

Predictors of work-life balance for women entrepreneurs in the North-East Region of Romania

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Abstract. *The paper aims to investigate the predictors of work-life balance of women entrepreneurs in the North-East Region of Romania. It emphasizes features of interaction between professional and personal life in case of women and reviews main disturbance or enhancing factors that impact work-life balance of women entrepreneurs. A sample of 50 female entrepreneurs from the North-East Region of Romania was surveyed in order to assess their work-life balance and the factors that correlate with it. The study uses correlation and correspondence analysis to test the existence of a relationship between various factors in the fields of work and personal life, as well as factors of social and psychological nature and the way in which women entrepreneurs perceive their work-life balance. The outcomes of the study identify the degree to which the working hours of women entrepreneurs match family and social commitments and the frequency with which it happens that women entrepreneurs feel tension in the household regarding the time dedicated to work-related activities as good predictors of work-life balance in case of women entrepreneurs in the North-East Region of Romania.*

Keywords: work-life balance, women entrepreneurs, the North-East Region of Romania

JEL Codes: C13, J16, J22, L26.

1. Introduction

The issue of work-life balance in literature on women entrepreneurship is of interest in the context in which women face an unequal distribution of childcare and other household duties that become major barriers when they start and manage their businesses. The fact that besides completing the workplace demands, women entrepreneurs have to do the major part of child care and household duties makes the balance between their work and home roles be more difficult than for men. Being responsible for a business brings new challenges for women entrepreneurs in terms of finding a balance between their professional and personal life.

This paper aims to address this issue and to investigate the factors that influence the work-life balance of female entrepreneurs in the North-East Region of Romania. To reach this goal, the research first presents a short discussion of work-life balance specific features in the case of women entrepreneurs focusing on factors that disturb this balance or to the contrary support it. The next section outlines the methodological issues (data source and sample, variables, methods). The outcomes of a survey on 50 women entrepreneurs active in the North-East Region of Romania are then discussed in order to test the existence of a relationship

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between various factors in the fields of work and personal life, as well as factors of social and psychological nature and the way in which women entrepreneurs perceive their work-life balance. The paper ends with the concluding remarks and references.

2. Work-life balance of women entrepreneurs and factors that influence it

Pocock [1] states that work-life balance is: „...about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. It is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected as the norm to the mutual benefit of the individual, business and society”.

The ability to control the workplace and home environment and, therefore, balancing professional and personal life is many times more difficult for women entrepreneurs than for their male counterparts due to disproportionate division of domestic responsibilities. In many societies, family duties are considered to be the main responsibility of women, while men are viewed as the breadwinners of a family [2]. This situation involves the fact that work and life come with different sets of priorities and challenges for men and women. Based on societal norms, men may concentrate on career as they are not expected to participate in household and child care. The same societal norms still expect women to focus on family care [3] and take a big part of responsibilities related to household, cooking and upbringing and education of children. Only after fulfilling these duties, women entrepreneurs can afford taking up the responsibility of a business as their participation in family life is often seen as independent from (and sometimes more important than) work [4]. Therefore, negotiation between work and home is, in case of women, unidirectional [3], in the sense that their involvement in the family life may have negative effects on work but their involvement at the workplace „must not” affect family life. That is why, when a business, a partner, children or elderly parents compete for the time, energy and attention of women, conflict management of inter-roles for women involves working in double or triple shifts.

Consequently, work-life balance disturbance occur as a result of a conflict situation between job demands and personal life duties.

In the case of women entrepreneurs, *work demands* may refer to:

- *Time requirements* (number of working hours). Time pressure as a requirement of work that disturbs work-life balance manifests in the sense that the more time a woman entrepreneur dedicates to her business, the less time she has left for her family. Research showed that entrepreneurs work more hours than employees [5].
- *Requirements related to an imposed schedule* (the degree to which the type of business and its management require a less flexible schedule).
- *Demands resulting from meeting company's needs*, such as financial support and business management (work stressors). Work stressors can produce symptoms of work overload, such as anxiety, frustration, tension and irritability [6]. These negative emotions can spill over from work to family contributing to work-family conflict.
- *Responsibilities to employees*. As women entrepreneurs are responsible for the success of their own business and the income of their employees, their commitment to work is higher than of married women who are just employees.
- *Emotional requirements* (need to succeed professionally, need to prove their value as entrepreneurs, need to establish themselves as successful business women).

Personal life demands refer to:

- *Parental demands* (parental status, number of children, children's age, share of child care, time dedicated to childcare). Parents tend to experience more conflict situations between work and family

than entrepreneurs who are not parents, as they have to spend more time at home, taking care of their children. Younger children demand more of their parents' time. Large families also are inclined to be more time demanding than small families [6]. Many researchers state that the number of children directly influences the demands from family [7]. Intuitively, taking responsibility for children at home requires dedicating time and energy for meeting their daily needs. Even though some results were not conclusive [8], Netemeyer et al. [9] and Kossek et al. [10] found significant relationships between the number of children living at home and the family interference with work.

- *Demands that appear in relation with female entrepreneur marital status.* Marital status could be a strong predictor of the perceived family demand. Married female entrepreneur is likely to experience more demand from the family in the form of obligations to her husband that unmarried women do not have [11].
- *Household responsibilities* (share of house work, time given to household duties). Although last decades have shown that men get involved in care giving to a higher degree, there are studies that found that women spend on the average about four times more time than men with such activities [12].
- *Caretaking of the elderly or other dependents* besides children (number of dependents, time given to caretaking of dependents). It is necessary to consider also the relations of dependence (for instance, grandparents) that could directly impact the levels of family demand [13].
- *Free time demands.*
- *Requirements concerning carrying out complementary activities to work* (such as to continue studies and develop a talent/hobby).
- *Emotional requirements* (need to have attention of family members, need of affection and support of the close ones).

Among the factors that help to improve work-life balance of the women entrepreneur, we can name *autonomy* and *flexibility* in the workplace, and *family* and other close people *support* in personal life.

Autonomy and the ability to manage her activities at the workplace should reduce the level of demand as the woman entrepreneur has the freedom to handle work demand without so many restrictive schedules and demands [11].

Flexibility given by the fact that the woman entrepreneur can make a decision on her own on her schedule ensures, for instance, a flexible schedule that can reduce the perceived work demand. A high number of women choose to work on their own as an alternative flexible path for a career allowing them to better manage their family duties [14]. Costin [15] found in the literature that women start their business to have more flexibility and freedom in organizing their commitments to job, spare time and family. The chance to adjust their working hours should thus allow female entrepreneurs to manage easier their time in fulfilling their workplace and home duties.

Family members supportive behaviour can help to buffer work-family conflicts experienced by some working women and, therefore, in ensuring a better work-life balance between the two main areas of life. The support can be given as attitude, be of emotional nature or instrumental and can be targeted to entrepreneurs or to work [16]. Regarding family support to entrepreneur, family can provide support for home responsibilities or work obligations which potentially reduce family demand. Family support to work involves the fact that, in addition to reducing family demand, family members may work to reduce family duties, situation that specifically frees time and energy for work tasks, the family demands becoming even lower [11]. The husband (the partner) is an important part in the support network of women entrepreneurs, his support being a major asset for them [16]. In addition to husband's support, the support of other people

such as housekeepers or nurses that take over house and childcare responsibilities and can help in reducing work-life conflict.

3. Material and method

3.1. Data source and sample

A sample of 50 female entrepreneurs active in the North-East Region of Romania was surveyed in order to collect information on their work-life balance and the factors influencing it.

The respondents were identified through internet websites of female entrepreneurs' networks from this region or through referrals obtained mainly from other entrepreneurs.

The following selection criteria were applied to maintain consistency:

- The organisation has been founded by the female entrepreneur.
- The organisation is at least 51% owned by a woman and the management and daily business operations are controlled by her.

General characteristics (age, county, rural or urban area) of female entrepreneurs sample included in the study are shown in table 1.

Table 1. General characteristics of the sample of female entrepreneurs

Parameter	Region of Romania:
	North-East (n = 50)
Age (%)	
18-24	0
25-34	16
35-49	56
50-64	24
65+	4
County (%)	
Bacau	14
Botosani	4
Iasi	26
Neamt	4
Suceava	18
Vaslui	34
Rural or urban area (%)	
Rural	24
Urban	76

For the purpose of this study, a data collection tool in the form of a questionnaire was used. The questionnaires were sent to women entrepreneurs by email, after a previous telephone conversation, or were handed personally by people who have recommended them.

3.2. Variables

Work-life balance was measured by a score given by respondents on a scale from 0 to 10 (0 – totally misbalanced, 10 – perfect balance) to balance between their professional life (work) and personal life (family, home, free time, etc.). We considered as potential predictors variables describing: woman entrepreneur's home life (marital status; number of children in her care; number of her dependents other than children; number of hours spent daily and weekly on household activities), her work situation (number of employees; number of hours spent daily and weekly at work), as well as a few factors of social (different

conflict situations that may appear between demands at home and at work) and psychological nature (certain women entrepreneur's inner feelings that appear as a result of different conflicts between work and personal life demands).

The included social factors take the form of various conflict situations that may arise between work and home demands and are expressed by the following variables:

- *Do you fail to fulfil social obligations due to work?*
- *Are your household activities interrupted by work-related phone calls?*
- *To what extent your working hours match family and social commitments?*

Psychological factors in this study refer to women entrepreneur's inner feelings that appear as a result of different conflict situations between work and personal life demands, namely:

- *Do you feel torn between work and personal life demands?*
- *Do you worry about work issues when you are at home?*
- *Do you feel tension at home due to the amount of time dedicated to work?*

3.3. Methods

To check if there is a relationship between demographic factors (marital status, number of children, and number of other dependents than children) and work-life balance of the surveyed women entrepreneurs, we analysed the distribution of scores given to work-life balance according to the values of each included factor.

For independent variables with numerical expression, we calculated Pearson correlation coefficients between the score given to work-life balance and each possible predictor.

As answers associated with social and psychological factors included in the study are expressed nominally (and namely *Never, Very rarely, Very often or Not quite well, Well, Very well*), exploring the possibility that these factors influence work-life balance perceived by women entrepreneurs in the North-East Region of Romania is carried out by means of correspondence analysis. This technique allowed us to draw a map of correspondences for each selected factor separately. These maps graphically illustrate the possible associations between scores given to work-life balance and answer categories of factors of influence. Also, the statistical test χ^2 is used to test the existence of a relationship between each selected factor and the assessment of work-life balance. If the level of test significance noted *sig.* is low (for instance, lower than 0.05), then it can be stated that there is a relationship between the two studied variables.

4. Results

The distribution of relative frequency of work-life balance scores by marital status of respondent (table 2) displays no pattern in the repartition of shares of each score among the analysed categories of women entrepreneurs, which means that it cannot be identified a relationship between the marital status of an entrepreneur and her work-life balance. Still, it should be noted that one of the categories, namely „widow”, did not appear in the sample.

Percentage distribution of work-life balance scores by the number of children a respondent has in her care (table 3) shows that more children she has in her care lower is her life-work balance, which means that her work-life balance is more misbalanced. Also, the resulted shares indicate a higher concentration of scores of 8, 9 and 10 among women entrepreneurs with no children or just one child in their care.

When comparing the distribution of women entrepreneurs who have children with that of those without children (table 3), it could be observed that the evaluations of work-life balance vary from very low scores (3 and 4) up to 10 in both categories. Nevertheless, it could be noted that a significantly higher percentage (71%) of women entrepreneurs with no children gave scores of 8, 9 and 10 to their work-life balance

compared to the corresponding percentage of respondents having children (61.5%).

Percentage distribution of work-life balance scores by the number of dependents other than children found in respondent's care (table 4) show that for the given sample it cannot be identified a relationship between the number of dependents at home and work-life balance of the woman entrepreneur as the shares spread does not show a specific pattern.

Table 2. The distribution of women entrepreneurs by marital status and work-life balance score

Work-life balance score	Marital status			
	unmarried	married	consensual union	divorced
3				14.3%
4	20%	2.7%		
5		16.2%		
6	20%	5.4%		14.3%
7	20%	20%		14.3%
8	40%	32.4%	100%	14.3%
9		29.7%		28.6%
10		8.1%		14.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Survey data

Table 3. The distribution of women entrepreneurs by number of children in their care and work-life balance score

Work-life balance score	Number of children				Do you have children?	
	0	1	2	3	Yes	No
3	4.2%					4.2%
4		7.1%	9.1%		7.7%	
5	6.7%	7.1%		100%	7.7%	16.7%
6	4.2%	7.1%	18.2%		11.5%	4.2%
7	4.2%	7.1%	18.2%		11.5%	4.2%
8	37.5%	28.6%	27.3%		26.9%	37.5%
9	29.2%	28.6%	18.2%		23.1%	29.2%
10	4.2%	14.3%	9.1%		11.5%	4.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Survey data

Table 4. The distribution of women entrepreneurs by number of dependents, other than children, and work-life balance score

Work-life balance score	Number of dependents			
	0	1	2	3
3	2.5%			
4	5.0%			
5	10.0%		50%	
6	5.0%	20%	25%	
7	10.0%			
8	30.0%	60%		100%
9	27.5%	20%	25%	
10	10.0%			
Total	100.0%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Survey data

Table 5 presents the values of Pearson correlation coefficients calculated between the number of children and that of other dependents and the scores given by respondents to their work-life balance, between the

average number of daily and weekly hours spent for household duties and the work-life balance scores, between the number of employees and the score, as well as between the average number of daily and weekly working hours and the scores given by female entrepreneurs to their work-life balance.

For all selected indicators with numerical expression, there have been obtained negative values of Pearson correlation coefficients expressing an inverse relation between these indicators and work-life balance. All correlation coefficients have values in the interval (-0.200; 0). These values very close to zero of correlation coefficients indicate, for the sample, weak relationships between included factors and work-life balance. Also, all *sig.* values associated with these coefficients are higher than the significance threshold $\alpha = 0.05$, which means that none of the estimated coefficients is statistically significant for the population of women entrepreneurs from which the sample was taken. The results do not identify any of the considered variables as an important predictor of work-life balance of women entrepreneurs in the North-East Region of Romania.

Table 5. Pearson correlation coefficients calculated between various predictors of work-life balance and work-life balance score

Predictors of work-life balance	Pearson correlation coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
Number of children	-0.079	0.587
Number of dependents, other than children	-0.130	0.368
Average number of hours spent daily with household duties	-0.103	0.475
Average number of hours spent weekly with household duties	-0.114	0.432
Number of employees	-0.105	0.477
Average number of daily working hours	-0.167	0.247
Average number of weekly working hours	-0.140	0.332

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The maps of correspondences between work-life balance scores and answers categories of each selected factor taken separately, as well as the values of χ^2 statistics significance calculated to test the existence of a relationship between each included factor and work-life balance have emphasized the following:

- There could not be identified a relationship between the frequency by which woman entrepreneur *fails to fulfil her social obligations due to work* and her work-life balance score (*sig.* = 0.209 > $\alpha = 0.05$).
- There could not be identified a relation between the frequency by which *household activities* of woman entrepreneur *are interrupted by work-related phone calls* and her work-life balance score (*sig.* = 0.765 > $\alpha = 0.05$).
- Graphical representations of modalities indicate a greater closeness of the scores of 9 and 10 – corresponding to a higher level of work-life balance – to the answer *Very rarely* chosen by women entrepreneurs to describe the frequency with which these two events occur.
- There is a relationship between *the degree to which working hours* of women entrepreneurs *match family and social commitments* and their work-life balance scores (*sig.* = 0.005 < $\alpha = 0.05$). Graphical representation of the modalities of the two variables (figure 1c) indicates a strong association of the scores 9 and 10 with the answer *Very well* and of the scores 7 and 8 with the answer *Well* with which the women entrepreneurs assessed the harmonization between working hours and commitments outside work.

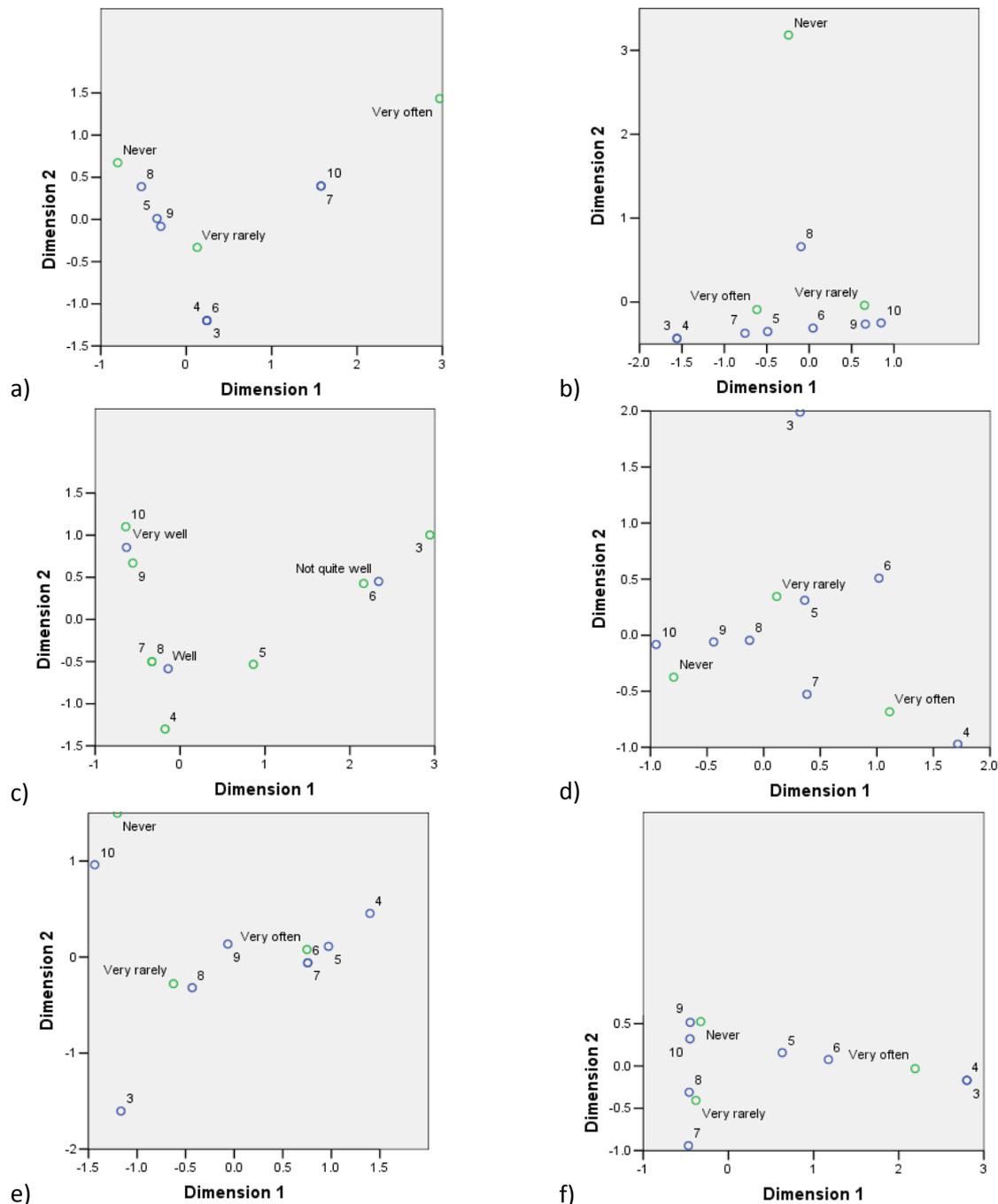


Fig. 1: The map of correspondences between: a) the frequency by which woman entrepreneur fails to fulfil her social obligations due to work (Never, Very rarely, Very often); b) the frequency by which household activities of woman entrepreneur are interrupted by work-related phone calls (Never, Very rarely, Very often); c) the degree to which working hours of woman entrepreneur match family and social commitments (Not quite well, Well, Very well); d) the frequency of appearance of the feeling of being torn between work and personal life demands in woman entrepreneur (Never, Very rarely, Very often); e) the frequency of appearance of the feeling of worrying of woman entrepreneur related to work issues when she is at home (Never, Very rarely, Very often); f) the frequency with which woman entrepreneur happens to feel tension at home due to the amount of time dedicated to work (Never, Very rarely, Very often) and the score she gives to her work-life balance (from 0 to 10).

- There could not be identified a relationship between the frequency of appearance of the *feeling of being torn between work and personal life demands* in woman entrepreneur and her work-life balance score ($sig. = 0.894 > \alpha = 0.05$). Graphical representation of the modalities of the two variables (figure 1d) indicates though a grouping of the scores 9 and 10 close to answer *Never* corresponding to this feeling frequency of occurrence. There could not be identified a relationship between the frequency of appearance of the feeling of *worrying of a woman entrepreneur related to work issues when she is at home* and her work-life balance score ($sig. = 0.322 > \alpha = 0.05$). Graphical representation of the modalities of the two variables (figure 1e) indicates an association of the occurrence of the score 10 with answer *Never* and of the occurrence of score 8 with the answer *Very rarely*.
- There is a relationship between the frequency with which a woman entrepreneur happens to *feel tension at home due to the amount of time dedicated to work* and her work-life balance score ($sig. = 0.004 < \alpha = 0.05$). Graphical representation of the modalities of the two variables (figure 1f) indicates a strong association of scores 9 and 10 with the answer *Never* and scores 7 and 8 with the answer *Very rarely* by which the women entrepreneurs assess the frequency of occurrence of this feeling.

5. Conclusions

The results do not show any statistically significant relationship between variables describing woman entrepreneur's home situation (marital status; number of children in her care; number of her dependents other than children; number of hours spent daily and weekly on household activities) and her work-life balance.

Also, there could not be identified a relationship between variables describing woman entrepreneur's work situation (number of employees; number of hours spent daily and weekly at work) and her work-life balance.

Nevertheless, a higher concentration of scores of 8, 9 and 10 could be noted among women entrepreneurs with no children or having only one child in their care. It was also observed that a significantly higher percentage (71%) of women entrepreneurs with no children rated with scores of 8, 9 and 10 their work-life balance compared to the corresponding percentage of respondents who have children (61.5%).

Regarding the included social and psychological factors, the maps of correspondences between work-life balance scores and answer categories of each selected factor taken separately indicate a higher closeness of the scores 8, 9 and 10 – corresponding to a higher level of work-life balance – to the answers *Never* or *Very rarely* used by women entrepreneurs to describe frequency by which various conflict situations occur between their work and home duties. The values of the χ^2 test and their significance demonstrate the existence of a statistically significant relationship between *the degree to which working hours of a woman entrepreneur match family and social commitments* and the score she gives to her work-life balance and between the frequency with which it occurs for a woman entrepreneur to *feel the tension at home related to the amount of time dedicated to work* and her work-life balance score.

The results show that it is not so much the amount of household duties and care putting a pressure on women entrepreneurs that produces disequilibrium of their work-life balance but the conflicts perceived by them between the demands of the two dimensions of their lives (professional and personal life).

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