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STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINDFULNESS
AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE LEVELS

Ion Ovidiu Pânișoară (a)*, Georgeta Pânișoară (b), Cristina Sandu (c), Ruxandra Chirca (d)

*Corresponding author

(a) University of Bucharest, 4-12 Regina Elisabeta Blvd, Bucharest, Romania

(b) University of Bucharest, 4-12 Regina Elisabeta Blvd, Bucharest, Romania

(c) University of Bucharest, 4-12 Regina Elisabeta Blvd, Bucharest, Romania

(d) University of Bucharest, 4-12 Regina Elisabeta Blvd, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between the levels of mindfulness and work-life balance in the Romanian families. Work-life balance is a powerful indicator for young families in Romania in terms of mental well-being, building a positive and healthy family environment and also well-being in interpersonal relationships. For families with children, well-being and awareness of their emotional states involve a strong internal agreement in terms of self-satisfaction or complacency. The participants selected for this study were 60 families, of which 30 families have children and 30 families do not have children. All the subjects were randomly selected. The methods used for this study were two questionnaires: a questionnaire for identifying the level of mindfulness, based on four dimensions – observe, describe, act with awareness, accept without judgment – and a scale for measuring the level of work-life balance. The data were introduced in SPSS Statistics and processed using the Pearson correlation and the *t* test for independent samples. The results have shown that there are statistically significant differences between the Romanian families with children and those without children, regarding the levels of mindfulness and work-life balance. The results of this study have led to the confirmation of the initial hypotheses and the emergence of the idea that well-being and work-life balance are key elements to the emotional and social intelligence of each family.

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Keywords: Mindfulness, work-life balance, satisfaction, well-being.



1. Introduction

The main goal of any family should be the cultivation of mental health, well-being and self-satisfaction of children and families as a whole. This concept of well-being should not be regarded to only in terms of academic results, but also through physical and mental health, as well as coexistence and satisfaction of both parents and children. Building a healthy and positive family environment, able to generate emotional balance, is one of the key elements for success (Grundy & Henretta, 2006).

Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of emotions states that positive emotions have an immediate effect on our cognitive skills, well-being and endurance (Fredrickson, 2001). They also play a fundamental role in enhancing our resources for overcoming difficult situations (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004). These emotions are imperative for a proper physical and mental upgrowth, although the last two also depend on the social contexts in which they occur. Nonetheless, well-being should prevail in any family environment, since our emotional development is conditioned by the immediate relationship between interpersonal trust and family satisfaction (Baker & Maupin, 2009).

An efficient way to improve well-being is through mindfulness, which involves "intentionally bringing one's attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment and is often taught through a variety of meditation exercises" (Baer, 2003, p. 125). This practice of meditation, which involves paying a close attention to our feelings and categorising them, also enables the acknowledgement that our initial perception of facts and emotions is not invariably correct (Linehan, 1993). That being said, although mindfulness is not an exclusive solution for coping with difficulties in interpersonal or self-relationships, it has certainly been proven to support the individual's optimal functioning (McCloskey, 2015).

Another fundamental concept for developing a state of well-being and self-satisfaction is considered to be work-life balance. "Pressures from work have been intensifying in the recent years. Factors that play an evident role include an increase in working hours, the advances in information technology, peer involvement, complicated family commitments, involvement of women in the workforce, information load, need for speed in response, inconsistent working hours due to globalisation (supporting various time zones), increased supervisory support, flexibility in working and many more" (Gopinathan & Raman, 2015, p. 1211). In this context, work-life balance has gained more and more attention throughout the past few years, since individuals and institutions concurrently became interested in improving their work performance, self-complacency and family satisfaction. The individual's quality of life, including the work performance and focus (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2011), will certainly enhance, on the condition that he/she grows to be a work-life balanced person.

In point of families with children, maintaining a state of well-being may become even more challenging, as parents are forced to juggle between their work demands, daily tasks, family commitments and parental responsibilities. Duxbury and Higgins (1991) consider that a conflict between work and family is more likely to occur when the employee also has to comply with his/her obligations as a parent. The repercussions of a work-family conflict often include a low professional commitment (O'Driscoll, Ilgen, & Hildreth, 1992), as well as stress, absenteeism or job dissatisfaction (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002).

2. Problem Statement

When acknowledging the possible negative consequences of the conflict between work and family, the necessity of bringing forth a series of the solutions for well-being and self-satisfaction becomes imperative. In view of the aforementioned facts, the present study serves this growing need of investigating the link between mindfulness and work-life balance, together with the difference between families with children and those without children in terms of the two concepts under discussion.

3. Research Questions

H1. There is a statistically significant correlation between the dimensions of mindfulness and the levels of work-life balance in the Romanian families.

H2. There are differences between the families with children and those without children regarding their level of mindfulness.

H3. There are differences between the families with children and those without children in terms of their work-life balance.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between the levels of mindfulness and work-life balance in the Romanian families. Work-life balance is a powerful indicator for young families in Romania in terms of mental well-being, building a positive and healthy family environment and also well-being in interpersonal relationships. For families with children, well-being and awareness of their emotional states involve a strong internal agreement in terms of self-satisfaction or complacency.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Subjects

The participants selected for this study were 60 families from Romania, of which 30 families with children and 30 families without children. Both categories were randomly selected from the urban environment. The subjects were briefly instructed before filling in the questionnaires.

5.2. Materials

The first instrument used for this study was the Scale for assessing work-life balance, developed in 2005 by Jeremy Hayman, professor at Auckland University of Technology. The questionnaire includes 15 items, with a Likert 1-to-7 response scale. The items are meant to investigate the level of work-life balance.

The second instrument was the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills, developed by Professor Ruth Baer (2003), at the University of Kentucky. The inventory contains 39 items with a Likert-type response scale and is meant to investigate four dimensions of mindfulness: observe, describe, act with awareness and accept without judgement.

6. Findings

The collected data were entered into SPSS statistical software. Due to the normal distribution of data, we were able to apply a Pearson correlation test, with the purpose of observing a statistically significant correlation between the dimensions of mindfulness and the levels of work-life balance in the Romanian families.

In order to identify the level of work-life balance for all the subjects selected for this study, we used the descriptive statistics (number of subjects, sum, mean and standard deviation) from Table 01. The results show high level of work-life balance among families in Romania, which leads to the idea that the profession-life relationship can be successfully built and developed if it is based on satisfaction and self-esteem.

Table 01. Descriptive Statistics – Work-life balance

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Work-life balance sum	60	15.00	105.00	192.00	84.27	12.833
Valid N (listwise)	60					

Table 02 shows the descriptive statistics, according to which there are high levels of mindfulness, for all its four dimensions, in the Romanian families. As it can be noticed in the table below, all the four dimensions of mindfulness – observe, describe, act with awareness and accept without judgement – show high scores, although the highest score we encounter is in the description of emotions. This can also be due to the age of the participants, all of them being aged 20-40.

Table 02. Descriptive Statistics – Mindfulness

Group Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Observe	60	38.07	4.338	.518
Describe	60	43.37	4.995	.594
Act with awareness	60	37.07	4.834	.565
Accept without judgement	60	39.10	4.990	.584

Table 03 presents the results of the Pearson correlation test, with a statistically significant correlation between mindfulness and work-life balance, $\text{sig}=.045$, which stands for a very strong relationship between mindfulness and work-life balance among Romanian families. Awareness, expression and action of one's emotional states, together with work-life balance, are the key to building well-being, self-esteem and positive thinking.

Table 03. Results for Pearson correlation

Pearson correlation			
		work-life	mindfulness
Work-life	Pearson correlation	1	.746
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.045
	N	60	60
Mindfulness	Pearson correlation	.746	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	
	N	60	60

To confirm the last two hypotheses, we applied the *t* test for independent samples, and the results showed statistically significant differences between families with children and those without children, as the first ones scored higher results in mindfulness and work-life balance (Tables 04 and 05).

Table 04. Results for independent sample *t* test for mindfulness

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	F	Sig.			
Equal variances assumed	9.411	.546	2.950	28	.006
Equal variances not assumed			2.950	20.094	.008

Table 05. Results for independent sample *t* test for work-life balance

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	F	Sig.			
Equal variances assumed	9.734	.576	2.745	29	.008
Equal variances not assumed			2.745	27.094	.005

7. Conclusion

The results of the present study confirmed our hypotheses, indicating the following: for young families in Romania, a high level of mindfulness is essential for both their relationships and communication with their own children and also for achieving a level of balance between personal and professional life. In conjunction with mindfulness, well-being and self-esteem are fundamental elements for building and developing a correct and positive self-image, with the purpose of efficiently managing adaptability and communication processes in the interpersonal space. So, taking into account the results presented in this article, there are significant differences between parents with children and without children regarding the level of mindfulness and work-life balance, which leads to the idea of subsequent research about lifestyle and parenting styles.

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