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## WORK-LIFE BALANCE INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES IN SPORTSMEN'S PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTIVITY INCREASE PROGRAMS

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**Ткалич М.Г., Сняданко І.І., Войцеховська О.В., Якупова О.Ю. Індивідуальні стратегії балансу робота – життя у програмах підвищення професійної продуктивності спортсменів.** Метою дослідження було емпірично дослідити рівень балансу між професійним та особистим (сімейним) життям спортсменів за психологічною шкалою з основними критеріями: відсутність балансу навантаження; планування робочого часу та його змісту; складність професійних завдань; соціальні зв'язи. Результати показали, що баланс робота – життя у спортсменів на середньому рівні. Баланс навантаження набрав найнижчі показники, показник соціальної взаємодії найбільш збалансовані і збільшується з віком. Гендерні відмінності можна спостерігати лише щодо питань тренувального табору та виїзних ігор чи участі у змаганнях, де спортсмени-чоловіки активніше займаються. Проаналізовані можливі індивідуальні стратегії, визначені особливості адаптивних стратегій та їх ефективність у досягненні балансу.

**Ключові слова:** баланс робота – життя, інтеграція робота - життя, професійна продуктивність спортсменів, програми професійної продуктивності, індивідуальні психологічні стратегії.

**Tkalych, M., Snyadanko, I., Voitsekhovska, O., Yakupova, O. Work-life balance individual strategies in sportsmen's professional productivity increase programs.** The aim of the study was to empirically investigate the level of work-life balance in sportsmen (both amateurs and professionals) by the psychological scale with the main criteria: absence of the load balance; work time and content planning; professional tasks complexity; social intercourse. The results have shown, that the work-life balance of sportsmen has been considered to be average. The load balance has gained the lowest scores, the social intercourse indicator is most balanced and gets increased with the persons' age. Gender differences can be observed only regarding the issues of training camp and away games or competitions participation, where male sportsmen are more actively engaged. There are a lot of possible individual strategies: focused, "resource – refusal", adaptive. Adaptive strategies include compensatory and segmentation elements and effectively contributes to the work-life balance achievement in sportsmen.

**Keywords:** work-life balance, work-life integration, sportsmen's professional productivity, professional productivity programs, individual psychological strategies.

**Introduction.** Nowadays people’s lives as well as their professional and personal development are being affected by a lot of various factors, events, information flows, and tasks, which they face every day. Professional development and productivity increase are associated not only with expert’s abilities and skills as well as his or her career goals and motivation, but also with the ability for time and energy management (the ability to divide one’s time and energy between work and play). The efficiency and productivity, the ability to achieve strong performance, and, along with it, the sense of satisfaction with one’s life, harmonious development are of the same significance, and besides, are associated with sports specifics: a necessity to work much for good results achievement; long-term training camps, away games, etc.

*Work-life balance* is a category defined by researchers as a person’s subjective general assessment of the interrelation between work and other life areas, family, as well as the ability to combine these spheres in a proper way (Tkalych, 2015) [17]. In some modern research studies, a “work-life integration” term is also used. It reflects a fulfilled, healthy, and productive life, which combines work, relationship, entertainment; integrates a number of activity types focused on oneself, one’s personal and spiritual development (Allen, 2013; Jones et al., 2008; Lockwood, 2003) [1; 18; 10].

Work-life integration is opposite to the disbalance in favor of one’s work, not life; to the focus of external demands to the detriment of self-evolution, conflict between work and real desires. Frone (2003) [4], Jones et al. (2008), Masuda et al. (2012) [12], Scott et al. (2015) [14] distinguish the following indicators of the negative “*work-life*” *integration*: overwork, negative work-life interference, “work-life” conflict. Inter-role conflicts can arise because person’s professional roles complicate his or her family, intimate ones, etc. Besides, professional roles can expect an expert to be tough and official, while family or intimate ones – affectionate and tender. These personal traits come into conflict with one another.

Billing et al. (2014) [2], Frone (2003) [4] distinguish the following positive characteristics of work-life integration: performing multiple and various roles is useful for both men and women; performing professional roles by women and family roles by men increase their mental and physical health as well as improve relationship in general. Though it depends on the number of roles and their quality.

The main work-life balance components include the load balance (optimal number of business hours, possibility to distinguish between work and leisure, take a leave, not to think about work all day long); time balance (equal distribution of time spent for work and other life spheres); work time and content planning (the possibility to change the content of one’s own work and to schedule business hours); the complexity of tasks (attractiveness, complexity, optimal number of tasks or challenges to be addressed); environment balance (equal psychological efforts aimed to solve occupational, family, or personal tasks); social intercourse (friendly relations with colleagues, director’s support, absence of the sense of loneliness, satisfaction of the need for socializing at work); satisfaction balance (equal occupational and family life satisfaction) (Tkalych, 2015, 2018) [17; 18].

**Materials and Methods.** In order to examine the level of work-life balance, we have designed an inventory based on 16 statements divided into the following 4 groups (which are the work-life balance components) by means of the factor analysis: 1) *absence of the load balance*; 2) *work time and content planning*; 3) *professional tasks complexity*; 4) *social intercourse*. Every statement should be assessed according to 1-7 scale, where 7 is the maximum score, and 1 is the minimum score (Tkalych, 2015) [17]. The study has involved professional sportsmen (n=131) and amateurs (n=156) engaged in different kinds of sports. The number of women and men as well as their age distribution have been representative to the general number of participants.

**Results.** The work-life balance has been generally assessed by the sportsmen as average (M=4.19). It should be noted that they have scored the load balance lower (M = 3.15) than other components: professional tasks complexity (M = 4.18), work and content planning (M = 4.46), and social intercourse (M = 4.98). It is the social intercourse component (friendly relations with coworkers (M = 4.65), the support of a manager or a coach (M = 4.91), the absence of the sense of loneliness (M = 5.36), satisfaction with socializing (M = 4.99)) which has got the highest scores. Therefore, the social and communication components, interaction with a coach and colleagues are the most balanced ones and have been most positively assessed by the members of both groups. No statistically significant differences in the work-life balance levels between amateur and professional sportsmen have been found.

According to the gender status, a statistically significant difference has been revealed only in the training camps and competitions participation issues. The male sportsmen more often take part in such a

kind of activities (3.34) as compared to the female ones (2.21),  $p < 0.01$ . Besides, a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2 = 14.82$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between the sportsmen's work load and marital status has been revealed. The low balance can be observed in 41.9% of the divorced sportsmen as well as 21.3% of the unmarried and 23.9% of the married survey participants.

The research results have shown that there is a statistically significant relationship between the sportsmen's age and their social intercourse scores ( $p < 0.03$ ): it becomes more positively assessed with aging, while other balance components have no significant age differences. Age correlates with such work-life balance characteristics as work time planning ( $p < 0.01$ ), attractiveness and complexity of work and tasks ( $p < 0.01$ ), a number of tasks to be completed ( $p < 0.01$ ), the absence of the sense of loneliness ( $p < 0.01$ ), perception of colleagues as friends ( $p < 0.01$ ): these indicators increase with aging.

According to the theoretical and empirical data and obtained research results, we have defined a number of work-life balance individual strategies achievement, which can be included in the training programs for sportsmen, psychology education events, sport psychologists' individual counselling sessions (table 1).

Table 1

Individual Strategies of Work-Life Balance Achievement		
Strategy type	Individual Strategy	Strategy content
Focused strategies	Problem-focused strategy	Resolving stressful situations, using time management and active eliminating styles
	Emotion-focused strategy	Behavior emotional regulation; manifesting negative emotions, exhaustion, irritation
	Avoidance strategy	Ignoring or denying stressors; wishful thinking; expecting time to solve the problem
“Resource” / “refusal” strategy	Resource increase strategy	All occupation and private life environment parameters are perceived as a resource for balance achievement
	Demands decrease strategy	Balance is achieved by means of refusal of any capabilities at work or in private life
Adaptive strategies	Compensatory strategy	Negative things or thoughts are compensated with positive energy at home and vice versa
	Segmentation strategy	Negative thoughts caused by business issues do not affect family relations

**Discussion.** Therefore, the basic strategies are as follows: focus strategies, “resource/refusal” strategies, adaptive strategies, every of which is manifested in a certain kind of an individual strategy (Emslie et al., 2009 [3]; Frone, 2003 [4]; Grandey et al., 2010 [6]; Lyness, 2014 [11]; Muse et al., 2008 [13], Straub, 2007).

*Focus strategies* are the ones which demonstrate a direction or a way of solving problematic or stressful situations by coworkers.

- Problem-focused strategy – coping with stressors by means of time management and active eliminating styles – helps to resolve “work-family” and “family-work” (but in a less extent) conflicts.
- Emotion-focused strategy – behavior emotional regulation, demonstration of negative thoughts, exhaustion, irritation – leads to the “work-family” conflict intensification, as it does not provide an opportunity to assess it rationally and resolve it in a constructive way.
- Avoidance strategy – wishful thinking; ignoring or denying stressors; expecting time to solve a problem – leads to both conflict types intensification and is considered as the infantile, emotionally immature one.

*“Resource / rejection” strategies:* coping strategies are directly related to the “work-family” interaction: demands decrease and resource increase strategies.

- Demands decrease strategy works in the form of decreasing a number of business hours, refusing some occupational or family duties, defining the priorities, limiting social life, decreasing role expectations (for example, being “good enough” for business or family relations).
- Resources increase strategy provides searching for support both at home and work (authority delegation, allocation of home duties, communication, positive interaction, satisfaction with

relationships), efforts of finding benefits, learning through complex situations, using proactive future-focused strategies (work week scheduling, interfamily resources search, proactive dialoguing with a partner or a director).

*Adaptive strategies* are the ones helping to adapt to problems arising at work or / and at home.

- Compensatory strategy – negative things or thoughts are compensated with positive energy at home and vice versa;
- Segmentation strategy – negative thoughts caused by work issues do not affect family relations. Both strategies are adaptive in achieving the balance between work and life.

We believe that it is a combination of the adaptive and the resource increase strategies optimally contribute to the work-life balance achievement.

At the personal level, it is necessary to improve the decision-making process and communication within a family for professional roles optimization and role conflict harm elimination as well as elimination of stressors affecting other family members. A person must be sure his or her work does not harm his/her physical health allowing to devote enough attention to other life spheres.

Billing et al. (2014) [2], Kinnunen et al. (2014) [7], Scott et al. (2015) [14] suggest the following interrelated levels of “work-life” integration disbalance:

- time, energy, and duties: a person spends more time and energy for work rather than other life spheres, and has too many work duties;
- attitudes and behavior increase demands for professional skills and achievements, and eliminate intimacy;
- significance and criteria for self-assessment – a person has an image of the ideal self (the one he or she thinks he/she must be) and others’ expectations, though as a rule, the achievement of such an image in real life is too exhausting for an individual.

In order to reach the work-life integration, a feeling of life fullness, some changes should cover the following three stages: the first one is balancing time, efforts, and duties; the second one is integration of occupational mastery and intimacy with others; and the third one is self-focus, which means being focused on one’s own self-esteem, aspirations, and self-image.

These changes are possible upon condition of psychological support programs, sports psychologists’ work who help to form the corresponding abilities and skills, as well as significant personal traits of sportsmen: motivation, self-confidence, persistence, psychological flexibility, lability, a low neuroticism level.

Besides, according to research, active engagement into the interaction with family and entertainment after a business day contribute to a better recovery as compared to passive activities (Jones, 2008).

One more important task regarding individual strategies of the balance achievement is the resources personal allocation. Resources personal allocation is a strategy according to which all desirable or necessary requirements are considered to stimulate a person to make a choice of where, when and how he or she spends resources in life (Grawitch et al., 2009) [5]. The efficient resources personal allocation not only decreases negative consequences but also contributes to positive results in the work-life balance achievement. It includes the following four stages: 1) defining available personal resources, 2) laying down requirements for work and private / family life, 3) using efficient strategies of resources allocation; 4) results review.

This task is often ignored in one’s work and private life in cases when work requires performing professional duties which contradict the family ones, ignoring other requirements for personal resources (e. g. social or private life, other activities, religious requirements, sports, rest, etc.). Individual differences, external resources, human-environment interaction have a great impact on the resources personal allocation. Despite the fact external resources are diverse, in general they can be divided into two basic spheres: support as well as teaching and development of a personality.

We believe that sportsmen’s main personal skills and traits contributing to the work-life balance achievement include the following ones: personal flexibility, a high level of self-discipline; trust-based relations; dynamic and independent work. These skills should be mature, and the work-life balance achievement psychological teaching programs for both amateur and professional sportsmen can increase their level.

**Conclusions.** The work-life balance of both participant groups is considered to be average. The load balance has gained the lowest scores, the social intercourse indicator is most balanced and gets increased

with the persons' age. Gender differences can be observed only regarding the issues of training camp and away games or competitions participation, where male sportsmen are more actively engaged. Though there are some differences in the work-life balance according to the marital status of the sportsmen: the life of the divorced participants is more disbalanced unlike the married and unmarried ones.

The basic possible individual work-life balance achievement strategies are as follows: focus strategies, “resource-refusal” strategies, adaptive strategies, every of which is manifested in a certain kind of an individual strategy. The use of the adaptive individual strategies with the resource increase strategy perfectly contributes to the work-life balance achievement, in the same manner as programs of sports and other life spheres harmonious combination psychological training for sportsmen.

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