

SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS OF WORK BALANCE SYSTEM APPROACH

ASPECTE SOCIO-PROFESIONALE ÎN ABORDAREA SISTEMICĂ A ECHILIBRULUI ÎN MUNCĂ

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Keywords: work balance system approach, system theory framework (STF), resources, professional demands, outcomes, psychosocial factors, wellbeing, health

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relations between professional demands and psychosocial factors related to the professional activity, environment and professional culture, as well as conditions and factors of human wellbeing and health, among doctors, teachers and social workers, in a sample of 288 Moldovan professionals. The short version of Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COP-SOQ) were used for data collection [6,p.2]. This questionnaire was used to establish the professional psychosocial factors that evaluate working conditions, health and well-being in the workplaces of these three professional sphere. As hypothesized, the Pearson correlations revealed that emotional demands, demands for responsibility at work, influence at work, degree of freedom at work, meaning of work, commitment to the workplace, wellbeing and health were positive predictors of psychological factors related to the professional activity in Moldova.

Cuvinte-cheie: abordare sistemică a echilibrului în muncă, teoria cadrului sistemic, resurse, exigențe profesionale, consecințe, factorul psihosocial, bunăstare, sănătate

Rezumat

Scopul acestui studiu a fost investigarea relațiilor dintre cerințele profesionale și factorii psihosociali legați de activitatea profesională, mediul de trai și cultura profesională, printre care condițiile și factorii de bunăstare și sănătate ai omului. Studiul s-a desfășurat în rândul medicilor, asistenților sociali și a cadrelor didactice din școală și universității, pe un eșantion format din 288 de profesioniști din R. Moldova. Pentru colectarea datelor a fost utilizată varianta prescurtată a chestionarului psihosocial Copenhaga (COPSOQ) [6, p.2]. Acest chestionar este utilizat pentru stabilirea factorilor psihosociali profesioniști care evaluează condițiile de muncă, sănătatea și bunăstarea la locul de muncă al acestor trei sfere profesionale. Conform ipotezei lansate, corelațiile Pearson au evidențiat aspecte semnificative ale exigențelor emoționale, exigențelor provenite din responsabilități în activitate, influențelor în activitate, graduale de libertate privind perioadele de repaus și de odihnă, importanța activității, implicarea afectivă în activitate, bunăstarea și sănătatea ce au constituit predictorii pozitivi ai factorilor psihologici legați de activitatea profesională în Republica Moldova.

Theoretical insertion: Work balance meanings

There are some theoretical issues concerning the definition of work balance, as in the last century a remarkable amount of research has been dedicated to the relation and influence of work and life interface as an integrative construct, or as an interface, investigating work–life conflict and enrichment from many different angles and in different populations. In literature there are a group that deserves particular attention and has received increasing interest in work–life research in the last few years is what we call professionals [5, p.3].

Feldman in 2007, in the faculty mentoring program at University California from Saint Francisco, considers that balance represent the successful balancing act of professional responsibilities with personal priorities, including spouse or significant other, family, personal and spiritual growth, and phy-

sical health [14, p. 3].

Brett and Stroh, tested explanations drawn from theories including the work-leisure tradeoff, work as an emotional respite, social contagion, and work as its own reward. They found that one of the best reward in anworkaholic and demographic homogeneous sample are the financial and psychological rewards from doing activity [1, p.67].

In advance, the theoretical component work-life balance, as a compound cause-effect relation, could be simplified to micro (individual), meso and macro levels. From this perspective the influence of one component on another one will determine level projections, simplifying in this manner the research components. The projection will vector the components, and analogous cases will hold the research power of being more experienced and managed in a controlled organizational environment in comparison with other life aspects.

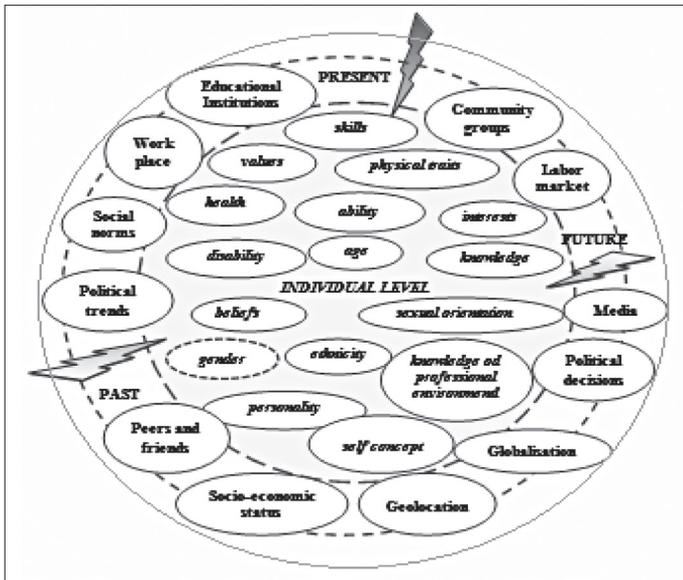


Figure 1. The system theory framework (STF) of career development [10, p.255].

The system theory framework (STF) aggregate three systems and three processes of influence. The individual system include: gender, values, sexual orientation, ability, interests, skills, age, world of work knowledge, physical attributes, aptitudes, ethnicity, self-concept, personality, beliefs, disability, health. The contextual system blend the social aspects: peers, family, media, community groups, workplace, education, institutions. The environmental-societal system organize the political decisions, historical trends, globalization, socioeconomic status, employment market and geographical location. The processes of influence, are compound by recursive nature of the interaction between the individuals and their contextual system, change over time and chance [10, p.152].

Analysis, pursuing and transferring the psychosocial gained data to the other life aspects, will represent the most influencing answers in solving the work-life balance puzzle. But till then, the analysis of psychosocial work component perceive a higher social demand, in a century of identity crisis.

In "Creating balance?" Springer textbook, the professionals are defined as usually hard working individuals in highly demanding work environments characteristically facing long working hours, high workload and pressure to succeed, and the need to travel frequently [5, p.3].

The competitive working environment is a condition, where efficiency and productivity are outcomes, and where individuals represent the organizational working resource. The impact of unbalanced work and working demands rise the psychological risks of

stress, emotional burnout, vitality and health.

On the other hand the professionals usually have above-average incomes and high standards of living together with jobs they enjoy. Professionals thus work and live in a situation which can be both impeding and enhancing work-life integration, i.e., *a sense of having achieved a satisfactory resolution of the multiple demands of work and non-work domains* [2, p.1223].

Alan Weiss, in his book is mentioning that in the workplace, our balance and equilibrium are largely a function of identifying ourselves with contributions (finishing points) and not tasks (starting points), paraphrasing that no one ever gave a medal to a runner because of excellent form at the starting line. The input/output rule holds that outputs trump inputs. That is, the result is far more important than the activity [12, p.5].

Litrico and Lee, in 2008, analyzed the qualitative relation between professionals and key individuals (spouse, boss, co-worker, and HR manager) as networking component around several professionals, in a reduced working load in the professional and management services industry. In their research it was identified three emergent patterns of cross-level distribution of exploration and exploitation across contexts (labeled Solo Performance, Organic Fluid Adjustment, and Orchestrated Cooperation), which illuminated a specific form of interaction between the dynamics of exploration and exploitation across contexts (organization, workgroup, individual, and family) [7, p.1001].

The system theory framework (STF) are highly important in highligh-

ting the complex process of work balance achievement. STF integrate personal, intrapersonal and environmental aspects over time and societal open systems which are permeable to affect the relationships. W.Patton and M.Mc.Machon rationalize the influences of permeable systems by describing non-linear, acausal, mutual and multidirectional working patterns, which tend to be expressed in a convergent manner of interrelated elements [10, p.243].

The group of professional workers faces specific challenges regarding work–life integration but also are opportunities and resources to which other workers do not have access.

The holistic approach mention that the each of us balance strikes between our own enrichment and depletion, beingcritically echoed to our physical, emotional, and spiritual health [13].

The atomic approach of work balance importance has the followed characteristics and reasons:

- work balance is a subject of well-being, performance, work satisfaction, cohesion and engagement, progress, competitiveness, organizational culture etc. [3, p.124];
- lack of work balance leads to stress and professional burnout associated with impaired job performance and poor health (a syndrome consisting of: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (of relationships, patients and the work), reduced sense of accomplishment (negative self-evaluation) [8, p.103];
- in human resource management serves as a rationale for work comfort environment establishment [9, p. 205];
- an organizational turnover or brain drain barriers [11, p.192];
- a cost less professional development enhancement [4, p.5].

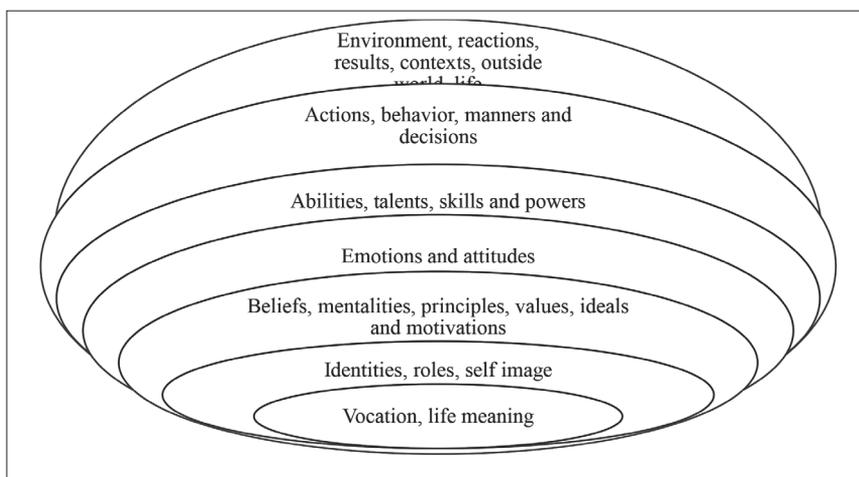


Figure 2. The psycho-individual resources which contributes to the personal efficiency establishment

The balance act trigger the needs updating processes and resources mobilization. In practice balance act represent an adjustment of individual, con-

textual and environmental contexts to the personal needs and motivation. The resources are interpreted as the efficiency or effectiveness of the subject, or

“I/Self” case, where, besides the logistic aspect (definition of objectives, setting priorities, fixing deadlines, time management, and synergy) everything will strictly depend on individual goals, aspirations, qualities and issues, and our entire biopsychological dowry. Under these circumstances, deep aspirations, essential motivations, beliefs and faith, personal capabilities will be settled in the forefront (see figure 2).

Research and findings

Our traditional practices in vocational guiding in social area are not adapted to the actual socio-economic contexts (taking into consideration the period in transition, the labor offer, the

capacity of professional and individual developing), which is affirmed in the data, **based on a sample of 288** professionals from Moldova (between 25-50 years) old, assessed with professional questionnaire designed by Psychosocial Department, The National Institute of Occupational Health, Copenhagen, Denmark. Taking into consideration this perspectives it was mandated to analyze, to process and to assess the obtained data. Participants respond to the items using a five point Likert rating scale ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree”. Internal consistency of subscales was scales were .88, .91, .83, and .93 respectively.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics and correlations

No	Assessed psycho-social factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Abbreviation
1.	Age	35.18	7.921	A
2.	Year of graduation	2003.08	8.999	YG
3.	Professional activity length	10.98	8.222	PAH
4.	Higherdegree level (Master or PhD)	2006.73	7.083	HDL
5.	Second professional activity length	5.84	5.274	SPSL
6.1.	Quantitative demands	62.748843	18.7350612	E1
6.2.	Emotional demands	59.733796	21.4975200	E3
6.3.	Demands for hiding emotions	61.354167	22.6910683	E4
6.4.	Demands for responsibility at work	47.384259	20.4996177	E6
6.	Professional demands	57.897859	16.2092130	E
7.1	Influence at work	72.905093	14.1759674	A1
7.2	Possibilities for development	83.385417	14.5578527	A2
7.3	Degree of freedom at work	53.732639	23.1125419	A3
7.4	Meaning of work	82.407407	14.6104108	A4
7.5.	Commitment to the workplace	73.125000	17.9223548	A5
7.	Psychosocial factors related to the professional activity	73.111111	9.2598317	A
8.1.	Predictability	73.958333	15.4702705	I1

8.2.	Quality of leadership	76.128472	16.3539089	I4
8.3.	Social support	69.756944	17.9849905	I5
8.4.	Feedback at work	69.895833	16.1112071	I6
8.5.	Sense of community	81.747685	13.8486787	I8
8.	Professional environmental and cultural factors	74.297454	11.8556563	I
9.	Insecurity at work	55.549769	25.5109731	S
10.	Job satisfaction/Wellbeing	74.062500	11.6042277	B
11.1.	General health	61.847222	13.5792009	V1
11.2.	Mental health	45.958333	11.0443357	V2
11.3.	Vitality	48.350694	11.7600250	V3
11.	Health	52.052083	9.4430249	V
12.	COPSOQ average percentage per sample	64.525511	7.2813409	

Our sample established positive and negative Pearson correlation between test parameters and their components. The most significant 2-tailed correlation at the 0,01 and 0,05 levels was selected in the second table, using the abbreviations from the first table. In correspondence, it was displayed parameters (vectors) in rows and in columns, where p-value is < 5% significant between parameters means.

In Moldova, the professions oriented to provide human services as medicine, education and social work,

manifest positive relation where age as primary vector build in time correlations between professional activity length, graduation year, commitment to the workplace, possibilities for development, sense of community, insecurity at work and job satisfaction/wellbeing. In contrary age deplete such resources as demands for hiding emotions quantitative, demands for responsibility at work and professional one, as well as from the degree of freedom at work and mental health.

Table 2.

Sample Pearson correlations

Factors	A	YG	PAH	HDL	SPSL	E	A	I	S	B	V	%
A		-.879**	.861**	-.618**	.558**	-.137*			.203**	.145*	-.138*	
YG	-.879**		-.921**	.569**	-.547**	.139*			-.172**	-.160**	.211**	
PAH	.861**	-.921**		-.459**	.290*	-.160**		.125*	.144*	.220**	-.174**	
HDL	-.618**	.569**	-.459**		-.708**				-.226*			
SPSL	.558**	-.547**	.290*	-.708**								
E1	-.126*		-.129*			.703**		-.195**	.159**	-.134*	.170**	.309**
E3						.808**	.174**	-.235**	.346**		.250**	.506**
E4	-.125*		-.145*			.797**		-.255**	.245**		.226**	.407**
E6	-.116*	.152**	-.138*			.656**	.213**		.135*		.323**	.400**
A1							.395**	.281**	-.218**	.125*		

A2						.557**	.253**		.171**		.242**	
A3	-.224**	.248**	-.235**			.255**	.458**	-.132*	.284**		.306**	.378**
A4						.620**	.327**		.209**	.152**	.320**	
A5	.163**	-.196**	.215**			.626**	.169**	.403**	.404**	.179**	.586**	
I1						.129*	.705**	-.195**	.308**		.175**	
I4						.281**	.714**	-.121*	.349**	.182**	.278**	
I5						-.273**	.183**	.817**	-.364**	.382**		
I6						-.249**	.137*	.711**	-.364**	.289**		
I8	.127*	-.122*	.156*			-.168**	.291**	.606**	.447**		.251**	
S	.179**	-.151*	.132*			.302**	.299**	-.293**	.963**		.125*	.683**
B						.223**	.325**		.638**	.123*	.261**	
V1						.172**	.146*		.155**	.712**	.267**	
V2	-.169**	.198**	-.160**			.237**	.207**		.119*		.590**	.348**
V3		.178**	-.135*			.263**	.258**				.674**	.394**
%						.395**	.553**	.334**	.209**	.289**	.424**	.643**
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).												
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).												
Abbreviations could be seen in table 1.												

The negative correlation between graduation year and professional activity length, possibilities for development, commitment to the workplace, sense of community and insecurity at work submit the implementation need of an accurate psycho-social intervention model; where responsibility and degree of freedom at work, mental health and vitality, shouldn't be underestimated, moreover could present the factors which will empower the individual level of career development.

Professional activity length arbitrate negatively with work demands (E1, E4 and E6), degree of freedom at work and mental health, which demonstrate that this aspect must be balanced in time with work rewards, in our case pointing more attention on professional environmental and cultural factors, commitment to the workplace, sense of community, security at work, job sa-

tisfaction and wellbeing (see table 2).

An advanced level of study, effect positively on work insecurity, thereby increasing the grade of quantitative demands. Contrarily HDL component is moderated negatively by bio-psychological resources (age and activity length). Thus, we can launch the following relationship affinity: as the professional increase the professional activity length, the more difficult it will be to make a decision to advance in the career, as an effect of adaptation to the work environment and strengthening the edges of the work comfort zone.

The factorial components of the test demonstrated significant consistency, barring:

- professional demands with psychosocial factors related to the professional activity;
- psychosocial factors related to the professional activity with insecurity at

work, job satisfaction or wellbeing;

- environmental and cultural professional factors with professional demands;

- insecurity at work with job satisfaction or wellbeing;

- job satisfaction or wellbeing with professional demands;

- health with environmental, cultural professional factors and psychosocial factors related to the professional activity.

The meager psychosocial work outcomes unbalance the meaning of professional work system, effects and relation which should be more revealed and explanatory described. The existence of this shortcomings cause us to approach it in an atomically manner, taking into account also other trigger factors, as self-concept, updating need, achievement motivation etc.

In the context of human activity increase the society demands concerning professional meaning. Professions itself changes depending on the characteristics of the current labor market and personal standards. These fluctuations will change continuously on background of rules, ethics, principles which underlying concepts and vocational training. Of course we can remodel and modulate these changes by developing vocational or professional programs, by expanding the organizational and managerial approaches, orienting their focuses on self-organization practice, but they will not really cause the BENE MERENTI-individual development or work balance establishment.

In conclusion, an error would be to assume that the companies will operate in ideal conditions of work, or in a homogeneous environment, and the

choice of human resources will be focused only on the assessment of statistics of work performance, the job conditions and other socio-demographic characteristics (age, health, social status, financial situation, labor productivity, experience and training).

Our results prove the valence of psycho-individual resources developed and obtained via experience in the professional environment. Also these outcomes should be taken into consideration when are developed, implemented and assessed professional standards, where the human resource present the core component of provided health, educational and social services.

Researching the multimodal relations in terms of work balance will bring new data in this broad picture of professionalism in Moldova, with a great impact on: multiculturalism, career choice, activity role, strength, burn-out and professional deformation, professional role, facilitation and training inhibition, professional conduct, professional learning, professional categorization, professional cognition, work compliance, vocational obedience etc.

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