
Involvement of Companies in the Policy of Work-Life Balance - A Comparison of the Signatories of the Diversity Charter and Non-Signatories

Submitted 08/10/22, 1st revision 25/10/22, 2nd revision 18/11/22, accepted 30/12/22

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Abstract:

Purpose: The main goal of the article is to explore and analyse how enterprises implement their activities in the analyzed aspects in the context of WLB and provides practical implications for management work-life balance (WLB) policy.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Researchers were particularly interested in the Polish companies and Signatories of the Diversity Charter as being extremely competitive in terms of maintaining WLB policy. The quantitative research was administered in 2019, on a group of 200 companies (non Signatories) and 51 of the Signatories of Diversity Charter.

Findings: Although the majority of enterprises in Poland do not preparing and implement work-life balance strategies. The implication indicates that the overall level of WLB policy is higher in companies which are also Signatories of the Diversity Charter. Additionally the research indicates that the WLB strategies should be developed and implement at the strategy level and managers awareness of WLB issue have a big impact for engagement of companies in WLB policy.

Practical implications: This paper recommends companies to develop and implement a policy in the field of work-life balance, and then to identify in the organizational structure the person/persons responsible for coordinating activities in this area and involvement in the implementation and promotion of this topic among the leaders of the organization.

Originality/Value: These studies contribute to the theoretical framework of the WLB context and allow the evidence to be complemented with other studies at the national level.

Keywords: Work life balance, diversity management, Polish companies, diversity charter.

JEL codes: J24, J81.

Paper Type: Research article.

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Funding: *The project was funded under the program of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education titled "Regional Initiative of Excellence" in 2019–2023, project number 018/RID/2018/19, with an amount of funding of 10 788 423.16 PLN.*

1. Introduction

Changes in the modern world, including demographic, economic and technological changes, and changing value systems and employment models, pose challenges for companies. Although, on the one hand, these changes contribute to the improvement of the quality of life, as well as its "facilitation" (new technologies), the problem of reconciling professional and private life remains a challenge. One of the reasons for the "mismatch" of work and life, and vice versa, is the way modern people live and work as they try to meet the growing demands, both at work and outside of it. Therefore, companies, including those operating in Poland, try to respond to these trends. The challenge is therefore to implement measures / programs to reconcile work and private life.

In the past, work-life balance was understood only in the context of time - the number of hours spent at home and at work. In the era of digitization and computerization, reconciling work and private life has acquired a slightly different meaning, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Satici *et al.*, 2020; Bartik *et al.*, 2020). We can stay at home, but at the same time answer business e-mails and make phone calls with contractors. In such a situation, do we still deal with professional matters or do we function on the basis of private life? Rather it is the first. In the context of work-life balance, it is also important that nowadays the working time has significantly increased, and therefore it is even more difficult to put a line between work and home in a reasonable place. Why are we working longer? For various reasons, including: fear of losing a job, unhealthy ambition among employees, pressure from superiors, or the mentality of employees from various social groups and cultures.

For over 20 years, issues related to the reconciliation of professional and private life have been the subject of public discourse (Borkowska, 2010; Riedmann, 2004). Both practitioners are looking for solutions that will support employees in reconciling these two areas, and the academic world raises questions - what is it? how to achieve this balance ?; what determines this balance? if and what the consequences of a "good" or "bad" work-life balance may be. Although we already have research on this topic, this topic still deserves exploration from different perspectives because it is poorly researched (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011).

Work-life balance (WLB) issues can be exported from the perspective of achieving positive results for both individuals and organizations (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011; Kalliath, 2008; Greenhaus and Kossek, 2014; Kossek, Valcour and Lirio, 2014; Eikhof, 2007). In particular, research on individual factors influencing WLB and

their positive consequences resound relatively slowly (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011; Maertz and Boyar, 2011).

The subject of the authors' interest is primarily the company's activity in the field of supporting the work-life balance of its employees. In particular, how enterprises implement their activities in the analyzed aspects in the context of WLB. Taking into account the literature on the various initiatives available to facilitate work-life balance and the interests of the authors, the following objectives of the study were defined:

- determining whether the surveyed enterprises prepare documents regulating the WLB policy;
- determining whether and who in the surveyed enterprises is responsible for the implementation of the WLB policy;
- determining what solutions to support WLB are implemented and used in the surveyed enterprises;
- whether there are differences in the implementation of policies and activities for WLB between the Signatories of the Diversity Charter and the general sample of entrepreneurs.

2. Literature Review

Work-Life Balance:

In general, recent studies focus on examining the effects of work and family factors on work-family balance (Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, and Whitten, 2012; Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw, 2003). Limited attention is paid to the broader concept of WLB.

WLB is a broad concept, defined in many ways by different researchers using different contexts (Clark, 2000; Cowton, 1998). The origins of research on WLB can be found in research on women in various roles (Keene and Quadagno, 2002). WLB was originally referred to as the work-family conflict. Kahn and co-authors defined this as “a form of role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible to some extent. This means that participation in the role of work (family) is made difficult by participation in the role of family (work)”.

Marks and MacDermid (1996) defined role balance as “the tendency to become fully committed to the outcomes of each role in an individual's total role system, to approach each typical role and role partner with an attentive approach and care. In simpler words, WLB is defined as "the extent to which an individual is equally committed and equally satisfied with the roles of work and family" (Rothbard, 2001).

In line with recent works (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011; Haar, Russo, Suñe, and Ollier-Malaterre, 2014; Maertz and Boyar, 2011; Valcour, 2007), we conceptualize WLB as an individual perception of how well balanced its life roles are. This definition is based on a person-centered approach that sees WLB as a holistic concept that covers all areas of an individual's life, that is unique to each individual (Kossek *et al.*, 2014) and that can change over the course of life in line with their career or stage of life, and this depends on the life values, goals and aspirations of an individual (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011).

It should be noted that WLB is a concept appropriate for all working people, regardless of their life and family situation (i.e., also for single, childless workers with no other caring responsibilities), as it includes the ability of an individual to do well things that they care for (Kossek *et al.*, 2014).

WLB as element of human resources management:

The problem of combining professional and family life is an important element of human resource management (and by no means should). Currently, more and more companies include WLB activities in their strategic documents, including, for example, the overall human resource management strategy (Chandrakumara and Sparrow, 2004; Clutterbuck, 2003; Gross-Gołacka, 2008). First, companies need to be increasingly aware of the changing expectations of their employees. Secondly, they have to take up the challenges of acquiring and / or retaining the best employees in the company. Today, companies are faced with the need to ensure an appropriate work culture and work environment, which is responded to by WLB activities.

The need to attract and retain valuable employees in an increasingly competitive labor market is one of the main reasons for raising awareness and taking action by employers in the field of WLB. Thus, the key to success is attracting, and most importantly, keeping talented people. This requires the creation of such a work environment in which it will be possible to combine the individual needs and expectations of employees with the strategic goals of the organization. Competitive salary is not enough anymore, it is necessary to create a stimulating work environment (Gross-Gołacka, 2009).

In recent years, companies have become increasingly aware of the need to have policies and practices that lead to a sustainable workforce and adopt the concept of work-life balance and appreciate its importance as a tool to improve employee productivity, satisfaction and retention (Katili, Wibowo, and Akbar, 2021; Kupczyk, 2011, Gross-Gołacka, 2008). The subject is of great importance especially in the context of the modern business world, which is characterized by high competition of markets and greater focus on sustainable organizations.

The main groups of instruments used in the practical implementation of work-family programs include (European Commission 2005, pp. 79-80):

1. different forms of organization of work and working time - mainly the so-called non-standard forms of employment: part-time, flexible working hours, contracts for specific work and mandate contracts, teleworking, jobsharing, work from home; Reconciling work and family life;
2. leaves and exemptions from work obligations granted due to family obligations; the issue of retaining the right to remuneration or the right to unemployment benefit during periods of non-performance is also important;
3. various forms of benefits for employees using various forms of care for life-dependent family members (children, disabled people, the elderly);
4. employee bonuses awarded in connection with the need to reconcile work with family responsibilities in conditions of high requirements on the part of the employer.

3. Materials and Methods

In order to verify the thesis and answer the research questions, the method of literature analysis and criticism, the method of diagnostic survey and statistical methods were used. A quantitative-qualitative study was conducted in the Responsible Business Forum (FOB) in 2019, based on a questionnaire survey, among the signatories of the Diversity Charter (n = 50) and a representative sample of Polish companies (n = 200). Due to the subject of the survey, companies employing less than 10 employees were omitted. As a result, the sample included 150 small companies (employing less than 50 employees) and 50 medium and large companies (employing 50 or more employees).

Analytical weights were used in the analysis of the results so that the structure of companies corresponded to the population. In the nationwide module, the first part of the study concerned general knowledge of the Diversity Management policy. Then, the companies involved were selected, which carry out activities in the field of Diversity Management, these companies were asked the same questions as the Signatories of the Charter. On the other hand, non-involved companies were asked questions to investigate what could be the reasons for their lack of interest in this topic. All respondents in both modules were asked questions about the company's policy in the field of health protection and improvement of employee well-being as well as the WLB policy.

The research results presented in this article come from the research carried out in 2019 by the FOB, which consisted of two modules. The Diversity Charter (DCh) Signatories module, to which companies and organizations that signed the Diversity Charter were invited (n = 50), and the nationwide module, which presents a representative sample of Polish companies (n = 200). Due to the subject of the survey, companies employing less than 10 employees were omitted. As a result, the sample included 150 small companies (employing less than 50 employees) and 50 medium and large companies (employing 50 or more employees).

Analytical weights were used in the analysis of the results so that the structure of companies corresponded to the population. All respondents in both modules were asked questions about the company's policy in the field of health protection and improvement of employee well-being as well as the Work-Life Balance policy. The sample of the Charter's Signatories consists mostly of medium-sized and large companies employing more than 50 employees (82%).

The nationwide sample, after applying the analytical weight, reflects the structure of the population in which medium and large companies account for 17% of the respondents. The signatories of the Diversity Charter are entities that have signed and adopted the Diversity Charter.

It is an international initiative to promote diversity and equal employment opportunities, irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability or religion. The charter is a voluntary, written commitment of the signatory (company or public institution) to implement solutions for equal treatment and diversity in the workplace. The signatory undertakes, inter alia, counteracting mobbing and discrimination in the workplace, ensuring equality in terms of remuneration, access to work, promotions and training, promotion and education in the field of diversity promotion among employees and cooperating entities. Currently, about 270 companies in Poland are Signatories of the Diversity Charter.

4. Results

The presentation of the obtained research results will start with information on whether the organization has a dedicated document for WLB policy and who in the organization is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the WLB policy. So where in the organizational structure of the company is the WLB policy coordination center located and whether it is so.

4.1 Strategic Documents of WLB

According to the research, 3% of all surveyed companies have developed and implemented WLB policy in the form of a single document. Among the Signatories of the Diversity Charter, 14% of the surveyed entities declare that they have developed a WLB policy in the form of a single document. 16% of the surveyed companies answer that a WLB policy has not been developed and implemented, but that there are activities in their company aimed at the balance between work and private life.

And 81% of all surveyed companies declare that their company has not developed and implemented a WLB policy. Taking into account the Signatories of the Diversity Charter, the situation in the analyzed topic is better because more than half (54% of companies) do not have a policy, but implement activities aimed at WLB.

Table 1. *Has a WLB / work-life balance policy been developed and implemented in the organization? (nationwide sample n = 200)*

	Yes, it is a single document	No	No, but there are WLB/work-life balance measures	Other situation
overall	3%	81%	16%	0%
small companies	3%	81%	16%	0%
medium and large companies	2%	83%	16%	0%

Source: Own study based on FOB 2019 research.

Table 2. *Has a WLB / work-life balance policy been developed and implemented in the organization? (signatories of the Diversity Charter n = 51)*

	Yes, it is a single document	No	No, but there are WLB/work-life balance measures	Other situation
overall	14%	32%	54%	0%
small companies	11%	33%	56%	0%
medium and large companies	15%	32%	54%	0%

Source: Own study based on FOB 2019 research.

4.2 The Place of WLB Policy in the Organizational Structure

The functioning of the person/unit responsible for its implementation is not without significance for the process of implementing WLB policies in the organization. And the indication of a specific person or position in the company is a very important element of the WLB-oriented strategy. The person responsible for the WLB policy/activities in 18% of companies is the HR Department Director, in 12% there is a special dedicated position.

Most of the respondents did not know who is responsible for such a policy or there is no such position in the company. Among the Signatories of the Diversity Charter, in 42% of organizations, the HR Department is responsible for WLB policy/activities, and in 12% there is a dedicated position. In the remaining organizations, the respondents did not know who is doing it, or there is no such position.

Table 3. *Who in the company is responsible for WLB/work-life balance policy/actions? (nationwide sample n = 200)*

	HR Director	There is a special, dedicated position	I don't know
overall	18%	12%	70%
small businesses	18%	13%	69%
medium and large companies	17%	6%	77%

Source: Own study based on FOB 2019 research.

Table 4. Who in the company is responsible for WLB/work-life balance policy/actions? (signatories of the Diversity Charter n = 51)

	HR Director	There is a special, dedicated position	I don't know
overall	42%	10%	48%
small businesses	22%	0%	78%
medium and large companies	46%	12%	41%

Source: Own study based on FOB 2019 research.

4.3 Activities in the Field of Reconciling Work and Private Life

The research conducted on a nationwide sample and among the signatories of the Diversity Charter shows that DCh signatories declare the possibility of their employees taking advantage of activities related to WLB much more often than all entrepreneurs in Poland.

Table 5. Which WLB / Work Life Balance activities / programs can Company Employees benefit from? (signatories of the Diversity Charter n = 51)

Program / Activity	small companies	medium and large companies	overall
flexible working hours	89%	78%	80%
remote work	67%	78%	76%
shorter working hours than specified in the Labor Code (i.e. full-time work with e.g. a 7-hour working day instead of 8 hours)	22%	24%	24%
additional days off	56%	24%	30%
additional longer leave	22%	24%	24%
additional leave for voluntary and / or social activity	22%	27%	26%
reimbursement / surcharge for additional recreational / sports / cultural events (Benefit cards etc.)	33%	63%	58%
special programs encouraging full-time paternity leave	22%	7%	10%
special amenities for pregnant women and parents returning to work after parental leave	44%	56%	54%
amenities for people who care for dependent people (e.g. parents, chronically ill)	33%	24%	26%
to associate on internal networks (women, LGBT, families, etc.)	33%	27%	28%
nursery or kindergarten in the workplace	0%	2%	2%
specially arranged space in the office	67%	51%	54%

Other	0%	12%	10%
None of the above	11%	10%	10%

Source: Own study based on FOB 2019 research.

Actions taken by the signatories include, above all, the possibility for employees to use flexible working hours (80%), remote work (76%), reimbursement/surcharge for additional recreational/sports/cultural cards (58%), special amenities for pregnant women returning to work after parental leave (54%) and specially arranged space in the office (54%) (Table 5). 1/5 of DCh signatories undertake work/life balance activities/programs in the area of - shorter working hours than specified in the Labor Code (24%), additional longer leave (24%), additional leave for voluntary and/or social activity (26%), facilities for people taking care of dependents (e.g., parents, chronically ill) - 28% and association within internal networks (women, men, families, etc.) (28%).

The size of the surveyed companies did not affect the distribution of the answers provided. Both small and medium-sized and large companies indicated similar WLB activities and programs that are implemented in their companies. DCh signatories also noted that as part of activities for WLB, their companies can use subsidies for hobbies, leisure and sports.

Table 6. *What WLB/Work Life Balance activities/programs can Company employees benefit from? (nationwide sample n = 200)*

Program / Activity	small companies	medium and large companies	overall
flexible working hours	51%	40%	49%
remote work	24%	32%	25%
shorter working hours than specified in the Labor Code (i.e. full-time work with e.g. a 7-hour working day instead of 8 hours)	29%	30%	29%
additional days off	22%	22%	22%
additional longer leave	21%	16%	20%
additional leave for voluntary and / or social activity	11%	9%	10%
reimbursement / surcharge for additional recreational / sports / cultural events (Benefit cards etc.)	17%	30%	19%
special programs encouraging full-time paternity leave	10%	13%	11%
special amenities for pregnant women and parents returning to work after parental leave	20%	30%	22%

amenities for people who care for dependent people (e.g. parents, chronically ill)	24%	19%	23%
to associate on internal networks (women, LGBT, families, etc.)	8%	2%	7%
nursery or kindergarten in the workplace	5%	0%	4%
specialy arranged space in the office	18%	10%	17%
Other	1%	0%	1%
None of the above	30%	26%	29%

Source: Own study based on FOB 2019 research.

On the other hand, among all Polish companies, the most frequently indicated activity / program regarding work-life balance is the possibility for employees to take advantage of flexible working hours (49%) (Table 6). Other activities are indicated by less than a third of companies - shorter working hours than specified in the Labor Code (29%), remote work (25%), additional days off (22%), facilities for people taking care of dependent persons (23%) and special facilities for pregnant women and parents returning to work after parental leave (22%).

About 1/5 of all Polish companies among the WLB programs available with them indicate an additional longer vacation (20%), reimbursement / surcharges for additional recreational / sports and cultural cards (19%), special arranged space in the office (17%). About 1/3 of the Polish companies surveyed declare that their company does not implement any of the WLB programs / activities from the cafeteria proposed in the study.

5. Discussion

The problem of combining professional and family life is an important element of human resource management (and by no means should). Currently, more and more companies include WLB activities in the company's strategic documents, including, for example, in the overall human resource management strategy.

However, as shown by the results of research in Poland, the implementation of solutions for WLB is not a fairly common phenomenon. It should be emphasized that those companies that have developed a policy for WLB in the form of a specific document are several percent, and the vast majority of companies do not have such a document.

Also, the issue of coordination and location of issues related to WLB policy in the organizational structure is not often visible in the surveyed companies. However, it is the Signatories of the Diversity Charter who declare their activity in the above-mentioned issues much more often than all entrepreneurs in Poland. Also among the Signatories of the Diversity Charter, specific activities related to WLB are implemented much more often, which their employees can use.

Numerous studies, and those presented in this article, allow for the formulation of some practical recommendations. Well, first of all, companies have to be more and more aware of the changing expectations of their employees, including the facilities for reconciling work and private life. Second, they have to take on the challenges of acquiring and / or retaining the best employees in the company, and WLB policies definitely strengthen these activities.

Many studies suggest that flexible work organization helps employees achieve a better connection between on-the-job and off-work activities, and helps organizations recruit, retain and motivate their employees (Lewis, Gambles, and Rapport, 2007; Lupu and Sandu, 2017; McIntosh, McQuaid, and Munro, 2015; McMurray, Linzer, Douglas, Shugerman, and Nelson, 2000; Mageni nad Slabbert, 2005; Mair, 2013). In today's dynamic environment, companies face the need to ensure an appropriate work culture and work environment, which are responded with activities/programs/strategies in the field of combining professional and private life (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2005).

Therefore, the challenge for companies is to develop and implement a policy in the field of work-life balance, and then to identify in the organizational structure the person / persons responsible for coordinating activities in this area (De Cieri, Holmes, Abbott, and Pettit, 2005; Cabello, 2022) and involvement in the implementation and promotion of this topic among the leaders of the organization (Katili, Wibowo, and Akbar, 2021). Effective work/life balance management (WLB) is an issue that is increasingly recognized as strategic for the organization and important for employees. It is argued that the need for an organization to attract and retain valued employees in a highly competitive labor market is a strong motivator to increase organizational awareness and act on the implementation and management of WLB strategies.

This study contributes to the emerging concept of WLB discourse from the perspective of developing countries. The study also sheds light on how institutions shape and implement WLB policies. This study also shows that companies that identify themselves and declare their willingness to implement policies for managing diversity by joining the Diversity Charter are characterized by a much greater commitment to the creation and implementation of WLB policies.

Therefore, it can be said that the promotion of the Diversity Charter initiatives plays an important role in understanding organizational practices that influence the organizational reality, including in the case of WLB. It is clear, however, that while some achievements have been made over the years, there are still serious challenges in adopting and managing WLB strategies (De Cieri, Holmes, Abbott, and Pettit, 2005).

The presented study has its limitations in the form of, for example, a limited sample size. However, it is important that future researchers and practitioners should pay

more attention not only to the design of work-life practices, but also to the implementation process, so as not to disappoint all the positive effects related to work-life balance for employers and employees.

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