

# **Work – Life Balance Practices in Romanian Organisations – A Pilot Study Conducted on HR Professionals**

*Ramona IGREȚ<sup>1</sup>*  
*Cristian Virgil MARINAȘ<sup>2</sup>*  
*Simona AGOSTON<sup>3</sup>*  
*Ileana MIRCIOI<sup>4</sup>*

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Work – life balance is becoming a very debated subject in the Romanian business context, especially in multinationals and large Romanian companies. This paper’s main objective is to conduct a pilot study regarding work – life balance practices on human resource professionals from Romania. The study’s main purpose is to validate a research questionnaire in order to conduct a more significant research in the future. The questionnaire was applied on 52 HR specialists from different organisations and is structured on five sections: working hours, WLB practices, holiday and time off, flexible working and information about the employer and the job.*

**KEYWORDS:** *human resource, work – life balance, Romanian organisations, HR professionals.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *M12, M54.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

*“Work – life balance is about responding to individual circumstances to help individuals fulfil their responsibilities and aspirations to lead to mutual benefit of the individual, business and society at large” (Chandra, 2012).*

Chandra’s work – life balance definition is encompassing all we can think about the concept...policies that organisations must put into practice in order to increase the engagement of the employees and thus the results of the businesses, and thus the entire modern society. It is very simple and still so complicated. Worldwide organisations wonder which are the most suitable WLB practices, when they have to use them, why sometimes they don’t work, and so on.

As argued by several authors, the impact of work-life balance policies and practices is a field in which the literature is relatively young and not especially well developed (Beauregard and Henry 2009). From the scientific point of view, only a few surveys measure conflicts between work, family and other areas of personal life as perceived by people (OECD, 2011). At an international level, more and more theoretical and empirical studies (Ferris and Weitzman, 2001; Grant-Vallone and Ensher 2001; Wayne and Cordeiro, 2003; Greenhouse, Collins and Show, 2003; Darcy, McCarthy, Hill and Grady 2012, Chandra, 2012) analyse the way these practices reduce levels of work-life conflicts, improve recruitment, reduce overheads when

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<sup>1</sup> Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania, ramonaigret@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania, cristian.marinaș@man.ase.ro

<sup>3</sup> Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania, simona.agoston@yahoo.com

<sup>4</sup> Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania, ileanamircioi@gmail.com

employees are working from home, enhance productivity and improve the psychological contract (Allen, 2001; Beauregard and Henry 2009). Moreover, the internationally conducted studies suggest that informal types of organisational support are very important for expatriate induction and success.

The scientific literature analyses the work-life balance policies and practices from multiple points of view: the impact at an individual level (reduction of work-life conflict, improved job-related attitude and perception of organisational support) and the impact at organisational level (improved organisational performance, improved recruitment and retention, reduced turnover, improved productivity). These two perspectives justify the importance of the problem both from a social and an economic point of view. Although there is enough scientific research at international level regarding the conflict between work and life, the problem is that almost all of the international studies regarding the project proposal have been conducted in very developed countries where the issue is not that stringent (The 24 7 work-life balance survey, UK; The third Work-life balance Employee Survey, UK, USA, Sweden, Finland, Denmark). In Romania, a more complex study regarding a subject related to work-life balance was published in 2006 by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions: *First European Quality of life Survey: Quality of life in Bulgaria and Romania*. The report only emphasises some information that impact the employees' quality of life, like working time, difficulties in harmonising work, family and social life and time constraints. Another research in which WLB policies from Romania and another 6 European countries were analysed was the project BILANCIA - *Work-life-balancing in the trouble spot of employers and employees goals: Enhancing a dialogue on the economic and social impact* (2007) promoted by the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria. In this project (the Romanian partner was the National Trade Union Confederation "Cartel Alfa") the objective was to present the current situation and status of WLB in the partner countries and to make a cost-benefit analysis. The limits of the study are: most of the conclusions were related to national policies, on the level of collective agreements; the project doesn't analyse policies and practices implemented at companies' level and their impact. Another limit of the current research in the field of WLB in Romania is that they do not necessarily make a link between the cultural particularities, the type of organisation, the sector of activity and the best practices to maintain a work-life balance and in the same time to improve organisational performance.

The issue of WLB is more and more stringent in Romania as *The Third European Quality of Life Survey – Quality of life in Europe: Trends 2003 – 2012*, released in 2014, emphasises that more than 65% of the Romanian employees come home from work tired at least several times a month, many of them having difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities. Furthermore, the percent of the Romanians that have difficulties concentrating at work increased between 2003 and 2012 from almost 11% to almost 16%.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1. Setting the scene**

The concept of work-life balance is not amenable for a precise or exclusive definition. The work-life balance discussion was introduced in corporations to help people deal with both personal and professional pressures of the modern world (Kelly, 2011). Hobson *et al.* (2001) describes work-life balance as employees having the ability to fulfil both work and other personal responsibilities. We call it work-life balance because we assume that there should be equilibrium between our job and the hours spent in order to solve working issues and the leisure time, the time spent with family, friends or any other things not involving work. We assume that work and life are in need of being separated. However, nowadays workers

perceive work and life as mixed parts of their lives, sometimes so mutually dependent, intertwined and amalgamated (Eikhof, Warhurst, Haunschild, 2007, Kelly, 2011, Edralin, 2011, Chandra, 2012) that they don't even realize what is still work and what is life. The research conducted over the years regarding the work-life balance process reveals that only a part of the workers perceives work and life as separate things in their lives and believe that there can be a balance between them (Eikhof, Warhurst, Haunschild, 2007). Why this imbalance between work and life? What makes people mix up, amalgamate their working activities with their family activities, social life, leisure time? Whose fault is it? Are the companies the only ones to condemn, or sometimes the employees choose to work even in their leisure time? The paradigm is a very complex one. On the one hand, some people need to work many hours for financial reasons, others because they have to deal with an enormous workload (Chandra, 2012). On the other hand, other employees choose to work long hours in order to advance in their professional career. Their commitment to the organisation exceeds some personal considerations. Furthermore, the way people view their relation between work and personal life differs depending on culture, social policies and countries economic development.

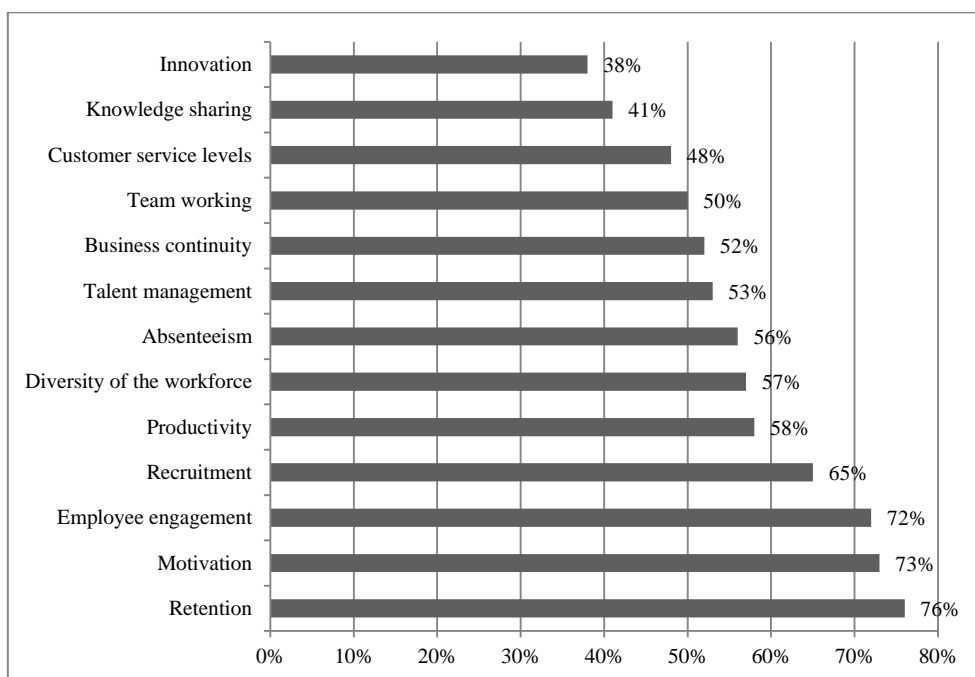
Work-life balance does not mean that we all must have an equal balance. We all interpret the concept differently and have certain expectations. Our best individual work life balance varies over time and circumstances. On the one hand, the organisations must respond to these individual circumstances and adapt their working practices. On the other hand, work-life conflict is both a product of employment and domestic stress (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). Besides work, people, and especially women with children, still undertake a share of caring and domestic work. Moore (2007) considers that a "good" work-life balance is a situation in which workers feel capable of balancing their work and non-work commitments, and, for the most part, do so.

Many researchers have debated the concept of work-life balance in their studies. In the 1970s, most of the studies addressed the women's conflicts between work and family or domestic responsibilities. Later, the research treated organisations as units and focused on the issue as a whole, without considering the effects at different levels (Moore, 2007) or moments of time. Recent studies (Lewis *et al.*, 2001; Moore, 2007; Sovanjeet, 2014) address particular issues related to work-life balance, focusing on managers, operational employees, different fields of activity, and different cultures or types of organisations. The benefits for the organisation are strongly emphasised, research showing "that employees who have trouble balancing work and personal life perform less effectively" (Abendroth and Den Dulk, 2011, p.234). Therefore, work-life balance is about offering individuals more choice and organisations greater flexibility in organising resources (Chandra, 2012). Unfortunately in many countries the gap between rhetoric of policies and the reality of practice is very large, Frame and Hartog (2003, p. 361) stating that "work-life balance activities were often regarded as a favour rather than an entitlement, and are often an area of management discretion".

## **2.2. Flexibility and perceived effects**

Recent studies related to work-life balance bring into discussion the issue of flexibility and the "flexible firm" (Frame and Hartog, 2003). Formal or informal, the vast majority of employers offer some different form of flexible working. The perceived effects of flexible working are related to a better retention of employees, a study conducted by CIPD showing that one in three survey participants (27%) consider flexible working to have had a major positive effect on retention and 47% a positive effect (CIPD, 2005). Flexible forms of work can, if well managed, enhance human resources activities like recruitment, retention, employer branding and development of the full potential of all staff and determine business growth (Lewis *et al.*, 2001). The study conducted by researchers at UMIST School of

Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, the Centre for Business Performance and The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England (Lewis *et al.*, 2001) revealed that 86% of the human resources professionals interviewed considered that flexible working practices helped recruiting best people, these practices making potential recruits feel valued beyond work. 91% of them also believed that flexible working in accountancy would aid retention of staff. Evidence from employees (Smeaton, Ray and Knight, 2014) also highlights that there is a majority attraction for jobs that offer flexible working opportunities and that a large amount of under-employment can be justified by a lack of flexibility. Recent studies conducted by CIPD (2012) show that many employers consider that implementing flexible working has significant direct benefits for the entire business. The figure below suggests the positive impact of flexibility on different areas of organisational performance.



**Figure 1. Positive impact of flexible working practices on areas of organisational performance (%)**

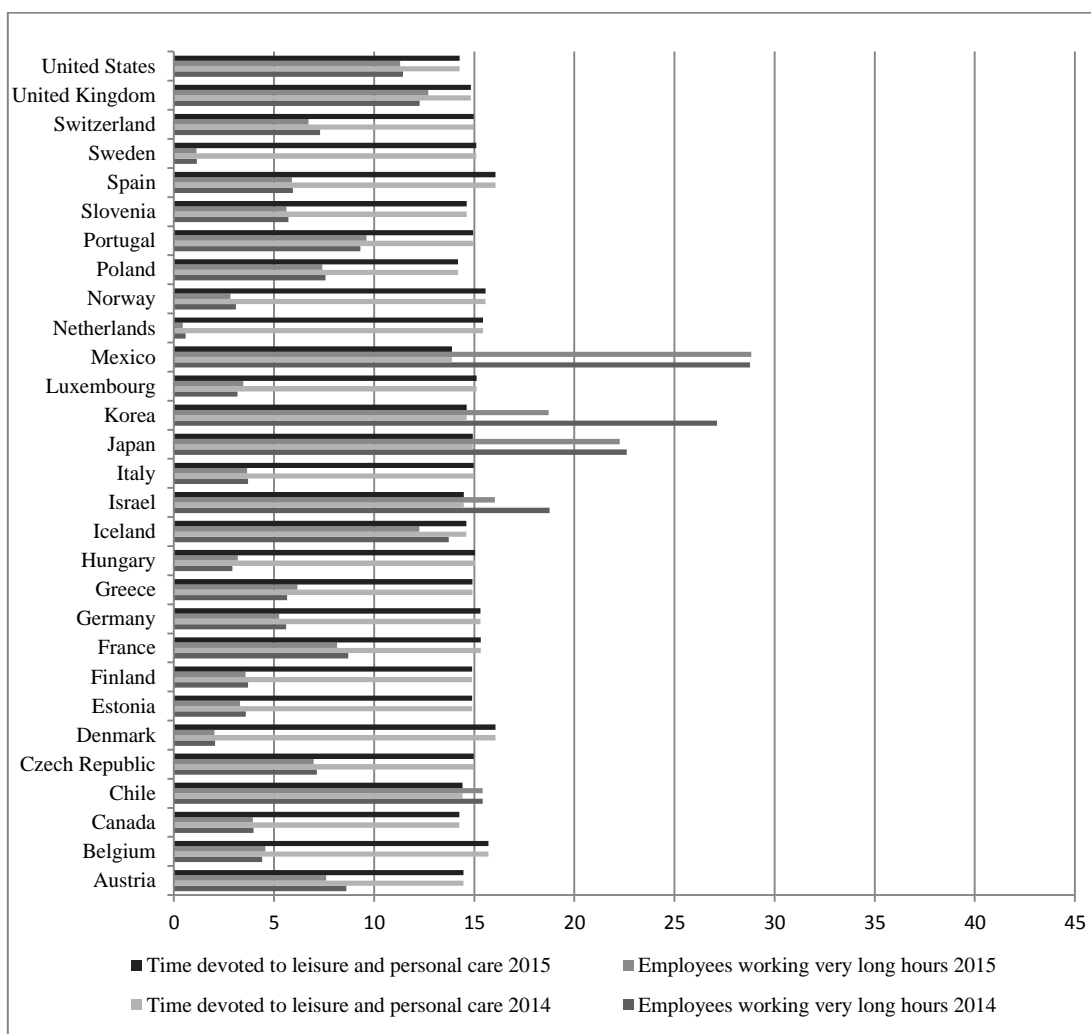
*Source: CIPD (2012)*

On the other hand, other studies have suggested that sometimes flexible working may contribute to poor work-life balance because flexible firms also refer to companies which use temporary workers to enlarge and reduce workforces (Frame and Hartog, 2003). Furthermore, Moore (2007) made a qualitative research in a MNC about the impact of WLB policies at different levels of the organisations and demonstrated that flexible working practices may have positive or negative influence on work-life balance depending on the circumstances of each employee. Even though many WLB practices addressed especially the management of the organisation, the managers were not able to maintain a work-life balance because other factors like self-sacrificing loyalty, the achievement of status and career. Evidence from other studies also suggests that for managerial positions, flexible working is less likely to be available and to be taken up (Smeaton, Ray and Knight, 2014). The available flexible working arrangements for managers are forms that don't decrease the usual number of working hours. By contrast, the workers were able to maintain a better work – life balance than managers because flexible arrangements, few career ambitions and even the lack of a psychological contract with the employer (Moore, 2007).

### 2.3. Work life balance around the globe

The topic of work – life balance is widely debated at an international level. However, there are very different national strategies both in respect to national regulations and organisational practices. In Europe, the Scandinavian countries are considered to have the best work – life balance programmes, with more than 30 years of positive experience. One of the dimensions of the OECD Better Life Index is Work – Life Balance. They state:

*“Finding a suitable balance between work and daily living is a challenge that all workers face. Families are particularly affected. The ability to successfully combine work, family commitments and personal life is important for the well-being of all members in a household. Governments can help to address the issue by encouraging supportive and flexible working practices, making it easier for parents to strike a better balance between work and home life.” (OECD, <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/> )*



**Figure 2. Work – life balance around the globe**

Source: OECD data processed by the authors

As we can observe in the figure above, Romania is not a part of the research conducted by OECD. We cannot mention the reasons our country did not participate at this study, but we can speculate that in Romania we do not have specific studies conducted on the subject of WLB.

The pilot study conducted in this paper is an attempt to enrich the knowledge in the field of work – life balance practices in Romania. It is a pilot study as our main purpose was to

validate the questionnaire applied. The questionnaire covers five dimensions of the concept of work – life balance: the number of working hours, the main practices and policies of work – life balance, the number of free paid days, the time off and flexible working practices. The results partially validate the logic and the fluency of the questionnaire.

### **3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH IN THE WORK – LIFE BALANCE PILOT STUDY**

#### **3.1. Objectives of the study**

The primary aims of this pilot study are to:

- Provide a comprehensive picture about the main work – life balance practices in Romanian organisations;
- Highlight the demand and availability of work-life balance practices among Romanian HR professionals;
- To ascertain the Romanian HR specialists’ opinion regarding the impact of WLB practices and what are the most required WLB practices;
- To find out the number of weekly working hours, paid or unpaid;
- To explore the main reasons for working overtime;

#### **3.2. Methods used**

The exploratory study conducted used the survey in order to seek new insights in the paradigm of work – life balance. The survey is based on literature review and inspired from the questionnaire used by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills –BIS (UK) for The Forth Work – Life Balance Employee Survey 2012.

The survey was conducted using web based software for creating the questionnaire, named Survey Console. The questionnaire was administered via e-mail and also via direct contact. The link of the survey is <http://wlbsurvey2015.surveyconsole.com>

The questionnaire has 46 questions. We used standard question types: Multiple Choice questions and Open – ended Text. The time to complete was approximately 10 minutes.

The questionnaire can be split into five sections:

*Section 1: Working hours*

*Section 2: Work – life balance practices and policies*

*Section 3: Holidays and time off*

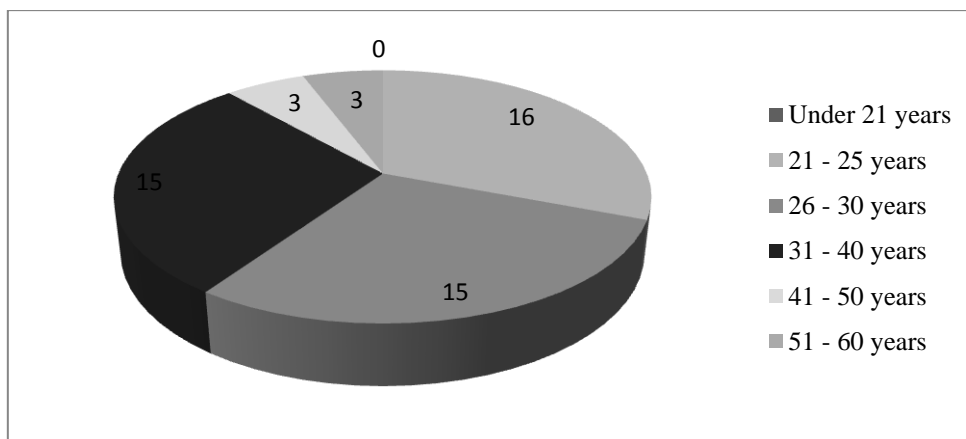
*Section 4: About flexible working*

*Section 5: About your employer and your job*

#### **3.3. Details of the population/sample**

The pilot study covered 52 human resources professionals. 77 HR professionals began completing the questionnaire but only 52 finished it. Therefore we can conclude that we had a 67% success rate. HR specialists were chosen for the pilot study in order to identify the potential inconsistencies of the questionnaire. The HR professionals are from different size organisations and various fields of activity.

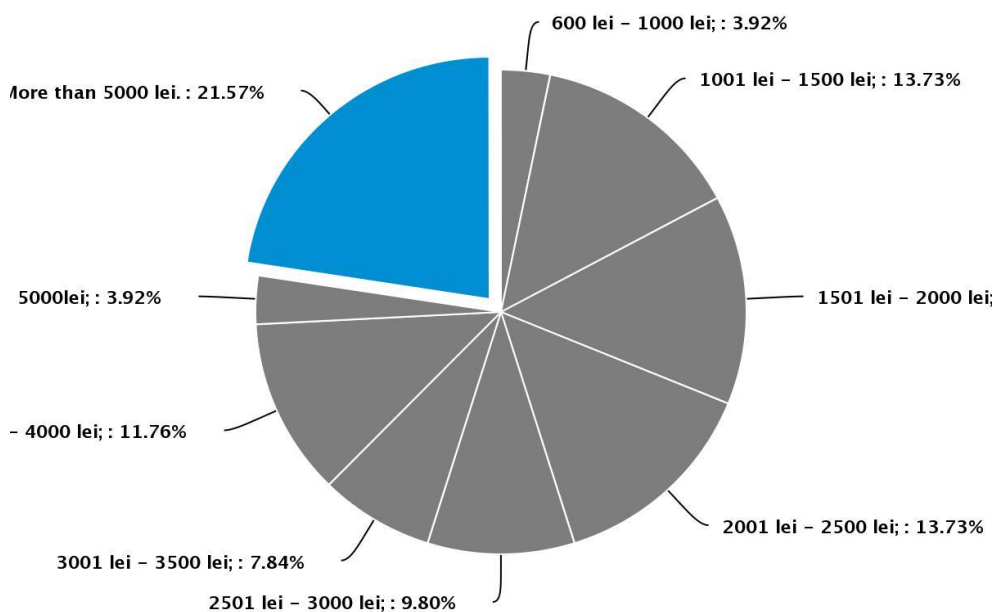
Almost 95% of the HR specialists worked full time, only 5% having a part time job. 21 respondents had managerial/senior officials positions inside their organisations and 31 were operational workers. In terms of age, 30.77% of the respondents had between 21 and 25 years, 28.85% had between 26 and 30 years, 28.85% had between 31 and 40 years and 11.54% had more than 40 years (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. The age of the respondents**

Source: Data processed by the authors

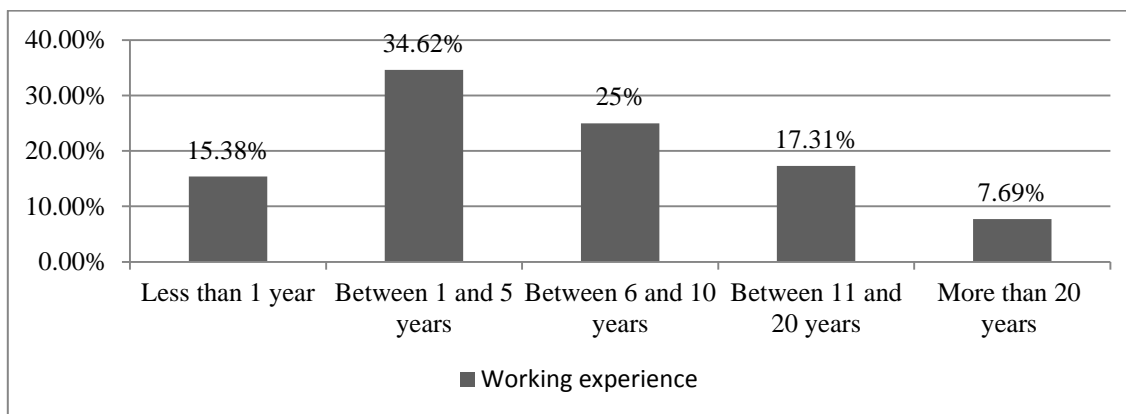
Only 10 of the respondents were male, the rest of 42 being female. This statistics was foreseeable as in human resources profession, a high percent of the employees are women. Regarding their level of qualification, only one respondent graduated only the high school, 38.46% having university education, 50% postgraduate studies and the rest of 9.62% doctoral studies. The monthly revenue of the HR professionals is very diverse and it can be analysed in the figure below (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. The monthly revenue of the respondents**

Source: Data processed by the authors

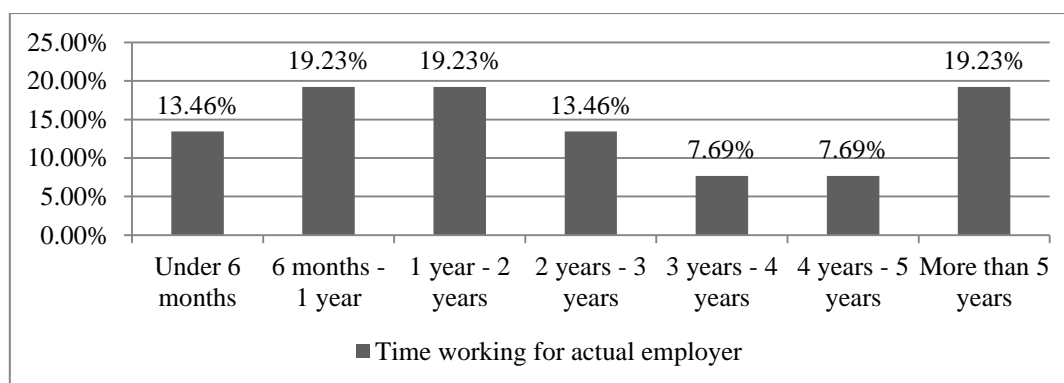
Most of the human resources professionals participating in this research are very experienced specialists, only 8 of them having less than one year of professional experience and 4 having more than 20 years of working experience.



**Figure 5. The working experience of HR professionals**

Source: Data processed by the authors

We also considered very important to ask a question about the professional experience at actual employer, the work – life balance responses being highly influenced by the employer’s WLB policies and practices. We can observe in the figure below (Figure 6) that most of the respondents have between 6 months and 3 years of experience for actual employer, a high percent of 19.23% (10 of the 52 respondents) working for more than 5 years.



**Figure 6. The working experience for actual employer of HR professionals**

Source: Data processed by the authors

We can conclude that the study’s participants were mainly full – time workers, especially young people with high monthly revenue and with a significant working experience in the field of human resources management.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

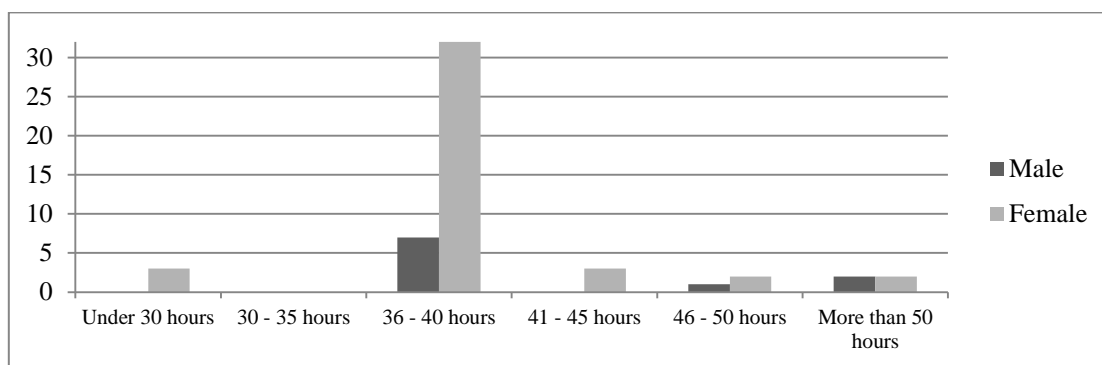
As it was mentioned before, we can split the results of the study into five sections: working hours, work – life balance policies and practices, holidays and time off, information about the employer, about flexible working and data about respondents and their jobs.

##### 4.1. Working hours

The Labour Code in Romania state that an adult full time employee must normally work 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week. In the case of employees under 18 years old, the normal working time is 6 hours a day and 30 hours a week. The working time regulations in Romania also state that an adult cannot be forced to work more than 48 hours a week without collective negotiations. The study conducted revealed that only 3 out of 52 respondents worked less than 30 hours a week, all of them female. The large majority, 75% of the HR specialists had



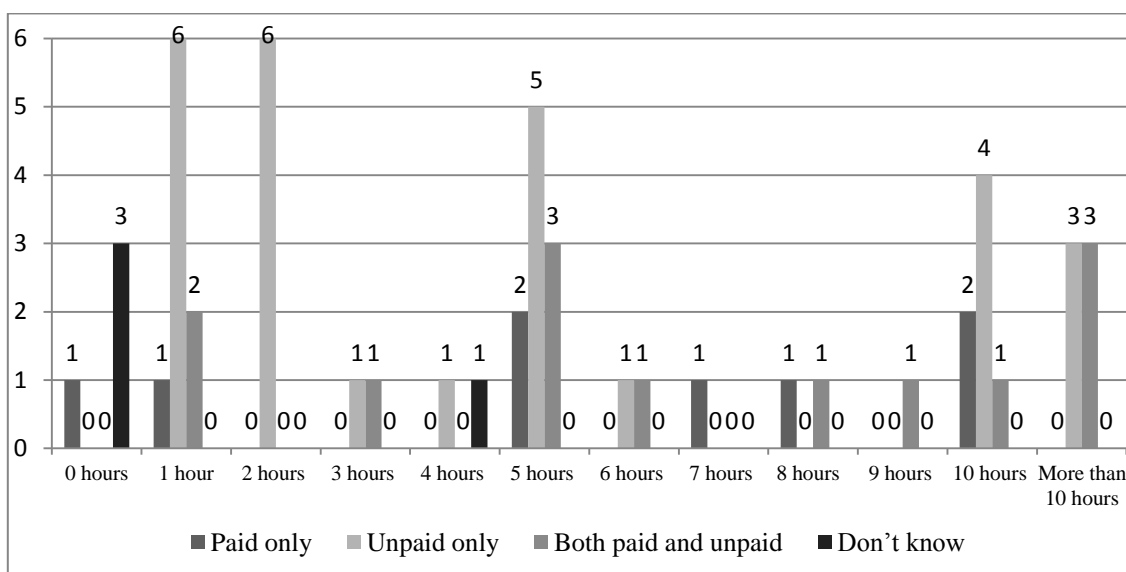
contracts with 36 – 40 hours a week, 4 of them (2 males and 2 females) declaring that their number of working hours in their contract is more than 50 hours a week. A comparison of the data can be analysed in the Figure 7.



**Figure 7. Contracted hours per week by gender**

Source: Data processed by the authors

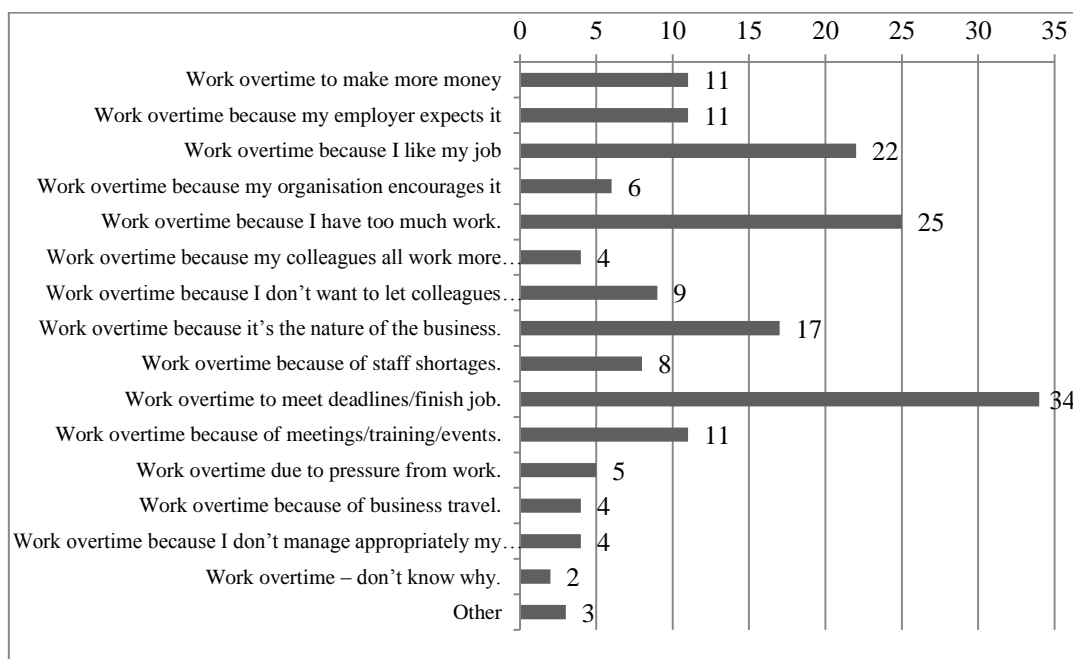
In terms of overtime work, 13 of 52 respondents declare they work 10 or more than 10 overtime hours per week. This result is in accordance with the European Labour Force Survey (ELFS) results which state that, in 2006, the Romanian employees worked in excess with 12% compared with the EU 27 average, the only country where employees worked more than Romanians being Latvia. Figure 8 shows a breakdown of overtime working hours and whether the overtime hours are paid or unpaid.



**Figure 8. Overtime working hours of Romanian HR specialists**

Source: Data processed by the authors

Employees were asked to report maximum five reasons why they worked overtime from a list of 15 reasons (Figure 9). The data gathered emphasises that most of them worked overtime in order to meet deadlines or to finish jobs. Another specified reason is “because I have too much work”. 22 respondents also stated that they worked overtime because they liked their jobs. Another 17 respondents declared they worked overtime because the nature of the business requires it.



**Figure 9. Main reasons for working overtime**

*Source:* Data processed by the authors

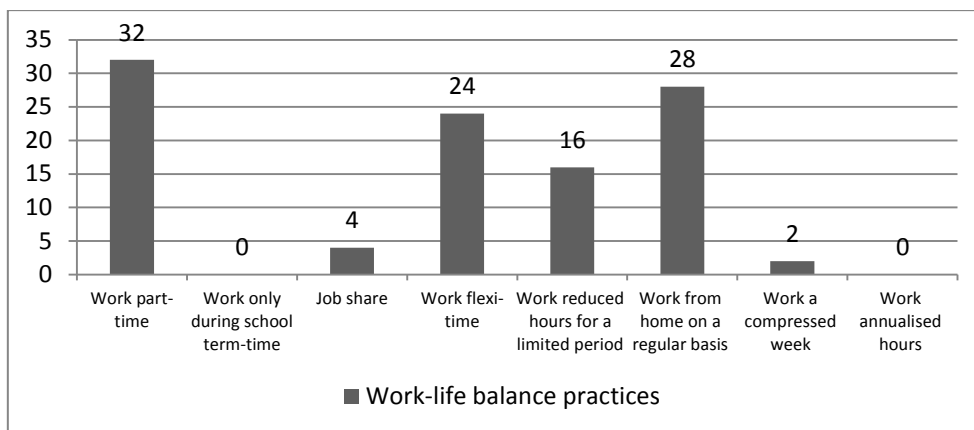
Related to overtime work, the HR professionals were asked to say whether they consider they worked too much. 24 respondents said sometimes and another 22 said no. Only 5 specialists declared they believed they worked too much. We can deduce that the majority considered unpaid overtime work as a normality at their workplaces.

#### **4.2. Work – life balance practices and policies**

The concept of work – life balance was well known by the HR professionals questioned. They strongly emphasised their opinion that “everyone should be able to balance their work and home lives in the way they want” (24 strongly agreed and 24 agreed).

In the same time, 30 specialists strongly considered that people worked best when they can balance work and life. Not a single respondent considered that WLB is just another human resources issue which can be treated as not very important.

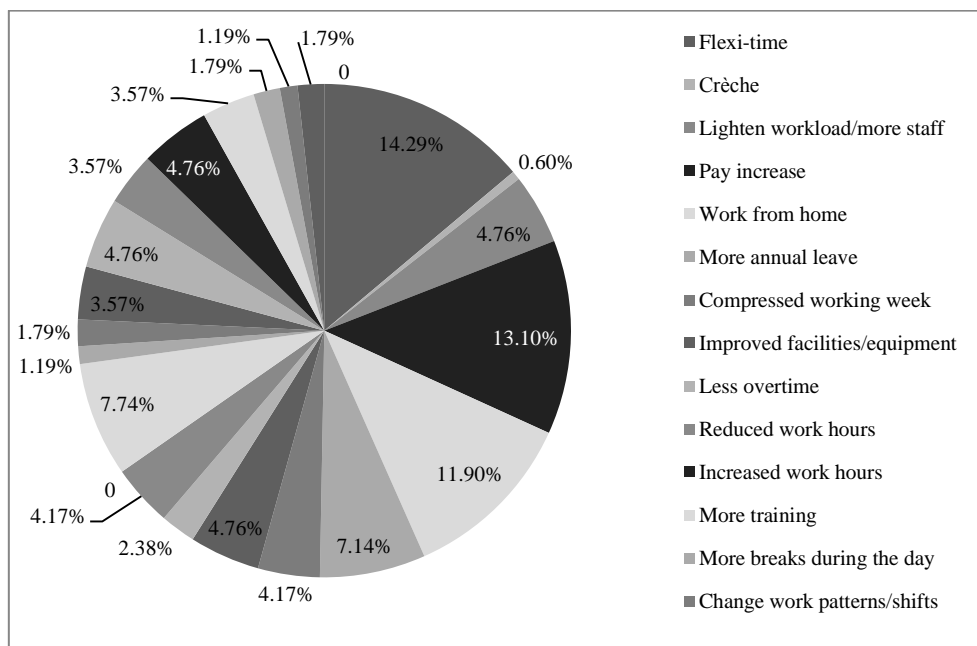
The employees participating at the study were asked about the availability of some working arrangements considered relevant for maintaining work – life balance. Most of them declared to have the option to work flexi – time – this is where an employee can vary their start and finish times but have an agreement to work a set number of hours per week or per month. This may be informally as well as formally agreed. Another policy practiced by the companies of the HR specialists was part – time work. 32 of the respondents said they could work part-time while 28 said they could work from home on a regular basis. 16 HR professionals also stated that they can opt for reduced hours for a limited period of time and just 4 of them could share their jobs.



**Figure 10. Work – life balance practices**

Source: Data processed by the authors

In the respondents’ opinion, five are the most important things an employer could offer to achieve a better work – life balance: flexi-time, pay increase, work from home, more annual leave and more training. In terms of their gender, 20 women and only 4 men considered flexi – time would help them achieve WLB and 16 women and 4 men preferred to work from home.



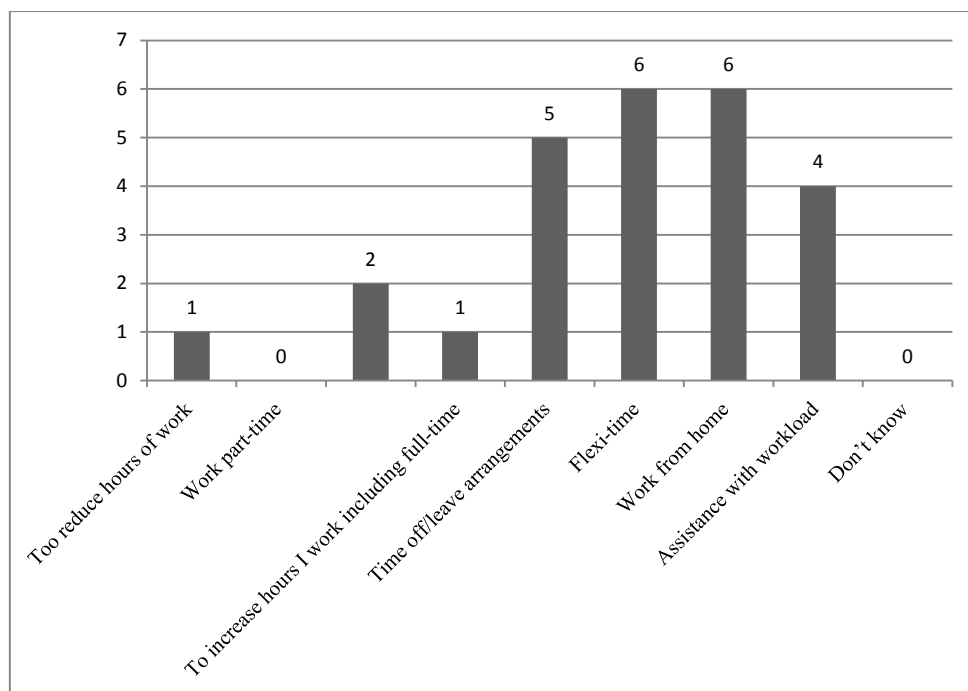
**Figure 11. Things an employer could provide in order to achieve a better work – life balance.**

Source: Data processed by the authors

When looking at current working arrangements, the employees declare themselves satisfied. 31 out of 52 respondents said they were satisfied with their current arrangements and 6 very satisfied. Only 2 of them considered themselves dissatisfied and 13 said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

13 of the HR professionals declared they approached their employer over the last two years to make a request to change how they regularly worked for a sustained period of time. Most of them requested flexi-time and work from home. The request was fully or partially accepted

for all of them except 2. These results show a certain flexibility of the employers when speaking about change in working arrangements.



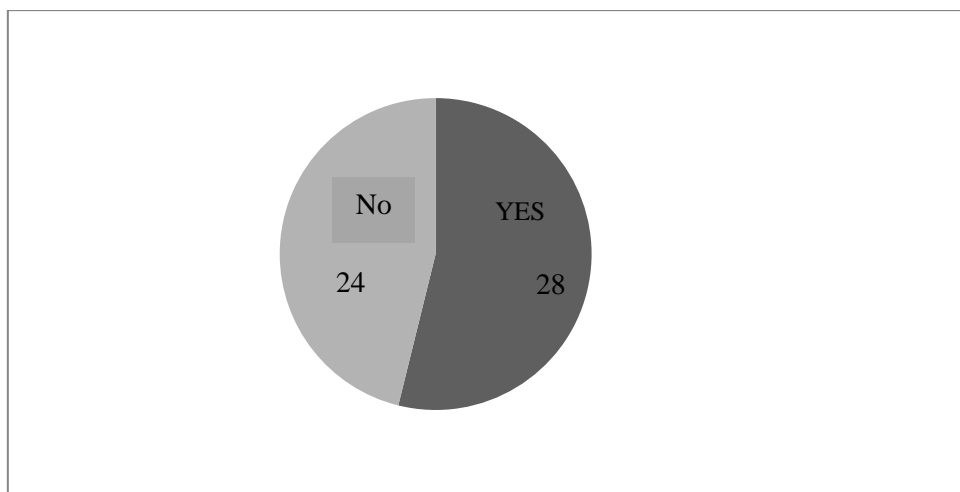
**Figure 12. Requests to change current working arrangements**

*Source:* Data processed by the authors

The conclusion is that we definitely find work – life balance practices in Romanian organisations. The problem is that some of the practices (like working from home) are not desired by the respondents (only 11.9% of the respondents said their work life balance would be better if they worked form home), and thus useless.

#### **4.3. Holidays and time off**

The employees participating in this study were asked to declare the number of paid days they were entitled per year. 50% of the HR specialists have 21 days of annual paid holiday. In Romania, the minimum legal number of paid holiday is 20 working days. Only 5 respondents have only 20 days of holiday. In Romania, the employer is obliged to give its all employees the legal holiday until the end of the next year. The employees participating in this study were asked if they took all the holiday they were entitled to. Only 53.84% declared they took all their holiday the last year. When asked why they didn't take the entirely holiday, the main reasons emphasised were: "I didn't plan 21 days of holiday", "I didn't need all the days", "I had the opportunity to take the rest of the day the next year", "I had too much work to do", "I changed jobs".



**Figure 13. The percent of the employees who took/took not the entirely annual holiday**

Source: Data processed by the authors

**Table 1. Cross tabulation frequency**

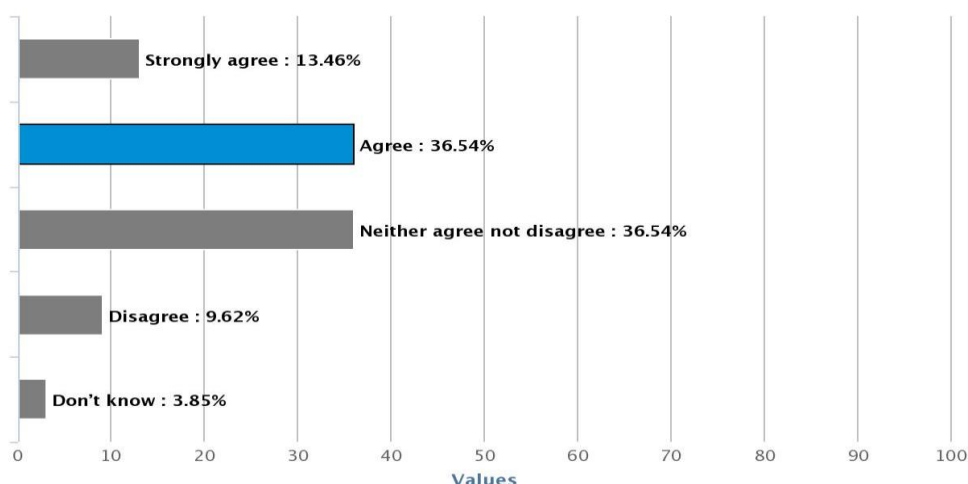
Cross Tabulation Frequency/Percent	The last year did you take all the holiday that you were entitled to?			
		Yes	No	Row Totals
Do you consider you work too much overtime?	Yes	1 <b>20%</b>	4 <b>80%</b>	5 <b>9.26%</b>
	No	13 <b>54.17%</b>	11 <b>45.83%</b>	24 <b>44.44%</b>
	Sometimes	13 <b>54.17%</b>	11 <b>45.83%</b>	24 <b>44.44%</b>
	I don't know	1 <b>100%</b>	0 <b>0%</b>	1 <b>1.85%</b>
	<b>Column Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>54</b>
	<b>Column Percent</b>	<b>51.85%</b>	<b>48.15%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data processed by the authors

In terms of the time spent with their families, most of the respondents declared they spent 30 or more than 30 hours per week. We can conclude that many of them dedicate their weekends to family activities.

**4.4. About flexible working**

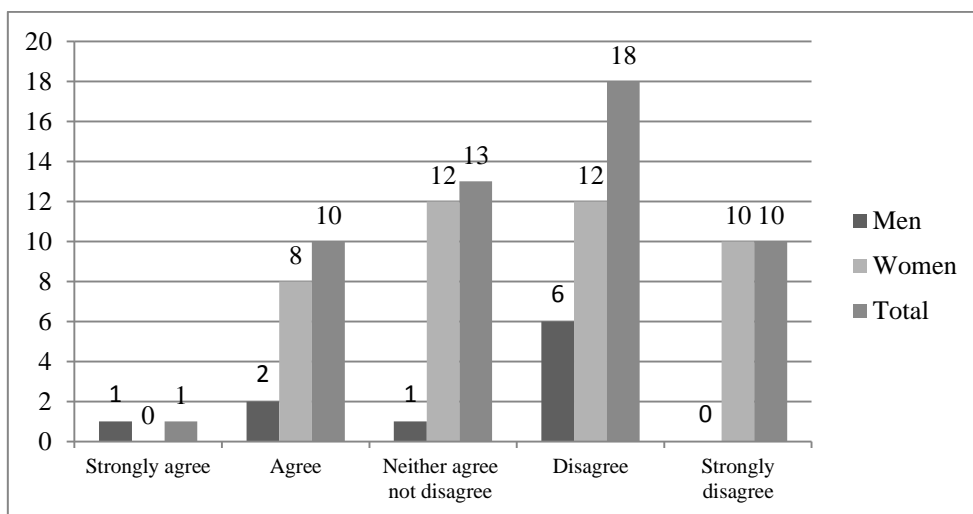
Many of the studies on flexible working report positive impacts on organisational performance. On the other hand, almost all of the studies suggest that the employees declare they would appreciate flexible working and would like to work flexible. We can conclude that both the employer and the employees can benefit from flexibility. Among the barriers to flexible working (CIPD, 2012) we find the operational pressures, maintaining customer/service requirements, the organisational culture or the line managers' ability to manage flexible workers.



**Figure 14. Responses to statement: “Employees must not expect to be able to change their working pattern if to do so would disrupt the business”.**

*Source:* Data processed by the authors

From the figure above we can see that most of the Romanian professionals consider that the business must not be affected by the desires of the employees. This suggests that they understand the fact that certain flexible working arrangements just don't fit any industry or field of activity. Only 9.62% of the respondents disagree with the statement.



**Figure 15. Responses to statement: “It's not the employer's responsibility to help people balance their work with other aspects of their life” by gender**

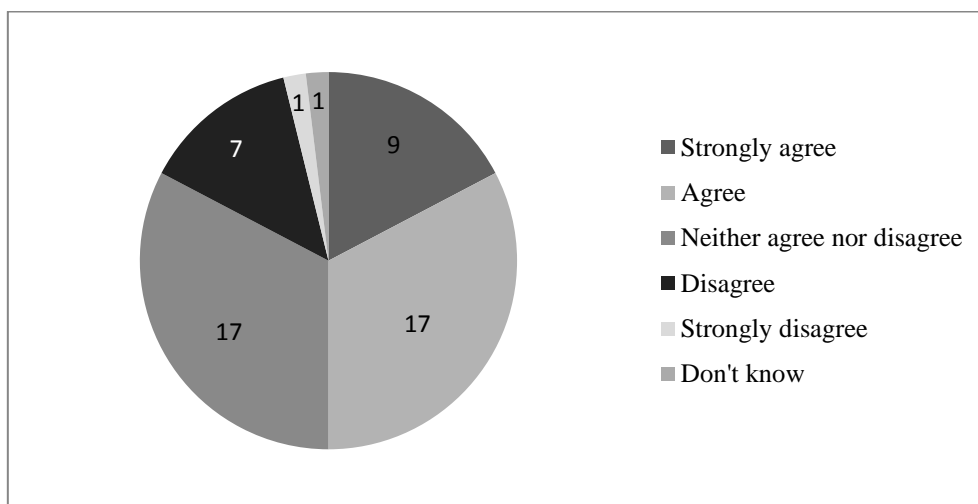
*Source:* Data processed by the authors

On the other hand, many of the HR professionals questioned considered that it is the responsibility of the employer to help people balance their work with other aspects of their life. At the question “It's not the employer's responsibility to help people balance their work with other aspects of their life”, most of the respondents disagreed (Figure 15). We can see in the figure below that most of the employees who strongly disagreed with the statement were women.

There are some important differences in the attitudes of the respondents when asked if people who work flexibly get more work done. 40.38% of them neither agree nor disagree, while 34.62% agree and 19.23% strongly agree. This high percentage of undecided people might suggest that they really don't know the advantages of flexible working and their impact.

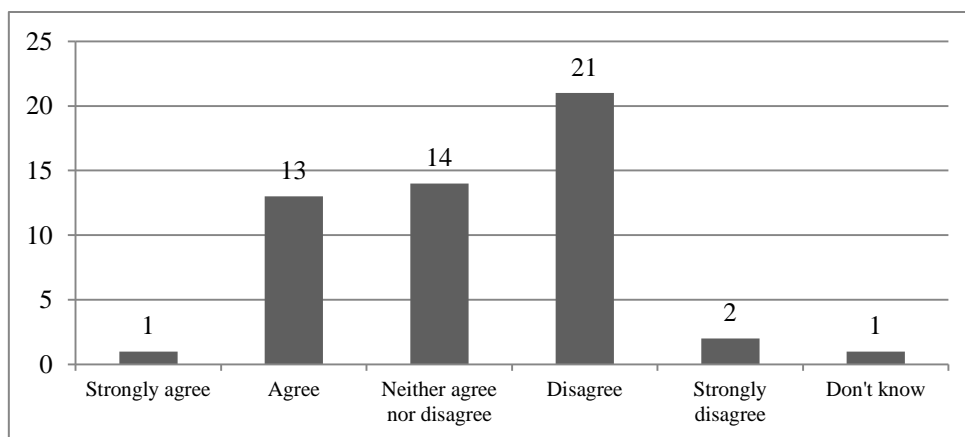
The high percentage of respondents who agreed with the question: "Employees without children should have the same flexibility in working arrangements as parents" suggest that the respondents don't consider that parents should have special working arrangements. Almost 83% of the HR professionals agreed with the statement. From 52 respondents, only 3 people disagreed.

Another question about flexibility asked the HR specialists if they considered that people who worked flexibly created more work for others. About a third of employees neither agrees nor disagrees. In fact, as we can see in the figure below (Figure 16), there is a significant percentage who doesn't agree (9 respondents).



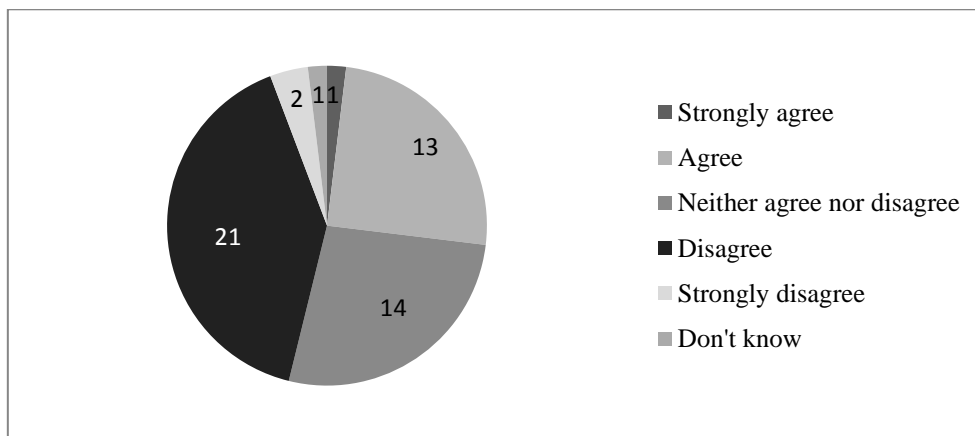
**Figure 16. Responses to statement: "People who work flexibly create more work for others"**  
 Source: Data processed by the authors

The general impression about the companies who offer flexible working is a good one. More than 70% of the respondents considered that employers who offer flexible working value their staff more and almost 85% of them declared that having more choice in working arrangements improves workplace morale.



**Figure 17. Responses to statement: "People who work flexibly need closer supervision"**  
 Source: Data processed by the authors

There is certain circumspection about the work done by employees who work flexibly. This conclusion is drawn because 14 of the 52 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that people who work flexibly need closer supervision and 18 of them neither agreed nor disagreed. In the same time, the respondents stated that the priority when considering requests to work flexibly should be the same for all the employees. Most of them (44) agreed that employers should not prioritize people with children or in other special situations.

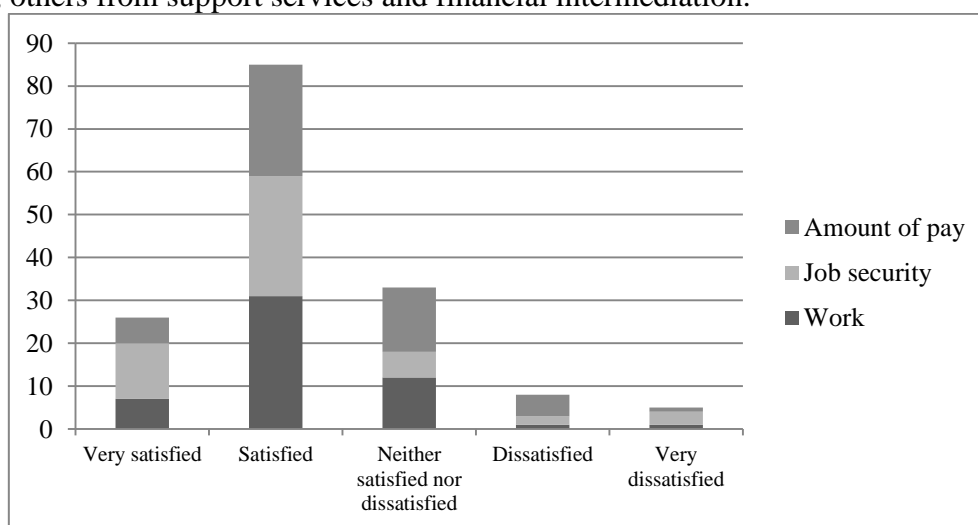


**Figure 18. Responses to statement: "People who work flexibly are less likely to get promoted"**  
 Source: Data processed by the authors

Regarding the chances to be promoted, many of the respondents declared that flexibility should not affect the chances to get promoted. However, 14 of the HR specialists said that people who work flexibly are less likely to get promoted.

#### 4.5. About your employer and your job

61.54% of the respondents of this pilot studied belonged to trading companies, 25% to public institutions, 1.92% to no- governmental organisations, 3.85% to trade unions and 7.69% to employers associations. The companies were fifty – fifty small and medium size enterprises and large organisations. Regarding their field of activity, most of them were from the IT&C domain, others from support services and financial intermediation.



**Figure 19. HR specialist's satisfaction about work, job security and pay**  
 Source: Data processed by the authors



The overall impression of the organisation the respondents worked was a good one. Only 4 respondents said they have a bad and very bad impression about their employer. Probably this good impression is also related to the good relations the respondents declare they have with the managers. Almost 75% of the HR professionals were pleased and very pleased about their managers. The HR specialists were also satisfied about the work they did, about the job security and the amount of pay they received (Figure 19).

## 5. PARTIAL CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude that the Romanian human resource professionals know what work – life balance practices are and understand their purposes. They consider that overtime work is normal, as long as you achieve better results and you like what you are doing. This result is also sustained by the respondents' satisfaction about their work, job security and pay.

The study also show that the most flexible working arrangements available in HR profession are part – time working, flexi- time working and working from home. They declare they could achieve a better work – life balance if their employer would offer more flexible working programme, an increase in pay, more annual leave and training.

The majority of the respondents considered that work – life balance is also in the responsibility of the employer and that the flexible opportunities should be available for all of the organisations' employees, no matter how many children they had. They also emphasised that flexible working should not be an obstacle in promoting to managerial positions.

After analysing the results of the pilot study we can conclude that its purposes were partially achieved. In the structure we identified some questions which could be removed or reformulated like: “The work itself – are you?”, “The job security – are you?”.

We could also improve the questionnaire by rearranging the questions for the five dimensions of the concept of work – life balance: the number of working hours, the main practices and policies of work – life balance, the number of free paid days, the time off and flexible working practices. The results partially validate the logic and the fluency of the questionnaire. Another limit of the pilot study is related to the number of the respondents and the organisation they are coming from. All 52 respondents are from organisations from Bucharest, so we did not obtain data about the opinion of other counties' HR specialists. However, this pilot study helped the authors to identify the main tendencies in the field of work – life balance and was a real help to improving the research in the domain.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted through the pilot study reveals the fact that the issue of work – life balance is a very significant theme in the community of human resources professionals. The specialists emphasise the importance of maintaining equilibrium between the working life and other personal life activities. They also state the fact that employers must understand their businesses develop and perform when the employees are engaged and satisfied with their work.

Among the most important findings of the pilot study is the fact that although the employees declare they have contracts with legal numbers of working hours, they still work overtime and most of the overtime work is unpaid. The most important reasons they worked overtime were to meet deadlines, because of the work load but also because they liked their jobs. Most of them didn't consider they worked too much overtime.

Another finding of the study is related to work-life balance policies and practices. It seems that part-time work is the most available form of flexible working in the respondents companies, followed by home working. The most important things an employer could offer to

achieve a better work – life balance are flexi-time, pay increase, work from home, more annual leave and more training.

A very important result is related to holiday. Most of the respondents declared they had 21 days of paid leave. Although it is not such a big number of free days, only 53% said they took all their holiday the previous year.

Four of the questionnaire statements measured the attitudes toward work –life balance practices. The results show a high level of support for these practices. Many respondents agreed that the employer should be responsible to help people balance their work and life and that flexible working shouldn't be a barrier to get promoted.

However, the results of this pilot study cannot be generalised as predominant for Romanian employees. The main purpose of this study was to test the logic of the questionnaire, to see if the questions are clear enough and understandable and to obtain an opinion of human resource professionals regarding to such a study. Following this approach, we observed that some questions should be removed as they didn't supply relevant information; other questions should be reformulated or completed. There is additional information we wanted to obtain but still didn't manage to find out.

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