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Decent Work-Life-Flow and its Assessment

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Abstract

This paper presents the underlying theoretical framework, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research activities, as well as preliminary findings on influencing factors for a healthy and sustainable Work-Life-Flow (WLF) in diverse countries. The research is conducted within the scope of the cross-cultural Erasmus+-project, "Excellence based profiling to identify and apply tools and training for a better and sustainable Work-Life-Flow" (2020-1-ES01-KA203-083282). Within this framework, we promote the re-conceptualization of the concept of work-life balance towards a more dynamic and inclusive resource-demands based concept of WLF. The project develops assessment and training tools to foster WLF for individual and organizations alike. To justify this two-fold assessment and training approach, we link WLF to the established occupational psychology concepts of personal agency and Decent Work. We hypothesize that resources and demands can be assessed at both the individual and organizational level, and that resources relate positively and demands negatively to individual and organizational health indicators. Comparing correlational, cross-sectional evidence of our first samples from Spain (N = 1313) and Portugal (N = 494), we confirm our hypotheses. We discuss practical implications for the WLF-project including interdisciplinary assessment alignments with established quality management tools, such as EFQM. As our survey research is currently ongoing, we provide survey invitation links for workers from Germany, Ireland, and Kosovo.

Keywords: Decent Work, work-life-flow, assessment, competences

Decent Work-Life-Flow and its Assessment

The concept of Work-Life-Flow (WLF) can be understood as an innovative re-conceptualization of the rather traditional, problem-oriented, exclusive, and rather normative concept of work-life balance (Czakert et al., 2022). WLF, based on the resource-demand theory, does not separate sharply the work area from the personal life. Among other features, WLF means and promotes a dynamic balance between organizational and individual demands and resources (Wells et al., 2023). Mastering a healthy and sustainable WLF is a key competence to maintain effective work performance while maintaining and promoting social, physical, and mental health (Wang & Shaheryar, 2020). The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's recent report (EU-OSHA, 2022) shows that the increasingly blurred integration of work and nonwork domains results in longer working hours, presenteeism, increased rumination after work hours, higher anxiety levels, increased sleep disorders, and generally higher levels of stress.

Organizational success largely rests on employees' psychological and physical wellbeing rooted in positive psychology constructs of flow and engagement for personal and professional growth (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Diener et al., 2020). This suggests that skills development for employees and system development for organizations that go hand in hand with economic, technological, and social development are needed. Thus, for current and future workers, as well as for organizations, it is crucial to determine which personal competencies and contextual working conditions are needed to promote an ongoing, integrative flow between work and nonwork domains to achieve a healthy WLF (Wells et al., 2023). Central constructs in this regard are that of resources (i.e., well-being enriching personal and/or organizational factors) or demands (i.e., wellbeing depleting factors), the latter describing a lack of personal competencies or unfavorable working conditions (Czakert & Berger, 2023). In the same way that the concept of WLF is dynamic, so are the concepts of resources and demands, insofar as a resource at work can be a demand in life outside work and vice versa. Overqualification provides an example of these dynamic relationships. While it can negatively impact well-being at work (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021), it can also be a prospective career resource (Russel et al., 2016) or a resource in nonwork life.

This two-fold approach focusing on resources and demands at individual and organization level alike is rooted in two main concepts, which are a) personal agency (individual level) and b) Decent Work (defined by the International Labour Organization (2019) as "Opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men").

Personal agency – the ability to intentionally plan, adjust, and reflect on goal-oriented behavior (Bandura, 2006) – relates to lifelong learning competencies (Sala et al., 2020) and plays a pivotal role for individuals to adapt to disruptive changes in work systems. While personal agency addresses individual resources and demands, the concept of Decent Work provides a suitable framework to explain the necessary evolution from seeing work-life

balance as a “personal” issue towards acknowledging it as an organizational and societal issue, thereby emphasizing the role of contextual resources and demands in an organization and in a specific society.

As such, with our international project, "Excellence based profiling to identify and apply tools and training for a better and sustainable Work-Life-Flow" , we position WLF cross-culturally as a crucial pillar for reaching the sustainable development goals of providing decent work for all (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8); good health and well-being (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3); ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4). In this paper, we present the project's underlying theoretical framework, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research activities, as well as preliminary results of the named European-wide Strategic Partnership project.

Within this framework, we propose a re-conceptualization of the rather traditional, static, non-inclusive, and normative concept of work-life balance. We also place particular attention to traditionally neglected groups which are particularly affected by WLF issues, including working parents, carers, and part-time workers. WLF is based on positive psychology and flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and thereby aims not only at preventing ill health but also at promoting wellbeing.

We position the concept of WLF as a pivotal topic for sustainable wellbeing in the modern world of work. By linking the concept of WLF to the idea of personal agency at the individual level and to total excellence (Berger et al., 2022, Berger & Czakert, 2022) at the organizational level, we explain the need for building personal and organizational competences (i.e., increasing resources and decreasing demands) for a healthy WLF. In our project we integrate the concepts of WLF and Decent Work to justify the need for WLF-related interventions at the organizational level to promote a Decent WLF.

We present the methodology of cross-cultural research activities that inform a Personal Excellence (PEX) assessment tool based on the EFQM model (EFQM, 2019). The EFQM model is a globally available management framework for total quality management. In the frame of our project, these research activities comprise multiple systematic reviews, semi-structured pilot interviews in five countries, and cross-sectional surveys carried out in Spain, Germany, Ireland, Kosovo, and Portugal. In the present paper, preliminary results of the surveys carried out in Spain and Portugal are presented, as more comprehensive data analysis is ongoing. The aims are: (1) to identify cross-cultural differences and similarities on demands, resources, and their impact on WLF and wellbeing; and (2) based these findings and cross-cultural comparisons, to develop evidence-based WLF training tools and solutions for diverse countries, based on their cultural context. Specific competences included in the WLF-training include, for example, WLF-policy literacy, crafting skills including organizational and social skills, specific emotion-regulation aspects, boundary management skills, etc.

It is envisioned that the PEX tool will serve as a basic diagnostic tool for individualized WLF training pathways that promote personal agency. The results of the self-assessment will highlight potential individual-skill mismatches, including failure and success factors, and thereby guide individualized training suggestions. Following the idea of contingency,

individualized practical exercises to nurture personal skills as well as individual learning, progress-monitoring options will be implemented. Recommendations for organizations that are closely related to Decent Work will be proposed.

The online WLF training platform will enable individuals to learn fundamental transversal skills that are key for a sustainable WLF (visit <https://moodle.work-life-flow.eu/>). As the concept of WLF is inclusive and relevant to all employees the WLF-training platform will be open access at no charge. A corporate assessment tool will enable companies to consolidate anonymized data from employees to inform WLF-related organizational and human resource interventions. At the organizational level, the results will identify limitations and resources to drive the organization in a Decent Work direction.

Also, we propose an innovative and transversal curriculum for higher education institution (HEI) students in Europe focusing on competencies for a healthy WLF. Below, we first outline the underlying theoretical framework; secondly, we explain the methodology related to WLF-related research and training development activities; thirdly, we provide preliminary results of the cross-sectional survey research in Spain and Portugal and reflect on practical implications.

Theoretical Background

WLF versus Work-Life Balance: A re-conceptualization Effort

The established concept of work-life balance (WLB) is a static, and less dynamic concept when compared to WLF. It does not include all affected groups and tends towards an idealistic/absolutist boundary-setting which often does not reflect the realities of personal lives (Reiter, 2007). Research on work-life balance is rooted in industrial-organizational psychology and work, organizational, and personnel psychology (IO/WOPP) (Kossek et al., 2021). As such it has adopted a rather conflict-oriented view and trade-off lens towards an idealistic perspective of balance. The concept of WLB suggests incompatibility between role investments (see Kossek et al., 2021) and less boundary and effort-recovery management (Kossek et al., 2012). In this sense, the concept of WLB focuses narrowly on the resource of time for working parents and scarcely on the resource of energy and on other affected groups (Brafford, 2016). WLB suggested a rather stagnant state of equality between the domains of work and nonwork, rather than a dynamic process including complex interactions (Brafford, 2016). WLB research has largely entailed rather normative elements of ideal work-life balance, thereby neglecting individual preferences, temporary imbalances, and cultural values (Kossek et al., 2021; Krys et al., 2020; Rothbard et al., 2021) that set the tone for organizational WLF politics in countries. These features results in certain shortcomings that might hamper individual skills development, organizational practice, and policy guidance.

For example, although the focus on working parents and especially women is relevant and needed, this approach seems not inclusive enough for today's society: occupational health policy implications might disregard a large share of the total workforce, and other vulnerable and emerging groups such as informal carers (Lindt et al., 2020). Additionally,

the accelerated change of highly flexible working conditions has called for a more dynamic lens on the issue (Sonnentag et al. 2022), with newer concepts such as the work-nonwork interface (e.g., Crain et al., 2018) and the work-life system (Cham et al., 2021). The work-nonwork interface, for example, can be defined as “the interaction of employee work experiences and [nonwork] lives” (Allen, 2012, p. 1163). These concepts highlight the importance of dynamic concepts such as recovery and daily emotional and energy-related spillover processes across the work and nonwork domain. Ultimately, a positive psychology approach that is less normative, more culturally responsive, and that does not neglect potential incompatibility issues and/or individual preferences but also focuses on enriching processes seems needed.

To overcome the shortcomings of predominant WLB conceptualizations, we build on the concept of WLF as a more modern, dynamic, inclusive, and less normative concept (Brafford, 2016). WLF integrates the elements of flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and resource-demands based theories (e.g., Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013). WLF assumes that resources (i.e., well-being enriching factors) and demands (i.e., wellbeing depleting factors) can stem from work or nonwork, personal or environmental domains.

Demands can be referred to physical, psychological, social, or environmental aspects that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Resources can be referred to those physical, psychological, social, or environmental aspects that are either/or functional in achieving individual goals (both work and nonwork goals), reduce demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (cf. Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312, for a definition of, job resources). Here again, resources can be found at different domains (work vs. nonwork domain, personal vs. environmental domain) and are specific to each individual situation. Moreover, sometimes a resource in one domain can be a demand in the other. As mentioned above, qualification is a resource to life in general, and a demand at work if it is overqualification (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Also, a current demand can become a resource in the future (Russel et al., 2016).

A sustainable WLF may be defined as the successful dynamic individual and organizational management of the complex interactions between all accessible resources and demands over time, although imperfection and fluctuations are accepted (especially temporally, e.g., think of a short-term higher demands-lower resources situations due to pressuring deadlines, ad-hoc childcare duties, etc.). A sustainable WLF is healthy and ensures vital engagement but does not neglect challenging times. In fact, consistent with flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), this dynamic resources-demands balancing should be weighted slightly in favor of positive challenge, as it drives flourishing.

We argue that a specific resource-demand fit is key (e.g., Schaufeli, 2017). This means, specific resources are only effective if they help to cope with a specific demand. For example, some skills such as better time management might help to reduce the demand of frequently working overtime but would be less effective for coping with the demand of ongoing rumination about work at the end of a workday. For the latter, self-regulatory resource types in form of emotional boundary management and emotional regulation might

be more beneficial (Czakert & Berger, 2022). In turn, a negative WLF is unhealthy and describes interactions where work demands are so high that they interfere negatively with people's nonwork life, for example by depleting time and energy resources of the individual (Czakert et al., 2022).

This conceptualization allows us to understand WLF as a dynamic concept that varies between and within individuals over short-term and long-term horizons. The dualistic distinctions between resources and demands, at both personal and contextual levels, as well as both work and nonwork levels, enables us to develop training solutions for both individuals as well as for organizations: While individuals may – in line with the concept of personal agency – increase personal resources and reduce personal demands, organizations may in line with the organizational excellence idea –1) facilitate contextual resources and reduce contextual demands by optimizing decent working conditions (Ferraro et al., 2018), and 2) also increase personal resources and reduce personal demands. To do so, organizations provide adequate training and personal development opportunities. In the following, we provide the WLF approach for individuals (i.e., the personal domain) and for organizations (i.e., the environmental and cultural domain).

WLF and Personal Agency

WLF for individuals is based on well-established social-cognitive theory and personal agency. The concept of personal agency was developed by Albert Bandura (1989, 2006). According to Bandura, agency refers to “the human capability to influence one's functioning and the course of events by one's actions”. Four aspects describe personal agency, namely 1) intentionality; 2) temporal extension through forethought; 3) self-reactiveness; and 4) self-reflectiveness. The first aspect refers to intentions that manifest in action plans and strategies for realizing them. The second aspect involves goal setting and anticipation to reach foreseen likely outcomes. The third aspect is self-regulating behaviors. The fourth aspect describes reflections on personal efficacy, evaluations of thoughts and actions, meaning-making, and corrective actions (Bandura, 2018).

There are many factors (i.e., resources and demands) relevant to WFL that individuals can control and modify. These factors can be influenced by personal competencies (self-efficacy, emotion regulation, crafting skills, recovery skills, time management skills, etc.) that can be learned. Without the idea of personal agency, an individual competency-based approach for WLF would be non-sensical and ineffective.

This perspective closely relates to the idea that the interaction between individuals and environment is mainly influenced by the subjective appraisal of the individual, and that it only needs appraisal and behavioural changes by the individual to foster a healthy WLF. However, this concentration of accountability on the individual is dangerous and disregards necessary structural changes and optimizations at social and organizational levels (Berger & Czakert, 2022) that might be present across cultures. It is important to mention then that a sole focus on the individual would be insufficient when aiming at fostering a healthier WLF, since environmental and cultural demands and resources also warrant optimization efforts.

WLF and Decent Work Across Cultures

WLF is a crucial pillar for reaching sustainable development goals (United Nations Organizations, 2017) to provide decent work for all and thereby link WLF to the concept of Decent Work. The concept of Decent Work, proposed by the ILO, emerged as an institutional effort to tackle the labor market degradation (Ferraro et al., 2016; Pereira et al., 2019). Since 1999, the importance of the Decent Work concept has been increasingly recognized internationally by researchers, employers, employees, organizations, and Governments (dos Santos, 2019).

From a psychological perspective, Decent Work is operationalized in seven dimensions (dos Santos, 2019; Ferraro et al., 2018, Graça et al., 2021), namely 1) fundamental principles and values at work; 2) adequate working time and workload; 3) fulfilling and productive work; 4) remuneration for the exercise of citizenship; 5) social protection; 6) opportunities; and 7) health and safety workplace. Adopting the resource-demands perspective of WLF, each of the dimensions can represent a demand or a resource, depending on its perception and factual setting. Indeed, it has been argued that the concept of Decent Work and its dimensions are culturally sensitive (dos Santos, 2019). While decent work expresses in the labor field universal values, its translation into practice is culturally dependent. To provide some examples, following Hofstede's (2023) dimensions, voice behavior (as a component of the first Decent Work dimension) is more distal in high-power distance cultures, while in low-power distance ones is more proximal. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, unsafe workplaces (as a component of the seventh Decent Work dimension) might be perceived as more dangerous than in low uncertainty avoidance cultures. Finally, in masculine cultures, WLF (as a component of the second Decent Work dimension) is expected to differ between males and females, while in feminine cultures, it is expected to be similar.

It thus becomes apparent that whereas the concept of WLB may only be related to dimension 2) (i.e., adequate working time and workload), the WLF concept allows us to understand each of the Decent Work dimensions as contextual work demands or resource. Also, Decent Work dimensions may be subject to governmental and organizational policies, as well as macro trends such as globalization, (inter-) national economic developments, digitalization, and cultural values, etc. (Blustein, et al., 2020; dos Santos, 2019). Integrating these contextual working conditions also transforms the traditional view of work-life balance as a rather "personal" issue towards an organizational, societal issue of WLF.

Taken together, Decent Work dimensions are the people's fundamental aspirations for their working life and as such are universal (dos Santos, 2019). However, as described above, cultural differences and contexts might influence the valence of each subdimension. It is therefore important to control for cross-cultural differences and to apply cross-cultural perspectives when designing Decent Work and WLF practices. This is one of the challenges when integrating the two in increasingly diverse cultural societies.

Based on this underpinning theory, we therefore hypothesized that in the diverse participating countries H1) All Decent Work dimensions are associated with WLF-indicators; H2) Demands are associated with higher levels of negative – and lower levels of positive –

WLF-indicators; and H3) Resources are associated with lower levels of negative – and higher levels of positive – wellbeing and performance-related indicators.

Methodology

In this section we present a general overview of the underlying research methodology of the WLF-project. The project received ethical approval by the institutional review boards of the participating universities.

The WLF-project consortium consists of seven partners and includes universities as well as business organizations across five European countries (Germany, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Kosovo) which are following Hofstede (2023) pointing differently in all important cultural dimensions and have different politics and practice concerning work-life-related issues (EU-OSHA, 2022). This consortium setting ensured a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary approach to all research activities.

The main goal of this research was to gain better understanding on key WLF factors and their relation to Decent Work dimensions in general and in the fast-changing post-pandemic times of remote and hybrid working. A particular focus was therefore given to concepts of personal resilience, health promoting organizational processes, and existing HRM strategies and practices.

In the first step, general attitudes, potential influencing factors, and specific needs of working parents, informal caregivers, and other groups were explored through semi-structured interviews with remote workers (N=22) in Ireland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and Kosovo acquired from the network of the participating institutions. The results were used to provide an evidence-based initial common knowledge base that informs further research activities, such as the following systematic reviews.

In the following step, three interrelated yet distinct systematic reviews were conducted on WLF in the context of personal resilience, health promotion, and Decent Work. All reviews followed the PRISMA Protocol by Moher et al. (2015) and assessed the quality of the studies by using an adapted version of the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach (Guyatt et al., 2008) to evaluate the quality of reported evidence in a systematic way.

A particular focus was given to remote work in the (post-)pandemic context across the globe. Following the conceptualization of WLF and in line with the resource-demands based perspective, the main aim of the reviews was to identify resources and demands at different levels and from different perspectives.

In the subsequent step, the preliminary results of the reviews informed a snowball-sampling survey conducted in all partner countries (Ireland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Kosovo) to gather empirical evidence of the identifiable resources and demands. Specifically, the reviews gathered informed about key factors, resources and demands, and validated measurement instruments. This included the development of single-items of all seven Decent Work dimensions both perceived as demands and resources, based on Ferraro et al.'s study (2018), personal and organizational demands (negative organizational

culture, constant availability expectations off-work, role stress, lack of self-discipline) and resources (positive organizational culture, meaningful work, autonomy, positive (i.e., transformational) leadership, crafting behaviors, emotion regulation), as well as positive and negative WLF-indicators (physical illbeing, anxiety, motivation, happiness, sleep quality, turnover intentions). The survey was translated to all partner country languages, using the ITC Guidelines (2017), including backward and forward translation procedures, and involving national practitioners as well as academic experts. Measurement instruments will be presented as follows.

Decent Work. Items for Decent work were introduced with the following statement: What follows are seven broader aspects that describe your work conditions. Consider the following aspects at your current work, answering: To what extent are those aspects overwhelming or stressful for you (1=not at all; 5=very much)? To what extent are those aspects helpful and contributing to your wellbeing (1=not at all; 5=very much)? In doing so, each subdimension could be considered a demand or a resource, presenting two items per dimension. Example:

Decent Work dimension 1 as demand: 1. Fair treatment, participation in decisions, freedom of expressing opinions, non-discrimination, dignity, and trust among people. Stressful?

Decent Work dimension 1 as resource: Fair treatment, participation in decisions, freedom of expressing opinions, non-discrimination, dignity, and trust among people. Helpful and contributing to your wellbeing?

The items of the other six Decent Work dimensions were: (2) Working time, workload, work-life balance and pace of work; (3) The meaning of my current work to me.; (4) Social protection regarding family support needs, such as possible parental leave, illness, unemployment or future retirement.; (5) Remuneration and benefits.; (6) The developmental opportunities that I have at work.; (7) Health protection safety, and the comfort of the work context and environment.

Items for personal and organizational demands and resources could be responded on a Likert-scale (1=strongly disagree – 7=strongly agree) and were introduced by the following statement.: „Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements:”

Personal and organizational demands. Negative organizational culture referring to work-nonwork issues was measured with 3 items from Thompson et al.’ study (1999): (1) “In this organization, employees who participate in available work–family programs (e.g., job sharing, part-time work) are viewed as less serious about their careers”; (2) “In this organization, many employees are resentful when colleagues take extended leaves to care for children or older relatives.”; (3) In this organization, employees are expected to work longer than what is formally hired, to get ahead at this organization (for example, to take work home at night and/or on weekends). Cronbach’s alpha was .59 for the Spanish and .57 for the Portuguese sample.

Constant availability expectations off-work were measured by two items from Day et al.’ study (2012): (1) “I am expected to respond to e-mail messages immediately.”; (2) “I am contacted about work-related issues outside of regular work hours.” Cronbach’s alpha was .59 for the Spanish and .52 for the Portuguese sample.

Role stress was measured using three items (Glazer & Beehr, 2005; Rizzo et al., 1970): (1) "I have too much work for one person to do"; (2) "I receive incompatible requests from different people."; (3) "I work under time pressure". Cronbach's alpha was .70 for the Spanish and .70 for the Portuguese sample.

Lack of self-discipline was measured using three items (Lindner et al., 2015): (1) "Sometimes I can't stop myself from doing something, even if I know it is wrong."; (2) "Pleasure and fun sometimes keep me from getting work done."; (3) "I have trouble concentrating". Cronbach's alpha was .58 for the Spanish and .59 for the Portuguese sample.

Personal and organizational resources. Positive organizational culture referenced to WLF was measured by three items (Thompson et al., 1999): (1) "In this organization employees are encouraged to strike a balance between their work and nonwork lives."; (2) "In this organization it is generally okay to talk about one's nonwork issues at work."; (3) "Higher management in this organization encourages supervisors to be sensitive to employees' family and personal concerns." Cronbach's alpha was .76 for the Spanish and .68 for the Portuguese sample.

Meaningful work was measured using three items (Steger et al., 2012): (1) "I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful."; (2) "My work helps me make sense of the world around me."; (3) "The work I do serves a greater purpose." Cronbach's alpha was .78 for the Spanish and .75 for the Portuguese sample.

Autonomy was measured using three items (Breugh, 1985): (1) "I can make my own decisions about how to schedule my work."; (2) "I am allowed to decide how to go about getting my job done (the methods to use)."; (3) "I am able to modify what my job objectives are (what I am supposed to accomplish)." Cronbach's alpha was .83 for the Spanish and .78 for the Portuguese sample.

Positive (i.e., transformational) leadership was measured using four items (Berger et al., 2011): (1) "I feel proud to work with my supervisor."; (2) "My supervisor develops ways of motivating me."; (3) "My supervisor gets me to rely on reasoning and evidence to solve problems."; (4) "My supervisor presents things through an approach that stimulates me." Cronbach's alpha was .93 for the Spanish and .92 for the Portuguese sample.

Crafting behaviors were measured by two items (Tims et al., 2012): (1) "I ask my supervisor to coach me when I need it."; (2) "I ask colleagues for advice when I need it." Cronbach's alpha was .58 for the Spanish and .66 for the Portuguese sample.

Emotion regulation was measured using three items (Grant et al., 2018): (1) "I pay attention to my feelings."; (2) "I support myself in emotionally distressing situations."; (3) "I am able to influence my negative feelings." Cronbach's alpha was .71 for the Spanish and .77 for the Portuguese sample.

Positive and negative WLF-indicators could be answered on a frequency scale ranging from 1=Never to 7=Almost always and were introduced with the following statement: "Please indicate the frequency you have felt this way over the last month." The following single-item scales were used to measure physical illbeing, anxiety, motivation, happiness, and turnover intention: "I experience physical pain (e.g., back pain, neck pain, headaches, etc.).";

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics for Spain (n = 1313) and Portugal (n = 494)

Variable	Spain		Portugal	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
DW1d	2.22	1.27	2.38	1.28
DW1r	4.28	0.90	3.61	1.13
DW2d	3.42	1.06	3.23	1.17
DW2r	3.48	1.44	2.93	1.20
DW3d	2.89	1.14	2.89	1.17
DW3r	3.55	1.04	3.20	1.08
DW4d	2.89	1.13	2.43	1.20
DW4r	4.10	1.00	4.03	1.27
DW5d	2.70	1.20	2.75	1.23
DW5r	4.12	0.99	3.25	1.12
DW6d	2.56	1.14	2.56	1.19
DW6r	3.55	1.17	3.04	1.11
DW7d	2.41	1.21	2.28	1.17
DW7r	3.98	1.00	3.39	1.15
OCd	11.27	4.78	11.76	4.70
ICTd	8.56	3.57	9.66	3.33
RSd	12.98	4.38	13.38	4.30
LoSd	9.13	3.64	9.01	3.73
OCr	13.93	4.62	14.36	4.17
MfWr	15.48	4.17	16.42	3.78
AUTr	13.86	5.07	12.20	5.05
LSr	17.83	6.20	18.45	6.34
CRr	14.16	2.98	14.00	3.16
Err	15.39	3.29	14.89	3.83
Phys	4.33	1.53	4.23	1.72
Anx	3.94	1.64	3.85	1.69
Mot	5.01	1.13	4.95	1.24
Hap	4.64	1.25	4.65	1.41
SQ	59.42	22.13	58.08	22.38
TI	2.52	1.72	2.41	1.76

Note. DW1d-DW7d = Decent Work dimensions 1 to 7 as demands. DW1r-DW7r = Decent Work dimensions 1 to 7 as demands. OCd = Organizational culture (demand). ICTd = Availability off-work; RSd = Role stress; LoSd = Lack of self-discipline; OCr = Organization culture (resource); MfWr = Meaningful work; AUTr = Autonomy; LSr = positive leadership; CRr = crafting behaviors; ERr = Emotion regulation; Phys = Physical pain; Anx = Anxiety; Mot = Motivation; Hap = Happiness; SQ = Sleep quality; TI = Turnover intention.

Anxious” (Daniels, 2000); “Happy” (Daniels, 2000); “Motivated” (Daniels, 2000); “I think about quitting my job” (Schaubroeck et al., 1989).

Sleep quality was assessed using a slider-scale from 0=Terrible to 100=Excellent with the following introduction: “Please rate from 1 to 100 the overall quality of your sleep over the last month (considering how many hours of sleep you had, how easily you fell asleep, how often you woke up during the night (except to go to the bathroom), how often you woke up earlier than you had to in the morning, and how refreshing your sleep was). Over the last month, I consider my overall quality of sleep. “

Results

The following tables illustrate preliminary results of the WLF survey carried out in Spain and Portugal. Table 1 reports mean average and standard deviation scores of the studied variables.

Table 2 presents the correlations between each of the 7 Decent Work dimensions perceived as demands with selected indicators for individual and organizational health for the Spanish and Portuguese sample.

As can be seen by the positive correlation coefficients, all Decent Work dimensions are inter-related. Perceived as demands, all Decent Work dimensions are associated with higher levels of negative indicators and lower levels of positive indicators of individual and organizational health. Applying Fisher’s z-transformation (Fisher, 1921) and the free online calculator tool from Soper (2023), we tested the significance of difference between the correlations of the Decent Work dimensions as demands and the selected WLF-related outcomes. The correlation coefficients were similar across countries with five exceptions. Perceived as a demand Decent Work dimension 1 (Fair treatment, participation in decisions, freedom of expressing opinions, non-discrimination, dignity, and trust among people) showed a significantly higher correlation with motivation in the Portuguese sample than in the Spanish sample (z-Score = -2.89, $p < 0.05$), as well as Decent Work dimension 3 (The meaningfulness of the current work) (z-Score = -2.20, $p < 0.05$). The correlations between Decent Work dimension 4 (Social protection regarding family support needs, such as possible parental leave, illness, unemployment, or future retirement) and physical pain) (z-Score = -3.11, $p < 0.05$) as well as anxiety (z-Score = -3.39, $p < 0.05$) were significantly higher in Spain than in Portugal. Ultimately, Decent Work dimension 7 (Health protection safety, and the comfort of the work context and environment) was significantly higher correlated with sleep quality in Portugal than in Spain (z-Score = -2.49, $p < 0.05$).

Table 3 presents the correlations between each of the 7 Decent Work dimensions perceived as resources with selected indicators for individual and organizational health for both samples. Perceived as resources, all Decent Work dimensions are associated with lower levels of negative indicators and higher levels of positive indicators of individual and organizational health. One exception is Decent Work dimension 5 as resources, which was not significantly correlated with any of the WLF-related outcomes in Spain. The correlation

Table 2.

Correlations of 7 Decent Work Dimensions as Demands with Selected Outcomes for Spain (n = 1313) and Portugal (n = 494)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Phys	Anx	Mot	Hap	SQ	TI
1	-	.29**	.37**	.26**	.32**	.31**	.39**	.03	.07	-.20**	-.20**	-.15**	.17**
2	.24**	-	.54**	.32**	.37**	.28**	.31**	.24**	.32**	-.13**	-.20**	-.24**	.19**
3	.29**	.55**	-	.37**	.40**	.38**	.33**	.21**	.35**	-.29**	-.30**	-.31**	.39**
4	.29**	.54**	.82**	-	.48**	.30**	.39**	.08	.14**	-.13**	-.17**	-.14**	.14**
5	.36**	.31**	.34**	.37**	-	.40**	.47**	.17**	.23**	-.18**	-.21**	-.17**	.27**
6	.33**	.31**	.41**	.42**	.45**	-	.43**	.10*	.19**	-.16**	-.15**	-.07	.19**
7	.38**	.28**	.33**	.34**	.43**	.45**	-	.13**	.14**	-.12*	-.16**	-.18**	.22**
Phys	.01	.19**	.20**	.24**	.09**	.09**	.08**	-	.52**	-.20**	-.28**	-.36**	.22**
Anx	.08**	.27**	.30**	.31**	.14**	.15**	.09**	.48**	-	-.35**	-.40**	-.35**	.32**
Mot	-.05	-.18**	-.18**	-.19**	-.10**	-.13**	-.12**	-.23**	-.28**	-	.67**	.30**	-.40**
Hap	-.11**	-.20**	-.23**	-.22**	-.14**	-.14**	-.14**	-.20**	-.38**	.58**	-	.38**	-.30**
SQ	-.10**	-.17**	-.17**	-.20**	-.13**	-.07*	-.05	-.29**	-.38**	.31**	.33**	-	-.31**
TI	.15**	.21**	.30**	.32**	.19**	.20**	.19**	.20**	.31**	-.34**	-.32**	-.22**	-

Note. Scores for Spanish sample below the diagonal, scores for Portuguese sample above the diagonal. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). 1-7 = Decent Work dimensions 1 to 7 as demands. Phys = Physical pain; Anx = Anxiety; Mot = Motivation; Hap = Happiness; SQ = Sleep quality; TI = Turnover intention.

coefficients differed across countries in the following way: Correlations between the Decent Work dimension 1 and motivation, happiness, and sleep quality were significantly higher in Portugal than in Spain. Decent Work dimension 2 correlated higher with all WLF-related outcomes in the Portuguese sample. Decent Work dimension 4 correlated significantly lower with turnover intention in the Spanish sample. Decent Work dimensions 5 and 6 correlated significantly stronger with motivation, sleep quality, and turnover intention in the Portuguese sample (all p-values below 0.05).

Table 4 presents the correlations between selected organizational and personal demands with selected indicators for individual and organizational health for both samples.

Table 3.

Correlations of 7 Decent Work Dimensions as Resources With Selected Outcomes for Spain (n = 1313) and Portugal (n = 494)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Phys	Anx	Mot	Hap	SQ	TI
1	-	.35**	.37**	.07	.32**	.37**	.44**	-.11*	0	.27**	.15**	.11*	-.12*
2	.26**	-	.52**	.07	.36**	.31**	.28**	-.21**	-.17**	.24**	.15**	.15**	-.22**
3	.27**	.30**	-	.12**	.39**	.49**	.39**	-.13**	-.14**	.33**	.22**	.22**	-.32**
4	.37**	.18**	.20**	-	.13**	.05	.08	.02	.09	-.01	-.01	.01	.06
5	.07*	.10**	.04	.18**	-	.44**	.43**	-.04	0	.15**	.09	.13**	-.13**
6	.27**	.22**	.34**	.28**	.17**	-	.46**	-.03	-.02	.30**	.18**	.15**	-.23**
7	.40**	.25**	.27**	.39**	.17**	.44**	-	0	.03	.15**	.12**	.10*	-.17**
Phys	.06*	-.05	-.15**	0	.01	-.06*	.02	-	.52**	-.20**	-.28**	-.36**	.22**
Anx	.10**	-.01	-.17**	0	0	.02	.04	.48**	-	-.35**	-.40**	-.35**	.32**
Mot	.13**	.06*	.33**	.08**	.02	.19**	.15**	-.23**	-.28**	-	.67**	.30**	-.40**
Hap	.05	.04	.19**	.06*	.01	.10**	.13**	-.20**	-.38**	.58**	-	.38**	-.30**
SQ	-.01	.03	.19**	.02	.02	.04	.07*	-.29**	-.38**	.31**	.33**	-	-.31**
TI	-.12**	-.07*	-.29**	-.10**	.02	-.09**	-.14**	.20**	.31**	-.34**	-.32**	-.22**	-

Note. Scores for Spanish sample below the diagonal, scores for Portuguese sample above the diagonal. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). 1-7 = Decent Work dimensions 1 to 7 as resources. Phys = Physical pain; Anx = Anxiety; Mot = Motivation; Hap = Happiness; SQ = Sleep quality; TI = Turnover intention.

As can be seen, both organizational and personal demands are associated with higher levels of negative indicators and lower levels of positive indicators of individual and organizational health. Comparing the samples, correlation coefficients did not differ significantly across countries with only one exception: Lack of self-discipline correlated significantly higher with anxiety in Portugal than in Spain (z-score = 2.05; $p < 0.05$).

Table 5 presents the correlations between selected organizational and personal demands resources with selected indicators for individual and organizational health for the Spanish and for the Portuguese sample.

As can be seen, both organizational and personal resources are associated with lower levels of negative indicators and higher levels of positive indicators of individual and organizational health. Comparing the samples testing for significance of differences, correlation coefficients were similar across countries with few exceptions: Autonomy was

Table 4.

Correlations of Selected Organizational and Personal Demands with Selected Outcomes for Spain (n = 1313) and Portugal (n = 494)

	OCd	ICTd	RSd	LoSd	Phys	Anx	Mot	Hap	SQ	TI
Ocd	-	.39**	.27**	.10	.12*	.17**	-.19**	-.21**	-.16**	.29**
ICTd	.48**	-	.31**	-.03	.11*	.19**	-.07	-.09	-.07	.21**
RSd	.32**	.32**	-	.18**	.28**	.32**	-.15**	-.18**	-.21**	.25**
LoSd	.19**	.16**	.14**	-	.13*	.33**	-.27**	-.23**	-.17**	.22**
Phys	.14**	.13**	.20**	.12**	-	.52**	-.20**	-.28**	-.36**	.22**
Anx	.21**	.20**	.27**	.23**	.48**	-	-.35**	-.40**	-.35**	.32**
Mot	-.14**	-.11**	-.13**	-.22**	-.23**	-.28**	-	.67**	.30**	-.40**
Hap	-.15**	-.13**	-.14**	-.19**	-.20**	-.38**	.58**	-	.38**	-.30**
SQ	-.09**	-.12**	-.13**	-.13**	-.29**	-.38**	.31**	.33**	-	-.31**
TI	.24**	.15**	.24**	.26**	.20**	.31**	-.34**	-.32**	-.22**	-

Note. Scores for Spanish sample below the diagonal, scores for Portuguese sample above the diagonal. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). OCd = Organizational culture (demand); ICTd = Availability off-work; RSd = Role stress; LoSd = Lack of self-discipline; Phys = Physical pain; Anx = Anxiety; Mot = Motivation; Hap = Happiness; SQ = Sleep quality; TI = Turnover intention.

stronger positively correlated with motivation and sleep quality in the Spanish sample. Crafting behaviors and emotion regulation were stronger correlated with reduced physical pain in the Portuguese sample. The resource emotion regulation was also stronger correlated with motivation, happiness, and sleep quality in Portugal.

The final results of the systematic reviews and surveys will be published on the WLF-project website: <https://www.work-life-flow.eu/resources>

Discussion

The correlational results generally show few differences between Portugal and Spain, suggesting that both countries have similarities regarding the association of variables. This allows a focus on transversal cultural resources and demands for diagnosing WLF, its relation to Decent Work and individual and organizational health. It also allows the conception of related training contents. It is further in line with the notion of Decent Work as

Table 5.

Correlations of Selected Organizational and Personal Resources with Selected Outcomes for Spain (n = 1313) and Portugal (n = 494)

	OCr	MfWr	AUTr	LSr	CRr	ERr	Phys	Anx	Mot	Hap	SQ	TI
OCr	-	.20**	.23**	.41**	.23**	.12*	-.20**	-.17**	.32**	.27**	.19**	-.32**
MfWr	.23**	-	.25**	.27**	.12*	.26**	-.02	0	.35**	.21**	.16**	-.29**
AUTr	.33**	.49**	-	.29**	-.04	.12*	-.09*	-.11*	.24**	.15**	.06	-.18**
LSr	.45**	.29**	.36**	-	.41**	.19**	-.14**	-.19**	.41**	.27**	.19**	-.36**
CRr	.18**	.08*	.05	.37**	-	.22**	-.12*	-.11*	.17**	.23**	.17**	-.12*
ERr	.09*	.13**	.13**	.18**	.21**	-	-.27**	-.34**	.34**	.43**	.37**	-.17**
Phys	-.13**	-.06*	-.13**	-.17**	-.01	-.11**	-	.52**	-.20**	-.28**	-.36**	.22**
Anx	-.10**	-.07*	-.12**	-.19**	-.09**	-.25**	.48**	-	-.35**	-.40**	-.35**	.32**
Mot	.28**	.39**	.34**	.43**	.12**	.31**	-.23**	-.28**	-	.67**	.30**	-.40**
Hap	.23**	.23**	.19**	.30**	.18**	.34**	-.20**	-.38**	.58**	-	.38**	-.30**
SQ	.18**	.15**	.16**	.17**	.08*	.25**	-.29**	-.38**	.31**	.33**	-	-.31**
TI	-.30**	-.26**	-.23**	-.42**	-.16**	-.14**	.20**	.31**	-.34**	-.32**	-.22**	-

Note. Scores for Spanish sample below the diagonal, scores for Portuguese sample above the diagonal. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). OCr = Organization culture (resource); MfWr = Meaningful work; AUTr = Autonomy; LSr = positive leadership; CRr = crafting behaviors; ERr = Emotion regulation; Phys = Physical pain; Anx = Anxiety; Mot = Motivation; Hap = Happiness; SQ = Sleep quality; TI = Turnover intention.

a transcultural human aspiration (dos Santos, 2019), similar between both countries in how people perceive the several dimensions as resources and demands. However, the significant differences of some of the relations found warrant further investigation, as explanations for these differences are yet to be found. Regarding H1) and as results summarized in Tables 2 and 3 suggest, Decent Work conditions are essential to sustain individual and organizational health. Comparing the identified relationships of the Decent Work dimensions as either demands or resources with their selected outcomes, it appears that perceiving the dimensions as demands is more strongly related to individual wellbeing than when perceiving them as resources. This suggests that Decent Work conditions might rather act as hygienic factors, i.e., factors that are needed to avoid negative WLF rather than promoting positive WLF (Herzberg et al., 1959).

In summary, the preliminary correlational evidence regarding Decent Work and WLF supports H1) and the need for an organizational intervention to optimize contextual working conditions towards Decent Work related to WLF. H2) and H3) were also supported by our preliminary findings. The evidence regarding personal and organizational demands and resources highlights the need for competencies to train and improve work-design features (e.g., autonomy, respecting the right to disconnect, reducing role stress), social work environments (fostering a WLF-friendly organizational culture, positive leadership), personal competencies (self-discipline, crafting behaviors, emotion regulation), and to provide meaningful work within and across the participating countries. Noteworthy, while these correlational results help to identify general transversal resources and demands, the crucial principle of resource-demand fit still warrants to identify individual situations via personal assessments for the proper identification of intervention measures. Such an individual assessment approach provides a more nuanced picture than cross-cultural perspectives.

Practical implications for the WLF project

All results of the research phase will be synthesized and aligned with a Personal Excellence (PEX) model for individual and a corporate assessment tool for organizations. A related Personal Excellence (PEX) assessment tool had been developed within a previous Erasmus+ project (the LOPEC Project). The Personal Excellence model builds on the EFQM model, a widely established total quality management tool for organizations across and beyond Europe. While the EFQM model provides a holistic blueprint to develop a culture of improvement and innovation in organizations, the Personal Excellence tool adopts this holistic perspective for individuals to assess a coherent approach to personal agency. Specifically, the PEX methodology follows the logic of the total quality EFQM 4.0 Model with its 7 Criteria and 3 main dimensions of Direction, Execution and Results (EFQM, 2019). It thereby fits the emphasis on personal agency underlying the WLF concept and represents a suitable starting point for training and interventions at the individual level in work organizations.

Specifically, all identified resources and demands at individual level that seem most strongly correlated with negative as well as sustainable WLF were translated into training topics. For example, as the cross-cultural review and survey results all confirmed the importance of individual crafting behaviors, both on-the-job and off-the-job, to reduce negative WLF, training content for crafting behaviors will be developed.

The corporate assessment tool also builds on the EFQM 4.0 and can thus seamlessly be aligned with existing EFQM Excellence assessment results. Concretely, it consolidates anonymized data from employees to report WLF-related resource and demand patterns to inform WLF-related Human Resource practices. It is also aligned with The Human System Audit framework of organizational behavior (Quijano et al., 2008).

The diagnosis of resources and demands along with identified key competencies for a healthy WLF as well as the PEX self-assessment tool will form the basis for a customer-oriented training solution. This training solution will be provided via a pilot-tested online learning platform, called "WLF Training platform". The WLF Training Platform will constitute

a full package solution, including all diagnostic tools and training contents. Multimedia enriched training contents will be modular so that various learning pathways, based on the specific diagnose of the individual situation, are possible.

The pedagogical approach is based on behavioral, cognitive, and social learning principles, again with personal agency at its core (Bandura, 2006; Clark, 2020) for employees and students in HEI. This means that the learning tools aim at multiple outcomes, including increased awareness and a better understanding of which individual factors can be self-assessed as failure or success factors for a healthy WLF and which can be improved; immediate application through practical exercises to nurture these skills in their own individual context. Asynchronous community building options for social learning exchange as well as evaluation methods to continuously track the learning progress will be implemented.

Based on our findings that found significant relationship between Decent Work conditions, leadership behaviors and WLF, one module will be developed that particularly targets supervisors and management as agents for Decent Work conditions. The company version will offer company- and country-specific recommendations, especially for Decent Work (dos Santos, 2019).

Limitations

The survey research is limited due to its cross-sectional design and exclusive reliance on self-reports, which deters from drawing conclusions about cause and effect and risks common method bias. Moreover, low Cronbach's alpha scores below .7 for few of the used scales might indicate limited reliability of these scales. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that we reduced the number of items per scale to a maximum of four items per scale to mind the response burden of the voluntary participants, and that we did so following the criteria of facial validity and item factor loadings of the original scales. Most importantly, it should be stated once again that the survey results presented here are of preliminary nature.

This project is limited to the project countries (Ireland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Kosovo). Moreover, although the project follows an interdisciplinary approach, it is largely embedded in the field of occupational health with a particular focus on occupational psychology. This means that knowledge derivable from (inter-)national legislations and economic trends influencing WLF and Decent Work dimensions is limited. Another limitation lies in the focus on work-related resources and demands and Decent Work, which limits the scope of the training tools. As theorized, environmental demands and resources located within the nonwork domain (for example, spouse and friends social support or conflicts) also play a role for WLF but are only marginally touched in the WLF-training.

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