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Influence of Flexibility on Work Life Balance

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Influence of Flexibility on Work Life Balance

By

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A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Service
Leadership and Innovation

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Abstract

Generation Y is entering into workforce and one of their needs in workplace is work life balance (Schulte, 2015). If employers want to retain them, they need to recognize it (Ingham, 2015). Different studies show, that flexibility has strong correlation with work life balance (Clark, 2000). Furthermore, literature review indicated that there is no sufficient data about Generation Y in Croatia. These indications showed the need for further research.

The purpose of this quantitative, survey method, study was to test whether work place flexibility, including factors of job content, time schedule and location, positively influences work life balance for Generation Y in Croatia. The primary research analyzes whether Generation Y in Croatia has work life balance and flexibility and whether correlation between the two exists. Sample (n=205) completed an online survey and results show that there is significant positive correlation between flexibility and work life balance for Generation Y in Croatia, $r(205) = 0,36$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the result show, due to lack of flexibility, Generation Y in Croatia is not achieving work life balance. This is essential information and prerequisite for future organizations, if they desire to retain Generation Y in their workplace. In addition it is valuable to employers in Croatia to build their future employer brands and prepare their organizations for Generation Y.

Keywords: generation Y, work life balance, flexibility, Croatia

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Introduction

Today there are two hard trends, which one has to be aware off to be able to predict how the future of work will look like (Burrus, 2011). The first trend is the fast development of technology. If one reflects on personal experience, there are many examples that show how progressive this trend is. For example, in my childhood, the main way children listened to music was at one point by using a Walkman. Today, when I ask my niece if she knows what a Walkman is, her reply is no. The purpose of this example is to show that technology is changing so quick, that it does not even stay in the market long enough for one generation, in this case Generation Y, to recall it. Today, smart phones are the source of music. Smart phones are not only used for entertainment such as music listening and gaming, but are used for business as well. Smart phones are becoming as essential for each businessperson as pen and paper were before. Not only business people are affected by this hard trend but students as well. More and more, education systems are implementing technology, so now you can find classes that are delivered by using iPad or grades that can be viewed in smart phone applications. All these are examples that prove the importance of technology advancement in our everyday life.

The other hard trend that one has to be aware off is Generation Y becoming a larger portion in the total workforce. Generation Y is the future workforce and therefore the way of working and communication will consequently change. Generation Y, depending on the interpretation of different sources, is in a need for work flexibility, work life balance and constant change. Employers who want to retain the workforce of Generation Y, already today, must start thinking of differentiating benefits and retention plans for the future workforce.

This research will focus on Generation Y in Croatia. Reason for this is a need for additional data about Croatian Generation Y and availability of the data to the researcher. Currently if a company, future employer needs data about Generation Y it has to use it form the

global surveys as there is no local research data available about work flexibility and work-life balance.

Purpose Statement and Hypothesis

This research will take a deeper look into two characteristics of Generation Y: the importance of work flexibility and work life balance. Generation Y has an increased need for work flexibility that can be achieved with the smart technology. For example, it increases availability and decreases the need for one work location. Generation Y has an increased need for work-life balance which the usage of smart technology is not contributing too (Donnelly, n.a). On the other hand, one could argue that smart technology is contributing to better work-life balance. For example, during business trips technology helps parents to communicate with their children through Skype, FaceTime etc. Millennial believe that smart technology plays important part in both work flexibility and work-life balance (Schulte, 2015).

The purpose of this survey study is to analyze correlation between work flexibility and work life balance as main work characteristics of Generation Y in Croatia. Usage of smart phones affects both work flexibility and work-life balance therefore is important factor of this study (Nam, 2013).

Hypothesis 1: Work flexibility positively influences work life balance for Generation Y in Croatia.

Importance of this paper lies with the fact that employers need to predict future workforce and their needs in order to stay competitive on the market. Today, the world is slowly getting away from the last economic crisis. From the firsthand experience, being part of the human resources industry in Croatia, it is now more and more obvious that migration of people between companies is increasing and in the future will increase even more. Survey study done by PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited in 2013 show results that career progression is

top priority for Generation Y. Furthermore, the survey also shows that Generation Y values employer brand that determines their employer choice and change.

In the near future, each employer will have to develop an employer brand and maintain it. The customer's, in this case, employee's characteristics and needs have to be identified. Two important factors that describe the future employee are work flexibility and work-life balance. The results, of this research will give benefit to companies in Croatia about correlation between work flexibility and work life balance to the new workforce generation. The results can be used to determine work hours, workplace, etc. Moreover, companies can use these results to better attract Generation Y and to become employer of their choice.

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on a specific population - Generation Y. Characteristics, which are significant for this group, are explored in relation to the workplace environment. The importance of this lies in the literature, which shows how Generation Y is becoming an important part of the future workforce (Nambiyar, 2014). Furthermore, technology development increasingly influences workplace. This influence affects work flexibility thus work life balance. Technology now makes us reachable everywhere. Therefore, some work related tasks can be carried out while not being in the office.

Literature review indicates that work – life balance as a need could disappear with the workforce (Ashgar, 2014). Generation Y's need for work flexibility is integrating both work and life and could make the boundary between work and life disappear (Masunaga, 2015). Work life balance is moving towards work life integration where people are crossing from one side to another constantly. For example, a smart phone is used one minute for business conference and the other to send a message to children. Other example is work time flexibility that is also giving the opportunity to manage better work and life. There are strong examples of correlation

between work flexibility and work life balance (Clark, 2000). Literature shows a need for research in regards to this correlation and Generation Y. Will the concept of work-life balance disappear with the new workforce due to the flexibility need increase?

Generation Y Characteristics

Literature defines age range of Generation Y or Millennial differently. Ranges found in literature can vary from end of 1970s to 2000s. Now there is no, universally defined period, which defines Generation Y. According to dictionaries, Oxford and Merriam-Webster, Generation Y is a group of people who are born in 1980's and early 1990's. Therefore, in this research, to achieve consistency, when referring to Generation Y only this range will be taken in consideration.

Today, in year 2016, Generation Y is between age of 20 and 35. This generation is becoming a bigger portion of workforce (Nambiyar, 2014). There are different characteristics, which are describing Generation Y. They, as the literature emphasizes, "want it all and want it now" (Erickson, Alsop, Nicholson & Miller, 2009). Among other, the characteristic, which vastly differentiates them from Generation X, which is preceding them, are the preferences in workplace (Burk, Olsen & Messerli, 2011). Preferences in workplace are specific for this generation. PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited survey from 2013 shows that Generation Y is techno generation who emphasizes importance of work life balance, development and career progression.

Generation Y in Workplace

As the demographic trend is progressing, corporations have to adapt to the new age workforce as well. The companies are now focusing more on exploring and analyzing this group of people and their career expectations in order to retain them in workplace longer (Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010). Retention is crucial and only by understanding the needs of

Generation Y the companies are able to keep the talent and prevent talent shortage (Ingham, 2015). Today researchers in different areas of study have managed to clearly, define the needs of Generation Y. This information makes it easier for companies to manage the expectations and needs of their employees. In addition to this, companies can learn from Generation Y how to cope with the technology and world changes as well, as Tammy Erickson says (2008).

Generation Y in the workplace is looking for interaction and inclusion (Erickson et. al, 2009). They are in a need of constant opportunities and challenges (Eisner, 2005). Following factors are important for Generation Y in the workplace: competitive compensation, career advancement and fulfilling experiences (Ng et. al, 2010). The characteristics describing Generation Y are similar to the world we are living in now, quick and flexible. The main characteristics of Generation Y have been identified in detail through different surveys that show their importance to future workforce (Bannon et al., 2011). Surveys that globally introduced main characteristics of Generation Y are (Bannon et al., 2011):

- Pew Research Center, “Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change,” February 2010
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), “Managing the Millennials: HR Survey of Recent Graduates,” September 2008
- KMPG, “Beyond the Baby Boomers: the Rise of Generation Y,” 2007 Johnson Controls, “Generation Y and the Workplace: Annual Report 2010”
- Deloitte, “Generation Y: Powerhouse of the Global Economy,” 2008

Generation Y is living in the time of constant technological advancement and they are using technology along the way in their workplace (Cruz, 2007). Erickson’s (2009) subtitle is perfectly describing Generation Y and their main distinction from other generations. The subtitle is “How I learned to love millennials (and stop worrying about what they were doing with their iPhones)” (Erickson et al, 2009). Smart technology is part of our everyday lives.

Generation Y is the only group in current workforce which, when using new technology for the first time in their life, has no challenges (Cruz, 2007) while within other groups one will most likely encounter a resistor or slow learner. Smart technology plays an important part in everyday life of Generation Y.

A study done by Liu, Pasman, Taal-Fokker and Stappers (2013) shows that Generation Y communicates better in a more flexible environment where instant, expressive, playful, collaborative and responsive communication tools are used. Furthermore, according to that research, quality of interaction with the sample was higher at home than at work. Participants were asked to place the activity cards to express level of interaction quality. The activities were ones which technology is providing us with, such as gaming. It can be concluded that using technology, which is flexible, increases the quality of interaction (Liu et. al, 2013). This suggests that usage of smart technology will become the main tool in business and workplace for Generation Y if companies want to achieve better interaction among employees.

Technology in Workplace

Computers are the main representatives when thinking about technology at workplace. Laptops were the main tool for work in the beginning but now smart technology is letting us do almost everything from our phone. Many employees today have work e-mails on their phones. This option compliments the Generation Y's core value, which is a need for flexibility (Taylor, 2013).

Although this opportunity gives flexibility, using smart phones increases stress and pressure at work (Bittman, Brown, & Wajcman, 2009). A grounded theory study of the relationship between e-mail and burnout by Camargo (2008) is trying to increase awareness of the burning issue where over usage of emails causes burnout of employees.

There are evidence that high usage of smartphones are connected with stress and pressure however there are also researches which are connecting this with the concept of work-

life balance. Using smart phones could potentially increase satisfaction with work – life balance is one of theories (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). Study done by Yun, Kettinger, and Lee (2012) however, shows that the usage of smart technology increases workload and therefore has negative impact on work life balance. Literature about this topic gives different opinions. Reason for this is that target population is not defined or different target populations are compared. There is no clear conclusion based on literature review whether smart-phones have negative or positive effect on work-life balance. As mentioned previously, smart phones are making boundary between work and life disappear.

Study done by Taewoo Nam (2013) defines three variables that are determining the effect on work life balance: job stress, job satisfaction and workload. This study as well is arguing that technology is influencing dimension of flexibility. Conclusion of Nam's (2013) research is that technology and the way we use it influences work life balance both positively and negatively.

Smart phone technology affects both work flexibility and work life balance level of satisfaction. It gives the opportunity for the work hours 9 to 5 to disappear but it then potentially compromises the work – life balance level of satisfaction. However, the correlation between two, according to the literature, exists (Hill et al., 2001).

Work Life Balance and Work Flexibility Definition

Work life balance is defined differently by various sources and finding a proper definition is difficult as is it individual for each person (Bird, n.d). The definition by Business Dictionary (n.d) is: "A comfortable state of equilibrium achieved between an employee's primary priorities of their employment position and their private lifestyle", while Cambridge dictionary (n.d) is defining it as: "the amount of time you spend doing your job compared with the amount of time you spend with your family and doing things you enjoy". This paper

will consider as relevant the definition which refers to the state of equilibrium as one cannot define the perfect time spend on the job and off the job since life is unpredictable (Bird, n.d.)

Work flexibility defined by Business dictionary (n.d.) is; “work practice (explained by the employer in employment policies and contracts) that allows the employees a certain degree of freedom in deciding how the work will be done and how they'll coordinate their schedules with those of other employees”. Depending on the employer, different options can be included, but three factors are usually taken in consideration and those are: location, time and content (Hill et al., 2001). Work flexibility consists of three factors whose deliverables can vary.

Work Life Balance and Work Flexibility

One of the theories in regards to work – life balance was set by Sue Clark in 2000. According to the theory, people are daily border-crossers (Clark, 2000), meaning work and family are two domains, which are integrated. This again emphasizes the concept of level of flexibility needed. In the research done by Hoffman and Cowan (2007), participants identified flexibility as key to define work-life balance that is consistent with Clark (2000). Flexibility is interconnected with the work-life balance and for generation Y different flexibility options, as time or location, are effecting work life balance (Bresman, 2015). Research shows flexibility in general positively influences work life balance (Hill et.al, 2001)

Furthermore Hill, Erickson, Holmes and Ferris (2010) suggested in their research that having flexibility makes one less likely to report work-life balance decrease or how they define it work – life conflict. This opens a new stream of thoughts in which flexibility is almost eliminating borders in a way that it is making work – life balance disappear. Ashgar (2014), who argues that work life balance does not exist for Generation Y, and that it is becoming work-life integration, supports this stream of thoughts.

Generation Y in Croatia

Croatia is developing country and according to the official population count, from 2011 Generation Y makes more then 700 000 people, which is more than 15% of total population (www.dzs.hr). Currently Croatia is struggling with the brain drain (anonymous, 2013). Generation Y in Croatia has difficulties to find a job after they finalize their studies (Devicic, 2013). Some argue that Generation Y in Croatia is lethargic, but what they want is to be happy with their job (Devicic, 2013). In this argument, that the needs of generation Y are not recognized in Croatia, lies the importance of this research.

Most of this researchers' literature review revolves around global surveys, research results and conclusions about Generation Y. As mentioned, global data shows importance of work flexibility and work-life balance which is influenced by constant development and progress of the technology. However, for Croatia, no detailed studies, which look at the characteristics of Generation Y in Croatia, have been found. Information about Generation Y in Croatia is derived from the global research data and characteristics are used to describe Croatian Generation Y. This research will not define Croatia Generation Y characteristics; rather it will focus on defining whether correlation between work life balance and flexibility exists. Reason is that this type of information has more practical use for future employers and that in the current literature there is no mention of correlation between work flexibility and work-life balance for Croatian Generation Y.

Methodology and Evaluation

Approach

Researcher defined directional hypothesis H_1 that follows: work flexibility positively influences work life balance for Generation Y in Croatia. The researcher is analyzing whether there is positive or negative correlation between work flexibility and work life balance.

This research uses quantitative approach. Quantitative approach has an aim to test correlations between variables while qualitative approach explores the meanings behind problem researched (Creswell, 2014). The aim of this research is to analyze correlation between work flexibility and work life balance for Generation Y in Croatia, which is the reason for selecting quantitative rather than qualitative approach. The researcher is exploring whether the correlation exists and is not exploring the meaning behind its existence or non-existence.

Quantitative approach uses instruments to measure variables that are set up to minimize bias (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research there are no fixed instruments therefore there is more risk-biased results. Another key strength of quantitative research is that it can be generalized to the whole population which, due to few number of participants, is not true for qualitative research (Ben-Eliyahu, 2014).

The drawback of quantitative approach is limited information of the reason why a certain correlation exists or it does not exist. From this research the reader will not find out why flexibility influences work life balance. Qualitative approach would be the one that would answer this question.

This research will use survey as the quantitative method. Experiment is not used as the researcher is not trying to analyze the impact of treatment on an outcome but is trying to identify conclusions for a specific population (Creswell J, 2014). Reason for choosing survey method is fast paced environment. With this method, results are gathered quickly and in a short time frame. Constant change in technology, generation evolution and working environment could affect the results. With this method, results are extracted in one point of time. This study, by using cross-sectional survey method can be a starting point, if the researcher decides to develop longitudinal study in the future (Creswell, 2014).

Benefits of survey method are ease of use and clear interpretation, which is another reason why mentioned method is selected. Transparency of results and conclusions increase importance and validity (Creswell J, 2014). In addition to that, survey method gives exact statistical, numerical data and it is cost efficient. Drawback of the survey method is similar as to the entire quantitative approach; survey method will not give us meaning behind the results. Moreover, the survey method and design of the instrument is of utmost importance as the researcher gets only once chance to get the responds. If the instrument is not correctly designed, the research loses validity and reliability.

Population

According to dictionaries, Oxford and Merriam-Webster, Generation Y is a group of people who are born in 1980's and early 1990's. If we take in consideration that today, in year 2016, these people are aged between 35 and 20, this is the age range of population this research is considering for Generation Y.

This research analyzes work life balance; therefore, employed Generation Y is the target population. This is the reason why unemployed Generation Y is not to be included in the population. The researcher assumes if one does not have a job that he or she is less likely to express and have a need for work life balance. Furthermore, due to constant technology progress one who has not been employed for a while may not be aware of the technology advancement as it is presently used in business.

Education level is a factor that defines the job and career direction. Higher education level assumes having jobs which allow more flexibility (Melmed, 2015). This research does not argue that population which has high school degree does not have a need for flexibility or work life balance. This research is taking in consideration that individuals with the higher level of education are working in companies that are more likely to be able to provide flexibility in their

workplace. For example, a worker in the manufacturing does not have flexible work hours as they are most likely working in a predetermined shift. Another example is the cook in a hotel, who cannot be flexible with his deadlines. As the researcher is analyzing correlation between flexibility and work life balance, option of having flexibility in your work is a required. In addition to this, use of technology for work purposes on daily basis is more likely in the jobs that require a degree. For example if one is working on a production line (Melmed F. 2015) as a waiter, or as a salesperson in convenience store, he or she is less likely to be able to use their phone. As identified in literature review, technology plays important factor in both flexibility and work life balance. Some say that using smart phones increases satisfaction with work – life balance (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007) while others argue opposite (Yun et. al, 2012). Additionally some argue that although it gives flexibility it negatively affects work- life balance (Bittman et al., 2009). The population of this research are people employed in Croatia, aged between 20 and 35 with at least some college degree.

Sample

Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics in 2011 issued a census and gave official number of population at the time in Croatia. The population count of Generation Y today, based on the number of people in 2011, would be around 795.000. Out of total population in 2011 the proportion of Generation Y would be 18,5%. If this percentage is applied to 2015, data given Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics, about the number of active population in Croatia, we assume that active working population Generation Y in last quarter of 2015 is around 300,000. Furthermore, 20 percent of the total population in Croatia has a Bachelor's degree or higher level of education based on Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics in 2011 (Lilek, 2011). If we apply this percentage to Generation Y population then we remain with 60.000 people. If we take, above mentioned, assumptions we can conclude that today the whole population, which

this research is targeting counts around 60.000 people. These assumptions are valid only for the last quarter of 2015.

Sample population is single stage randomly selected. Random sampling introduces sampling errors (Pyrzszak, 2010). The larger the sample size the smaller margin of error is (Pyrzszak, 2010). The sample size of this research is 205 which gives the researcher confidence level of 95% that is commonly used (Pyrzszak, 2010) while margin of error is seven.

Instrument

IBM has been administering internally the same survey from 1986 (Hill et al., 2001) and its purpose is to gather the data that will make their workers efficient in achieving business objectives while maintaining work life balance. Hill et al. (2001), to study correlation between perceived flexibility and work life balance, used the same data. They are group of professors from Brigham Young University who did an empirical study based in IBM instrument, which was published in *Journal of Family Psychology*. The group of authors used the part of the IBM instrument data to analyze the correlation between flexibility and work life balance using mostly descriptive statistics. Hill et al. (2001) showed the objectivity stating certain limitations that are mostly related to the data being derived only from IBM employees therefore results might not be applicable globally. More than hundred other authors, in different articles and journals, have cited Hill et al. (2001) conclusions. The validity and reliability of the instrument also lies in the record of accomplishment and the fact that survey results were the basis from which IBM started improving work life balance along with the working environment of their employees continuously (Hill et al., 2001).

Survey used in this research is partially derived from Hill et al. (2001). Survey from Hill et al. (2001). has in total 9 questions. Two of the questions are related directly to the status at IBM workplace and they were not used for this research. In addition to that, question “How

much flexibility you have in scheduling when you do your work (e.g., scheduling hours, time of the day, etc.)” and question “How much flexibility you have in scheduling what work will you do (e.g., content of work, process used, etc.)” (Hill et al., 2001), were combined in one. Reason behind is that Hill et al. (2001) analyzes in separate questions flexible time and flexible work content, which will not be analyzed in depth in this research. The question used as a replacement is “Which of the following work support/flexibility programs have you participated in at your organization in the last 3 years? (Select all that apply.)”

Survey of this research had 10 questions in total (see Appendix A). The part of the survey related to flexibility and work life balance has six questions. Additional four demographic question were inserted. Reason for the minimum number of questions is quick but high quality completion of the survey and limitation that is set up in the tool used to design the survey, Survey Monkey. Researcher assumes that sample population answered honestly and without prejudices.

Primary four questions are related to gender, level of education, age and work status. These questions are with given, predetermined answer. This is necessary for the researcher to know if the participant is part of the targeted population as the option to have targeted population reply only was not found. Then questions, derived from Hill et al (2001) research, related to work life balance and flexibility follow. These questions were modified based on Survey Monkey source recommendations, which is the tool used to gather the data. Survey Monkey has pre-set question, which are approved by certified sources. The reason why some questions from Hill et al. (2001) are modified is to increase the validity of the survey. For example, question from Hill et al. (2001) survey is “How easy or difficult is it for you to balance the demands of your work and your personal and family life?”. The question in this survey is worded as following: How difficult was it for you to balance your work life and personal life while working? When worded as this the Survey Monkey guarantees that this is a certified

question. This means, according to, Question Bank in Survey Monkey (n.d.), that it was written by methodologists to minimize bias and get the most accurate responses. Furthermore, if one edits the wording of this question, it is no longer certified, which means it might be subject to bias and accuracy issues. By doing this the validity and reliability of the research is increased as the Hill et al. (2001) survey is dated 2001 and the bank of certified questions in Survey Monkey is up to date at the current time. The question from Hill et al. (2001) “How often do you feel drained when you get home due to pressure and stress at work?” did not exist in the question bank of Survey Monkey and therefore was not modified at all. Modification were done only if the Survey Monkey tool suggested a better wording or construction of the question. Question bank of Survey Monkey (n.d.) was used for demographic questions as well.

Data Collection

Data was gathered in the period of two months. Reason for this are the external factors and trends that are changing constantly and rapidly therefore researcher wanted to target the approximate point in time. The benefit of having data all at one point of time increases the validity of these results as economic factors affect the Generation Y working population size.

Survey was designed by using Survey Monkey tools. Survey questions were distributed randomly online using different distribution tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, mailing groups and e-mail. Through researcher social profiles, the link of the survey was published and contacts were asked to distribute further. In addition to that, email containing the link was sent to the RIT Croatia alumni population as well as AMCHAM Talents group. Reason for using this method is its cost-effectiveness and time-effectiveness. The cost of the survey design was 250.00 HRK as the researcher needed more than 100 responds. This was the price of using Survey Monkey as a tool for designing the survey. There for no costs for distribution.

The survey link included the invitation that explains the purpose of the survey (see Appendix B) In the invitation, the contact was shared for the participants who would like to see the results of the research. This is important to increase the responsiveness to the survey. Namely, the participants tend to be more responsive if they are interested in the topic, whilst they have the opportunity to see the results (Johnston, 2016).

To minimize the researcher to be biased the participants anonymously completed the survey. As the researcher is part of Generation Y population and knows some of the respondents through personal and professional networks it was important to increase the conditions in which results are analyzed and conclusions are made. Anonymity of participants ensures minimum bias or prejudice.

Data Analysis

Once results were gathered, descriptive statistics was derived to gain the understanding of the random sample based on demographic data. Comparison was be done between participants who have work flexibility and work-life balance, ones who do not have work-life balance nor flexibility, ones who do not have work-life balance but have flexibility and ones who do not have flexibility but do have work life balance. With this comparison, the researcher concluded whether positive or negative correlation exists, or if there is no correlation between the two.

Dependent variable for the research is work life balance. In order to determine level and ability to maintain work life balance set of questions and statements were given. Questions “How difficult is it for you to balance your work life and your personal life while working” and “How successful do you feel in balancing your work and personal/family life balance” determined whether the correspondents feel they are achieving work-life balance. This determined standpoint of Generation Y in Croatia. Work-life balance definition is different for

each person therefore through these questions researcher determined whether the correspondent feel they managing to have it or not.

For work life balance not to be just a perception following question was given: “How often do you feel drained when you get home due to pressures and stress at work?”. This question is a real life example, and gives added value to the work-life balance perception questions. This question is direct indicator whether work interferes with private life.

Once work life balance was determined, flexibility related questions followed. Perception of work flexibility was determined with the following statement: “I am satisfied with workplace flexibility offered by my organization”.

Flexibility in work place was defined by three flexibility factors, location, time and job content. Job content factors was analyzed by using following question: “How much flexibility do you have in organizing your daily tasks?”. Time and location factors were analyzed through the response to the following question: “Which of the following work support/flexibility programs have you participated in at your organization in the last 3 years? (Select all that apply.)”. The selection included: reduced schedule, part time schedule, work from home, job sharing, leave of absence paternity, maternity. Reduced time schedule and work from home were time and location factors that are analyzed.

Analysis was done first in relation to work life balance and whether Generation Y in Croatia perceives to have it. Once the perception was defined, the researcher used real life example questions to determine whether they are supporting the perception. For example, if the correspondents felt they were drained after work the result was lack of work life balance.

Once work life balance was determined completely, flexibility was analyzed. Three work flexibility factors were used: time, location and job content. Perception of flexibility was determined with a question and the factors were used to conclude whether work flexibility exists

or not for Generation Y in Croatia, so that the conclusions are not made just through correspondents perception. For example if correspondent perceived to have work flexibility and had, at least two out of three factors in their work place then the result were that correspondent has work flexibility.

In the end, correlation between work life balance and flexibility was tested to either prove or disapprove the hypothesis. Two questions were tested for correlation, for work life balance the question was “How successful do you feel in balancing your work and personal/family life balance”, and for flexibility the statement was “I am satisfied with the workplace flexibility offered by my organization”. For the correlation, researcher used Microsoft Office Excel. Data was downloaded, coded and then data analysis was performed by using correlation and descriptive statistics formula. The reason why a software was not used was the researcher was previously familiar with correlation analysis in Microsoft Office Excel.

Difference between analysis of this survey and the one from Hill et al. (2001) is that the one from Hill et al. (2001) additionally deeply analyzed factors of time and location, being factors of flexibility, against perceived work life balance. This research analyzes only whether flexibility has influence on work life balance for Generation Y in Croatia and whether work life balance and flexibility exist in Croatia for Generation Y.

Results

Questions related to age, education and employment status ensure that target population answered the survey. From the sample (n=205) surveyed 72% of respondents are female and 28% are male. Demographic data is important for the researcher to be able to identify any limitations which are be discussed further in the limitations section.

To the question “How difficult is it for you to balance your work life and your personal life while working” respondents answered on the difficulty scale of five. The biggest number,

43% of sample moderately has difficulties in balancing the two. From the sample 13% have no difficulties. Following question, the question “How successful do you feel in balancing your work and personal/family life balance” , on the scale of five, only 4% of respondents replied that they are not successful, others are slightly, moderately, a lot or extremely successful. Based on the percentage the researcher concludes that correspondents perceive they are achieving work-life balance.

Direct indicator, real life example, whether work interferes with private life is analyzed in the question: “How often do you feel drained when you get home due to pressures and stress at work?”. Only 6% of respondents answered not at all, 20% answered slightly often, 30% moderately, 38% very often and 6% answered extremely often. This question, which is a real life example, confirms that the population does feel work life balance challenges and the researcher concludes that the population is not achieving work life balance.

Although the perception questions indicate existence of work life balance the researcher concludes based on real life example results that Generation Y is not achieving a successful work life balance.

Flexibility perception statement “I am satisfied with the workplace flexibility offered by my organization.” gives result that 45% of population agrees they are satisfied with flexibility and 23% does not agree. 32% of respondents do not lean in any direction. The researcher concludes that Generation Y in Croatia does not have the perception of flexibility at their workplace, as one third of respondents has not expressed the agreement or disagreement whether they are satisfied with their workplace flexibility. The researcher assumes that some respondents who answered that they are neither, nor satisfied, that they do not have flexibility perception of their organization. This assumption results from the fact that 45% of the

respondents who have not expressed the agreement or disagreement, in the question where they should choose a flexibility program from a list, they selected they have none.

Three factors of flexibility are job content, time and location. How much flexibility you have in organizing your daily tasks is the question that determines flexibility of job content. 20% of respondents replied that they have a great deal of flexibility, 34% have a lot, 32% have a moderate and 13% have little amount of flexibility. Only 2% has no flexibility. The researcher concludes that generation Y has flexibility in factor one, job content selection.

Other two factors that are analyzed are time and location. From the drop down list of flexibility programs 40% of sample answered that they have not experienced any of the flexibility programs. This means that out of 205 answers 81 person does not have time or location flexibility. Other 124 respondents have selected different flexibility programs. 32% of 124 selected working from home and 34% out of 124 selected reduced schedules program. If percentages were converted to reflect and describe the whole sample, they would give that around 20% of the sample has time and location flexibility.

Based on the results researcher concludes that generation Y is lacking flexibility in their workplace if considering the location and time factor. Although the job content selection is flexible the two other factors, time and location are scoring low on the respondents list.

Correlation between flexibility and work life balance is analyzed through two questions: “How successful do you feel in balancing your work and personal/family life balance” and “I am satisfied with the workplace flexibility offered by my organization.” These two questions are indicating two factors work life balance and flexibility. Question related to work life balance gives the answer whether the person feels that they are in “a comfortable state of equilibrium achieved between an employee's primary priorities of their employment position and their private lifestyle”, which is the definition of Business Dictionary (n.d) of work life balance.

Question related to flexibility, gives the answer whether the person is satisfied with “work practice that allows the employees a certain degree of freedom in deciding how the work will be done and how they'll coordinate their schedules with those of other employees”, which is definition of for flexibility, defined by Business Dictionary (n.d).

The excel correlation data analysis evidences that there is a significant positive relationship between the work life balance, defined as feeling successful in balancing work and personal life and flexibility, defined as satisfaction with flexibility offered, $r(205) = 0,36$, $p < .001$. With the 95% confidence interval level, the researcher accepts the hypothesis that flexibility positively influences work life balance for generation Y in Croatia. In addition to this, regression was ran using data analysis excel tool to get the summary output that gives more statistical correlational data to the reader (Table 1). In Table 1, Intercept stands for the work life balance, dependent variable, while work flexibility, independent variable, is expressed in the form of the statement that was given to the participants. In the Table 1, we can see that p value is less than .05, which give us the confidence of 95% that there is true relationship between two variables. This regression analysis give us the information that flexibility is a significant predictor for having work life balance. Furthermore, if flexibility is increases the work life balance will be increased by 0.29.

R-squared value is low, 0.13 (Table 1) which is supported by the following fact: when attempting to predict human behavior or feelings R-squared is lower than 50% reason for this is that humans are more challenging to predict (Forst, 2013). R-squared value is low but there are statistically significant predictors. Regression analysis adds value to realize that predicting humans can depend on many factors however flexibility is significant predictor for work life balance.

SUMMARY OUTPUT								
<i>Regression Statistics</i>								
Multiple R	0,36							
R Square	0,13							
Adjusted R Square	0,12							
Standard Error	0,82							
Observations	205							
<i>ANOVA</i>								
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>			
Regression	1,00	20,17	20,17	29,65	0,00			
Residual	203,00	138,14	0,68					
Total	204,00	158,31						
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95,0%</i>	<i>Upper 95,0%</i>
Intercept	2,08	0,15	13,60	0,00	1,78	2,38	1,78	2,38
I am satisfied with the workplace flexibility offered by my organization.	0,29	0,05	5,44	0,00	0,18	0,39	0,18	0,39

Table 1

As there is lack of data about work life balance and flexibility for Generation Y in Croatia for this research, it was important to identify whether these exist at all and in which volume with the current population. Overall results from this research indicate that Generation Y, specifically the sample in question, has lack of work life balance and work flexibility, which is derived from the interpretation of descriptive statistics.

In regards to correlation, the results indicate that if one does not have flexibility in workplace one is more likely to feel less satisfied with balancing work and private life. This confirms the researcher directional hypothesis that flexibility positively influences work life balance. Correlation analysis results are supported by the descriptive data for Generation Y in Croatia, which indicates that there is lack of flexibility and therefore lack of work life balance. We can conclude that work flexibility is one variable, which correlates to work life balance and affects the work life balance positively.

Discussion

Idea for this research arose from the observation of the hard trends where generation Y is becoming a large part of the workforce in the future (Nambiyar, 2014) and at the same time, we observe the fast development of technology. Global surveys characterize generation Y as generation that needs inclusion, career advancement and fulfilling experiences. Strong trend of progressing technology is helping them in achieving quality interactions and experiences (Liu

et. al, 2013). PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited survey from 2013 describes that Generation Y as techno generation who emphasizes importance of work life balance. Work life balance is one of the characteristics observed for generation Y in global surveys.

Technology can have negative effect on work life balance (Donnelly, n.a). however part of generation y believes that smart technology plays important part in work-life balance (Schulte, 2015) as it gives them flexibility. Work/family border theory by Clark (2000) indicates that there is strong correlation between work flexibility and work life balance. Study by Nam's (2013) is arguing that technology is influencing dimension of work flexibility. This consequently puts technology as an important factor in analyzing work life balance and work flexibility correlation. This research does not analyze the specific technologies and how they affect flexibility and work life balance but is focusing on population that, in their workplace, is using smart technology. The research results relate only to the generation y who uses smart technology in their work place.

Different sources have different points of view on the topics related to work life balance and work flexibility of generation Y. Some of them consider the correlation between two factors exists (Clark, 2000) while other argue that the generation Y is erasing the clear border in work life balance therefore the correlation would not exist as work life balance as a term is becoming extinct (Ashgar, 2014). Globally there is no alignment on the topic in what way work life balance will change for generation y in comparison to previous generations however there is alignment that flexibility plays an important role (Bresman, 2015).

The purpose of this research is to study and analyze correlation between work flexibility and work life balance as two characteristics of generation Y. Focus of this research is Croatia as in the literature review, no detailed studies, which look at these two characteristics of Generation Y in Croatia, have been found. In Croatia, generation y has difficulties in being employed, which causes significant brain drain (Devicic, 2013). The factor that is affecting this

is current economic situation, which is not beneficial for generations coming into workforce. Unemployment rate in January 2016 for Croatia was 16,2% according to the Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics. Economic situation is one indicator of the high unemployment and the other could be employers having a difficult time in attracting and retaining generation y in the workforce due to the limited data they have about their needs and wants.

The attempt of this research is to test the hypothesis that work flexibility positively influences work life balance for Generation Y in Croatia. The research gives value data to future employers who, by modifying the way of operating can attract and retain generation y in Croatia and decrease the currently high unemployment rate.

Results of this research indicate that if one does not have flexibility in workplace one is more likely to feel less satisfied with balancing work and private life. The results derived are from the 205 respondents who replied to the online questionnaire. The respondents were limited to currently employed members of generation Y who have the option to use smart technology in their workplace. The results as well give the overall picture of the generation Y in relation to work life balance and flexibility. Respondents results, when given work life balance situational question, indicate generation Y is not achieving work life balance. Generation Y perceives that they do not have flexibility and this is supported by the lack of the two out of three flexibility factors which are: time and location. To conclude, generation Y does not have work life balance nor work flexibility in their workplace. This is consistent with the correlation findings, which indicate that flexibility positively influences the work life balance, thus supporting the hypothesis stated by the researcher.

Secondary research indicates correlation between flexibility and work live balance while primary is proving that the correlation between two exist for generation Y in Croatia. Current economic situation in Croatia is one of the causes for the high unemployment rate

generation Y is facing. The other cause, as the results of this research indicate, could be the lack of understanding for generation Y's needs in the workplace, which are work life balance and flexibility.

Limitations

This research has certain implication that should be taken into consideration when analyzing results and reviewing the conclusion of the researcher. The population surveyed is more than 70% of female; this could give the indication that these results are more applicable for the female part of the population. In order to be more confident the sample size should be 50/50 or surveys should be distributed per gender.

Limitation of not taking into consideration the economic factor of the population in interpretation of results exists as well. One could argue that higher economic status has an effect on the work life balance and this research did not reflect on this factor. Furthermore, potentially household differences, number of members within a household, could have the effect on the results as well. Again, one could argue that person in household with more members has more challenge is achieving work life balance.

Recommendation

Generation Y is the future workforce. Employers should be aware of their needs and wants, in order to enhance the employees' satisfaction and productivity. Increase awareness about future trends and future workforce is the key for successfulness of future organizations and building a strong employer brand. Companies should analyze the benefits they currently offer and increase the ones related to work flexibility. In promoting themselves as best employer the focus should be on the work flexibility options, the company offers. By promoting flexible working hours and working from home, the companies will attract and retain generation Y.

Generation Y in Croatia is affected by the external environmental and economic factors. Unemployment rate in Croatia according to Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics in January 2016 was 16%. This fact has the effect on sample size this research considers. This would suggest that results might potentially change due to the working population increase or decrease. The recommendation would be to repeat the research once there is a change in the unemployment rate.

This research should be a cornerstone for a more in depth longitudinal cross-sectional study in order to get more validity of the results over the time. Longitudinal study is recommended in order for researcher to argue that external economic factors are not affecting the results, which now, is not possible.

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Appendix A

Flexibility & Work Life Balance

1. What is your age?

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 to 74

75 or older

2. What is your gender?

Female

Male

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Graduated from high school

Graduated from college or higher

4. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

Employed, working full-time

Employed, working part-time

Not employed, looking for work

Not employed, NOT looking for work

Retired

Disabled, not able to work

5. How difficult was it for you to balance your work life and personal life while working?

Extremely difficult

Very difficult

Moderately difficult

Slightly difficult

Not at all difficult

6. How successful do you feel in balancing your work and personal/family life balance?

Extremely successful

Very successful

Moderately successful

Slightly successful

Not successful

7. How often do you feel drained when you get home due to pressure and stress at work?

Extremely often

Very often

Moderately often

Slightly often

Not at all often

8. How much flexibility you have in organizing your daily tasks?

A great deal

A lot

A moderate amount

A little

None at all

9. Which of the following work support/flexibility programs have you participated in at your organization in the last 3 years? (Select all that apply.)

Part-time schedules

Reduced schedules (e.g. ability to leave workplace early)

Telecommuting/Work from home

Job sharing programs

Leaves of absence / sabbaticals

Maternity leave

Paternity leave

Extended maternity policies

Extended paternity policies

Program to smooth transition before, during and after maternity leave

In-house or subsidized external childcare facilities

Company-sponsored peer networking group for parents

Services for sick children (e.g., onsite clinic)

None of the above

10. I am satisfied with the workplace flexibility offered by my organization.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neutral/Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Appendix B

Invitation

Dear colleagues,

I am conducting a research on Flexibility and Work Life Balance of Generation Y in Croatia as a part of completing Master of Science program at RIT Croatia. The purpose of the research is to analyze whether flexibility positively influences work life balance and whether Generation Y in Croatia had work life balance and flexibility in their workplace. I kindly ask for your help in taking a 10-question survey on the link below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/37VJNSJ>

By answering these questions, you will stay completely anonymous and the information that you provide will strictly be used for research purpose.

If you would like to see the results, after the research is completed please contact me and I will happily share.

Kind regards,

Nikolina Birimiša

e-mail: nbirimisa@gmail.com