

**PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE:
SEGMENTATION-INTEGRATION ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES
IN SERVICES COMPANIES IN ROMANIA**

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the perceived importance of work-life balance from a managerial perspective and how the preoccupation for work-life balance translates into organizational practices and policies, via several case studies on Romanian subsidiaries of multinational companies. We create an overview of the most important work-life balance current practices and propose a method of assessing where companies position themselves on the segmentation-integration continuum. We make recommendations on how companies can further adapt their policies to ensure greater work-life balance for employees and thus positive organizational outcomes.

KEYWORDS: *segmentation-integration index; work-life balance; work-life balance practices*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M12, M51, M54, J24, J29, L84*

1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance (WLB) is not only a buzz word in popular media, but also a topic of interest for the researchers in areas of organizational psychology and human resources management. A basic search on Google Scholar returns over 40,000 hits on the topic from 2007 until today. The concept has been defined in numerous ways, depending on the organizational theory it is linked to, but, at gist, WLB represents a state of perceived equilibrium between the work and personal life domains of an individual. It is virtually axiomatic that individuals aspire to reaching this state, and since companies often state that their greatest resource are their people, supporting work-life balance of their employees should be an area of interest for organizations too. Although various aspects of WLB have been researched by scholars outside Romania starting with the '60s, there are just a few papers on this topic pertaining to Romania. We explain this by the fact that only after 1990 has Romania benefited from foreign investments and even more recently from the blossoming of the subsidiaries of multinational corporations, which are considered the vehicle through which the concept of WLB, originated in Occidental contexts – namely in the USA and UK –, spreads around the world, through tools like employee satisfaction surveys (Lewis et al. 2007) and HR practices. WLB scores constantly high in the area of the employees demands. For instance, a Deloitte study showed that work-life balance is the most important factor for millennials for choosing a new job, more important than career opportunities (McCarthy, N., May 11, 2016). As WLB becomes an instrument for talent attraction and retention, companies need to be creative in keeping up with the demands of their employees. Therefore, we believe the classifications and examples of work-life policies and practices presented by the academic literature need to be updated constantly. By looking at the WLB topic both from an academic and a practical standpoint, this paper attempts to reconcile various WLB theories with the organizational practices. Through a multiple case study research performed in subsidiaries of multinational companies in Cluj-Napoca, this paper also aims at listing common and special WLB

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practices in Romania and to understand which future directions of research would benefit practitioners and organizations most.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretic frameworks of work-life balance

The term „work-life balance” was coined in 1986 (Lockwood 2003) and it is an evolution of the term „work-family balance”, in the sense of acknowledging that more and more people are living in non-traditional family structures and that the non-work time entails more than family time e.g. personal time, leisure activities, etc. After a consistent literature review, Kalliath and Brough define work-life balance as „the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life priorities.” (Kalliath & Brough 2008). This approach infers that achieving balance is the opposite of experiencing work-life conflict, which is best defined by Greenhaus and Beutell as having 3 forms (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985): *time-based*, *strain-based*, *behavior-based* (time/strain/behavior devoted to one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another role).

Consistent with the *spillover theory* (Staines 1980), we consider that the interactions between the work and family domains may have negative effects, which situates us in the work-life conflict paradigm (an example of negative spillover being staying in a bad mood at home as a result of a problem at work or vice versa), but also positive ones (like a skill developed in non-work context can be successfully used at work or viceversa), positive spillovers being the gate towards *work-life enrichment*, defined by Greenhaus & Powell as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell 2006). Wayne et al. talk about a bidirectional *facilitation* between work and life, which entails “the transfer of positive mood, enhancement of self-esteem and confidence, support received, and transfer of skills and behaviors from one domain to another” (Wayne et al. 2004).

All these theories are based on the idea that work and non-work are two separate domains, in which each individual has various roles to perform. For instance, the work-related roles may be of manager, employee, union representative, while in the non-work domain, the individual may have family, religious, community, leisure and student roles (Frone 2003). Performing multiple roles may cause *role conflict*, that is “the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other” (Khan apud. Greenhaus & Beutell 1985) or *role accumulation*, which would be the opposite of role strain (which entails conflict and overload), and hence may come with a series of “rewards”: role privileges, overall status security, resources for status enhancement and role performance, and enrichment of personality and ego gratification (Sieber 1974). According to Clark’s border theory (2000), “work” and “life” constitute different domains/spheres/worlds which influence each other; the domains have different rules, values and expected behaviors, they have border-keepers (like managers for the work domain and spouses for the life domain), as well as physical, temporal and psychological borders; the borders differ in strength, and this will determine whether the domains are separated or blended. People are daily border-crossers between these domains and they negotiate the borders on a segmentation-integration continuum. We believe the policy makers and keepers in an organization (e.g. HR departments and managers) are the most important guardians in the work domain, whereas, in the life domain, the individuals themselves have the power to negotiate the boundaries either with themselves or with other actors (spouse, partners, parents, etc.) and allow a certain level of interaction or spillover. As described by Nippert-Eng (1996), “a person who has fully integrated family and work makes no distinction about what belongs to home and what belongs to work: the people, thoughts, intellectual and emotional approaches are the same, no matter whether the task has to do with work or with home. In contrast, segmentation involves very different intellectual and emotional approaches” (Nippert-Eng apud. Clark 2000). “For example, Nippert-Eng (1996) found that some individuals would disconnect the two domains by keeping separate calendars and/or key chains, not

discussing the events of one domain with the participants of the other, or trying to not think about the issues of one domain while in the other. Conversely, others prefer to integrate elements of both domains, essentially removing boundaries between the two and blending facets of each. For example, 'integrators' in Nippert-Eng's study would display pictures of family at work, bring co-workers home for dinner, talk about family while at work, use one set of keys for all aspects of life, etc." (Kreiner 2006).

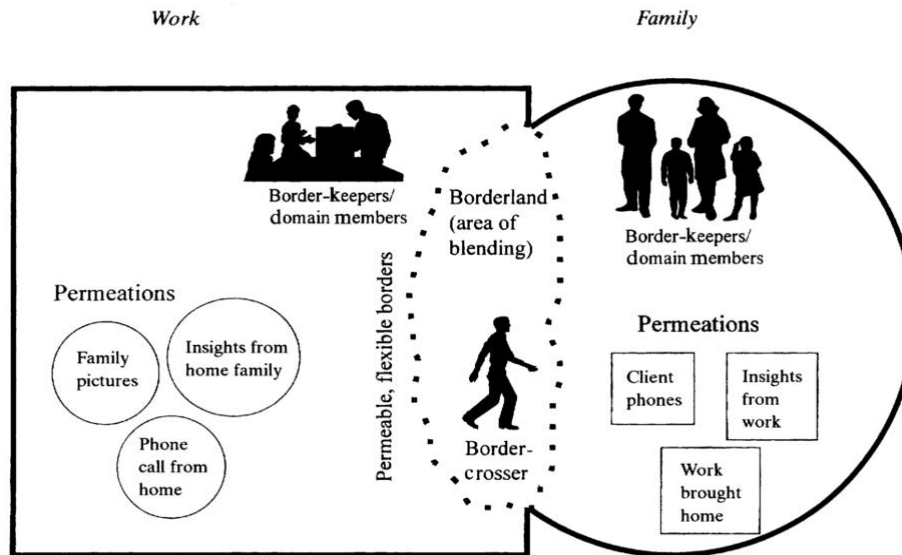


Figure 1. A pictorial representation of work-family border theory

Source: Clark (2000)

Consistent with the border theory, Ashforth et al.'s *boundary theory* talks about daily role transitions on the same segmentation-integration continuum. The authors argue that "combining the concepts of role boundary (flexibility and permeability) and role identity (contrast) indicates that a given pair of roles can be arrayed on a continuum, ranging from high segmentation to high integration" (Ashforth et al. 2000). As per figure 2, highly segmented roles "are highly differentiated (high contrast), tied to specific settings and times (inflexible), and permit few cross-role interruptions (impermeable)". In opposition, highly integrated roles are "weakly differentiated (low contrast), are not tied to specific places and times (flexible boundary), and allow cross-role interruptions (permeable boundary). Highly integrated roles tend to have similar identities, be embedded in similar contexts, and overlap in the physical location and the membership of the role sets". The closest example to complete segmentation would be the cases of persons doing stigmatized jobs (garbage man, exotic dancer) who hide this from their family, whereas the closest example of complete integration given by the authors is a member of a religious order living in a monastery or convent.

Kreiner (2006) concluded that "we can speak of a person's desire to separate work and home domains as 'preferences' for work-home segmentation and that segmentation is the opposite of integration". Also, he argued that "integration is not inherently better or worse than segmentation. Rather, because individuals differ in their desire for segmenting work and home, not all workplaces supply the 'right' level of segmentation for any given worker" (Kreiner 2006). This is consistent with the *Person-Environment Fit theory* (Harrison 1978; Caplan 1987), that talks about objective and subjective fit of an individual with their work-environment. For example, in a workplace allows a high work-life integration, this will cause dissatisfaction for an individual who has strong segmentation preferences.

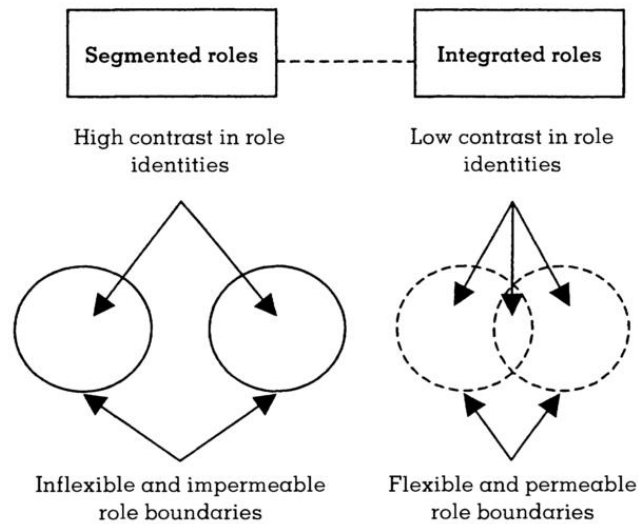


Figure 2. The role segmentation-role integration continuum
 Source: Ashforth et al. (2000)

We believe our graphical representations in Figure 3 and 4 are a way of integrating most of these theories and looking at work-life interactions in a synthetic way.

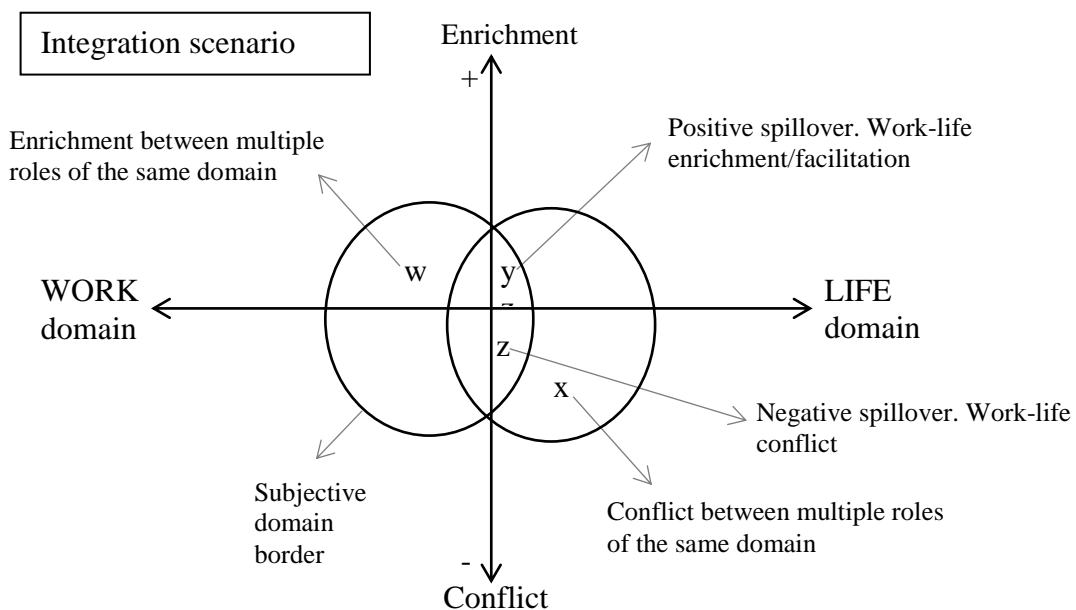


Figure 3. Work-life domains interactions. Partial integration scenario
 Source: Own editing

Work and life can be regarded as two theoretically separate domains and each individual sets their own domain border, through their actions, tasks, interests. We would call this a *subjective domain border*, specific to each individual's momentarily life circumstances. In the integration scenario (Figure 3), the subjective work and life domains overlap, either in the area of positive spillovers (point Y=enrichment) or in that of negative spillovers (point Z=conflict). Conflict and enrichment within multiple roles of the same domain are also possible (point X and W, respectively). This is a representation of partial integration, as complete integration would entail two superposed circles.

In Figure 4, we have the complete segmentation scenario. Intra-role same domain or inter-role same domain conflict or enrichment are still possible.

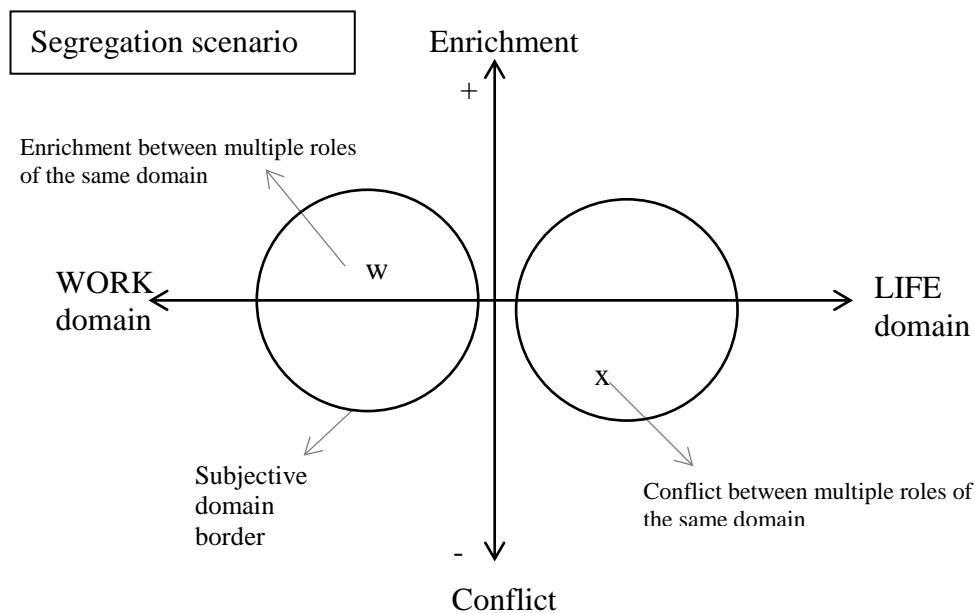


Figure 4. Work-life domains interactions. Segmentation scenario

Source: Own editing

2.2. Work-life balance policies

Literature defines work-life practices as “any employer sponsored benefit or working condition that helps an employee to balance work and non-work demands” (Cascio 2000). Our research shows that the term *practices* is used interchangeable with policies, *strategies*, *programs*, *arrangements* or *initiatives*, hence we will be using them as such, although we may observe that *policy* can mean the official (written) guideline, while *practices* or *arrangements* can mean the actual implementation of those policies, which may be different (while the company may have a policy of compensating overtime, the practice may be that the employees do not actually receive any compensation).

De Cieri et al. (2005) identified as major strategies or practices in the literature until that point in time the following, without classifying them: part-time work, study leave, flexible starting and finishing time, work from home and on ad hoc basis, job share, rostered days off (i.e. time off for accumulated overtime), paid parental leave, flexi-time, using flex day or rostered days off as half days, telecommuting, annual leave (or 48/52 working year, the authors put it), career break, compressed work week.

Casper et al. (2007) distinguished 5 organizational WLB policies and programmes that could help improve employee well-being: (1) flexible working arrangements, (2) provision of leave as required to meet family needs, (3) provision of childcare benefits or services, (4) provision of health and well-being programmes, and (5) organizational understanding and managerial support, the first four being considered organizational problem-focused coping programmes, while the last (consisting of “informal leave arrangements and managerial discretion in assessing an individual employee’s specific situation” (Zheng et al. 2015)) is emotion-focused.

After performing a literature review, Yuile et al. (2012) classify the “life friendly policies” in organizations in 4 categories: (1) offsite working i.e. policies designed to give workers flexibility to work away from the physical work place (e.g. work from home, telecommuting), (2) carer’s arrangements i.e. policies designed to provide workers the facilities or time to attend to outside care responsibilities (e.g. carer facilities, leave/flexibility to allow to care for children, elders or other family members), (3) flexi-work schedule i.e. policies designed to give workers greater flexibility to

schedule hours while not decreasing the hours worked per week (e.g. accrued time off, flexible start and finish time), and (4) alternative work arrangements i.e. policies designed to give workers flexibility to work hours around other commitments or when desired (e.g. part time work, job sharing).

Cegarra-Leiva et al. (2012) identify the following WLB practices: (1) practices that ease the flexible use of time, such as flexitime, annual hours, credits for hours and compressed week, (2) practices that provide spatial flexibility to workers, such as teleworking or video-conferences, (3) time reduction, such as part-time work and shared work, (4) work leave, such as maternity and paternity leave in excess of the official amount and career breaks, and (5) employee assistance and counseling programmes.

Darcy et al. (2012) enumerated a series of work-life balance arrangements and practices, such as (1) temporal arrangements that allow employees to reduce the number of hours they work (e.g. job sharing, part-time working); (2) flexible working arrangements (flexi-time i.e. flexible start and finish time, tele-working/home-working/e-working); (3) work-life balance supports (such as employee counseling, employee assistance programs, time management training, stress management training); and (4) childcare facilities (on-site or financial support for childcare off-site through subsidized childcare).

These approaches are very similar, some overlap of categories and an overwhelming interest towards flexible working arrangements and child care issues being obvious. In an attempt to reconcile existing literature, we propose a synthetic new classification of WLB policies and practices in: (1) flexible working arrangements regarding the use of time – these include part-time working, flexible start and finish hours, overtime in advance which can be recovered with a day off, etc.; (2) flexible working arrangements regarding the use of space – like working from home and videoconferencing instead of business travel; (3) arrangements for family care such as maternity/paternity leaves, benefits, services or facilities, including kindergartens or subsidized childcare, as well care for elder or other members of the family; (4) personal time off, such as annual leave, career breaks, emergency time off, time off for personal events, etc.; (5) health and well-being initiatives, such as medical services and insurance, gym subscription, massage in the office, employee counseling, stress management training; (6) emotional organizational understanding and managerial support; (7) personal and team development support, such as subsidized educational programs, participation to trainings, budget for teambuildings, time off for studies, etc.

Furthermore, we propose an 8th category - **segmentation/integration support** -, that encompasses the organizational facilities and regulation (or their absence) of some border-crossing behaviors and of blending areas of work and life domains. We have identified 4 areas for this category: (1) facility-related e.g. the use of company resources for personal reasons and the existence of rooms for personal use in the company's premises; (2) time-related, like the company's claim for individual time investment outside working hours (such as for trainings and teambuildings) or the overtime policies or the right of employee to link personal days to business trip days; (3) technology use related, for example the use of technology at work for personal purposes, access to social media and content sites; (4) artifacts and content related, like the right of employees to display personal items in the office or the tolerance of discussing personal issues at work. We consider that this observation fills a big gap in the literature regarding WLB practices.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research questions and framework

While the research abounds in WLB articles, by this paper we aim at finding out if and how WLB is important for organizations. Through the first chapter of the interview we want to find out if companies have official policies about WLB and if they see WLB as an element that influences organizational outcomes such as employee attraction and retention.

Table 1. Interview protocol framework

| Chapter | Research question | Main topics of the questions | Related literature |
|---|-------------------|--|--|
| Official WLB policies | RQ1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of WLB official policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lauzun et al. (2010) |
| Perceived importance of WLB from management's perspective | RQ1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WLB important for talent attraction? • WLB important for employee retention? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beauregard & Henry (2009) • Lockwood (2003), etc. |
| Regular WLB practices | RQ2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-flexible working arrangements • Space-flexible working arrangements • Arrangements for family care • Personal time off • Health and well-being programs • Emotional organizational understanding and managerial support • Personal and team development support • Other segmentation-integration support | Grawitch et al. (2006), Yuile et al. (2012), Honeycutt & Rosen (1997), Zheng et al. (2015), etc. |
| Future trends of WLB practices in case companies | RQ2 | What other WLB policies may be implemented | |
| Segmentation-integration policies | RQ3 | What are the current policies and practices regarding WLB – do they encourage segmentation or integration? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashforth et al. (2000), Kreiner (2006), etc. |
| WLB research questions from companies to academia | RQ4 | What direction of WLB research is of most interest to companies? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kossek et al. (2011) |

Source: Own editing

Hence, our first research question is: *RQ1: What is the perceived importance of WLB for companies?*

We believe the companies are the vectors where innovation happens in terms of implementing WLB policies and that research has a certain delay in noting down those changes. By our second research question we aim at confirming whether the academic classifications in terms of WLB are still up to date and to possibly discover other examples of WLB practices. We also take a look at the newest trends in WLB and try to understand if companies consider transforming novelties into regular practice. *RQ2: What are the regular practices of work-life balance on the market?*

While we maintain that segmentation and integration are not good or bad in themselves but are perceived individually by employees based on their needs, we believe that they help define the organizational culture of a company. Therefore we propose an overall measure of where companies score on the segmentation-integration continuum, which could provide insights for practitioners about how their company ranks when compared to the competition. *RQ3: How do companies measure up on the segmentation-integration continuum?*

Considering how scattered research on WLB is, we would like to know which direction of academic study, practitioners see as the most important. Finding this out may help academics focus their efforts on finding relevant insights with practical implications for companies. *RQ4: How can academics contribute with practical insights for practitioners in the field of WLB?*

3.2 Case study companies

The research methodology used is the multiple case studies. As our first-hand practical experience with the labor market tells us, the companies in the business process outsourcing/shared service centers (BPO/SSC) industry (together with the ones in the IT sector) are the trendsetters when it comes to friendly work-life balance policies. We have selected 4 companies representative for the BPO/SSC sector in Cluj-Napoca. We have applied the same interview with questions ranging from closed to open to either CEOs or HR Managers, whom we consider the best persons to speak to about organizational policies, vision and goals. All of the interviewees wished that the name of the company remain anonymous. While we do have data about the company's global and local number of employees, headquarters, revenue, year of start worldwide and in Romania, departments and main activities, for confidentiality reasons we will not disclose them. We choose to limit ourselves at mentioning the country of origin of the company and to say that combined, these 4 companies have over 2,000 employees in Cluj-Napoca, which represent half of the BPO/SSC market, hence make them representative and relevant from a headcount point of view for our study. The interviews took place face to face in September-October 2017.

Table 2. Case study companies

| | Company A | Company B | Company C | Company D |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Headquarters</i> | Germany | USA | India | USA |
| <i>Interview with</i> | HR | HR | CEO | CEO |

Source: Own editing

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this section, we will analyze the data, in order to answer our research questions.

Related to RQ1, we found out that none of the companies has an official WLB policy, but all of them have questions pertaining to WLB in their employee engagement surveys. Companies A, B and D have explicit WLB related questions in their exit interviews, while Company C indirectly (and partially) addresses the issue when employees leave, asking if they were satisfied with the working schedule.

Table 3. WLB importance for employee attraction and retention (RQ1)

| | Company A | Company B | Company C | Company D |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>WLB is a factor in attracting candidates</i> | 9 | 5.5 | 6.5 | 7 |
| <i>WLB is a factor in retaining employees</i> | 9 | 5.5 | 6 | 8 |

Source: Own editing

Asked to self-rate to what extent they consider their WLB policies as a factor in attracting candidates, respectively, in retaining employees, the companies gave the scores from Table 3, where 1=to a small extent, 10=to a great extent.

In terms of available WLB policies and practices (RQ2), we have received answers as per Table 4.

Table 4. Regular WLB policies and practices (RQ2)

| Policy examples | Company A | Company B | Company C | Company D |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Sub-category | Time-flexible working arrangements | | | |
| 1. <i>Flexible hours (start/end time may differ)</i> | For all employees | For some employees | For some employees | For all employees |
| Sub-category | Location-flexible working arrangements | | | |
| 2. <i>Working from home</i> | For most employees | For some employees | For some employees | For some employees |
| Sub-category | Arrangements for family care | | | |
| 3. <i>Kindergarten</i> | Yes | No | No | No |
| 4. <i>Child care services (e.g. vouchers)</i> | No | Yes | No | No |
| 5. <i>Child care leave on top of legal provisions</i> | Unpaid leave | Unpaid leave | Unpaid leave | Unpaid leave |
| 6. <i>Employees can keep benefits while in parental leave</i> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 7. <i>Employees can keep benefits while in child care leave</i> | Yes | No | No | No |
| 8. <i>Care services for other relatives</i> | Medical subscription | Medical subscription | Medical subscription | Medical subscription |
| 9. <i>Bereavement allowance</i> | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Sub-category | Personal time off | | | |
| 10. <i>Allowing several hours off with little/no notice for personal emergencies</i> | To all employees | To most employees | To most employees | To most employees |
| 11. <i>Allowing several days off with little/no notice for personal emergencies</i> | To all employees | To some employees | To all employees | To most employees |
| 12. <i>Days for annual leave</i> | 25 for execution, 30 for managerial roles | 21 | 21 | 22 including birthday off, plus 1 day for every 2 years of tenure (capped at 5 days) |
| 13. <i>Days off for marriage</i> | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 14. <i>Days for bereavement</i> | 1 to 3 | 1 to 3 | 1 to 3 | 1 to 3 |
| Sub-category | Health and well-being programs | | | |
| 15. <i>Medical services</i> | Private clinic subscription | Private clinic subscription OR medical insurance | Private clinic subscription OR medical insurance | Private clinic subscription |
| 16. <i>Subscriptions/ discounts to gym</i> | Discount | Discount | Discount | Discount |

| Policy examples | Company A | Company B | Company C | Company D |
|--|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 17. <i>Massage services</i> | Occasional discounts for external providers | No | No | No |
| 18. <i>Training on WLB topics</i> | No | Yes | No | No |
| Sub-category | Emotional organizational understanding and managerial support | | | |
| 19. <i>Exceptions from policies to accommodate personal circumstances</i> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Sub-category | Personal and team development support | | | |
| 20. <i>Budget for teambuilding (non-work related)</i> | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| 21. <i>Budget for personal celebrations (birthdays, tenure anniversaries)</i> | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 22. <i>Budget for team/company celebrations (top performers, best teams awards, team dinners, corporate parties)</i> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 23. <i>Budget for personal development (trainings, individual educational programs)</i> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| | Other segmentation-integration support | | | |
| 24. <i>Usage of company's devices and resources (phone, emails, printing, stationery, laptop) for personal purposes is</i> | Expected/ Allowed occasionally | Always allowed | Forbidden | Expected/ Allowed occasionally |
| 25. <i>Facilities for personal usage</i> | Pregnancy room, showers, locker-room, kitchens | Relaxation room, PlayStation area, kitchens | Pregnancy room, Facebook kiosk, terrace, kitchens | Games room, Facebook kiosks, kitchens |
| 26. <i>Overtime is</i> | Allowed strictly for business reasons | Tolerated | Discouraged | Allowed strictly for business reasons |
| 27. <i>Trainings are inside working hours</i> | Always | Always | Most of the times | Most of the times |
| 28. <i>Teambuildings are inside working hours</i> | Half of the times | Never | Never | Sometimes |

| Policy examples | Company A | Company B | Company C | Company D |
|--|--------------------------------|---|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 29. <i>Employees may link personal days to business trip days</i> | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| 30. <i>Access to social media (Facebook, LinkedIn) and content sites (YouTube) at work from company's devices is</i> | Tolerated | Generally forbidden; partially allowed for some employees | Forbidden | Always allowed |
| 31. <i>Usage of personal devices at work (smart phones) is</i> | Always allowed | Always allowed | Forbidden | Expected/ Allowed occasionally |
| 32. <i>Usage of company provided devices (phone, laptops) for business purposes outside working hours is</i> | Compulsory | Expected/ Allowed occasionally | Discouraged | Expected/ Allowed occasionally |
| 33. <i>Display of personal items at work (pictures, personal objects) is</i> | Always allowed | Always allowed | Always allowed | Always allowed |
| 34. <i>Discussing personal/family issues during working hours is</i> | Expected/ Allowed occasionally | Expected/ Allowed occasionally | Always allowed | Expected/ Allowed occasionally |

Source: Own editing

Several observations may be useful. For instance, flexible start times are allowed in all companies for back-office roles, where the operational continuity (e.g. answering all customer calls) is not threatened. Working from home is allowed for employees holding company laptops, which usually happens for specialized/managerial positions. In companies A, B and D there is an official policy regarding working from home, while in C this happens via unofficial arrangements with one's direct manager (i.e. the employee must stay available for any business needs).

In all companies employees can take days off according to the operational context. As examples of organizational support, Company B mentioned the situations when people on annual leave were asked whether they could return to work in order to cover for a colleague with a serious family emergency, the case of one manager who, at the end of his paternity child care leave, was given a newly created role, in order to accommodate his desire to work remotely (from another city), and the case of a manager who, at the end of child care leave chose to reduce her working norm and change roles. Under the chapter organizational support, Company C always allows unpaid leave, no matter how long (for instance: for internships abroad), as they prefer "knowing that the employee will maybe return to us than being sure we are going to lose them". Company A and D also showed organizational understanding by allowing mothers-to-be to work several months remotely before their official maternity leave. The surveyed companies have a cautious approach to overtime and do not encourage it, as, by law, they must either compensate it with free time or pay it to the employees, the latter entailing extra approvals from the client (budget holder). Company C is very strict in terms of using company devices and networks for personal purposes, as a means of protection against IT viruses and data leakage. Moreover, it does not allow access with phones having a camera in the working areas; this means employees need to take official breaks and go into the social areas in order to make a personal call, for instance. Company A expects people with company laptops to carry them home (not necessarily to use them) in order to ensure business continuity in case of disaster. Company D has a

unique provision in terms of personal time off employees work 7.5 hours per day and get paid for 8; it also offers birthday off for the employees. Companies A, B and C offer bereavement leave as per the former National Collective Agreement, while Company D has tweaked the respective numbers, offering 1 day off for the funeral of grandparents and 3 days off for the funeral of siblings. Company A is convinced that allowing employees to start working as early as 7 a.m. (and hence finish as early as 3 p.m.), as well as having a company sponsored kindergarten which accommodates children from 11 months to 6 years old are key factors in attracting and retaining a certain category of employees. Company B has a compulsory WLB training in the corporate curricula for employees with tenure of less than 12 months, as well as local initiatives on healthy eating and stress management. We have observed that, due to the average age of below 30 of their associates, none of these companies pays much attention to elderly care. Their employees can contract subscriptions for two family members, but not older than 65. Considering the accentuated tendency of population aging in Romania, we anticipate that elderly care (for instance via special allowances) will become an area of interest for companies in the upcoming years.

In an attempt to understand how companies compare between themselves in terms of WLB practices, we propose the creation of a **segmentation-integration index**. To this purpose, we selected policies 1, 2, 10, 11, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 and associated a score to the possible answers, as it follows: for policies 1, 2, 10, 11, the answers were rated 0=To nobody, 1=To some employees, 2=To half of employees, 3=To most employees, 4=To all employees; for policies 24, 30, 33, 34, the answers were rated 0=Forbidden, 1=Discouraged, 2=Tolerated, 3=Expected/Allowed occasionally/strictly for business reasons, 4=Encouraged/Always allowed; for policies 26, 31, 32, the answers were rated 0=Forbidden, 1=Discouraged, 2=Tolerated, 3=Expected/Allowed occasionally, 4=Encouraged/Always allowed, 5=Compulsory; and for policies 27 and 28 the answers were rated 0=Always, 1=Most of the times, 2=Half of the times, 3=Sometimes, 4=Never. The scale is flexible and can be enriched by introducing into the mix other relevant WLB policies. Our current scale goes from 0 points (maximum segmentation) to 55 points (maximum integration) and here is how the four companies measure up:

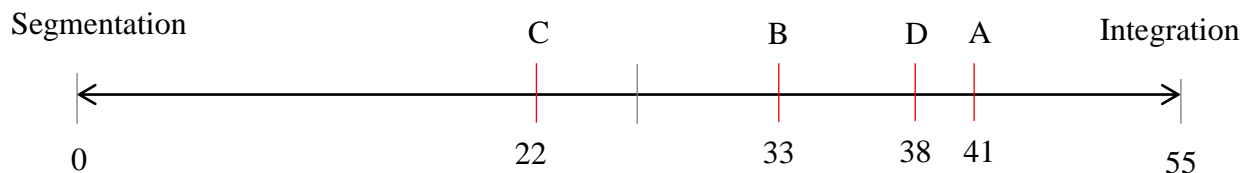


Figure 5. Segmentation-Integration Index (RQ3)

Source: Own editing

Asked what are the most frequent extra WLB demands they receive, Company A indicated access to the online library Bookster and giving extra annual leave days based on tenure, however, the latter is not likely to happen, as their package is already over the market in this respect; Companies B and C also face requests to increase the number of annual leave days based on tenure, while in Company D some employees request child care support (kindergarten or specific allowance).

When it comes to other WLB arrangements that management would like to offer employees, Company A is looking for ways of creating more parking places, Company B is investing in stress management programs, Company C would either increase the default number of annual leave days or give extra days for tenure when financial indicators would allow this extra benefit and would allow usage of personal devices in the office (that includes access to social media and making/receiving

personal calls), while Company D is considering eliminating restrictions regarding the number of days per month for working from home (two at the moment).

The popular press is full of "exotic" examples of other WLB practices. For instance, American companies in the US but also local IT companies (Betfair) are offering personal days off (no explanation requested by the employer); Mars Petcare (owners of Whiskas and Pedigree Chum brands), BitSol Solution (Manchester based tech company), and BrewDog (a brewery in the US) offer days off for pet adoption, also known as "paw-ternity leave", several US and Canada based companies offer days off for pet bereavement (Dodgson, L., Mar. 23, 2017), while an Italian academic won in court the right to take medical leave for taking care of her sick dog (Horton, H., Oct. 12, 2017).

In what concerns personal days, the representatives of all four companies consider them as a nice idea, as long as the business has the capacity to accommodate them, but do not envision granting them. As far as pets are concerned, the interviewees recognize the constant transformation of the meaning of family and accept the inclusion of pets in it; however, they consider some more time will have to pass until Romanian companies will offer time-flexibility for such reasons, especially because it is hard to ensure an equivalent to employees who do not own a pet.

Lastly, we wanted the managers to rank some possible directions for further WLB research, depending on which one is the most relevant to them, and here is what we found:

Table 5 shows that companies consider as most valuable knowing how satisfied their employees are with WLB, then they are interested in having examples of WLB policies which they could implement, understand how WLB can influence other organizational outcomes and only lastly they want to compare with the competitors (as they are aware each company has very distinct financial and business circumstances).

Table 5. Directions of WLB research and their importance to companies (RQ4)

| Research directions | Company A | Company B | Company C | Company D | Total |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Examples of WLB policies | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 11 |
| How do our employees perceive their WLB | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| How does WLB relate to organizational outcomes (attraction/retention/motivation) | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 11 |
| How does my company compare to others in terms of WLB | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 13 |

Source: Own editing

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this paper was to bring together the extensive WLB literature with current practices in organizations. This paper contributes with an integrative model of existing WLB theories, as well with a revised classification of WLB policies and practices. Via a series of 4 case studies, we manage to update the existing literature with current examples of WLB initiatives implemented in one of the most WLB preoccupied sector, the one of BPO/SSC. We would also want to point out that some of the most quoted WLB practices – job-sharing, condensed work week, zero hours contracts – are virtually irrelevant for Romania, therefore we consider that WLB research could benefit from having a Romanian perspective. Another proposed innovation is a segmentation-integration index, against which companies could measure themselves. We believe this score may create awareness for business leaders on how their company is perceived and could be used as a starting point for policy

adaptation. We will be the first ones to admit this index is not set in stone; it can be adapted by any user in order to include policies relevant for each company/researcher.

One of the limitations of this study is the low number of case studies and the focus on only one industry, in one city. Although we do speak for half of the BPO/SSC industry in Cluj-Napoca, we would like to extend this research to other companies, potentially in other industries and cities. Another limitation is that, using the managers' perspective only, we've evaluated the degree of segmentation-integration in existing WLB policies, but integration-segmentation are not positive/harmful per se; instead, they should be analyzed from the P-E fit theory perspective and matched to the employees' expectations. Hence, we recommend further studies to reveal how employees position themselves towards the identified WLB policies and practices and we consider that the insights from these studies would help company understand which measures have the greatest impact on employee WLB satisfaction and on other organizational outcomes.

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