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# SOCIAL BENEFITS IN BRICS AND SPAIN. A CRITICAL REVIEW

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**Abstract:** The object of this paper is to collect and discuss examples of social benefits in emerging markets. The main approach is to identify a number of the current policies being applied in BRICS compared to those in Spain and the OECD. Emerging markets are countries that will become a reference for their industry, economy and social management in upcoming years. These countries should not disregard the role the workforce holds as being essential for their mutual benefit (both as employers and employees). For this reason, it is crucial to review the social benefits applied in these states and their companies. According to various studies, governments are implementing policies to increase maternity and paternity leave, the development of personal and work skills or other social benefits like discounts for personal fitness or transport vouchers.

**Keywords:** *work-life balance, work-life conflict, emerging markets, social benefits and non-profit benefits.*

## INTRODUCTION

According to the International Association of Working Men (ES-ADE Institute for Labor Studies, & Randstad, 2004), differentiating employees' working hours is essential for the worker's development. For the companies, this measure is considered an investment in human capital as it allows for competitiveness and provides additional value (Buqueras, 2009; Chang, McDonald, & Burton, 2010; Chinchilla & León, 2007; Chinchilla, Poelmans, & León, 2003; Chinchilla, Poelmans, León, & Tarrés, 2011; Dick & Hyde, 2006; Indra, & Consejo Andaluz de Relaciones Laborales, 2008; Lee, Hsu, & Lien, 2006; Pasamar & Valle, 2011). This assessment, called work-life balance (WLB), includes social benefits and discounts among other measures such as time management, worker's economic stability, health care and the development of worker skills.

The essence of this type of compensation is considered to be more emotional in nature due to the fact that social benefits cover specific worker needs. Employees express their needs to a given company with the hope that the company can act as an agent to aid them in rectifying their work-life imbalance (Burguillos 2010; Rubio & Sánchez 2009). Finally, this compensation is a competitive tool for the company and also a benefit to the employee because it enhances worker performance, overall company productivity and improve WLB (Aguilar & Lacosta, 2009; Buqueras, 2009; Chinchilla & León, 2007; Chinchilla et al., 2003, 2011; Instituto de Estudios Laborales ESADE, & Randstad, 2004; Hsieh & Chen, 2011; Pasamar & Valle, 2011).

The social benefits aim is to cover current and future worker needs in order to avoid or balance work-life conflicts (WLC). This policy has its origins in social and cultural changes the society has undergone in the last century, which have promoted new governmental laws and approaches to human-resource management. The main changes underlying this alteration were population growth, increased life expectancy, greater incorporation of women into the paid labor market, the emergence of new family structures and the involvement of men in household tasks (Cantera, Cubells, Martínez, & Blanch, 2009; Chandra, 2012; Chang et al., 2010; Indra, & Consejo Andaluz de Relaciones Laborales, 2008; Jiménez, 2009; Kirkwood & Tootell, 2008; Lyness & Judiesch, 2014; Mayo, Pastor, Cooper, & Sanz-Vergel, 2011; Nasurdin & Hsia, 2008; O'Brien, 2013; Ollier-Malaterre, Valcour,

Den Dulk, & Kossek, 2013; Pasamar & Valle, 2011; Romeo, Yepes-Baldó, & Berger, 2014; Rubio & Sánchez, 2009; Singh, 2013; Sinha, 2013; Thein, Austen, Currie, & Lewin, 2010; Thévenon, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012).

The aforementioned compensation has arisen to take advantage of these changes within society, culture and industry. In accordance with this idea, the countries should be aware of the processes of change in their respective regions so as to adapt their compensation policies and reap greater social benefits (Ollier-Malaterre et al. 2013). Emerging markets are examples of countries that are undergoing significant transformations in their development at present. They are defined as those whose developed economies will be a world reference in the next decade because of their vast territories, increased number of citizens, numerous natural resources and strategic position in the international commerce. These aspects, related to greater economic and technological development, could involve foreign capital investment to allow for market growth and the expansion of these countries' market domain. Presently, one example of emerging markets are BRICS, a list composed by the economist Jim O'Neill. This acronym refers to the Federative Republic of Brazil (Brazil), the Russian Federation (Russia), the Republic of India (India), the People's Republic of China (China) and South Africa.

Knowledge of the culture of each country is important in order to adapt social benefits policy to the concerns of employees (Chandra 2012; Lu 2012; Lu et al. 2010; Ollier-Malaterre et al. 2013; Romeo et al. 2014; Xiao & Cooke 2012; Zhang et al. 2012). For example, according to Romeo et al. (2014), Lu (2012) and Lu et al. (2010) in individualistic cultures such as those found in American or Anglo-Saxon countries, an excess of working hours is understood as an abandonment of family duties. Consequently, it is defined as something negative. On the contrary, in collectivistic cultures, like those in Asiatic countries, longer working hours can be interpreted as a sacrifice for the family wellbeing. Therefore, the implementation of social benefits requires an appropriate contextual interpretation in each country and a proper analysis of the social culture –collectively or individually–, the difference between the role of male and female at work and at home, the work culture and ethic, work outlook and adaptation to globalization and industrial change (Romeo et al. 2014; Lu 2012; Lu et al. 2010).

## METHOD

The present paper was developed according to the theoretical and empirical studies reviewed from the PSYCINFO, MEDLINE and PSICODOC databases. Specifically, we drew from literature in psychology, social benefits, emerging markets and human resources management from the last 15 years. In addition we included investigations from other sources like IESE and ESADE, two of the most important business schools in Spain, some human resource consulting firms such as Accenture, Adecco, Indra or Randstad. Finally, as a framework, we reviewed other regulations in Spain, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) or the International Labor Organization (ILO). The keywords used to find journal articles included “Work-life Balance”, “Work-life Conflict”, “Emerging Market”, “Social Benefits” and “Non-profit Benefits”. A total of 172 documents were found, of which 49 papers and 17 studies were selected due to their importance, clarity and concise analysis of social benefits in BRICS and Spain.

## RESULTS

### CHANGES THAT HAVE LED TO THE APPLICATION OF SOCIAL BENEFITS

One of the essential concepts that defines emerging markets and social benefits is that they take advantage of changing times to cover people's needs. The non-profit benefit is applied by government or company regulations but it is crucial to previously review the situation in BRICS and Spain, and the reasons for the application of WLB measures.

According to Sorj (2004) the situation in Brazil is based on three big changes in the social and cultural fields that have promoted the application of social benefits. At first, Brazilian citizens emigrated from rural environments to industrial areas and the main cities. People's adaptation to cities and new jobs led to a restructuring of gender roles and, in the end, difficulty in time management for family members regarding home and work tasks. The second big change was in 2003 with the application of a new Civil Code which, by law, determined gender equality. The last big change was in the concept of family, as more family structures exist than that of just marriage between a man and a woman, such as mono-

parental families. In fact, the society admits other kinds of families despite there not being an official resolution in this respect. These changes bring about the need for Brazilian citizens to balance the time spent at work and at home, the redistribution of earnings, and the management of unpleasant emotional states like stress, fatigue or burnout.

In Russia, one of the changes was also that of the family structure as we have explained, but in this particular situation the most important break was a result of the end of the communism. This caused a radical restructuring of the essence of the country in social, cultural, financial and political aspects, yet birthrates did not decrease. Nonetheless, the prominence of single, divorced or widowed mothers as the sole provider of family structure increased significantly and most of them are full-time workers which means that they probably suffer from financial struggles (Pailhé 2009). The social benefits applied in Russia since the end of communism have not been sufficient as most managers have determined from the numerous WLB measures applied in relation to the role of employees (Addati et al. 2014; Pailhé 2009).

In India, migration to industrial areas and main cities has also been important. However, according to several authors, there are two major issues that have been leading change and the implementation of social measures: the incorporation of women to the workplace and high poverty rates in society (Chandra 2012; Singh 2013; Valk & Srinivasan 2011). According to Valk & Srinivasan (2011):

*“In a transitioning society like India, where the traditional roles of women as homemakers and caretakers are deeply entrenched, the work-family balance becomes a challenge for women and their employers. Over the last decade, Indian society has witnessed a surge in the participation of women in the workforce, especially in the software industry” (p. 39).*

Furthermore, these authors comment on the key question of poverty and the desire for global emergence in the country. Openness to new markets and internationalization of companies has led to the integration of new areas of work which had never been utilized before in the country. The evolution of manufacturing and international service companies have generated increased working hours distributed throughout the day to cover time zones throughout the globe. In this sense, poorly regulated labor standards have brought about great difficulties in reconciling work times. In addition, according to several studies (Chandra 2012; Singh

2013; Valk & Srinivasan 2011), there is often a complete lack of harmony between the needs of workers and the social benefits they receive. According to Chandra (2012), as we will see later, some companies apply social coverage that balance social levels at the cost of other social benefits.

China has undergone a major transformation in relation to migration from rural areas to cities and, above all, has developed new ways of working in accordance with the globalization and internationalization market. Perhaps the biggest change in China has been the engagement of their singular collectivist culture into the global industrialization. In recent decades, the role of the male figure was oriented to work and to the economic livelihood of the family while the female task was family care (Romeo et al. 2014; Lu 2012; Lu et al. 2010; Tang et al. 2014; Xiao & Cooke 2012; Zhang et al. 2012). According to these authors, these changes have given rise to a startling contrast between their culture and the demands of society. As these societies are in a constant search for harmony, they consider WLB policies to be essential. The above mentioned changes have favoured men and women to become the new task force in companies. The difficulty of balancing working hours has increased because now most family members are employees. Thus, according to Chen (in Xiao & Cooke 2012): “37% of sampled knowledge workers believed that working-time flexibility could reduce work-life conflict efficiently” (p. 17).

South Africa has changed considerably since the end of the Apartheid over twenty years ago. Social, cultural and political changes have been aimed at equality between the citizens of this country in both terms of gender and race. The measures taken to achieve this equality has been labor and social developments. This aspect have been accompanied by social benefits that have facilitated this transition. In the last decade the government has implemented measures adapted to the social reality, among which insurance for domestic workers (Addati et al. 2014) and facilities for training and employment of women are outstanding. However, as noted by Poulos (2011), these improvements focused on positive discrimination have still given way to greater inequality among certain sectors. According to Soni (2013), work awareness in WLB is a key factor. As their studies have shown, 67% of employees reject jobs when they imagine that they will have a very strong effect on their WLC, and if the company does not apply social benefits they consider appropriate.

In Spain the situation is quite different because it is considered a devel-

oped country. According to Pasamar & Valle (2011), more than 70% of the companies established in this country usually give social benefits but only 26% have these techniques built into their own regulation. Although it could be more extended, this average has increased 14% since 2006 (Meil et al. 2008; Pasamar & Valle 2011). According to Villafañe (2013) and Adecco (2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2014) employees give their highest consideration, in addition to financial compensation, to non-profit benefits. The greatest problem in Spain is possibly the organization of schedules as workers spend long hours at work with only a moderate level of productivity (Buqueras 2009; IESE Business School-IRCO, & Adecco, 2007; Fundación Encuentro, 2013). According to them, nearly half of full-time workers take at least a two-hour lunch break while in other countries workers spend between half an hour and one hour.

To conclude, most changes in BRICS are related to the changing role of women and consequently men at home as well as at work. This restructuring of roles has entailed changes in the organization of time and family care. Below, we will discuss some of the measures implemented by governments and businesses to resolve work-family conflict.

## GOVERNMENT SOCIAL BENEFITS

WLB emerged as a protection to employee needs in their personal and professional lives. Currently, it has expanded to new horizons by hosting more personal items such as training, dedication to family and child care, time for hobbies or financial aid. In this block, we will go over maternity and paternity leave and legal regulation in this area, the number of work hours and the workforce in BRICS and Spain.

Emerging markets aim to reach the globalization and internationalization of their respective companies. This means opening up to new business management methods based on industrialization, export and relationships with companies in other countries (Chandra 2012; Singh 2013; Valk & Srinivasan 2011). For example, industry in China and India has focused on the manufacture and sale of electronic products, software and high technology for export. This has meant an investment in employee training, and the management of a higher number of work hours in relation to WLB (Chandra 2012; Hamid & Amin 2014; Lu 2012; Lu et al. 2010; Valk & Srinivasan 2011). Internationalization can lead to difficulties in



conciliation such as in India, where new technologies have blurred the workspace and allowed the family to perform work away from the office without this measure implying a continuous connection between workers and the work being performed (Soni 2013). Actually, it is undeniable that smart technologies have generated a constant connection to all the involved elements, either family, friends or work. This gives greater importance to the implementation of measures that allow workers to differentiate between their time devoted to work and that devoted to their family or other personal needs.

In this regard, note that the annual average in Spain is 1,690 hours (the same as Brazil) which means approximately 40 hours a week. According to OECD (2014) the other countries have a higher average of annual hours such as South Africa (1,900h), Russia (1,982h), India (2,400h) or China (2,200h). According to data analyzed, 50% of Chinese workers exceed the average weekly working hours (40-50 hour a week), while the OECD average is set at 9%, closer to Brazil (11%), Russia (9%) and Spain (6%). In the cases of South Africa and India, note again that there is no data on the long working week, due to government transparency issues that have, already been discussed. According to these authors, this trend is to promote development and adaptation to new international trade markets as argued above.

Another essential aspect that promoted the implementation of social policies was the great benefit of incorporating women into the workplace. Based on the authors cited, society and families in BRICS are in the process of adapting the home and family tasks among its members. According to Alam et al. (2011), the balance in gender roles has been delayed in most countries, whether developed or emerging. Despite this tendency towards equilibrium, it is difficult to break stereotypes regarding the role of men in work and women at home. Increasingly, governments and companies are implementing measures to facilitate the organization of time for everyone to use as needed. This review is theoretical but it is interesting to take a look at the global percentages as shown in table 1. The specific percentage of men and women in the labor force of each country is significant, as determining whether evolution has been increasing in line with the measures that have been implemented in each country as shown in table 2.

Prior to analysis, we believe it is important to define the concept of workforce. It is the collective that performs remunerated tasks while of working age (16 to 65 years old). The percentage of non-active population



**Table 1. Workforce overall average and by gender.**

	Global (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Spain	59.53	66.50	52.60
Brazil	67.20	80.90	59.50
Russia	68.80	71.40	57.00
India	42.00	80.90	28.80
China	69.00	80.90	63.80
South Africa	42.70	60.00	44.20

*Note: Adapted from OECD (2014), OIT (2014), INE (2014), World Bank Group (2014).*

**Table 2: Workforce evolution of by gender during last ten years.**

		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Spain	F	41.30	43.00	44.50	45.80	47.30	48.20	49.60	50.70	51.40	52.10	52.60
	M	66.00	66.70	67.30	68.00	68.30	68.40	68.60	67.70	67.30	66.80	66.50
Brazil	F	56.20	56.60	57.60	58.90	58.70	58.40	58.50	58.90	59.40	59.50	59.50
	M	81.70	81.40	81.80	82.10	81.70	81.20	81.40	81.20	81.10	81.00	80.90
Russian Federation	F	54.00	55.10	55.70	56.20	56.50	57.10	56.90	57.00	56.40	56.90	57.00
	M	67.30	68.00	68.40	68.70	68.80	70.00	70.80	70.70	70.80	71.20	71.40
India	F	35.10	35.70	36.30	36.90	35.10	33.40	31.80	30.20	28.60	28.70	28.80
	M	83.00	83.10	83.20	83.30	82.80	82.30	81.80	81.30	80.80	80.80	80.90
China	F	69.00	68.20	67.30	66.50	65.80	65.20	64.60	64.10	63.50	63.70	63.80
	M	81.70	80.90	80.20	79.50	79.00	78.60	78.30	77.90	77.60	77.80	78.10
South Africa	F	49.60	47.50	45.00	46.50	47.60	46.40	46.70	44.90	43.50	43.90	44.20
	M	64.20	62.80	61.20	62.20	62.60	61.90	63.70	61.60	59.90	59.40	60.00

*Note: Adapted from World Bank Group (2014).*

refers to students, the unemployed with or without unemployment benefits and those who develop work in the black economy as well. According to table 2, the average workforce in the OECD is 65% while in Spain, a member of this organization, it has been much lower (59%). The BRICS results shows that Brazil (67%), Russia (69%) and China (71%) stand out while in South Africa (51%) and India (55%) the results are lower

than in Spain. However, these are the overall results though the situation between men and women must be further scrutinized.

Table 2 shows the evolution of men and women in the labor force of each country throughout the past 10 years according to World Bank data. According to this source in 2012 data all the countries analyzed in this study, have a percentage of male workers above 60% while this percentage is only present in three of the countries when analyzing female workforce. This is the case of China (63'80%), Brazil (59'50%) and Russia (57'00%) who also have a high percentage of male workers. In contrast, the situation in South Africa (44'20%) and India (28'80%) discloses less than one third of working women, and the latter country possessing the largest difference between men and women in the workforce.

The workforce of Spain and Russia has evolved positively in the last ten years for both sexes. In the case of Brazil, this evolution has only occurred in the case of women, but the decrease was not significant for men. The current situation in India, China and South Africa over the last ten years is a lower percentage of hard labor, even though, the results have been improving since 2010. In detail, note that South Africa has increased from 38% of working women in 1995 to the current values (Poulos 2011) with the remarkable percentage in 2002. In 2008 in China, between 30% and 40% of women without higher education left their offices to engage exclusively in household chores while workers with advanced degrees do not exceeded 5% (Xiao & Cooke 2012). Therefore, according to these authors, the government is improving access to education.

The positive trend to balance the values of the workforce are the result of government education policies for women and the evolution of social culture towards role equality. Also, government regulations facilitate WLB without members of society having to choose between work and family exclusively. The application of social benefits has increased employee commitment to their organization, an improvement in the performance of work tasks, satisfaction in the lives of workers and their families and, consequently, an improvement in the effectiveness and productivity of the organization (Alam et al. 2011; Allen et al. 2014; Hamid & Amin 2014; Lu et al. 2010; Ollier-Malaterre et al. 2013; Romeo et al. 2014; Siong-Choy 2007; Sorj 2004; Valk & Srinivasan 2011; Villafañe 2013). Perhaps one of the most remarkable situations in which a family has significant needs is in childbirth (table 3).

Within the context of the economic crisis, the most logical action would have been for maternity or paternity benefits to be reduced or

Table 3. Days and amount of Maternity and Paternity leave.

	Maternity leave		Paternity leave	
	Duration of leave in days (in national legislation)	Economic Benefit (%)	Duration of leave in days (in national legislation)	Economic Benefit (%)
Spain	112	100	13	100
Brazil	120	100	5	100
Russia	140	100	-	-
India	84	100	-	-
China	98	100	-	-
South Africa	120	60	3	100

*Note: The percentage is related to previous earnings. Adapted from Addati et al. (2014), Chandra (2012), López-Ibor et al. (2008), O'Brien (2013) and Thévenon (2011).*

even eliminated as highlighted by several authors, but this was not the situation in China and India (Chandra 2012; O'Brien 2013; Thévenon 2011). According to these authors, since 2012 maternity leave has been increased by 7 days in China, while in South Africa it has improved by 30 days since 1992. Brazil and Russia also have a special structure concerning maternity leave. This benefit is divided into two parts, one before and the other after childbirth. In Brazil, it is structured into 28 days before and 92 after birth and into a 70-70 division in Russia. This policy aims to protect the health of the mother during the final days of pregnancy and allow mothers to organize family and home environment prior to birth. In Spain, the maternity leave is 112 days, below the level in some BRICS, but the economic benefit is 100% of earnings while for South Africa, with 120 days, the compensation is set at only 60%.

Russia also provides paternity leave benefit although fathers can only enjoy it in cases in which mothers explicitly cede part of the days. In 2009, Spain approved a law that increased the duration of paternity leave from thirteen days to one month (Law 9/2009, 6 October) although it will be applied once the economy improves (O'Brien 2013) (Moss 2014). Brazil has gone through a significant increase due to a social and cultural analysis of its citizens (O'Brien 2013). This author argues that it has evolved from one single day in the mid last century to five days, which were introduced in the late 80's. Currently, the Brazilian government is

in discussions to increase paternity leave significantly. They are considering increasing it to either 15 or 30 days (O'Brien 2013; Pailhé 2009). Both authors note that although the measure is adapted to the needs of workers, the country cannot forget other measures that are complementary to one, is to facilitate cultural change for men and women and promote gender equality to improve the sharing of domestic tasks.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

All of the papers and the investigations reviewed about BRICS' and Spain have shown that all of these countries apply some sort of social benefits policy. Consequently, we assume that emerging markets have decided to apply some WLB measures to improve the status of their employees' –personal and professional– lives. Besides, the implementation of this policy implies a competitive and productive improvement to both employees and companies. Further, these countries are managing policies to reduce the quantity of hours in the workday and the number of very long working days to balance the WLC.

We accept that there are still novel ways to improve gender equality both at home and at work. As argued, the trend towards greater gender balance has begun with access to school and higher levels of education. Therefore, it should not be surprising to find a greater equality in access to employment between men and women and more women leading organizations in the future. This cultural change should not be present only at the workplace, by it should also be applied to the family to complete WLB. In consequence, we have also explored maternity and paternity leave. To sum up the reviewed documents, maternity leave is widespread in BRICS and Spain both in duration and monetary compensation. In contrast, paternity leave is only implemented in Russia, Brazil and Spain for a limited number of days in spite of governments legislating for an increase in the number of leave days. One way to provide better facilities for higher performance in equality at home and housework is to improve the duration and payment of maternity and paternity leave.

In any case, a key conclusion is that a social benefits policy arises not only from the needs of the society and culture of each country (education, family and work), but also the specific needs of employees as human beings. Sometimes, state policies are slower than the workers needs so companies must adapt their social benefit policies to solve WLC via dis-

counts, schedule adjustments or substituting work trips for video conferences. Anyway, it is important to underline that these measures have to be in tune with the context, country or company like the payment of some home bills because it is not present in all countries (Chandra 2012).

The literature reviewed about BRICS and Spain determines that social benefits have a great influence on workers status and organization. According to some authors (Hamid & Amin 2014; Lu et al. 2012; Nasurdin & Hsia 2008; Tang et al. 2014; Zhang et al. 2012) the benefits for workers who enjoy social benefits for WLB feature improvements in health, better sleep, family relationships and motivation. These improvements also bring about improved productivity. That is because WLB avoids the errors of concentration and reduces some aspects like workers' mood, job disaffection, absenteeism, stress rates, sleep disturbances, the risk of depression and procrastination (Maertz & Boyar 2011; Meil et al. 2008; Nasurdin & Hsia 2008; Soni 2013).

Although social, cultural and industrial contexts are not uniform in each country, this study confirms that the times for change are upon us and essential in order to implement policies and techniques to WLB. This same rationalization and thought have been employed in times of economic crisis that led to restructuring the human resources management and remuneration policies in the companies. Thus, the philosophy of empowering employees in their work and personal profile is a competitive advantage for the companies. It is also an essential element that drives the company to be a reference in human resources management because they demonstrate care for their employees. To conclude, if BRICS were to be a world reference in upcoming years, the definition of emerging markets should contemplate social benefits as going hand in hand with this process. That is because they are managing country development in work, economic and culture fields without failing to cover the employees' needs to balance their WLC.

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