2018) proposed a synthesized view of the main antecedents and consequences of WLB for employees and organizations (Table 1).

Mladenović (2020) emphasizes that the introduction of programs for balancing between work and private life can have the following positive effects (benefits) for employees (p. 75):
- a better understanding of the importance of balance between work and private life,
- better control over business and private life,
- better connections and interpersonal relations at work and outside of work,
- better physical and mental health of employees,
- less stress at work,
- greater job satisfaction,
- higher productivity and commitment of employees,
- greater sense of job security i
- lower turnover.
Table 1. Antecedents and consequences of WLB (Sirgy & Lee, 2018, p. 236)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Predictors:</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antecedents:</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• job involvement</td>
<td>• high job performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• job importance</td>
<td>• high job satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• family involvement</td>
<td>• high organizational commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• conscientiousness</td>
<td>• high career development and success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• neuroticism</td>
<td>• low job malfunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• coping style</td>
<td>• low job burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• individualism</td>
<td>• low job alienation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• power distance</td>
<td>• low absenteeism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• masculinity</td>
<td>• low turnover intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uncertainty avoidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related outcomes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• high job performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• high job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
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<td>• high organizational commitment</td>
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<td>• low job malfunction</td>
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<td>• low job burnout</td>
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<td>• low job alienation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• low absenteeism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• low turnover intention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonwork-related outcomes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• high life satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• high marital satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• high family performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• high family satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• high parental satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• high leisure satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• high poor health condition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• low conflicts with family members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizational Predictors:

• job demand
• time pressure at work
• job autonomy
• role ambiguity
• scheduling flexibility
• flexible work arrangement
• part-time work
• assistance with childcare
• parenting resources/lactation support
• elder care resources
• employee health and wellness programs
• family-leave policies
• social support at work
• other services designed to assist employees manage their multiple roles

Stress-related outcomes:

• low emotional exhaustion
• low psychological distress
• low anxiety
• low irritability
• low hostility
• low hypertension
• low depression
• low affective parental distress
• low marital distress
• low illness symptoms
• low somatic complaints
• low blood pressure and cholesterol
• low alcohol abuse
• low cigarette consumption

Satisfied employees will manifest the following positive effects (benefits) for the organization:

- greater responsibility, commitment, and loyalty of employees,
- better teamwork and communication,
- less organizational stress,
- better morale,
- greater organizational productivity,
- less absenteeism and tardiness,
- less leaving the organization and a more stable structure of employees,
- greater retention of the best employees,
- better image of the organization,
- greater customer satisfaction and
- better business results (p. 75).
Based on the aforementioned, and the fact that job stress is commonly mentioned as a variable that is affected by work-life (in)balance, we decided to investigate the relationship between WLB and job stress in a sample of employees from Serbia.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

3.1. Sample

Data collection based on the created electronic questionnaire was carried out in October 2023, through the LinkedIn social network. All employees who responded to the questions were asked to declare that they had been living in Serbia at the time of data collection. After the data collection had been completed, it was determined that 316 responses had been collected. By analysing the database and removing incomplete answers, the final sample was reduced to 291 valid answers that were used in further analysis. To mitigate non-response bias, the authors took prior action to reduce non-responses, i.e. stressing anonymity and emphasizing academic sponsorship and survey importance (Berber & Gašić, 2024).

In the sample of 291 respondents, 51% of the respondents were male and 49% were female. The largest share of respondents was between the ages of 35 and 44 (44% of them), followed by those between the ages of 25 and 34 (43%), while a very small share of respondents were between the ages of 45 and 54 (they 7%) and in the group from 18 to 24 years of life (6%). When it comes to the level of education, position in the company, marital status, number of children, and the level of monthly household income, it is evident that the respondents mostly completed high school, 48% of them, while 21% inherited faculties and 29% master's studies, and only 2% were people with a college education. Most of the respondents were not in managerial positions (80%), 57% were married, and 10% were in a common-law relationship, while 32% of the respondents were neither in a relationship nor married. The largest number of respondents did not have children (44%) or had 1 or 2 children (15% and 32%), and the largest share (56%) of respondents indicated that they monthly salary is between 60,000 and 100,000 RSD.

3.2. Questionnaire and research variables

For quantitative research, a questionnaire was created based on previous validated research in this area. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part consisted of questions about the demographic profile: gender, age, level of education, position at work, level of monthly income, marital status, as well as whether respondents have children and how many.

The second part of the questionnaire included questions concerning WLB. We used a questionnaire adapted from Fisher-McAuley, Stanton, Jolton, and Gavin (2003) by Hayman (2005) was used. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions related to three dimensions of measuring the balance between work and private life. Seven questions referred to work interference with personal life (WIPL), four questions referred to personal life interference with work (PLIW) and the final four questions referred to work/personal life enhancement (WPLE). Higher arithmetic means indicate that respondents experienced that situation more often. For WIPL and PLIW, subscales with higher mean values indicate lower levels of work-life balance. The WPLE subscale is positively worded, and higher mean values indicate higher levels of perceived work-life balance.

In addition to the questionnaire about work-life balance, the third part of the questionnaire contained questions about stress at work (Lait & Wallace, 2002), to determine the relationship with WLB.
The respondents answered to the questions within the range of 1–5 on the Likert scale (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree).

### 3.3. Data processing approach

For the research, we used descriptive statistics to present the sample and overall level of WLB in a sample. The descriptive statistics of the sample were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics statistical program for data processing. For the determination of the relationship between WLB and job stress, we used the PLS-SEM technique. “PLS-SEM is a causal-predictive approach to SEM that emphasizes prediction in estimating statistical models, whose structures are designed to provide causal explanations. The technique thereby overcomes the apparent dichotomy between explanation – as typically emphasized in academic research – and prediction, which is the basis for developing managerial implications” (Hair et al., 2019, p. 3). The SmartPLS software was used.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data shown in Table 2, it can be concluded that the respondents indicated that they are not in balance regarding the interference of work in private life (WIPL), meaning that the balance is disturbed because the average score is 3.355, which indicates a high-level interference of work in private life. Regarding the interference of private life in work (PLIW), respondents indicated that they were approaching balance here, meaning that the balance was relatively established because the average score 1.9570, indicated a lower level of interference of private life in work. Regarding the improvement of work and private life (WPLE), the respondents indicated that they are approaching balance here, showing that the balance was relatively established because the average score was 3.537, indicating that work and private life had a positive effect on the respondents.

| Table 2. Descriptive statistics for WLB (Authors) |
| WIPL | PLIW | WPLE |
| Mean | 3.3554 | 1.9570 | 3.5369 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.20953 | .90275 | .95216 |
| Median | 3.7143 | 1.7500 | 3.5000 |
| Minimum | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Maximum | 5.00 | 5.00 | 5.00 |

The authors performed a path analysis to investigate reflective constructs and bootstrapping in order to investigate the structural model. In terms of path analysis, the measurement model was tested by using indicator and construct reliability, and convergent and discriminant validities, while the structural model was tested by application of the bootstrapping procedure based on 5,000 subsamples (Berber & Gašić, 2024). This type of measurement was proposed for reflective constructions in the model (Hair et al., 2019). The indicators’ loadings between 0.4 and 0.7 should be retained only if their removal did not have an impact on the average variance extracted and composite reliability (Hair et al., 2014). The authors checked the outer loadings of all indicators and found that all reached the minimum level of 0.70 and that all of them could be included in further analysis. However, later analysis of VIF and cross-loadings (Table 3) showed that indicators WIPL5, WIPL6, and WIPL7 had high VIFs (above the threshold of 5.0), and were highly correlated, and therefore they were excluded from the
model. Figure 2 summarizes all of the above-mentioned and shows the retained items (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Path analysis diagram (Authors)

Table 3. Outer loadings, variance inflations factors, and convergent validity (Authors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PLIW</th>
<th>Job stress</th>
<th>WIPL</th>
<th>WPLE</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Composite Reliability</th>
<th>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLIW1</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>2.768096</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLIW2</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.552027</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLIW3</td>
<td>0.871</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.839233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLIW4</td>
<td>0.834</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.919655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress2</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>0.915</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>2.080052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress1</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.013452</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress3</td>
<td>0.852</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.579734</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress4</td>
<td>0.879</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.143388</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress5</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0062</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress6</td>
<td>0.763</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.876875</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIPL1</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>2.621608</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIPL2</td>
<td>0.849</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.109196</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIPL3</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.304175</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIPL4</td>
<td>0.916</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.318259</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPLE1</td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>2.09636</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPLE2</td>
<td>0.688</td>
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<td>WPLE3</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.070897</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPLE4</td>
<td>0.612</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.297333</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 outlines the reliability test, Cronbach’s Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The lowest acceptable limit of Cronbach’s Alpha should
be 0.6 (Rahimnia & Hassanzadeh, 2013; Dakduk et al., 2019). The lowest limit of acceptability of Composite Reliability should be 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019; Sabi et al., 2016). Convergent validity was assessed by testing Average Variance Extracted (AVE), ranging from 0.616 (WPLE), 0.644 (Job stress), and 0.675 (PLIW), to the highest value, recorded for WIPL (0.782). The lowest acceptable limit of AVE was 0.5 (Dash & Paul, 2021). Based on the data in Table 3, the present authors determined that Convergent validity was satisfied for all constructs.

Apart from convergent validity, the authors examined the discriminant validity. Discriminant validity can be assessed by using Heterotrait–Monotrait HTMT (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). HTMT ratio values below 0.9 indicate that the defined components are sufficiently different from each other; it means that they describe different phenomena (Hair et al., 2019). The results presented in Table 4 show that all values were below 0.9, so it can be concluded that the discriminant validity criterion is met.

*Table 4. Discriminant validity - Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Authors)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Job stress</th>
<th>PLIW</th>
<th>WIPL</th>
<th>WPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job stress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLIW</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIPL</td>
<td>0.676</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPLE</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final step was to analyze the relationship between the independent variables (WLB components) and the dependent variables (job stress). $R^2$ (R-squared), as a statistical measure of the proportion of the variance for a dependent variable that is explained by an independent variable, shows that for Job stress it is 48.6%, explained by the independent variables WIPL, PLIW, and WPLE in the model.

*Table 5. Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values (Authors)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Sample</th>
<th>Sample Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>T Statistics</th>
<th>P Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLIW -&gt; Job stress</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>3.228</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIPL -&gt; Job stress</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>15.449</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPLE -&gt; Job stress</td>
<td>-0.249</td>
<td>-0.254</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>6.234</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results shown in Table 5 indicate a statistically significant relationship between WLB and job stress. A positive statistically significant relationship was found between PLIW and job stress ($\beta=0.167; t = 3.228; p = 0.001$) and WIPL and job stress ($\beta=0.538; t = 15.449; p = 0.000$). Besides, a negative statistically significant relationship was established between WPLE and job stress ($\beta=-0.249; t = 6.234; p = 0.000$). The relations are presented in Figure 3.
Based on the results of the analysis, high interference of work in personal life and vice versa will increase job stress. It means that in the case when employees feel that work and private life are in balance, it decreases job stress. The proposed hypothesis is confirmed.

Present results are in line with previous research that also found that balance between work and private life will decrease job stress (Balkan, 2014; Helmle et al., 2014; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Karani et al., 2022). Helmle et al. (2014) found that organizational initiatives for work-life balance have a negative correlation with job stress. Besides, family problems, financial crises, and conflicts between demands from the company and home are potential stressors for employees at work (Aruldoss et al., 2021). Giauque et al. (2019) found that a high level of satisfaction with work-life balance stands out as having the potential to reduce stress perception.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Work-life balance is a very complex phenomenon and until today it is still in the developing phase in terms of understanding and all elements that could be comprised by it. However, from all previous research, we can conclude that it is important for each person and organization in the contemporary business environment.

The results of this research showed that respondents in Serbia are not balancing their work and private life well, most of them suffer from strong interference of work in their personal life, as indicated in Table 2. Also, we confirmed that WLB is in relation to job stress and that dimension that shows imbalance will increase stress.
Based on all of the above, it is necessary to point out possibilities for improvement of WLB. Measures and recommendations are observed at the individual and organizational levels.

When we talk about the individual level, some of the suggestions are:

- Improve the process of planning your obligations, both family and business, for better coordination.
- Assess your capabilities - don't take on more tasks than you can handle (it's not impolite to say I can't, I'm not getting there).
- Define a list of priorities both in work and in private obligations.
- Take breaks during work, they are not designed for no reason.
- Try to control stress - playing sports, walking, reading literature, watching tv programs that relax you, etc.
- Try to eat healthier and have regular meals.
- Be flexible and ready to adjust plans, because there will always be changes.

On the other hand, there are measures that organizations should implement to help their employees. Some of the measures can be:

- Application of various forms of flexible working arrangements, among which the most common are flexible working hours, working from home, a hybrid work model, reduced working hours, or reduced working week. In this way, the companies would enable the employee to get a certain amount of freedom and authority to allocate his/her working time and thereby provide himself with enough time to meet private needs.
- Design and implementation of special programs to help employees who are at a high level of stress, and facing burnout, as support and care for their mental and physical health at work.
- Provision of various additional benefits such as paid private and health insurance. Employees get additional opportunities and care for health and old age in the future.
- Providing fair and adequate compensation - salary and incentives to employees.
- Providing employees with training and career development, through understanding their goals and needs.
- Facilitating the organization of a kindergarten in the company, or at least paying for a private kindergarten for employees who failed to enroll their children in a state kindergarten can also be of great importance for employees.
- Organization and facilitation of the acquisition and preservation of fitness, physical, and mental health, through payment of membership fees to employees in training and fitness centers or the opening of a gym and sports center in the company itself.
- There are also benefits related to children's education (financing), participation of employees in volunteer work, and the like.
- Organization of events that are not related to work in the company itself - watching important sports matches, celebrating various events, and the like.

Although all the mentioned measures are very necessary considering the results of the research, according to which the majority of respondents could not balance their business and private life well, the reality is that only a few measures were recognized or implemented. Therefore, it is necessary to implement many proposed measures as possible at the individual level, as well as at the organizational level. Certainly, serious approaches such as shortening the working week to 4 days or designing special benefit programs require a detailed analysis of job design, business volume, financial predictions, and the like, to create an adequate model.

The limitations of the work refer to the sample of the research, as it does not represent all employees in Serbia. In the future, sector-focused research is suggested to analyze the level
of work-life balance in Serbia, and its relation to job stress in production and service sector and different employee groups.

REFERENCES


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