Behavioural Insights in family policy.
An example of the work-family balance concept

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Introduction

One of the greatest challenges of current family policies is to analyse and understand the relationship between two important areas of human life: family and work. These can be analysed from several theoretical perspectives of which two, work-family balance and Behavioural Insights (BI) will provide the context for this study. Behavioural Insights can be defined in a single sentence as approaches that use evidence of the conscious and nonconscious drivers of human behaviour to address practical issues (Hallsworth & Kirkman, 2020, s. 21). To develop this short definition, BI can be described by three features: evidence about behaviour, robust evaluation, and practical application and policy focus (Hallsworth & Kirkman, 2020, p.16). Implementing this approach in family policies allows a higher level of efficiency to be achieved and also the satisfaction of citizens themselves.

The concept of work-family balance (WFB) is a narrower version of the concept referred to in the literature as work-life balance. Although both concepts have been present in the literature for many years, they are not clearly defined and therefore point in different directions for possible government intervention.

Traditionally, conflict has been a key concept in WFB. It is defined as a form of internal tension regarding the fulfilment of different roles (employee, family member), where the role pressures of work and family are in some way incompatible. Participation in one role is hindered by participation in the other (Huselid, 1995). This conflict is an important part of the employee's life and usually has a negative impact on both spheres of life: work and non-work, including family. Conversely, if the employee does not perceive tension between these spheres, but rather sees them as sources of satisfaction, they can complement each other and improve a person's quality of life. The relationship between the two can therefore have a positive or negative impact on a person's wellbeing (Wood et al., 2020). The aim of WBL is to eliminate or reduce tensions and increase satisfaction with both work and private life. At the same time, the employee should regain control and autonomy in the process of

coordinating and integrating work and non-work aspects of his or her life (Felstead et al., 2002). The possible framing of the relationship between work and family life should be noted here. The general assumption in the WFB is that the citizens want to reconcile their work and their family life. But it should be noted that this picture is not that one-dimensional.

In a well-known study, Prof. Hakim points out that in the female population, on average, 20 per cent are career-oriented and the work environment is most important to them, 60 per cent want to combine home and work responsibilities, and 20 per cent want to focus primarily on home and family responsibilities (Hakim, 2003). Based on the research presented here, at least five types of relationship can be identified: work only, work dominating family, family dominating work, family only and work-family balance. Frequently, the understanding of WFBs is reduced to the last concept. If the state is unable to support citizens' autonomous choices, we can speak of paternalism.

The idea of WFB has been one of the most important topics for practitioners and researchers in recent times. This is not only because of the changing times, but also because of the entry of new generations of workers into the labour market, for whom a sense of wellbeing and coherence of life (also in the context of work and other activities) is becoming increasingly important. It also seems that the increasing number of publications should be translated into an effective implementation of these concepts, also on a systematic level, and unfortunately this is not happening. It is therefore important to address the issue of implementation of WFB solutions. Currently, the implementation of WFB is dominated by a static model in which a specific catalogue of solutions is proposed to employees. As citizens, employees can choose those solutions that seem beneficial and attractive to them. Given the considerations outlined above, a flexible model that adapts to the changing and emerging needs of employees seems preferable (Darcy et al., 2012). One of the key assumptions is that most of the new approaches require more than just the development of new assumptions. Examples of the implementation of new solutions show that there is often too much focus on the solution itself, neglecting the planning of the implementation process. According to the author's own experience and research and an analysis of the scientific literature, it is necessary to focus not only on the solution, which of course must be well elaborated, but especially on the implementation process (Przeperski, 2020; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). It is therefore important to base the implementation on a model

that is specifically designed. One of the most promising in the last decade is the Behaviour Insights-based Behaviour Change Wheel model (Michie et al., 2011).

In the context of the implementation of the WFB approach, some exemplary areas of relevance for the shaping of the implementation can be highlighted.

Aim of the resolution/policy

A major barrier that often limits the effectiveness of a solution, but also significantly affects how it is implemented, is knowing exactly what the intervention aims to change. At first glance, this question may seem simple and obvious to WFB policy makers. The important question is what needs to be changed by implementing the solution. Some studies have identified the goal of implementation as a change in organisational leaders that should address three areas: employee awareness of the WFB policy, policy adoption, and policy satisfaction (McCarthy et al., 2010). The question may be asked as to whether these objectives are correctly formulated. The answer may vary. They may not be sufficient to achieve the goal if they are the main and only objectives. They will be well constructed if they are followed by specific objectives. These objectives will take into account the change of specific managerial behaviours. Such an approach will be consistent with the Behavioural Insights approach, where the key is behavioural change, and this is the measure of success. The central question then becomes how to (solve and implement) the realisation of specific behavioural patterns of leaders. Of course, the factors identified can lead to behaviour change, but there is generally no clear data on whether the expected behaviour has occurred. A significant change in perspective is therefore required when formulating the implementation strategy. Outcomes that are defined in terms of awareness, satisfaction, etc. are less important and are more related to behavioural change, which can be measured by assessing whether it occurs and how often it occurs (Michie et al., 2014).

Definition of WLB

Understanding of the WFB concept itself can also be an important obstacle to its implementation. If only a rigid division between work and 'life' is accepted, then the concept is reduced. This approach has persisted for many years. However, it has often not led to the desired results. Research has led to a broader understanding of people's lives, activities, interests and passions. As Kelliher (Kelliher et al., 2019) points out, 'life' has previously been seen as largely encompassing the activities of caring for

dependent children, with the implication that achieving work-life balance is primarily a problem for working parents. This understanding is consistent with the notion of work-life balance, but the phenomenon is increasingly being analysed more broadly, taking into account not only the family dimensions of a person's life (Özbilgin et al., 2011).

Similarly, 'work' has largely been based on a traditional model characterised by full-time, permanent employment with a single employer and a conventional understanding of what work entails. Nowadays, it is also important to take into account the different forms of work that are becoming increasingly popular, such as temporary contracts, part-time work, self-employment and the provision of services to enterprises, or the employment of workers by employment agencies.

In the context of BI, it will be important to analyse both the 'life' dimension, including family and work, in terms of behaviour. This will make it possible to map behaviours and, consequently, to decide on possible areas of intervention (behaviour change).

Beneficiaries of the solution and their needs

Another source of failure in implementing WFB can be the lack of accurate identification of the beneficiaries of a given solution, their needs and behaviour. At first sight, the answer to the question of who the recipient of a given solution seems simple and obvious: the employee. However, the problem starts to arise when we take a closer look at this category of people. It turns out that it is, in general, a very diverse group of people. The simplest distinctions will be in terms of variables related to gender, age, education, position held, or whether or not they have parental responsibilities. But even in the last category - the exercise of parental roles - the sex of the worker (mother-father), the number of children, the age of the children, the presence of external support, the presence of illnesses, etc. will be important. Most of these variables will be relevant because the individual workers, in this case the parents, will have different needs which will create a conflict between the responsibilities at home and at work.

To be effective, the preparation and implementation of WFB solutions must be based on relatively thorough analysis of workers' situations. Only the study of everyday behaviour can lead to solutions that improve the quality of life, reduce the level of conflict, and are accepted by employees, rather than just being a solution that appears in surveys of WFB policies in companies. It seems that by taking this task seriously, the relationship between employer and employee changes. In the previous

arrangement, work and everyday life were separated categories (work was left at work and domestic problems were not brought to work). In the wider understanding of the WFB, the role of the employer is expanding into the privacy of the worker. What is important to note is that while in the workplace the employer is the decider, here the employee has to invite the employer into their world. This also seems to be another dividing line relevant to the design and implementation of the WFB concept. Some employees will prefer to keep working and nonworking life separate; others will welcome the employer in a new role. Extending employers' influence into private life will also mean that employers will need to collect more data. This will no longer be limited to the person's functioning as an employee, but it will also be necessary to get to know him or her in his or her daily roles, but also to identify areas that may support satisfaction on the one hand, and lead to conflict on the other. Gathering such knowledge requires both scientific expertise, so that the data collected are useful, and high ethical standards. One solution could be to work with research institutes that would collect the data and make it available only to the extent necessary for the development and implementation of a solution. The data would be anonymised.

Organisational factors

Barriers to the implementation of WFBs can also arise on the organisational side of institutions. It should be stressed that the implementation of any innovation, and the WFB concept is undoubtedly one of them, requires additional resources (Patton, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to estimate these costs, as well as the time needed for implementation, already at the level of designing the implementation concept. It is also important to realise that implementing the WFB approach will change several areas of how the company operates. Undoubtedly, one of the most important will be the organisational culture. If implementation is to be successful, the WFB concept needs to be embedded in the organisation's culture (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2010).

It is also important to anticipate the real impact of organisational solutions on WFB. Research on remote working's impact on employee performance is interesting. It highlights the need to pilot and evaluate solutions and shows that even the best assumptions do not always lead to the expected results. When people work remotely, they save time that would otherwise be spent travelling to work. In many cases this is a significant saving. It could be said that employees can shift, say, 40 or 90 minutes from work to non-work time. But the reality is different. Studies have shown that in

most cases, employees have increased the amount of time they spend at work (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010), rather than allocating this time to family, passions or personal matters. From an employer's point of view, these data may not necessarily be worrying. However, when proposing such an initiative within the WFB, we need to be sure that it will reduce conflict rather than exacerbate it.

Clearly, the first step is for the organisation concerned to have the willingness to adopt the solution and to make the effort to make the WFB concept a mainstay within the employer-employee relationship (Guest, 2002). This is not a one-off process but requires a continuous effort from all stakeholders.

Finally, it should be stressed that achieving a balance between life at work and life outside work is becoming a sure sign of the times. And arguably, it is no longer just a matter of increasing job satisfaction, but also of maintaining a good quality of life or, in some cases, well-being and mental health (Jones et al., 2006).

The research shows that the key to developing and implementing good solutions, including behavioural ones, is an approach that integrates all the stages (design, implementation, and evaluation) needed to make them work, meet employees' and employers' needs and, above all, deliver the intended results.

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