

Roles of work-home balance skill and accommodation strategies for satisfaction at work-home interface

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In this research we investigated the moderating role of the work-home balance skill and the work-home accommodation strategies on the relationship between the emotions at work-home interface and satisfactions and mental health among Romanian workers. We firstly hypothesized that, in the relationship between the experience of work-home interface's negative emotions and the outcomes referring to satisfaction and health, the skill in work-home balance and the work-home accommodation strategies have an opposed function. We assumed the former might act to enhance satisfaction and inhibit illness. Secondly, we hypothesized that this skill in work-home balance will probably moderate the negative effect of prolonged working hours on the satisfaction with work-home balance. We tested the hypotheses through structural equation modeling and the ANOVA method in a representative sample of 277 Romanian workers (age range 21-65). The results supported both hypotheses. We conclude that it is important that people should use the work-home accommodation strategies to the minimum and accumulate the work-home balance skills.

Keywords : work-life balance, satisfaction, negative emotions, work-life interface, mental illness

1 Introduction

Work-home balance has become an important issue around the world. To actualize work-home balance, organizational support is very important. On the other hand, however, personal coping and skills are also important. Especially the success in maintaining health status and satisfaction during the daily work-home commuting is due to individual efforts. For this reason we

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focus this paper especially on research into the individual factors.

The coping skills to work-life interface are social support (e.g., Valk & Srinivasan, 2011), control over work demands (e.g., Valcour, 2007), mental unwinding from the negative psycho-social instants at work (e.g., Sonnentag, Kuttler, & Fritz, 2010) and the construction of permeable and flexible work-home borders (e.g., Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009), etc. The work-home accommodation strategies are also a resource that people often use to cope on the work-home interface. Enacting these implies that the workers favor more the assignments and the immediate needs either of work, or of home. Thus, they base the decisions of action on neglecting to care of specific matters related to work (e.g., cut off the schedule) or to home (e.g., cut off leisure activities). However the workers who choose numerous work-home accommodation strategies produce imbalance in their life (Wierda-Boer, Gerris & Vermulst, 2008). Still, the consequences on the state of balance re-established by this style are more harmful than beneficial (Keene & Quadagno, 2004).

Therefore, the following problem arises: what kind of coping would prevent workers from long-term stress? For example, social skills (e.g., self-disclosure) protect people from the experience of interpersonal stress (e.g., Cohen, Sherrod & Clark, 1986). We infer that, in a similar manner, a coping skill referring to the realization of equilibrium between domains is necessary for the people's success with work-home balance. Through such a skill, the workers manage the roles' needs in a manner that permits to them an optimal adaptation. Moreover, this skill might enable them to allot energy proportionately to the requirements of the multiple

domains of their life. Through the skill of work-home balance, the individuals may conserve their supplies. The work-home balance skill permits to workers to feel emotionally and cognitively available for various assignments. Devoting inner resources is a pursuit that prevents the employees from the experience of bi-or unidirectional intrusions of work into home (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009). People internalize this skill though experiential learning.

Through this study, we intend to clarify whether the two coping styles (i.e. the work-home balance skill and the work-home accommodation strategies) are efficient for the state of work-life balance of the workers in the organizations in Romania.

2 Hypothetical Model

2.1 Effects of the negative emotions at work-home interface on the coping resources, on satisfaction and on health

The daily hassles, appeared from the recurrence of emotions such as irritation, frustration, and fury (Hudiburg, 1996) are counterproductive to the active presence in work and in home. These discrete negative emotions may appear in work, in home or during commuting between work and home. Judge, Illies & Scott (2006) demonstrated that these negative emotions (e.g., fear, guilt) are precursors of work-family conflict, and contribute to the decline of the individuals' satisfaction with their jobs. As above, the negative emotions in work, in home or during commuting between work and home will decrease the satisfaction with job, and with work-home balance, and increase illness.

On the other hand, people often tend to select work-home accommodation strategies as a temporary way of avoiding the negative emo-

tions at work-home interface because they cause frustration. In contrast to these strategies, the work-home balance skills which confront and adjust frustration don't tend to be selected as the coping of daily negative emotions because the work-home balance skill needs calm judgments. Thus, we assume that the negative emotions increase the work-home accommodation strategies and decrease the work-home balance skill.

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): The negative emotions will suppress the work-home balance skill, the satisfaction with work-home balance and with jobs, increasing the work-home accommodation strategies and mental illness.

2.2 The role of work-home balance skill for satisfaction and for health

To counterbalance the effect of the work-home interface's negative emotions, various coping processes may occur in the organism. Applied research in organizational settings has shown that the individual work-home balance protects the work-force from symptoms, such as anxiety and depression (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Hämming & Bauer, 2009). In previous review studies, Couser (2008) and Carouso (2008) mention the family-friendly practices in the behavior of the workers to be a factor that prevents them from secondary or tertiary symptoms of depression. The work-home balance skill as resource of work-home balance will increase the satisfaction with job, and with work-home balance, and decrease illness.

Hypothesis 1b (H1b): Work-home balance skill will enhance the satisfaction with job and with work-home balance and will inhibit the symptoms of mental illness.

2.3 The role of work-home accommodation strategies for satisfaction and for health

The work-home accommodation that requires a series of sacrifices cultivate uni- or bi-directional work-home conflict rather than of consonance between these areas. A choice of coping that implies compromises may be more or less adequate to a context that people evaluate as stressful. Neglect of deadlines or inattentiveness in fulfilling responsibilities in work or at home contribute to maladjustments. The latent mechanism at the base of refusal or over-acceptance of assignments is passive-aggressive rather than assertive.

Hypothesis 1c (H1c): The work-home accommodation strategies will inhibit satisfaction with job and with work-home balance and will enhance incipient symptoms of mental illness.

2.4 Working time and Work-home balance skill

To investigate the role of work-home skill more, we examined the moderating effect of work-home skill on the relationship between the working time and the mental consequences. Unsocial work hours diminish the resources available for investment in household chores. Extra work hours have a positive association to the time-based and to the strain-based interference of work into family (Spector et.al., 2007). Increased work overloads generate an unsatisfactory work-home balance.

Furthermore, the manifest choices for a work-home-balanced existence prevent the transformation of work overload into ill-being (Charles & Harris, 2007). In a condition of extension of time allotted to the job, exercising control of work demands facilitated the workers' satisfac-

tion with work-family balance (Valcour, 2007).

Emotionally nurturing relationships and success in work are consequences of the quality of family and leisure time, including the personal-care activities. These contribute to the strengthening of work-home balance (Sakazume, Bakker & Demerouti, 2009; Sonnentag, Kuttler & Fritz, 2010). The availability and the efficacy of the workers' coping mechanisms are precursory to the refilling of their mental energy.

We assume that the work-home balance skill has a moderator role in the relationship between the working time and the satisfaction with work-home balance.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Prolonged working time, when one has a high skill of work-home balance, will not decrease the satisfaction with work-home balance, while it will decrease the satisfaction, when one doesn't have a work-home balance skill.

3 Method

3.1 Measures

The scales were translated from English into Romanian through the back-translation method (see Appendix). The face sheet specifies that this survey is on work-home balance and its purpose is to get information for promoting work-home balance. In addition, voluntary participation and protection of personal information are also specified.

3.1.1 Negative emotions

We applied the list of 14 emotions which Diefendorff, Richard & Yang (2008) developed. The question addressed to the participants was if they experienced, either in work, or in home, a negative emotion during the day. Although it's a very difficult problem to measure emotions,

we tried to measure emotions which are close to actual by asking participants the day's emotions which are easy to recall. As the result of CFA, we eventually retained only four items that showed good consistency (χ^2 (2, $N = 302$) = 4.01, ns , GFI = .99, CFI = .99, FMIN = .013, RMSEA = .058, HOELTER CN = 691, $p < .01$). If a participant's answer at this subscale is "yes", we coded "1", and if it is "no", we coded "0". The maximum score that a participant could obtain in responding to this scale was "4" and the minimum was "0".

3.1.2 Work-home balance skill

Based on the previous research of Valcour (2007), we developed a measure of 14 items. Through performing CFA, we identified and used in this study the five most representative items of this subscale (χ^2 (5, $N = 293$) = 1.61, ns , GFI = .99, CFI = 1.00, FMIN = .006, RMSEA < .001, HOELTER CN = 2738, $p < .01$).

3.1.3 Satisfaction with work-home balance

Also following Valcour (2007), we developed an initial set of 14 items to measure this variable. We kept in this study four of these (χ^2 (2, $N = 287$) = .78, ns , GFI = .99, CFI = 1.00, FMIN = .003, RMSEA < .001, HOELTER CN = 3363, $p < .01$).

3.1.4 Overall job satisfaction

For measuring this variable, we derived from the previous research of Rutherford, Boles & Hamwi (2009) four items (χ^2 (2, $N = 301$) = 4.88, ns , GFI = .99, CFI = .99, FMIN = .02, RMSEA = .07, HOELTER CN = 567, $p < .01$).

3.1.5 Mental illness

We used four, out of a total of nine items that Mroczek & Almeida (2004) developed ($\chi^2(2, N = 288) = .02, ns, GFI = .99, CFI = 1.00, FMIN = .001, RMSEA < .001, HOELTER CN = 13244, p < .01$).

The items of these four scales above were phrased as statements that participants could rate on a 5-point scale from 0 to 4.

3.1.6 Work-home accommodation strategies

We derived the measure for this variable from the previous studies of Keene & Quadagno (2004), Mennino & Brayfield (2002) and Wierda-Boer et. al. (2008). This consisted of six items. The numerical value correspondent to a “yes” answer was “1”. Opposite, if a participant choose the “no” option, we coded the answer with “0”. The value of “6” represented the highest value of the calculated score that a participant could possibly register in answering this subscale. The lowest was “0”.

3.1.7 Personal and demographic data

Personal and demographic data relating to gender (1 = “male” and 0 = “female”), working time (from 1 = “less than 4 hours daily work program”, to 5 = “working between 11 and 12 hours per day”), marital status (1 = “currently married”, including cohabitating and engaged, and 0 = “unmarried”, including separated or divorced from partner), number of children (from 0 = “no children”, to 5 = “4 or more children”) and educational background (from 1 = “high-school”, to 5 = “post-doctoral studies”) were also collected.

3.2 Sample

A representative sample of 277 Romanian

workers was constituted by the non-probabilistic snowball technique. We yielded subsamples from IT programming, architecture, education and research in engineering, language and religion. A total of 311 questionnaires returned, and usable responses were 277. The sample in this study was 50.2% (139 participants) women and 46.9% (130 participants) men. Eight participants (2.9%) returned incomplete answers about their gender. The mean age was of 41.34 ($SD = 12.10$, age range 21 - 65). In this sample, three participants (1.1%) returned uncompleted responses about their age. University graduates constituted nearly half of the sample (45.1%, 125 participants). Post-graduates (76 participants) represented 27.4% of it. A percent of 18.1 (50 participants) were high school graduates. Those who completed doctoral and post-doctoral studies, 26 participants, represented 9.4% of this sample. The married participants constituted more than a half (67.1%, 186 participants) in the composition of this sample. We received questionnaires from 86 unmarried participants (31.0%). Five persons, 1.9% of this sample, returned missing answers about the marital status. The majority of this sample (43.7%, 121 participants) had no children. A number of 87 participants (31.4%) had one child. Further on, 67 participants (24.2%) had two or three children. Two participants (0.7%) returned incomplete answers about their parental status. A large part of this sample, 55.6 % (154 participants), had an official working time of seven to eight hours daily. Those spending a time between nine to ten hours per day on their job, 83 participants, constituted 30.0 % of this sample. Further on, 19 respondents (6.9%) worked a time between four and six hours on a day. The rest of the participants’ answers in reference to working hours, were incomplete.

Table 1 Means, standard deviations and matrix of correlations between the main variables of this study

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Gender (<i>N</i> = 269)	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	-										
2 Education (<i>N</i> = 277)	2.31	0.94	.09	-									
3 Marital status (<i>N</i> = 274)	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	-.05	-.12 *	-								
4 Number of children (<i>N</i> = 275)	0.83	0.86	-.01	-.25 **	.47 **	-							
5 Working time (<i>N</i> = 277)	3.37	0.73	.20 *	.18 **	-.04	-.03	-						
6 Negative emotions (<i>N</i> = 277)	0.11	0.25	.06	-.01	.07	-.06	.07	-					
7 Work-home balance skill (<i>N</i> = 277)	3.00	0.63	-.09	-.15 *	.01	.01	-.20 **	-.16 **	-				
8 Number of work-home accommodation strategies (<i>N</i> = 277)	1.44	1.37	.11	.10	.05	.08	.12	.19 **	-.28 **	-			
9 Overall job satisfaction (<i>N</i> = 277)	2.81	0.88	-.03	.09	.06	.06	.14 *	-.21 **	.26 **	-.21 **	-		
10 Satisfaction with work-home balance (<i>N</i> = 277)	2.55	0.79	-.06	-.02	-.04	-.11	-.19 **	-.15 *	.66 **	-.28 **	.32 **	-	
11 Mental illness (<i>N</i> = 277)	1.35	0.83	.03	-.01	.15 *	.13	.18 **	.32 **	-.41 **	.30 **	-.19 **	-.43 **	-

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Moreover, the percent of participants who did supplementary time on the job, during week-ends or in legal days off (44.4%, 123 participants), was nearly identical to that of those who never worked during their days-off (43.7 %, 121 participants). A great part of them, 53.8% (149 participants) had no prospects to change the workplace in the near future.

We conducted this survey on March 2010.

4 Results

The one-factor structure of each scale was validated using confirmatory factor analysis. The scales were defined as the negative emotions, the work-home balance skill, the satisfaction with work-home balance, the satisfaction with job and the mental illness. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .76, .86, .91, .81, .80, respectively.

The measurement scale of the work-home accommodation strategies consisted of six items whose reliability coefficient Cronbach alpha was under the value of .70 ($\alpha = .60$).

The results obtained from conducting the *t*-test for means' comparison indicated the existence of gender differences, with significantly higher means of working men than of working women, for two items. One was "In your present job, due to work responsibilities, have you been

unable to do the housework?" (t (289) = 2.04, $p < .05$; N men = 139, M men = .23; N women = 152, M women = .14). The other item was the negative emotion of fury (t (292) = 2.05, $p < .05$; N men = 139, M men = .11; N women = 155, M women = .05).

Table 1 displays the Pearson's coefficient correlations, the mean and the standard deviation of each variable.

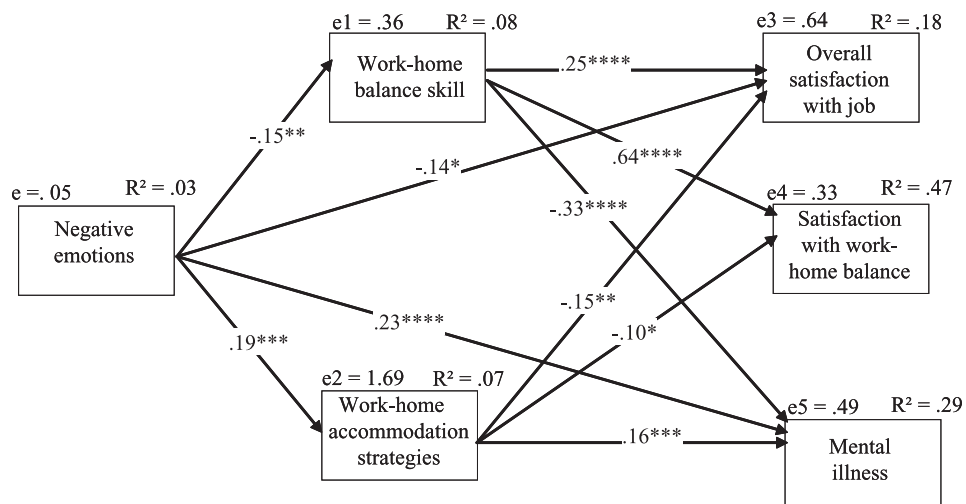
We present in the following the results obtained in the examination of the hypotheses. In the examination of the first set of hypotheses, we controlled for the effect of five demographic characteristics. Additionally, by inserting in the model the co-variance lines between each pair of the control variables, we examined the bidirectional influence between them. Table 2 shows the results that we observed in the SEM OUTPUT to have a level of the significance probability ($p < .05$).

And each causal relationship at significant level ($p < .05$) is indicated in the structural model (see Figure 1). As the results showed, the hypothesis *H1a* was supported without the satisfaction with work-home balance. The findings stated a suppressor effect of the negative emotions on the work-home balance skill ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .01$) and on the satisfaction with job ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$), but not on the satisfaction

Table 2 Values of the standardized *beta*-estimates for the relationships between the demographic characteristics and the main variables of study

Predicted relationship	Value of the standardized estimate coefficient	Significance level
work-home balance skill <--- education	-.13	<.05
work-home balance skill <--- working time	-.17	<.01
overall job satisfaction <--- education	.13	<.05
overall job satisfaction <--- working time	.21	<.001
satisfaction with work-home balance <--- number of children	-.11	<.05
gender <--> working time	.20	<.001
education <--> number of children	-.24	<.001
education <--> working time	.18	<.005
number of children <--> marital status	.47	<.001

Note: Only significant relationships for $p < .05$.



Note: **** $p < .001$; *** $p < .005$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. The values near each line are standardized β estimate coefficients. For the ease of presentation, we omitted from this representation the demographic variables, their error covariance and the following covariant relationships: cov (e1, e2) = -.23****; cov (e4, e5) = -.16****; cov (e3, e4) = .21**. The following properties describe this model's characteristics: $\chi^2 (3, N = 277) = 1.69$, $p = .64$, GFI = 1.00, AGFI = .98, CFI = 1.00, FMIN = .006, RMSEA < .001, HOELTER CN = 1849, $p = .01$.

Figure 1 SEM model showing work-home balance skill and work-home accommodation strategies in relation to satisfaction and mental illness

with work-home balance. It also referred to an enhancer effect of the work-home accommodation strategies ($\beta = .19$, $p < .005$) and mental illness ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$).

The findings showed a significant negative effect of the work-home interface's negative emotions on the work-home balance skill. On the other hand, a multitude of daily negative emotions, loaded to a stress potential, determined a significant, positive effect on the choice

of coping through work-home accommodation strategies. Accordingly, the exposure to a set of daily negative emotions cause a person's experience of stagnation of the development of work-home balance skill, and a person's choice of work-home accommodation strategies as an easy way out.

The following hypothesis, **H1b**, stated that work-home balance skill will have an enhancer effect on satisfaction with job ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$),

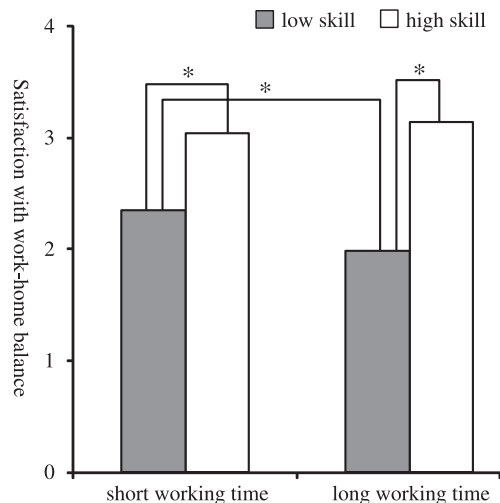
on satisfaction with work-home balance ($\beta = .64$, $p < .001$) and an inhibitor effect on illness ($\beta = -.33$, $p < .001$). The findings from the structural model provided proof for supporting this hypothesis.

The findings obtained from SEM offered proof to support the last hypothesis, **H1c**, as well. This stated an inhibitory effect of the work-home accommodation strategies, on satisfaction with job ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .01$), on satisfaction with work-home balance ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .05$). It also referred to an enhancing effect of these on mental symptoms ($\beta = .16$, $p < .005$). As investigated in **H1a**, negative emotions caused the work-home accommodation strategies. But our findings suggested that the consequences of the work-home accommodation strategies were not beneficial for worker's satisfactions and mental health like the previous findings (e.g. Wierda-Boer, Gerris & Vermulst, 2008; Keene & Quadagno, 2004). So we need to sever the work-home accommodation strategies from negative emotions.

H2 stated a moderator effect of work-home balance skill between the working time and the satisfaction with work-home balance. To investigate it, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed with the working time as independent variable, the work-home balance skill as moderator, and the satisfaction with work-home balance as dependent variable. The subgroup that had a low work-home balance skill contained 164 participants. A number of 113 participants had a high work-home balance skill. Further on, 174 participants worked between six and eight hours daily(short working time) and 103 participants worked nine, up to 12 hours daily(long working time).The work-home balance skill (low and high) and the working time (short and long) were the between-group factors. A main

effect for the work-home balance skill group, $F(1, 273) = 115.18$, $p < .001$, was the result of generally higher satisfactions for the high work-home balance skill group than for the low work-home balance skill group. In contrast, a main effect for the working time was not found, $F(1, 273) = 2.40$, *ns*. There was also a significant effect by interaction, $F(1, 273) = 7.23$, $p < .01$. Because a visual inspection of the results did not clearly show the kind of interaction that was obtained, we conducted a post hoc simple main effect analysis (see Figure 2).The simple main effects were obtained in the low work-home balance skill between the long working time and short working time groups, $F(1, 273) = 12.55$, $p < .001$, and in the short working time between the high and low work-home balance skill, $F(1, 273) = 48.54$, $p < .001$, and in the long working time between the high and low work-home balance skill, $F(1, 273) = 67.54$, $p < .001$.

As the results showed, when work-home balance skill was high, even if working time pro-



Note: * Significant simple main effect [$F(1, 273) = 12.55$, $p = .00$; $F(1, 273) = 48.54$, $p = .00$; $F(1, 273) = 67.54$, $p = .00$].

Figure 2 Moderator effect of work-home balance skill between the working time and the satisfaction with work-home balance

longed, it did not decrease the satisfaction with work-home balance. However, when work-home balance skill was low, prolonged working time decreased the satisfaction.

5 Discussion and limitations

In this research we investigated the moderating role of the work-home balance skill and the work-home accommodation strategies on the relationship between the emotions at work-home interface, satisfaction and mental health among Romanian workers. As the results suggest, emotions labeled as negative constitute an antecedent factor of a coping-style based on compromises. But, as the results showed, the enactment of the work-home accommodation strategies increased risk of illness and of dissatisfaction. On the other hand, our results reveal that the work-home balance skills increased satisfaction, but negative emotions decreased skills.

From these findings, for the maintenance of the work-home equilibrium, we must trade the work-home accommodation strategies for the work-home balance skills on daily negative emotional situations. As the evidence of the previous studies showed, the workers' fulfillment of needs, in work, or in home, place them at a low risk to experience unbalanced living (e.g., Gröpel & Kuhl, 2009). Because of organizational environment and condition of individual life cycle, people tend to be forced to take the work-home accommodation strategies. In that case, it is also important that people should use the strategies to the minimum and accumulate the skills. Future research should investigate how to control the negative emotions and to accumulate the skills.

And we found that the choice of coping through the skill in work-home balance may prevent people from the experience of dissat-

isfaction in devoting extra-time to work. But it goes without saying that the devoting extra-time to work is not beneficial for human well-being no matter how much the skills do moderate the negative effects of the long-time working. Of course, the working time should be controlled in an appropriate way.

Limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. We mention the measurement of the skill in work-home balance through a self-report instrument as a major limitation of this study. It is likely that measurements of negative emotions were measured by chance. Also, we need to examine the means of measuring emotions in more detail. Furthermore, the degree of correspondence between the subjective evaluation of the presence of this skill and the habitual actualization of it in order to cope to work-home stressors on a day is a theme that remains open to investigation. Moreover, through the pursuit of this study, the workers' preferences for sharing or compressing the time allotted to family and leisure remained uninvestigated. The confirmation of the obtained results through replication of this investigation in other samples, with different socio-cultural backgrounds, remains an overt issue.

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Roles of work-home balance skill and accommodation strategies for satisfaction at work-home interface

Appendix Scales and items in this study

Negative emotions

Today, at work or at home, did you feel: angry?

Today, at work or at home, did you feel: irritated?

Today, at work or at home, did you feel: furious?

Today, at work or at home, did you feel: disgusted?

Work-home balance skill

I am skillful in dealing concretely with the multitude of requests from work, personal, social and family life.

I am skillful in dividing my energy between work, home and friends.

I am able to adapt at problems that necessitate solving in my professional life appeared simultaneously with problems belonging to my family life.

I am skillful in managing situations of conflict of interests between my job and my personal or family life.

I am skillful in harmonizing work with home and social life.

Satisfaction with work-home balance

I feel content with the way I adapt professional to personal life.

My family and close friends feel content with the way I share resources between paid work and personal-life.

I feel content with the way I integrate work with family and social-life.

I feel content with the way I share my attention among work, family, social responsibilities.

Overall job satisfaction

My job is exciting.

My job gives me a sense of accomplishment.

I am really doing something worthwhile in my job.

My job is satisfying.

Mental illness

How often do you feel: depressed?

How often do you feel: so nervous that nothing can calm you down?

How often do you feel: nervous?

How often do you feel: that everything is an effort?

Work-home accommodation strategies

In your present job, due to work responsibilities, has it been impossible for you to care for a sick child?

In your present job, due to family responsibilities, did you leave work early?

In your present job, due to work responsibilities, have you failed to attend a family event?

In your present job, due to family responsibilities, did you have to refuse extra-job hours?

In your present job, due to family responsibilities, have you had to refuse a job promotion?

In your present job, due to work responsibilities, have you been unable to do the housework?
