

## WORK AND LIFE BALANCE – THE NEW AGE MANAGEMENT MATTER

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**Abstract.** Even apart from the dramatic statistical data about sicknesses caused by imbalance and burnout, surveys make it clear that individuals are struggling to enjoy living because of the growing workload and the persistent presence of technologies around us (EQLS, 2016). Work-life imbalance causes loss for companies for several reasons - intentional or unintentional absence at work, high employee turnover, low productivity, insurance costs etc.

The scientific question arises from the fact that until now there have not been clear researches which indicate the model of how the work and life balance (WLB) or imbalance is being created. Particularly, author is interested in how the interaction between the values of employee and employer or direct supervisor affects WLB of the employee. However, before practical research the aim of this paper is to evaluate the importance of this topic in Latvia and to detect the major steps to even the balance out between work and private life by using the data that is already available. The methodology of the research is to gather local (i.e. TNS) and international (i.e. EUROSTAT) secondary data available to assess the current situation in Latvia. The research shows that unemployed people in Latvia tend to feel less stressed than those who are employed, which shows that although unemployment itself may cause stress, workplace and employment creates even a greater room for stress related factors. Further author is determined to conduct a research to later provide a model, which could be practically used by managers to help them with managing the WLB for their employees.

**Key words:** *work-life balance, job satisfaction, stress*

**JEL code:** J28, M54

### Introduction

In life there are several roles for every member of the society – to be an employee or employer, a husband or a wife, a mother or a father, a daughter or a son, a friend and not to forget to be a human. These roles take energy, time and in the great pace of the everyday life it is possible to notice a conflict between these roles. This conflict is only one of the reasons for work and private life imbalance in life of members of our modern society. The imbalance in turn results as dissatisfaction of both work and life, it leads to greater stress levels and thus to stress related illnesses. In extreme cases the imbalance may cause burnout and even a phenomenon called *karōshi*, which in Japanese means literally “overwork death”. The statistical data from several sources show that the tendency is getting worse over time, for example, Europe’s Quality of Life Survey, which is being organized once in every two years, shows a clear trend even when comparing the difference of data of two years apart. In their opinion, the trend can be explained by the growing workload, requirements and the increasing speed of life. Undeniably, the balance between work and private life is, first of all, an individual’s responsibility. However, there are many aspects which are dependent on employer and a conscious approach towards the employees.

There have been studies, which seek for the answers of what are the main influencing factors, which cause work and life imbalance. However, there is a lack of scientific attention to the factors of organizational culture and particularly the interaction of the values of an employee and the values of the employer or the supervisor. Thus author sees a scientific problem that the role of values has not been detected and evaluated in determining the work and life balance. Work-life imbalance is an important factor when analysing efficiency of an enterprise for the reason that it causes intentional or

unintentional absence at work, high employee turnover, low productivity, higher insurance costs, low job satisfaction and other consequences. The aim of the research is to evaluate the current situation in the particular matter in Latvia. For it to be done, the author will gather quantitative and qualitative information from official researches and surveys done in the past years. The further aim is to assess the current threats and losses because of work and private life imbalance and to foster a conscious approach towards company policy making to take care of the greatest resource of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – the human capital. Author wants to raise a theoretical discussion on the mode of entrepreneurship of 21<sup>st</sup> century and the role of conscious capitalism in it, which is an emerging phenomenon among scholars. The novelty of this research is to raise the question of human capital as the greatest value of entrepreneurship and to foster the research and practical implementation of conscious capitalism in modern business practices in Latvia. Information sources used in this paper are scientific papers and sources, which provide secondary statistical data on the particular matter.

## **Research results and discussion**

Taking into account that work plays a great role in every life of an employee, job satisfaction is one of the key components which builds the overall satisfaction of life and overall wellbeing. Undeniably, job satisfaction is also making a great difference on economic indicators – researches are showing that it gives impact of productivity (Halkos et al, 2010, Van de Voorde et al, 2012), on turnover of employees (Freeman, 1978, Clark et al, 1988, Clark, 2001, Antecol et al, 2009), and on absence of work (Brown, 1996). Although job satisfaction is a widely examined topic among scholars, there still isn't a united approach towards it. Most widely used definition for the term "job satisfaction" dates back to 1976, when Locke defined it as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976). Locke's theoretical model is the one that is most widely used in researches about one's job satisfaction. The main idea of the model is that job satisfaction is being determined by the difference from what the individual expects and what he gets in return. In other words it means that if one strongly values autonomy in workplace, then the actual situation whether he or she gets autonomy or not strongly influences overall job satisfaction. It can be aggregated in a formula –

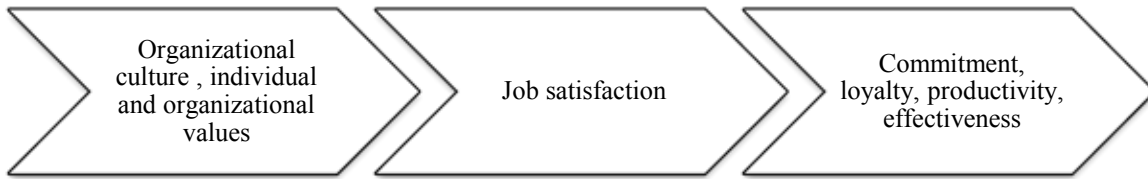
$$S = (V_c - P) \times V_i$$

Formula 1. **Theoretical model of job satisfaction**

Where S is satisfaction,  $V_c$  is content of the value that one desires, P is perception on how much the individual has actually received at work and  $V_i$  is a coefficient showing the level of importance of a particular value (Judge et al, 2008). This theory states that job satisfaction is not directly connected with particular factors which are or aren't present in a workplace, but it is rather important whether this factor is important or not for the individual. For instance, if the microclimate between colleagues is not pleasant, but it is not a value for the particular employee (for example, if one is working from home or one's work is not connected with communication with others), then one's job satisfaction might not be influenced by lack of this factor. The overall job satisfaction can be detected when several factors are counted together. In author's opinion this clearly shows the importance of matching values between the organization and the employee, while it also shows the importance of an employee as a core value for the enterprise to ensure that the workplace meets the needs and values of the employees.

Most of the researchers see job satisfaction as a concept that consists of several aspects. Most widely used is categorization, which includes 5 aspects – salary, promotion, colleagues, supervision and work content (Smith et al. 1969). Locke, however, adds work recognition, working conditions, policy and other aspects (Locke, 1976). Many researchers believe that work which gives motivation mainly because of the work content, will give a greater satisfaction that work

without a sense of fulfilment. Several researchers believe that interaction between individual and organizational values and adjusted organizational culture leads to job satisfaction. Schematically it may be seen in Fig.1. (Goštautas et al, 2015).



Source: Goštautas V, Diskiene D., Relationship between individual and organizational values and employees' job satisfaction

Fig. 1. Hypothetical relationship between values, culture, job satisfaction and other variables

Another influencing factor is work orientation. Work orientation means whether an employee chooses to work in a particular organisation because he or she sees it as either as work, as a part of career or as a calling. Individuals, who see their occupation as work, concentrate on the financial benefits they get from work. In their perception work is an opportunity to accumulate financial resources, which can be spent outside work. Individuals who see their occupation as career sees their job as an investment in their personality and life path. They are motivated not only by their salary, but by the opportunity to acquire a higher social status, to gain power and to raise their self esteem. However, the ones, who see their job as a calling, feel it as a part of their personality. Their greatest motivation is neither money, nor status, but the end result and their ability to benefit society by their work (Bellah et al, 1985, Wrzesniewski et al, 1997)

### 1. Work and private life balance connection with job satisfaction

Work and life balance together with job satisfaction are responsible for employee performance – there is a positive correlation between both (Isse et al, 2018). Undoubtedly, work-life balance is vital for individuals' wellbeing, organisations' performance and a functioning society (Grady et al, 2008). While there are numerous researches and there is still a discussion about both – work-life balance and job satisfaction, researchers mostly agree and explain that work and life balance is a set of internal factors, which take part in the overall evaluation of job satisfaction (Yadav et al, 2014).

Source: author's construction based on the literature reviewed

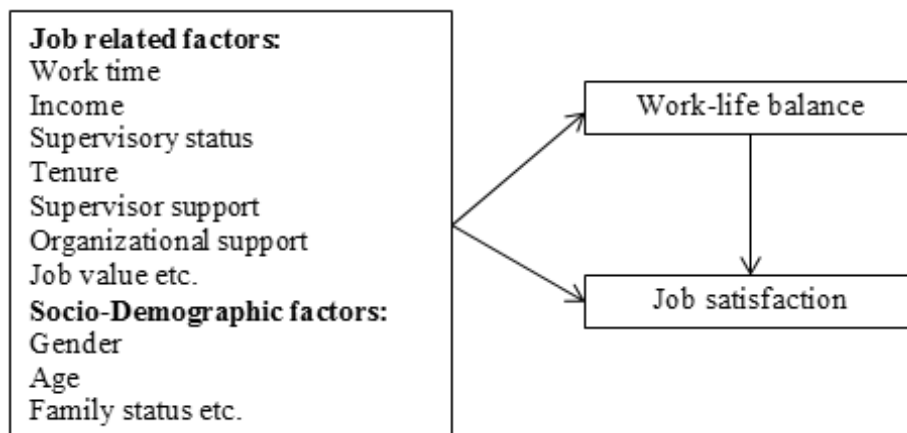


Fig. 2. Interrelations of work-life balance and job satisfaction

Although researchers had already had an insight about the topic even before the World War I, a crucial development of the concept started only in the 80ies of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lockwood, 2003). Work and life balance nowadays is a widely

researched topic, which has been topical in several fields – management (Konrad et al, 2000), psychology (Hegvedt et al, 2002), sociology (Glass et al, 1997) and mostly in the context of human resource management (Hill et al, 1989, De Cieri et al, 2005). Different terms are used by different scholars to refer to ‘work-life balance’. For example, Frone (Frone, 2003), Greenhaus et al. (Greenhaus et al., 2003), and Clark (Clark, 2000) refer to the term ‘work-family balance’; Clarke (Clarke et al, 2004) refer to ‘work-family fit’; Burke (Burke, 2000) refers to ‘work-personal life balance’; and Grady et al. (Grady et al, 2008) refer to ‘work-life balance’. As work-family balance is often associated with traditional families, i.e., individuals who are married with children (Barnett et al, 2001), and this study refers to a family in both its traditional and non-traditional form; in order to therefore avoid any confusion, the term ‘work-life balance’ is used throughout this paper.

Clark defines work and life balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at **work** and home, with a minimum of role conflict” (Clark, 2000). Clarke et al (Clarke, 2004) state that work and life balance (WLB) is an “equilibrium or maintaining overall sense of harmony in life”, while other scholars (Greenhaus et al., 2003) define WLB as “the amount of time and the degree of satisfaction with the work and family role”.

There are several theories, which describe the nature of work and life conflicts, which cause imbalance. For example, researchers separate conflicts which are caused by time, strain based conflicts and behavior-based conflicts. Time becomes a reason for conflict when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another role. Time-based conflict is consistent with the excessive work time and schedule conflict dimensions identified by Pleck (Pleck et al, 1980) and role overload identified by Kahn (Kahn, 1964). Strain-based conflicts involve role-produced strains i.e. there is considerable evidence that stressful work factors can produce strain symptoms such as tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy and irritability. In short the second form of work-family conflict happen because the roles are incompatible in the sense that the strain created by one makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another role (Greenhaus et al, 1985). Specific patterns of in-role behavior may be incompatible with the expectations regarding behavior in another role. For example, if a male has a managerial position, he is supposed to be emotionally stable, self-reliant and strict, while family members may expect a warm, emotional and nurturing husband and father.

## 2. Current situation in Latvia in terms of work and life balance

Work and life balance in the last years has been a concern for both local and international authorities. Internationally, European Union for several years has conducted a research to overview and control the situation in terms of work and life balance. There are also several initiatives proposed to enhance the situation in EU countries. For example, on 17 November 2017, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission formally proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR, 2017). The Pillar includes an initiative to particularly support work–life balance for parents and carers. The initiative aims to address women's underrepresentation in the labour market and outlines a number of new or improved minimum standards for parental, paternity and carer’s leave.

Locally, Ministry of Welfare has raised the importance of this question. There have been several initiatives under a 3 year long EU project which is meant to foster family friendly practices among employees and employers in Latvia. For example, in 2016 Ministry of Welfare organized a press conference “Work and life balance in the labour market of Latvia” and a seminar “Good Practice for Entrepreneurs in Latvia: Implementing Family-Friendly Principles in the Work Environment and Relationships”. Under this project there was also developed a website [www.darbsungimene.lv](http://www.darbsungimene.lv), which means work and family. The aim of this website is to foster the awareness of the topic of work and life balance in society to enhance the implementation of employee-friendly practices in Latvia. Ministry of Welfare states that both – local and international researches show that one of the approaches for developing human capital is to foster work and life balance

for employees and to integrate family friendly initiatives. Former minister of welfare Jānis Reirs says that very often employers think that balancing between work and life is a task for employees. However, the experience of enterprises clearly shows, that investing in employee-friendly organizational culture, fosters not only the involvement and loyalty, but it is also important for attracting new and holding the existing employees in their workplace (Ministry of Welfare, 2016). The methodology of this paper is to use both – local and international sources to gather secondary data about the work and life balance issue in Latvia and how it can be assessed among other European countries.

EUROSTAT researches show that bad working environment in European Union is responsible for losses in amount of 2,6-3,8% of EU GDP (EUROSTAT, 2009). Also, 8,6% (20 million inhabitants) clearly state work is responsible for their obtained health issues. Since 2003 European Union organizes European Quality of Life Survey, which has been repeated in 2007, 2012 and 2016 (EQLS, 2016). Overall, it is possible to say that there is general progress in different indicators like quality of life, quality of public services, level of optimism. However, the work-life balance has deteriorated over years, which, in author's opinion, could be the cost for raising the standards. In EQLS the work and life balance term consists of 3 dimensions – if employees are too tired to do household jobs, if they experience difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent at work and do they have difficulties on concentrating at work because of family responsibilities. It is believed that the deterioration is prominent because of labour market pressures, new forms of work organisation, and technological progress that sometimes contribute to the blurring of boundaries between private and working lives (Eurofound, 2017). It is also stated that to achieve balance, it is important to have resources – and in this context, time is a critical resource – as well as having the means to address conflicting demands and the related stress. Author would like to agree that time is the most important resource in the context of this issue. While many professionals and even researchers emphasize the importance of family-friendly practices, flexible working hours and other benefits, the actual number of working hours is often ignored. Among all OECD countries and some developing countries Latvia takes 32<sup>nd</sup> position out of 39 in the amount of average working hours per week, which for sure is not a contributing factor to sustain work and life balance (OECD, 2018). Also, due to technologies the time off work is not really completely free – everyone is accessible through e-mails or phones and, in authors opinion, the organizational culture and management practices are important to be developed in an employee-friendly manner to sustain work and life balance.

Are employees in Latvia content and healthy? Are they productive? Ivars Vanadžiņš, researcher in Institute for Occupational Safety and Environmental Health and professor in Riga Stradins University, states that there is a lack of local researches to give precise data, however, the available statistical data is unsatisfactory. He also states that many enterprises have already started to understand that it is obligatory to care for the welfare of employees, not only to increase profits and decrease losses, but also to attract workers, who ensure a competitive advantage for the enterprise. He believes that actions to improve the situation should be taken in a national scale so the employers would see that the employee-friendly choices are also the best for the enterprises (Conference „Providing flexible childcare services to employees working on non-standard working hours”, 2018).

The available data shows that in the Baltic States 60% of employed respondents are too tired from work to do household jobs, 43% feel that they have a difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spend at work and only 23% feel that they have difficulty concentrating at work because of family responsibilities. While it is important to balance both sides to ensure balance between work and life, it is obvious that work is more making conflict with private life than the other way around. The best situation is among Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Finland), which are then followed by Western Europe countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands etc.). The cluster with the least success in sustaining work and life balance is among Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Romania – respectively 67%, 51%, 31%).

Table 1

**Work–life balance related problems occurring at least several times a month (% of respondents in employment)**

		Too tired from work to do household jobs	Difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent at work	Difficulty concentrating at work because of family responsibilities
Country cluster	Nordic (Denmark, Finland, Sweden)	53	26	13
	Continental (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands)	55	33	15
	Western islands (Ireland, UK)	66	37	17
	Mediterranean (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain)	60	39	21
	Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)	63	50	28
	Baltic (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia)	60	43	23
	Balkan (Bulgaria, Romania)	67	51	31

Source: EQLS, 2016

Comparison of work–life balance indicators between 2007 and 2016 show that work–life balance has deteriorated for all age groups and in particular for young women and women in the middle-age category (35–49). The deterioration mostly took place after 2011, which has probably been influenced by global changes i.e. the global economic crisis. One of the influencing factors, which worsen the work life balance for women is that women still provide most of the care, whether for their own children, grandchildren or for their relatives, friends and neighbours with a disability. When it comes to providing care on a daily basis, twice as many women as men do so (Eurofound, 2016), thus it makes an extra pressure for females to be able to balance their work and private life needs.

However, when analysing the numbers of Latvia alone (Table2), comparatively with other countries, it is possible to notice that Latvia has the fourth worst summary indicator of work-life balance in European Union (sharing the position with Hungary and winning over Czech Republic, Greece and Croatia). It has a summary coefficient of 5,2 (out of 10), while the highest rating is in Netherlands with a score 6.6. Meanwhile, it must be noticed that in most of the countries the indicator has worsened over time, while in Latvia it has stayed the same since the previous survey in 2011. It is also possible to conclude that all European Union countries have a room for growth since none of them have at least 7 as their summary indicator.

Table 2

Summary indicator of work–life balance

	2003	2007	2011	2016
<b>Austria</b>	6.9	6.2	6.6	6.2
<b>Belgium</b>	6.7	6.9	6.6	5.9
<b>Bulgaria</b>	5.8	5.6	5.9	5.5
<b>Croatia</b>	-	5.1	5.2	3.7
<b>Cyprus</b>	6.5	5.7	5.0	5.3
<b>Czech Republic</b>	6.3	5.9	5.7	5.0
<b>Denmark</b>	7.2	6.9	7.3	6.5
<b>Estonia</b>	5.9	6.1	6.3	5.9
<b>Finland</b>	6.7	6.7	6.8	6.2
<b>France</b>	6.7	6.9	6.6	5.7
<b>Germany</b>	6.9	7.0	6.7	6.3
<b>Greece</b>	6.0	5.3	5.3	4.9
<b>Hungary</b>	6.0	5.7	5.7	5.2
<b>Ireland</b>	6.6	6.7	6.5	6.4
<b>Italy</b>	6.2	6.2	6.7	5.7
<b>Latvia</b>	4.6	5.7	5.2	5.2
<b>Lithuania</b>	6.4	6.2	6.7	5.9
<b>Luxembourg</b>	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.2
<b>Malta</b>	6.4	6.4	5.7	5.8
<b>Netherlands</b>	7.2	6.9	7.2	6.6
<b>Poland</b>	5.9	5.8	5.5	5.3
<b>Portugal</b>	5.7	6.1	6.4	5.9
<b>Romania</b>	6.0	5.6	6.0	5.0
<b>Slovakia</b>	5.7	6.2	6.1	5.9
<b>Slovenia</b>	6.3	6.1	6.1	6.3
<b>Spain</b>	6.2	5.8	5.6	5.3
<b>Sweden</b>	6.6	6.9	6.6	6.2
<b>United Kingdom</b>	6.0	6.5	6.3	5.8
<b>EU28</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.8</b>

Source: EQLS, 2016

Meanwhile, in 2017 there was another research in Latvia, conducted by Kantar TNS, a company doing researches in Latvia for over 25 years, which asked 913 respondents their opinion. The research made it clear that 69% of employees in Latvia are overall satisfied with their work and life balance. In the research it was found out that 44% of all respondents see elastic working time as the best opportunity to find balance, 33% of respondents have an opportunity to get an extra day off and 19% are allowed to work from distance. Meanwhile 84% of respondents state they might feel too tired of work to do their responsibilities at home and 70% state that they see a hard time of doing their responsibilities outside work because of the long working hours (Kantar TNS, 2017). However at the end of year 2018, TNS conducted another research, which showed dramatic results – almost half of the respondents (48%), who are all employed, stated that in the

past year they have experienced at least some of the symptoms of a professional burnout. Comparatively more often these symptoms appear among women, those who work in retail, for those who work more than 40 hours per week and also for those, who are not satisfied with their job and have thoughts of changing it in the next year. The consequences of these symptoms are directly connected with both – the quality of individual's life and with his abilities to perform well in the workplace. The most common consequence for people who experience symptoms of burnout is not willing to take any other responsibilities at work (56%). They also state that they are not able to concentrate at work (53%), that they feel emotionally and physically tired all the time (52%), they react aggressively on little issues (50%) and are constantly anxious (36%). Respondents admit that they are regularly sick and thus not able to go to work (17%) and that they use medicine (15%) and alcohol for stress relief (28%). Another point that stands out in this research is that, while most of the researches concentrate on the work and life imbalance among those, who have children, the data shows that inability to concentrate, lack of good sleep and a tendency to use medicine is more among those, who live alone. (Kantar TNS, 2018) In author's opinion it is important to notice this trend, because obviously it is a topical issue for the whole society, not only for those who are actively involved in their family lives. TNS also looked at the interaction between hours worked and a tendency for burnout – they noticed that those, who work over 40 hours per week are often those who experience symptoms of burnout. Overall, 40% of respondents stated that they work more than 40 hours per week, those were also people with high income, top level managers, those who are not satisfied with their current job, those who feel imbalance between their work and private life and those, who have stated that they have a too high-intensity workload at the moment. Another issue that appeared in the research is that only 41% of employees would be ready to talk to their employer about their burnout symptoms, which means that there is a room for improvements in terms of managerial practices and organizational culture, so the employees felt safe to talk with managers about problematic situations. It was clear according to data that those, who are ready to talk about their issues, are those who feel more secure in the labour market – employees with top level management positions, high income and those who state to feel confident about finding a new job. Meanwhile those, who aren't ready to talk about their problems, are those who are in the age before retirement, who have average or low income and those who feel there is a great imbalance between work and private life. (Kantar TNS, 2018)

## **Conclusions, proposals and recommendations**

### Conclusions:

1. In author's opinion work and life balance is clearly an issue in society not only in Latvia, but globally as well. It is a matter that both employees and employers should think about, because it impacts both – the overall health and wellbeing of an individual and effectiveness, productivity and even reputation of the enterprise. In the last decade it is possible to notice a trend that this is a worrisome topic, because both local and global authorities have raised their voice to pay attention to this issue.
2. Also, it is possible to conclude that the issue shows an undeniable trend in all researches regardless of the institution doing the research, which clearly gives credibility in the seriousness of the particular work and private life imbalance issue. In author's opinion one of the opportunities to improve the situation is to look deeper into theory and practice of conscious capitalism. It the matter of fact, in author's opinion it could in the next decades become a must, not a trend. The reason is simple- first of all, taking care of the wellbeing of employees is not only essential, but an integral part of a policy for sustainable enterprises, and second of all, in Latvia there is a clear lack of available labour (Kantar TNS, 2018) – it is getting more and more difficult to find employees and especially if the standards, that the employer is looking for, are high. Thus author believes that conscious capitalism is phenomenon that should be more deeply examined in further researches.



- Another conclusion that can be clearly noticed is that theory goes well together with practice. Previously author described three reasons for work and family conflicts – time, behaviour and strain based conflicts. TNS research clearly showed that time and strain is a crucial reason to cause work and life imbalance with the corresponding consequences. In author's opinion it is important to, firstly, pay extra attention on separating work from private life by limiting extra hours worked per week (working week should not be much longer than 40 hours per week), and, secondly, to pay attention to the importance of organizational culture and the values that both an individual and an organization share. In author's opinion, in terms of organizational culture it would be important to set boundaries in working after working-hours (limiting the use of technologies i.e. answers on calls, e-mails and messages) to foster work and private life balance.

Proposals and recommendations:

- Author believes that further research should be focused on examining what managers would be ready to do to enhance the current situation and what employees would be willing to receive from their workplaces to reduce the consequences of work and life imbalance.
- Further research may also examine, which are the values, which employees expect to see represented in their workplace. Thus, which are the values, which should be included in the organizational culture of the particular enterprises.

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