Managing work-life balance during the Covid-19 crisis

Results from a survey with 1500+ participants worldwide

As one consequence of the pandemic situation, many individuals were forced or encouraged to move on with their professional activities in remote conditions, having to combine private life and professional obligations, e.g. doing home-schooling while working in their home-office. Accordingly, Fig. 3 presents peculiar stressors of the remote working conditions that impacted on the individuals.

The graphic suggests minor gender related differences during the first lock-down in Germany, much less than had been expected. However, in free text entries that everyone was encouraged to add, the responders expressed more adverse effects individually, including gender related roles.

A similar pattern is obtained when conjectures on post-pandemic concerns were addressed: major differences among females and males were only expressed regarding social anxiety and financial perspectives when females had bigger concerns on the first and males on the other.

The responses reflect major differences mostly due to hierarchical (leader / non-leader) and occupational conditions (academic / non-academic). However, asking for changes in daily routines due to moving from shared office to shared workspace in home-office indicated a gender bias: females report (Fig. 4) significantly longer working hours as compared to their male peers, and more figured conditions of professional isolation and the challenge of having to share their home-office space with family activity rooms.

Conclusion / Outlook. The pandemic is going on, in waves developing depending on the local conditions. The diverse countries and sectors are continuing to adapt their schemes to the needs as they perceive and as they can afford them. Everywhere, families are especially challenged to cover their needs and to secure their financial situation, the existence of children might be turned into a decision disadvantage as it had been in the past. Securing the achievements of work-sharing in private life, and as well in the professional sector may no longer be a prior priority for some societies.

On the positive side, the pandemic has enhanced the recognition of science, and evidenced the success of fact-based decision making. Both aspects are especially relevant for scientists, and among them physicists.

The survey conducted so far can only be the start: it is essential to collect more data on the situation and its perception, addressing a broader basis of interviewees and especially including more regions, changes in daily routines as related to closing personal and professional life.

References:
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