

DECLARATION

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKPLACE: MEETING THE
WORK LIFE BALANCE CHALLENGE**

by

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at the**

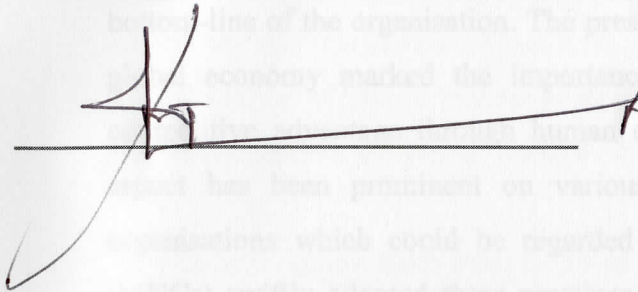
CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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**Cape Town
September 2005**

DECLARATION

I, Gavin Francois Mageni declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.



The primary research therefore explores the composition of a WLB system, and analyses the constraints relating to its application on the South African labour market conditions. It will furthermore present the results of a survey aimed at the employees of two organisations that has WLB systems in place which was directly cloned from European counterparts.

The purpose of this research is encapsulated in the following research questions:

- Are WLB models applied in South African organisations effective or merely "nice-to-have" concepts?
- Are tangible results or actual value added to the bottom-line of these organisations?
- What restraining forces hamper exact European cloned WLB models within South African organisations?

ABSTRACT

The construct of Work Life Balance (WLB) gained international recognition as a business imperative within overseas organisations, realising the reality impact of work-life conflict. The past two decades marked intensive research within countries, such as Canada, on the value-add of these practices on the bottom-line of the organisation. The pressures created by competing within a global economy marked the importance of creating a sustainable global competitive advantage through human capital. Within the last decade this aspect has been prominent on various research forums. South African organisations which could be regarded as Multi – National Corporations (MNCs) swiftly adopted these practices as a cloned version on their South African counterparts. However, no actual studies provide insight into the applicability of WLB models to the South African workplace.

The present research therefore explores the composition of a WLB system, and analyses the constraints relating to its application on the South African labour market conditions. It will furthermore present the results of a survey aimed at the employees of two organisations that has WLB systems in place which was directly cloned from European counterparts.

The purpose of this research is encapsulated in the following research questions:

- Are WLB models applied in South African organisations effective or merely “nice-to-have” concepts?
- Are tangible results or actual value added to the bottom-line of these organisations?
- What restraining forces hamper exact European cloned WLB models within South African organisations?

The current research study debunks the preconceptions within the researched organisations that European based designed WLB models are applicable on the South African workplace and supports the alternative hypothesis: that the current system cannot be applied to all levels of employees.

Current challenges facing the South African labour market are structurally entrenched and warrant a systemic approach which calls for directives from all role players within the market economy to adjust their ways of thinking and to approach employment practices from a macro-economic perspective.

This study therefore starts from the basis of assessing the existing paper policies and expands the investigative research to focus on the work-life situation of the individual employee, organisational attitudes, whilst including both the political and macro-economic factors impacting on the studied organisations.

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GLOSSARY

WLB	Work Life Balance
MNCs	Multi-National Corporations
WTF	Work To Family
FTW	Family To Work
SWAH	Supplemental Work At Home
DCG	Dependent Care Giving
NDCG	Non-Dependent Care Giving
EAP	Economically Active Population
HR	Human Resources
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

In defining WLB, Pillinger (2001-B: 1), refers to the concept as:

“The adjustment of work patterns in such a way that everyone, regardless of age, race or gender can find a rhythm that enables them more easily to combine work and their other responsibilities and aspirations”.

WLB is a comprehensive concept and can mean different things to different people. According to Canabou (2001: 1), the fundamental perspective is to connect the seemingly contradictory goals of the individual and the organisation towards congruent practices. The conclusion drawn is that contrary to popular belief, companies don't have to pit employees' needs against business needs. It therefore requires organisations to eliminate a lot of work rules and to rethink the way the job gets done.

However, it is also imperative to remember not to underestimate the role of management in the implementation of a WLB model, regardless of whether formal policies are in place. It is ultimately the skills, attitudes and behaviours of management that will determine the success of WLB policies.

Organisations investigated in this study, identified a range of WLB options / practices along theoretical guidelines as encapsulated in their policy formulations. These practices cover flexible working arrangements, flexible benefit packages and Employee Assistance Programmes. The current researcher assessed the policy documents presented by organisations, studied in this research project, and constructed an easy guide in the explanation of WLB options for ease of understanding. Diagram 1-1 provides a condensed scope of the key drivers of the implemented WLB systems.

Diagram 1-1: Examples of Key Drivers in the WLB Systems

A. FLEXIBLE WORKING PATTERNS		
Flexitime	Phased Retirement	Term – Time Working
Variable Time	Annualised Hours	Job Sharing
Voluntary Reduced Time	Flexi – Place Working	Team Self Rostering
Compressed Hours	Home working	
SPECIAL LEAVE MEASURES		
Maternity Leave	Paternity Leave	Adoption Leave
Home working	Study Leave	Employment breaks – Sabbaticals
BENEFIT AND SUPPORT MEASURES		
Childcare Schemes	Child and Elderly Care Information Services	Community Projects
Concierge or Life – Management Services	Health and Fitness Facilities	Independent Counselling
Stress Management Schemes		

Assessing the data cited by the current researcher in Diagram 1-1, it reflects that managing and measuring all these different systems, as a whole, can become an added nightmare in the already challenging South African workplace. However, it surely warrants employers' consideration for the implementation of these systems in order to support the notion of human capital as the key to a sustainable competitive advantage. Cognisance should be taken of the economic intellectual capacity of the organisation's workforce when selecting the different systems, as it could contribute to exploitation of the already wavering work ethic experienced amongst certain segments of South Africa's economically active population. In assessing the diagram, further distinctions could be drawn between temporal flexibility practices (support measures and special leave arrangements) and operational flexibility practices (flexible working patterns).

1.1 Why Balance has become imperative

Ample international research findings supports the researcher's notion that, the workforce profile has changed dramatically across the world. According to Van Niekerk & Douglas (2003: 2), the following realities prevail:

- ***The nature of work has changed.*** This indicates that work activities are becoming more knowledge-based, less structured, more immediate and less compartmentalised. It therefore leads to a change in the skills needed and competencies required within the new economy. Transforming skills into competencies that is aligned with the core competencies needed for realising the overall business objectives are becoming more important, (Krom 1999: 36). This practice proves the organisation's internal gear towards focusing on a few value-adding deliverables that drives performance and which could ultimately be measured.
- ***Employee demands have changed.*** According to Poswell (2002: 36), with the increased needs of families and lifestyles, people want to have more input in the choice of work they do and the conditions they work under, as they seek to create balance
- ***Income patterns have changed.*** The trend is towards a contingent workforce, with a small core staff where women with a dual responsibility as both earners and primary caregivers form a large part of the labour market.
- ***Women require flexibility to juggle their roles.*** Although little research has been done, there is evidence that home working consists largely of female workers, (Jick & Mitz 1985: 2).
- ***The structure of the economy has changed.*** Economies have shifted from Agriculture and Industry to the Service sectors (Poswell 2002: 36). Bhorat (2001:36) supports this argument and states that the levels of fragmentation, competitiveness and predictability are constantly changing within the product/services market.

Studies suggest that the above-mentioned factors contribute substantially to the quest for WLB in the sense that it contributes to an increase in work-life conflict, (Duxbury & Higgins 2001: 10). The dramatic changes in the nature of work and the role of new technologies leads data to suggest that a greater proportion of workers are experiencing greater challenges in balancing their role of employee, parent, spouse, etc. ,(Pleck 1995: 5).

At large, it could be concluded that jobs have become more stressful and less satisfying. This trend is noticeable within the South African business environment because of its larger integration in the global economy while entrenched structural, social and economic problems prevail.

1.2 Proven results of an Effective WLB System within International organisations

It was indicated earlier that the organisations included in this research study, have policy formulations around a WLB system in place, but no studies or proof is provided on the measurable perceived value added. The researcher therefore needs to rely heavily on results produced by overseas studies. The major concern is the applicability of these studies on the unique South African circumstances with regard to workplace conditions and the workforce profiles. It is therefore questionable whether these positive results will be yielded in the South African environment as well.

1.4 Background to the Research Problem

Van Niekerk & Douglas (2003: 3), provides an insight in results achieved by TWR, a Kansas – based company in the United States: Absenteeism runs currently at 2%, the company experienced an 80% increase in worker output over the last six years, no time-keeping controls, no supervisors, no job classifications and no definite work assignments prevails. These aspects are surely reflective of a perfect world and further highlight the shortcomings of the South African labour market.

The above-mentioned measured results are the fruits of a WLB system that was implemented in the early 1980's. Taken into account the date of implementation it should be noted that South Africa experienced an economic recession, brought about by global economic exclusion and sanctions at that time.

Using the research results by Van Niekerk & Douglas (2003: 3) as benchmark for propagating the implementation of a WLB system in South Africa proves to be very unrealistic. However, the challenge will be for South African companies to move at a much faster pace in order to align themselves with world-class trends.

1.3 Problem Statement

WLB models and policies applied in South African organisations, especially MNCs, appear to be non-effective and directly cloned from European counterparts. Overseas literature and research provide an insight into the mechanics of WLB, pertaining to their unique circumstances. However, no actual studies provide an insight into either the applicability of WLB models on the South African workplace, tangible results of perceived value added, or an oversight of the restraining forces hampering exact cloning.

1.4 Background to the Research Problem

The construct of WLB has been a growing concern as a business imperative in overseas organisations for the past two decades, particularly given the pressures of creating a sustainable global competitive advantage through human capital. Within the last decade this aspect has been prominent on various forums within South Africa. The increased international recognition received by the topic is becoming more apparent, for example, one search engine (<http://web.intorac.galegroup.com>) indicated 5260 hits.

The reality of today's workforce is that workers hold a number of different roles throughout life. People are increasingly juggling a range of activities, interests, and relationships outside work, while still striving to meet the increasing demands of the workplace for quality goods and services around the clock. Can employers run a demanding business and still let their employees run their lives? This is a question more and more South African companies are facing as they struggle to compete in a 24/7 take-no-prisoners economy. With the advent, and rise in awareness, of the above business case, many international organisations have adopted WLB policies as early as two decades ago. However it appears that even though a few dynamic Multi – National Corporations (MNCs) in South Africa adopted the same approach, these policies remain inaccessible and unproved in terms of the value added to the bottom-line.

Taking into account the entrenched structural-, social- and economic problems of the South African labour market, the successful implementation and the perceived value added to organisational wellness by these cloned WLB policies and practices become seriously questionable. Taking cognisance of South Africa's undeniable integration into the "new globalised world economy", the researcher seeks to focus on the application of the international WLB System on the unique circumstances governing the South African workplace.

1.5 Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The current researcher seeks to explore international studies in order to provide a comprehensive understanding, perceived value added and more specifically, the application of international WLB models on the unique circumstances governing the South African workplace. Concomitant to this, to embark on a South African study to ascertain the impact of the entrenched structural-, social- and economic problems on the European cloned WLB models, whilst highlighting the impact of work-life conflict on the employees of the organisations focused on.

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

Two major South African organisations (1. from the petroleum industry, - Global Aviation division and 2. a major role player within the South African Financial Services Sector) were considered in analysing the implementation and working practices enforced with regard to their extensively advertised WLB policies, also encapsulated in the Wellness policy.

Important to note that the researcher did not conduct a comparative organisational study, but performed a joint study on the construct of WLB balance trends within both organisations and linked it to the South African specific labour constraints. Data collection was conducted from both organisations in the same format and the data was analysed as a joint sample population.

The enquiry into the South African implementation of WLB systems was experienced as relatively unstructured due to the complex nature of this very broad phenomenon. Essentially, data was derived through unstructured information sharing interviews with randomly selected subjects.

Concomitant to this, employee self assessment questionnaires were administered, which addressed specific questions around the effectiveness of the WLB model, constraints around these models as well as an investigation into the perceived levels of work-life conflict. The survey template was designed and analysed with the assistance of Questionpro, an international web-based service specialising in the virtual survey management.

The sample jointly consisted of 150 employees:

- Managers (73): (Senior, Top and Middle as well as Supervisors).
- General Employees (77): Admin, Sales, Finance, Service.

1.7 Delineation of the Study

The study only focused on organisations with more than 1000 employees, with international ties and who have representation throughout the whole of South Africa.

Organisation 1: is a MNC operating within the petroleum industry and has illustrated an awareness of the need for WLB over the last decade. The organisation has 1500 employees within the Western Cape and specialises in virtual management across continent boundaries.

Organisation 2: is a financial services institution within the Banking Sector and has created a lot of interest with their new People Management strategy underpinned by their international partner's influence and focus on WLB as part of their Wellness Policy.

Due to the sensitivity of the information it was requested that the companies' names be withheld. The decision on these two specific organisations was also driven by the fact that both organisations are of the few with a Balanced Scorecard approach, locking the Human Resources function into strategic partnership in driving the organisations' bottom line approach.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The researcher indicated earlier that the construct of WLB has been prevalent on internet-sites of many local organisations, creating the impression that the trend of converting to flexible organisations, as set by international counterparts, is followed. The question of cloned versus tailor-made models arises and questions the success of these models. Concomitant to this, research on the topic of WLB, with specific reference to the unique South African labour market conditions, is limited and at large non-existent.

Overseas literature on the other hand, does not provide sufficient examples of measured results yielded by a successfully implemented WLB system. There is still a too strong focus on the soft – edge deliverables which does not speak to the bottom line of the organisation.

1.9 Expected Outcomes, Results and Contributions of the Study

The expected outcomes of this research could be cited as follows:

The WLB systems in place within South African organisations are restrictive in the sense that a top-down approach is maintained, which does not address the needs of the bulk of the organisations' employees. An international modelled WLB system in its purest form cannot be applied on the South African workplace. This is brought about by a lack of 21st Century business competencies as well as the entrenched unique structural impediments within the labour market. The conventional notion of an employment contract is challenged by the WLB system. The study will show that South Africa has a too strong focus on face time in the design of jobs that the success of a WLB system is questionable at this stage. Therefore the South African workforce is in critical need of new competencies profiling as underlined by the WLB approach.

This would include:

- The ability to self-manage output requirements.
- The ability to drive self-learning and ownership.
- The ability to self-drive measurable results.

The researcher furthermore highlighted the complexities around the compilation of a well-defined WLB system. The application of WLB practices is perceived as being easy. However, the current study provided evidence of the multiple moderators impacting on organisational freedom in the application of a European – based WLB model. Realities within the South African workforce dynamics that prohibit South African employers from applying a generic WLB model were highlighted. In essence, it was proved that South Africans are beginning to make some connections between work-personal life harmonisation and issues like work ethic and organisational trust. A critical shortcoming that was revealed is the fact that overseas organisations started the debate around WLB already in the 1970s. At this point in time no formal national debate on work-personal life harmonisation has taken place.

1.10 Summary

It needs to be clarified that the approach of the current research is not against the implementation of a WLB system as a whole, but on the contrary, propagates the implementation of a system that also takes into account the structural and social adversities underpinning the South African workplace.

It is a reality that the dimensions of the productivity/employee wellness dichotomy have also increased in South Africa over the past decade and warrants urgent attention. However, there has been a suggestive move towards implementing flexible workplace practices in a few of the more dynamic South African companies as studied in the research. The dimensions of the internal and external forces, steering overseas organisations towards adopting a more practical approach towards WLB, are also shared by South African workplaces. However, unique constraints within the South African labour market are perceived to be a major duress affecting the success of a comprehensive WLB approach.

It is imperative that organisations that currently have WLB policy formulations in place should change the approach from a sole employee-centred focus towards developing a comprehensive business case for the system. Extensive international results cite that a whole spectrum of benefits or value-adding practices can be drawn and measured from a WLB system. However, this is an area that still needs to be explored via South African – focused research. Implementing a WLB system reflects that the major challenge to South African management will be significant, as they should learn to manage worker outputs, rather than the workers.

Concomitant to the proposed research's aspiration of the need to manage transition towards a flexible firm is also the necessity to bring about a proper balance between flexibility and security in order to guard against the abuse of a WLB system.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Debates around WLB reveal interesting insights into a new politics of work that reflects new ideas and practices of how work can be exchanged and changed, redistributed and shared for the purpose of creating a balance between work and life. While many overseas organisations, within the global economy, claim to understand the issue of WLB, few have actually developed workable solutions.

2.2 Literature Review

In creating an understanding of the concept WLB, Guest (2001: 8), alludes to the fact that WLB is a complex phrase with a variety of meanings. This could be viewed as indicative of the complexity in developing a “best-fit-for-all” WLB model. As a noun, balance is described as a set of scales, a weighing apparatus. If the concept of balance is used within the framework of scales, then balance occurs when there is **“an equal distribution of weight or amount”**, (Guest 2001: 8). However, the weight or amount required by either sides (work- and family life) may be very heavy or very light. This therefore implies that the type of WLB sought by many may not imply the quest for creating an equal weighting on both sides (work- and family life). Taking cognisance of this explanation, Hochschild and Machung (1989: 20) provide an example in their research on WLB and family life, in order to support the “imbalanced continuum” approach propagated by Guest (2001:8). Hochschild and Machung (1989: 20) drew a comparison between a working mother’s role and family requirements of starting the second shift after normal working hours in relation to the husband whose balance curve will shift more weight onto the work - life side of the continuum.

In the English language, balance is also a verb; as the Oxford Dictionary puts it as:

“...to off-set or compare; to equal or neutralise, to bring or come into equilibrium”.

The use of the verb implies that individuals can take steps to manage balance. Guest (2001: 9) states that what is encapsulated in this description, is an implicit normative assumption that balance is good. It could therefore be derived that, in this context, balance is referred to in the notion of the balance of power and the notion of a balance sheet. The counter argument might be that a positive balance of trade of payments, in other words an imbalance, can be something that may be valued. If this theory is applied to WLB, some form of imbalance might be viewed as positive; or is the idea of a positive imbalance a contradiction in terms? This brief analysis of the meaning of balance is sufficient to highlight the dangers in the loose use of WLB as a functional metaphor.

Problems in analysing WLB only start with the concept of balance, (Beck 2000: 15). “Work” (as encapsulated in the phrase WLB) can initially be defined as paid employment. Taking into account the unique South African labour market conditions, this concept soon breaks down into extra permutations such as: unpaid hours, the time taken to travel to and from work, more intractable problems of farmers, others who work from home and where the border between home and work is very porous. Part of the interest in the construct of WLB arises from the view that the scope for increased work from home, facilitated by new technology, has helped to blur the border between home and work, (Guest 2001: 9). It is therefore derived that in much of the debate around WLB, there is a limited understanding of the term WLB itself when used as a motivator for organisational wellness. According to Dyson (2004: 7), a range of views were expressed about the value of the term WLB, with a number of alternatives suggested. One of the main points emerging from this study was that there is frequently no easy separation between work and life, and some see distinction as being somewhat artificial.

Ideally, researchers should define the concepts of work and life carefully in order to put their research findings into the right perspective. It is therefore concluded that for the basis of easy analysis, “work” is normally conceived of in the organisational context as including paid employment while “life” includes activities outside of work, (Guest 2001: 9).

The pool of knowledge around WLB has extensively increased within the past two decades amongst foreign researchers as well as foreign government research task groups. It is identified that different perspectives on what WLB actually encompass prevails. However, all data reflects the commonality of creating and maintaining a balanced life. According to Latham (2003: 1), WLB is more than a series of programmes. Latham’s argument around WLB could be translated as a culture entrenchment that ultimately emphasises the value of the individual within the broader organisational dynamics. Therefore, when organisational decision makers state that they want to become the employer of choice through WLB initiatives, the question that must be asked initially is for whom? To be effective, a WLB system and underlying culture must take into account individual differences and similarities in order to create a generic policy base from which individual applications could be drawn. Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 5) support this trend of argument by stating that WLB is not an involuntary subconscious act. It involves the efforts of a number of partners- the employee, the organisation for which the employee works, the family with whom the employee lives, and the society in which all these variables are embedded. Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 5) uphold a further notion on the vast background differences amongst employees, rendering the individual employee’s personal circumstances as key in developing an understanding of their expectations from a well-defined WLB system. Research on the societal impact as the defining force of individualism amongst an organisation’s employees is further explored by McCartney & Holbeche (2003: 1).

It is derived that McCartney & Holbeche (2003:2) found the true meaning of WLB as reflected in improved productivity, savings on recruitment and retraining, improved employer-employee relations and an increase in customer satisfaction. These deliverables could therefore be viewed as typical organisational benefits, used to “sell” the issue of WLB as an element of corporate social responsibility, internally. McCartney (2003: 4) extended this trend of research and claims that WLB is such a key priority to workers that they will leave if their organisation doesn’t recognise the importance of their personal societal influences. Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 5) support this notion of complexity, and claim that the concept of balance needs to be clearly defined through the organisation’s individual employees’ influences, before the process of developing policies can take place. Balance should be thought of as a set of reciprocal relationships within a set of highly interdependent partners, (Beck 1992:1). This is in line with the trend of research conclusions drawn by Latham (2003:1), who claims that the assessment of societal influences on the individual’s life should not be underestimated in considering the level of balance. Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 5) deepen their research theory by offering compelling proof that decisions, actions or circumstances in any work or life domain will have an impact on all other domains. They therefore debunk the “separate worlds” model (work is work and personal life is personal life), that is still subscribed to in many South African businesses and many parts of South African society. This theoretical approach was supported through exploration research by Moss (1996: 23). The researcher argued that balance, first of all, needs to imply equal time or energies in each interdependent partner. This implies that WLB is something to aspire to, to negotiate towards and is probably a moving target as standards and expectations change, rather than a static goal that can be achieved and settled. This argument supports the individualistic approach in developing a generic WLB system as propagated by Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 5).

Guest (2001: 8) further contributes to the notion of individualism and highlights the importance of a WLB assessment approach which takes into account a subjective and objective measurement criterion. It is concluded that the applied WLB system will reflect different model applications that will vary according to circumstances and hence vary among individuals. Dyson (2004: 11) is in keeping with the arguments derived from studies on the applicability of individualism on WLB and concludes that there is no one right balance for everyone. It is therefore imperative that the consultation process, in establishing a WLB model, gets perspectives from a diverse range of people as well as influencing factors. The conception of “one size fits all” therefore cannot be applied when recommendations are made to organisations, (Dyson, 2004: 11). It could be derived that the meaning of WLB to people changes at different stages throughout life, and often in response to milestones during the course of life. Dyson (2004: 7), states that the responsibility for WLB was seen as primarily an individual one by a majority of individuals and organisations who made submissions to the study. On the contrary a number of people thought it desirable that both employers and the Government take responsibility for all aspects of WLB.

In order to devise a tool that identifies the need for WLB, studies were consulted to determine what Work Life Conflict (WLC) looks like as the contrasting image of WLB. An earlier study done by Guest in 2001, questions the correct identification of WLB as an organisational construct, and states that much of the general analysis about the causes, consequences and identification of work-life imbalance is speculative and based on limited convincing evidence, (Guest, 2001: 4). It could therefore be concluded that a research gap also exists on the consequences of imbalance between family and community. However, significant developments in the field of WLB research and the growing interest in WLB as an imperative organisational construct yielded contrasting evidence to the conclusions drawn by Guest, (DTI 2003a: 12).

Research results by Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 73) reflect actual identification criteria for WLB. According to Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 73), WLC means having a job that interferes with family life and a family life that interferes with your career and the ability to get ahead at work. Beck (2000: 34), extends the characteristics of WLC as situations where the individual employee is impacted from the onset of his/her working day, ranging from commuting to and from work to pending domestic chores. A study performed on the Canadian population in 2003 reflects that most Canadians see “work” as the main offender with respect to conflict between work and life, (Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill 2003: 74). Results therefore suggest that respondents were five times more likely to talk about problems at work that negatively affected their ability to have a life outside of work than to talk about problems at home.

According to Pillinger (2001b: 1), the aspect of WLB appears to be a live issue across Europe, and is very much on the political agenda in the United Kingdom. Johnston & Packer (1987: 14) support this statement and indicate that research on this phenomenon has already been executed for the past fourteen years; therefore the European countries have substantial proof of its contribution to organisational wellness. It therefore becomes imperative to identify the determinants of WLB in order to analyse the propagated successes yielded from European companies. According to Guest (2001:15), the determinants of WLB are located in the work and home contexts. It is derived that the term “home” is used in the analysis as shorthand for life issues outside work. Guest (2001: 16) deliberates that at work, the demands of work may either be too low or too high; and what is termed the culture of work reflects the organisational culture and may support balance through policies and practices. Dyson (2004: 10) concludes that the developed organisational policies may facilitate balance, such as occasional time off work and flexible hours, or may strictly limit these. It is also imperative to know that the organisations’ policies might also steer working practices in the alternative route.

Alternatives could be reflective of longer and irregular hours and be intolerant of taking time off to deal with family emergencies. In assessing the determinants of WLB, Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 59) state that creating WLB is to become a personal quest on the side of the individual; requiring cooperation and effort on the side of the individuals within the family and the workplace. It therefore also requires daily sacrifices and trade-offs as a determinant of balance.

Taking into account that many Third World countries have barely entered the arena of WLB, the generalisation could be made that balance is a skill that still needs to be taught and developed amongst both employers and employees. This skill therefore in turn becomes a determinant of WLB. The view that employees' WLB is often at the discretion of individual managers is evident in a study conducted in the United Kingdom, (Castells 1996: 20). These results therefore leads to the identification of management's discretion as a determinant of WLB. Whether by interpreting company policy fairly, or sometimes by working around it, the manager appears to be key with respect to solving work-life conflicts. Duxbury, Higgins & Coghill (2003: 74), identified this phenomenon in their study of WLB within the Canadian population. The researchers indicated that those who reported positively about their managers as individuals who were recognised as making accommodations for employees' life outside of work are not great in number. The organisation itself, inclusive of top management, is identified as one of the key determinants of WLB, (McCartney 2003: 2). It could be concluded that it is critically important for organisations to promote WLB as a "business critical" issue and not simply as the right thing to do. The concept "business critical" could be put into perspective through McCartney's (2003:1) research, which encapsulates that profitable growth and sustainable business depends on retaining top talent who view WLB policies as an essential ingredient of successful recruitment and retention strategies.

Determinants of WLB could therefore be assessed from the basis of a well-defined continuum that covers a range from individual-, organisational- and societal drivers towards constructive measurables.

In response to the focus on measurables produced by a WLB system, the Canadian Department of Trade and Industry papers link productivity and performance to successful WLB policies, (DTI 2003a : 1 and DTI 2003b: 1). Other case study material suggests that the productivity and competitive discourse undermines employees' sense of entitlement to and the willingness of companies to effect WLB policies, (Brannen 2002: 4). In certain organisations, working hours have become flexible but also longer; and in both the private and public sectors workloads may have intensified in the move towards leaner workplaces, (Fraser 1996:2). The derived understanding is therefore that people continue to work longer hours than they actually want or prefer to, generating constrained autonomy in work-time arrangements. Rapport, Lewis & Gambles (2004: 18) state that recognising and using dual or multiple agendas in constructing WLB systems, are imperative in assessing the equity level of the organisations. It could therefore be derived that workplace effectiveness and equity do not have to be a trade off. Studies done by Beck (2000: 10) reflect that collaboration between people working together and organisations that develop new working practices, values and norms – that account for and respect personal life needs and workplace effectiveness - can bring positive results for both parties. Beck (2000: 10) substantiates this theory by stating that a small manufacturing company turned profitable just by paying attention to the employees' personal needs. The dual agenda was developed in the context of exploring new ways of working that enabled greater gender equity and workplace effectiveness, (Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2002: 15). Assessing the researched theories, it was derived that the dual agenda approach is based on the ideology that personal life and workplace needs are not antithetical. They therefore impact on each other, which in turn has an impact on the levels of productivity and efficiency experienced within the organisation.

The negative aspect of this approach is identified as time consuming, the tackling of identity issues, breaking down assumptions and resistances, collaborative leadership and support. In pursuing this approach the issue of individualism also come into play. The developed approach by Lewis and Cooper (2003: 20) addressed this concern. Therefore the approach encompasses a multiple agenda that looks at a range of levels. Included in the dual or multiple approach is not only the workplace but also the community, family, interpersonal and the individual. It is ascertained that the key driver for organisational performance should be the development of innovative working practices which would not only satisfy the employers' or employees' personal needs, but also enhance workplace effectiveness.

The realities of the modern world of work are that the new workforce is more ethnically diverse, has a larger proportion of working women, dual earner families, skills shortage, sandwich employees (those employees with child-, elder – or other care taking responsibilities), as well as a shift in expectations of quality of work life by the younger generation. In this regard Rose (2005: 1) suggests that companies have realised that by giving employees extra time off to attend to personal business, links directly with higher job satisfaction. Dyson (2004: 12) supports this argument and cites that employers and human resources practitioners identified a range of benefits associated with work-life practices. Work-life deliverables observed included loyalty, trust, quality of work, and increased productivity. It could therefore be derived that employees' personal productivity within these organisations was integrally linked to their level of comfort with their domestic – or personal arrangements, (Dyson, 2004: 22). McCartney (2003: 1) cites research findings that dispute the relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment and state that employees tend to define career success in relation to balance and are less likely to put in longer hours as this will jeopardise their personal fulfilment. The advent of the new era of work resulted in European employees developing a high degree of confidence in their employability, (McCartney 2003: 1).

This in turn would mean that people are not afraid to leave their current organisations in favour of one that better meets their needs.

Lowe (2000: 26) indicates that there has never been a better time to talk about WLB in the workplace. Morale is down and companies have to figure out how to support post-layoff survivors so that their workload is manageable and business-goals are achieved. Duxbury, Dyke & Lam (2000: 23) support this argument and their research provides an insight into the new tendencies WLB models gear towards. European countries show an undeniable trend towards making the construct of WLB part of their strategic planning as a key contributor to the bottom-line of their organisations. Research trends further indicate that a definite rush towards organisation – specific research is taking place. It therefore becomes imperative to try and understand why organisations are currently so concerned with finding ways to create a culture that fosters a WLB directive. In the 1960s and 1970s, Scandinavian countries took a lead in promoting the issue of WLB and its relation to quality of life, (Proudfoot et al, 1997: 10). A solid data base of empirical data about the benefits of promoting the quality of working life, that justified a call for policy and even legislative intervention, was produced. Some legacy of this phenomenon is detected in the European Social Chapter, which reflects that Sweden has chosen to promote quality of working life and flexibility during its presidency of the European Union. This raises the question of whether a solid body of social science knowledge about WLB, that is sufficiently robust to feed into policy formulation and legislation, exists, (Walby 2002: 10). However, findings indicate strong support for WLB amongst employers and, although this has not always been matched in practice, provision has increased in the last three years, (Doogan, 2003: 10). Despite some concerns about staff shortages, the majority of employers that provides flexible working practices and leave arrangements found them to be cost effective, with a positive impact on labour turnover, motivation and commitment as well as employee relations.

In order to understand the trend in research development around WLB, it is essential to also assess the concomitant development of organisational dynamics. According to Green (2003: 10), previous generations of employees held what might be termed as an “employer-first” mindset. This theory is confirmed by Beck (1992: 12), who claims that the world of work was centred around the strict rhythm of hour dependence as measured by the boss. This notion implies that organisations employed people that believed in the necessity of delayed gratification, self-sacrifice and hard work. This mindset included a deeply held belief that commitment towards one’s organisation will be reciprocated, (Fraser 1996: 10). It is identified that the outcomes of research done on WLB in the early 1970’s culminated in quality of work/life programmes. Assessing these programmes it became clear that the emphasis was on designing jobs that provide the employee challenge, autonomy, recognition, opportunities for on the job learning and subsequent advancement, as well as participation in the decision making process.

The advent and rise of the new economy has recently caught the attention of the media, politicians and social theorists, (Doogan 2003: 1). It is therefore derived that similarity interest in family friendly policies has also grown in governments, corporations, pressure groups and among academics. This is supported by the vast pool of research accessible on European organisations and projects driven by government project teams, like the Dyson study on the population of New Zealand, (Dyson 2004: 1). Doogan (2003: 1) also identifies the possibility of new organisational questions being posed in the focus on WLB within the advent of the new economy. The intent of WLB is being questioned as a phenomenon that might possibly bring an extension of the spatial and temporal boundaries of paid work, by increasing the intensity of working with people never being “off line”. Brannen (2002: 3) also alludes to the fact that the new economy, concomitant with WLB, simply brings new, more insecure, fragmented and precarious working conditions. This might pose a threat for certain employees in that they might find it difficult to affect equal opportunities for their families.

Linked to the concept of the “never off line syndrome”, it might therefore just increase the levels of balance disparity. Thus Brannen (2002: 3) argues that as employees seemingly take more control over time, so time takes control of the individual and the more control given over organising time in work seems to mean that employees are spending longer and longer periods at work, (Brannen 2002: 3). Castells (1996: 23) also adds to this phenomenon the role of time in the constitution of the employment relationship and how the apparently simple exchange between labour and wages is complicated by the fluidity of the boundaries around the length of the working day. It is imperative to take cognisance of the regulatory and institutional frameworks that governs the length of the working day as well as the intensity of the work effort. This argument by Castells (1996: 23) reflects one of the major driving forces in the slow development of WLB practices within South African organisations. The entrenched structural and legal rigidities, especially around time spent at work pose a major restraining force for South African organisations. It could therefore be concluded that work patterns and individualised rewards structures, which increase the commoditisation of labour, therefore have potential adverse implications for WLB practices.

In conclusion, increased flexibility, improved morale and quality, increased value of

In the application of WLB models, organisations need to assess the different options of work-time structuring and apply it to their organisation-specific needs. Researchers argue that organisations that adopt initiatives, which help their employees to achieve a better balance between work and the rest of their lives, focus on achievement and quality performance. This reflects the ability of business to build more resilient organisations – better able to adapt and to be successful. Lowe & Schellenberg’s (2001: 3) research results are congruent with this view and argue that the business’ benefits can be extended in the sense that they can also attract better talent as “best practice employers”, a benefit impacting directly on the bottom-line. Steinberg (2002: 1) state that flexible working patterns can support balance and in turn yield positive results for the organisation’s production results. Case studies indicate that managers are becoming increasingly forward thinking about WLB.

They do not assume, as perceived, that choosing flexible work patterns or prioritising personal life should jeopardise career progression. Steinberg (2002: 12) states that the response in her study alludes to the tendency of management regarding employees who could cope with their workloads – in an organised and calm manner during their contracted hours – as the most likely candidates for promotion and rapid progression. It therefore becomes clear that a solid business case can be built for the effective application of the WLB system. It is derived that although a company's goals often take priority within the modified system, most employers agree that people do their best work when they can strike a balance between their jobs and the rest of their lives.

Nora Spinks, President of Work Life Harmony Enterprises, indicates that the economic case for WLB has been made repeatedly, demonstrating the value of investing in employee well being. Duxbury and Higgins (2001: 45) support this argument and provide a classification of the identified benefits organisations are reaping in attending to work-family balance as:

“increased output, increased focus, increased motivation, increased income, increased retention, increased morale and loyalty, increased ease of recruitment, improved public relations, decreased expenses, decreased health care costs, decreased stress-related illness and decreased absenteeism”.

It is important to note that this literature study identifies the lack of quantification of results and will later explore this trend. Dyson (2004: 22) supports the ideology that WLB brings about positive changes within organisations, but also highlights the disconnect between employers and employees on their perceived belief of the benefits of WLB. The counter argument of certain managers evolves around the notion of whether WLB practices would not necessarily increase profitability. This is indicative of the multiple questions still surrounding the conceptualisation of WLB as a success recipe for organisational growth.

The quest for WLB practices is undeniably applicable to the South African economy, because of its integration in the global network. The basic driving forces for the integration of WLB concepts, within the South African economy, are therefore undeniably the realities enforced by the new economy. Research conducted by Lero & Johnson (1994: 3), indicate that during the past decade, the wellness levels of organisations in South Africa came under increasing pressure. Contributory to this, are the intensified international competition and the blurred lines of responsibility between the job and the family. The harmonisation of paid work with other parts of South Africans' lives is a central issue in many societies and people today. As more and more South Africans (but by no means all) work longer or more intensely, be it because of perceived or absolute economic necessity, a response to societal or workplace expectations, or because they enjoy and derive fulfilment from paid work, key questions still emerge. These questions link in with many issues connected to the global economic context in which South Africans' lives are unfolding. In research exploring work-personal life harmonisation in South Africa, by Rapoport, Lewis and Gambles (2004: 2), responses like the following were detected:

“I do have friends, but hardly. I am at the office at weekends. That is my life. I don't want to work so hard, but I have found my work environment is my second home, even Sundays” (South African woman).

This quote illustrates some of the current discontent certain South Africans voice about harmonising the many parts of their lives. However, it is important to note that according to Van Niekerk & Douglas (2003: 1), WLB became a reality amongst a few dynamic South African companies about ten years ago and is manifested in their policy formulations. However, the visible shortcoming of this research is that the sample was not representative of the entire South African business community, and was performed only on organisations that have international ties (MNC's). Research results reflect that the current underlying principle of WLB systems is the enforcement of good management practice and sound business sense (management's view).

Further investigations clearly indicate that WLB has a number of complications with regard to full implementation. The policy is widely advertised on websites, but in-depth investigation highlights that the practical application and monitoring of the system is lacking in substance. In South Africa, the prevailing argument is that many organisations still feel that helping employees balance competing work and non-work demands is not their responsibility, (Bird 2003: 2). Specifically in parastatals, organisations subscribe to a somewhat dated view called the “myth of separate worlds”. This is based on the premise that work is work and life is life and the two domains do not overlap. The perception aired is that companies are in the business of increasing shareholder value and serving customers and not helping employees cope with stress. Supporting this viewpoint are results from the 2003 Human Capital Satisfaction Survey (Shell SA) which states that only 60% of employees who participated in the Survey indicated that balancing work and non-work lives is important. Management’s perspective is that:

“*Our workers are focused on the task*”, (Czakan 2003: 2).

The perceived challenge of South African managers therefore is to learn how to manage and measure worker outputs, more than the workers themselves. Reality indicators support this, and reflect that productivity rate increases take place at a much slower rate when compared to South Africa’s major trading partners. Therefore the unit labour costs, which ultimately reflects the real value added by productivity, increase dramatically, (Barker 2002: 189).

It is thus derived that the South African concept of WLB leaves a gap, because no practical value-adding models are established as guidelines to smaller organisations. Experience has taught that even though South Africa is operating in a globalised-, integrated economy, all practices need to be adapted to cater for unique circumstances within the South African workplace.

The current data overview addressed the nature of WLB, considered why it is an issue of contemporary interest, outlined a simple framework by which it can be analysed and presented selected findings from recent research. It is however, noted that too little consideration is given to the nature, operationalisation and measurement of value adds brought about by a comprehensive WLB system. Guest (2001: 25), supports this notion and adds the prevalence of uncertainty about the circumstances under which WLB becomes an issue for key stakeholders. In this context it should be noted that there are unresolved issues about what constitutes a good WLB system or even whether this is something that South Africans should consider.

At the outset of the debate it was ascertained that WLB is central to debates about quality of working life and its relation to quality of life. Results drawn from the second WLB study in an employer survey (Research Series no.22), present some key findings on employers' attitudes around perceived value add by WLB. Results reflect that:

- There was a high level of support for WLB in relation to the need for all employees to balance their lives.
- More than nine in ten employers were of the view that people work best when they can strike a better balance between work and the rest of their lives.
- The majority of employers agreed on the difficulty encountered in trying to accommodate individual balance requests.

Generally speaking, support for the basic principles and concepts of WLB were supported by actions. Employers that indicated the strongest levels of support tended to provide a wider range of practices and entitlements that helped their employees living a balanced life. These findings however, still do not address the issue of measurable results brought about by the application of a WLB system. The response on this question from employers is generally answered in a subjective non-measurable manner.

One example of such is the response to the question:

“What are the benefits to the organisation from providing WLB practices?”

The response was a happy workforce. Most of the employers reported further that it had a positive impact on workers. The argument is therefore not to discredit the positive results yielded by these employers, but in support of quantifying these results in order to prove the actual contribution to the bottom line. This information would provide a pool of valuable knowledge to South African organisations that does not deny the importance of applying WLB methods, but reflect the need to understand the impact on the organisations’ bottom-line and ultimately the South African economy. These criticisms on the perceived positive results yielded by spending time on devising and implementing a WLB system is supported by Duxbury & Higgins (2001: 1), who state that it is agreed that the need why organisations need to address WLB issues have been well-documented over the past several decades. The question raised is what WLB looks like within an actual organisation, (Duxbury & Higgins 2001: 1). The actual questions that need to be answered are:

- What is the success ratio of attracting and retaining quality employees?
- Does absenteeism drop and at what rate?
- Quantify the money the company’s saved?

The only way in which these answers could be answered is by virtue of case studies within the perceived successful companies.

Duxbury & Higgins (2001: 1), in their case study approach, identified a comprehensive range of WLB options, covering flexible working arrangements, flexible benefit packages and Employee Assistance Programmes. Assessing the results yielded by Duxbury & Higgins (2001: 1), it appears that managing and measuring a range of different systems, can become an added nightmare in the already challenging South African workplace, which includes inter alia, the issue of employment equity.

However, it warrants employers' consideration for the implementation of these systems in order to support the notion of human capital as the key to a sustainable competitive advantage. Cognisance should be taken of the economic intellectual capacity of the organisation's workforce when selecting different systems, because it could contribute to the deterioration of the already wavering work ethic experienced amongst certain segments of the South African workforce. Studies suggest further suggest that these realities contribute substantially to the quest for WLB in the sense that it focuses on an increase in work-life conflict, (Duxbury & Higgins 2001: 10). Due to the dramatic changes in the nature of work and the roles of new technologies, data suggests that a greater proportion of workers are experiencing greater challenges in balancing their roles of employee, parent, spouse, etc., (Pleck 1995 : 5). At large, it can be concluded that jobs have become more stressful and less satisfying, especially in the South African business environment.

As a direct consequence of globalisation and internationalisation, retrenchments and lay offs are an ever-present reality on the South African labour front. WLB could conceivably therefore be regarded as an economic luxury. This view is supported by Ngumbi (2001: 5) who states:

“... the challenges (problems) facing most of the organisations in the South African labour markets include high levels of unemployment and massive retrenchments which affect the strategic human resource management processes”.

In order to strike a delicate balance between these realities, alternative options and routes should be investigated and examined for possible utilisation in company context. One of these would be job-sharing, a situation where two or more employees share a job, which could theoretically be filled by one employee. In this context, Ngumbi (2001: 25) concludes that:

“... it is highly recommended that all the stakeholders explore the use of job-sharing as a viable alternative solution to these problems”.

From the above, it is apparent that WLB, in its international colours, will have a fundamental struggle for recognition and full utilisation, especially amongst smaller employers in South Africa. This position is supported by Greef & Nel (2003: 55) who recognises the complexity of job-sharing, in that:

“... such cost considerations as rates of turnover, and absenteeism, recruitment, training, fringe benefits, and the potential for increased flexibility should be taken into account as well”.

The modern reality is that South African businesses are getting more involved in a global interdependent network of economies. The derived implication is that the problems faced by big overseas organisations will be manifested as different facets in the South African economy and therefore will make WLB an international concern.

2.3 Conclusion

Research undeniably indicates that businesses in South Africa are getting more involved in a global interdependent network of economies. According to Poswell (2002: 40), the Systems Theory approach implies that organisations in the new economy operate as complex systems that involve interaction within and integration between different subsystems. The derived implication is that the problems faced by big overseas organisations will be manifested as different facets in the South African economy and therefore makes WLB an international concern.

To support the systems interaction approach, research conducted into the post-apartheid South African labour market presents a clear indication of the manifestation of labour market problems. The following realities were identified, (Poswell 2002: 40):

- Employees have become more stressed.
- Physical- and mental health levels declined.
- Concomitant increase in physician visits.
- Increase in HIV/AIDS infections.

Certain MNCs adopted European cloned WLB models and applied it in its purest form on the South African workforce. This was done irrespective of the major concerns highlighted by the pool of research on WLB:

- The lack of quantified results.
- Complications posed by maintaining a complicated individualistic approach in developing organisational WLB systems.

It is imperative to note that WLB disconnects are viewed as largely systematic issues rooted in factors such as entrenched social power relations including the gender imbalance, the nature of industrial economies and global competition, (Rapoport, Lewis & Gambles 2004: 22). Cognisance should be taken of the individual South African employee's labour constraints, such as lack of work ethic and skills shortage hampering the implementation of a European-based WLB model.

The perceived general trend amongst the majority of South Africa's economically active population is the tendency to reject or rebel against current labour market forces by altering the ways in which they harmonise paid work with the rest of their lives. The scale weighs heavily towards abandoning organisational responsibilities by performing the minimum of the minimum tasks. Research results confirmed the trend that the level of work ethic amongst South Africans is wavering in relation to European counterparts. This could be regarded as a covered rebellion against the primacy of unfettered economic growth and consumerism that fails to pay attention to the well-being of people and societies more generally. This notion is further entrenched in the generalisation that South Africans are more likely to talk about problems at work that was making balance more untenable (workloads, non-supportive managers and organisational cultures) than to focus on what was problematic at the non-work end of the equation.

It is also important to understand the impact of financial strain on WLB. South Africans are experiencing high levels of poverty and therefore experience financial strain, which in turn suggest that balance is virtually impossible in lower – income families, which constitute 40% of the economically active population. In order to ensure the easy implementation of an organisation – specific WLB system, the causes of the financial strain need to be addressed at both the organisational and government level.

The research review into WLB reflects the importance of implementing flexible work arrangements within organisations. Results from studies reflect that there should be mutual accountability around the usage of this system – employees need to meet job demands, but organisations should be flexible with respect to how work is arranged. The generalisation made is, that taking into account the low level of economic accountability intellect amongst the majority of the South African workforce it will be very difficult (if not impossible) to implement flexible work arrangements. Also to consider is the fact that the country's organisations have a too strong focus on hours rather than output and on presence rather than performance. This in turn means that organisations should not neglect the need to introduce new performance measures that focus on objectives, results and output (i.e. move away from a focus on hours to a focus on output). It will in turn mean that the reward system need to be re-assessed in order to reward output, not hours, and what is done, not where it is done.

McCartney (2003: 1) indicates that stress, long hours, change and uncertainty have, for several years, been the defining characteristics of organisational life. This trend still prevails in South Africa, considering the fact that the country only gained access to the world economic arena after the early 1990s. Adding a further complication towards the application of a European WLB model is the fact that there is a substantial increase in the phenomenon of contingent pay and contingent contracts.

Concomitant to this, cognisance should be taken of the fact that jobs within the new economy become more individualised and insecure. Empirical evidence presented by Green (2003: 6), indicated a conceptual understanding of insecurity, pointing out that it has a number of facets, making it difficult to capture empirically. The basic understanding is therefore that a job with nil insecurity is not realistic in a capitalist economy. Hence, the understanding of the high unemployment rate of the South African population. Re-assessing the data sourced from various researchers, on the principles of a well-established WLB system, it became clear that South African organisations experience unique constraints that warrant individual assessment.

Chapter 3 will provide a comprehensive insight into the research

The question of the perceived value added by WLB models to the bottom-line was discussed and also becomes important in order to provide a full spectrum of ideologies to South African organisations that intend following the formalised route of implementing a well-defined WLB model.

Studies by Guest (2001: 27), indicate that the pre-dominant conclusion drawn from their results is the fact that WLB models do not only yield positive results, especially if an individualistic approach is not followed. The “never off-line syndrome” could be cited as one example for those employees with the means to work virtual. What the syndrome in essence means is that there might be non-alignment between individuals as to the specifics of their own WLB practices. It happens that the chosen diverse flexi time fixtures amongst colleagues might contribute to further imbalance as it might impact on the personal time of another colleague. Therefore the extended continuum of variables needs to be assessed thoroughly before the decision on a set WLB system is decided upon.

It was identified by the current researcher that the trend in MNCs with national offices in South Africa, is to purely adapt WLB systems utilised in their European countries. This phenomenon became more questionable after accessing the international research information pool on WLB systems within European environments.

An information gap on the existence of research conducted on WLB within South African organisations was identified as a critical problem. It was therefore imperative to delineate a South African specific study on the applicability of existing WLB models on the unique South African circumstances and individual employees. Currently propagated was a perceived value added by these systems which is nowhere quantified as part of the Balanced Scorecard. This could partially be due to the South African - specific labour market constraints that prohibit the exact cloning of these WLB models.

Chapter 3 will provide a comprehensive insight into the research methodology applied in directing the current researcher's study into the applicability of European cloned WLB models within South African organisations. It provides a detailed explanation of the research design, methods applied in the form of a survey questionnaire and constructive interviews conducted. The chapter furthermore provides insight into the profile of the sample population and cites the purpose of the research study.

The sample population was selected randomly with the focus on gaining representation along the lines of:

- Gender.
- Levels of work: Management versus General Employees.
- Professionals versus Non – Professionals.
- Dependent Care and Non-dependent Care Responsibilities.
- Marital Status.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical foundation of this study is drawn from Duxbury and Higgins's 1991 and 2001 work and family studies, as well as other research and case studies pertaining to WLB analogies in overseas companies. Local studies are limited to a few articles and "nice-to-have" WLB policies and charters within organisations studied in this project. The researcher identified the easiness to access policies and charters. However, it became apparent that there is a visible gap in terms of extensive research done on the practical applicability and the measurement of the perceived value added by this practice within the South African workplace.

3.2 Research Methodology

A quantitative descriptive research method was applied. The research study therefore resulted in the compilation of a large amount of quantitative survey data on sample subjects within the identified organisations. This was done in the form of a content-specific questionnaire designed to probe variables relating to WLB.

To further increase understanding of the topic, it was decided to carry out a minimum of 15 interviews with both managers and general employees. This has resulted in an extensive set of qualitative data on work –life balance.

The dual approach in the data collection method was utilised due to the constraints relating to the insufficient South African research studies conducted on the topic. It was also deemed necessary to do a cross-reference analysis of the results recorded by the questionnaire.

3.3 Research Design

The designed research questionnaire consisted of 34 WLB - specific questions, relating to specific variables impacting or contributing to the construct of work-life conflict (WLC). The questions were set in a broad based manner, allowing individual responses on a wider span. Refer to the questionnaire inserted below as Diagram 3-2.

The questionnaire was issued to a sample population 150 employees. Jointly consisting of:

- Managers (73): (Senior, Top and Middle as well as Supervisors).
- General Employees (77): Admin, Sales, Finance, Service, Human Resources, Call Centres, Data Capturers.

The researcher identified a knowledge gap amongst certain individuals within the sample population on the abstract of WLB and the actual meaning of the construct. Therefore to ensure the validity of the research findings as derived from the research survey, as primary source, it was decided to follow the route of secondary data collection in the form of a structured interview. This was done with the underlying focus of gaining better insight into the identified problem situation relating to the perceived success of the European cloned WLB policies.

When conducting the interviews, it was imperative to focus on at least ten percent of the sample population and those directly impacted by the need for WLB. The identified sample group included the frequent travellers and those working on a virtual basis. Fifteen subjects were ultimately sampled from Malaysia, Dubai, Johannesburg and the Eastern Cape. It consisted of ten managers and five general employees, also known as level 1 employees who have no subordinates, mostly project specialists.

The relevance of the structured interview was further entrenched by the necessity of personal opinion relating to the studied phenomenon. Within the structured interview personal opinions on the applicability of WLB on the South African workforce as well as the pitfalls of a cloned European model were discussed amongst others. The findings derived from this exercise carried a heavy weight in the final decision making and the subsequent results derived. Validation and evaluation of the primary data collected in the sample survey was therefore consciously performed.

3.3.1 Diagram 3-2 Research Questionnaire

WORK – LIFE BALANCE RESPONSE FORM – INDIVIDUALS / EMPLOYEES

PLEASE INSERT A CROSS (X) IN THE APPROPRIATE BLOCK THAT YOU AGREE WITH AS A SUITABLE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION POSED

1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

2. What is your age?

Under 30

30 – 39

40 – 49

50 +

3. What is your marital status?

Married

Single

Divorced

4. What is your parental – and care giving status (*children and other dependants*)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Dependents
<input type="checkbox"/>	No dependents

5. What is your level of education?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional (<i>Any form of further studies</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Professional

6. Which of the following best describe your current position?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Top Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Middle Management
<input type="checkbox"/>	Team Leader
<input type="checkbox"/>	General Employee

7. Which of the following best describe the department you work for?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer Service
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sales
<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Business Support Functions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

8. Please state your honest opinion regarding the following statement:

Management believes that employees are the most important asset of our firm:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree

9. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Satisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral

10. How would you rate your level of job stress?

<input type="checkbox"/>	None
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mild
<input type="checkbox"/>	Severe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extreme

11. Which of the following describes the variety of tasks required by your position?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Too many
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enough
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not enough

12. To what extent do your work responsibilities interfere with your family responsibilities?

<input type="checkbox"/>	None
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mild
<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Severe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extreme

13. To what extent do your family responsibilities interfere with your work ?

<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Severe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mild	<input type="checkbox"/>	Extreme
<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate		

13. How flexible is your company with respect to your family and dependant

14. Please indicate the time you spend at the office per week:

Under 35 hours

35 – 45 hours

Over 45 hours

Somewhat Disagree

Very Flexible

15. Please indicate the time spent on doing work at home outside regular office hours on average per day:

0 hours

1 – 5 hours

Over 5 hours

Somewhat Agree

16. Please indicate the average time spent per week on family activities:

0 hours

1 – 5 hours

5 – 10 hours

10+ hours

Somewhat Disagree

17. Please indicate the average percentage of times you had to cancel or miss out on family activities due to work commitments within the past week:

0 %

1 – 10%

10 – 20%

20% +

Strongly Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

18. How flexible is your company with respect to your family and dependant care responsibilities?

<input type="radio"/>	Very inflexible
<input type="radio"/>	Somewhat inflexible
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral
<input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Flexible
<input type="radio"/>	Very Flexible

Please state your honest opinion regarding the following statements:

19. I am currently able to balance my work and personal life responsibilities:

<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral
<input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

20. I believe that my company has guidelines, policies and processes in place which help me to balance my work and personal life:

<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral
<input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

21. My company's WLB policies and processes are accessible to me as an individual:

<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Neutral
<input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly Agree

21. My manager applies the rule of thumb arrangements as with executive

22. My company's WLB policies and processes is supportive to my needs of balancing my work and family demands:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree

23. My manager is supportive of maintaining a balance between my work and family responsibilities:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree

24. My company's WLB policies and processes is understood, make sense and could be applied to my personal needs:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A

25. My company has a formal policy in place that allows me to work flexi hours:

<input type="checkbox"/>	True
<input type="checkbox"/>	False

26. My manager applies the rule of flexi time arrangements to curb excessive working demands:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A

27. I think of leaving the organisation at least once a month due to increased work demands:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree

28. I am currently on prescription medicine due to increased work demands:

<input type="checkbox"/>	True
<input type="checkbox"/>	False

29. I've went to work ill already due to increased work demands:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree

30. Management encourages employees to stay home with dependants in case of medical emergencies:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree

31. Please provide an indication of how many hours you are required to work overtime per week:

<input type="checkbox"/>	0 hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 – 5 hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 5 hours

32. Do you have the option or means to work from home if required by family responsibilities?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

33. Is your job content of such a nature that you can work from home from time to time

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

34. Tick the blocks that you agree with:

I apply the following mechanisms to cope with increasing work demands:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Leave things undone around the house	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use Wellness Support Systems provided by my Company	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Get on by less Sleep	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cut down on outside activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify one partner as being responsible for family responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan family time together	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Limit my job involvement to allow more time for my family	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often transpose my levels of stress on parties at home	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.4 Sampling Design

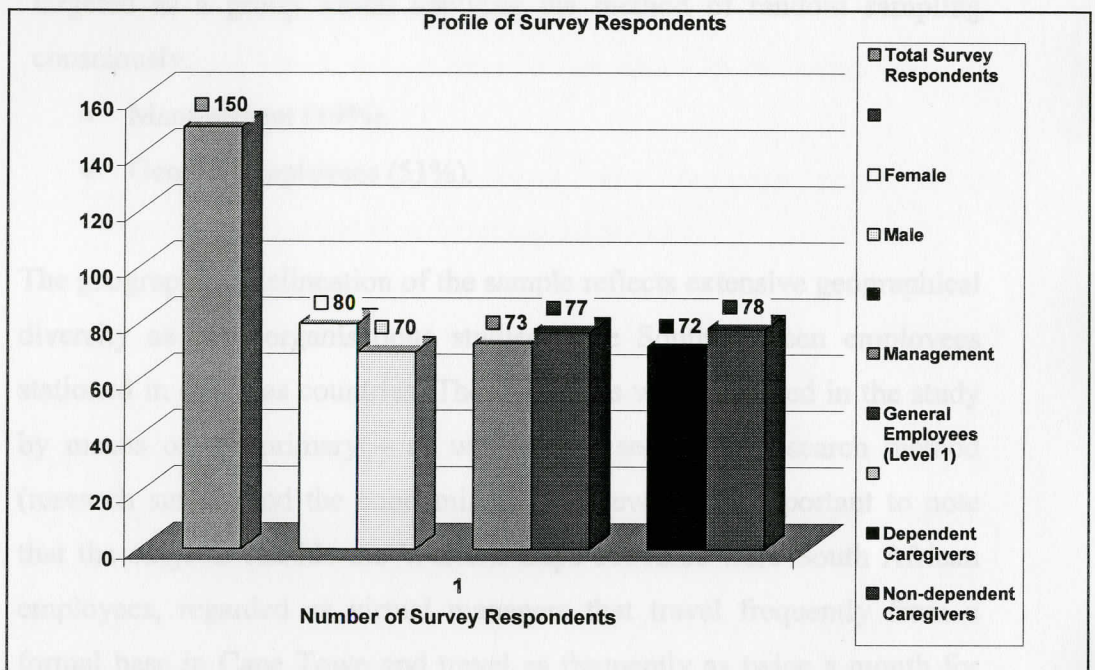
This section provides a structured outline of the sample utilised in the survey conducted. The researcher deemed it necessary to distinguish along the lines of:

- Gender.
- Levels of work (Management – General employees).
- Dependent care giving responsibilities (DCG).
- Non-dependent care giving responsibilities (NDCG).

3.4.1 Profile of the Sample Design

Figure 1-3 will provide the reader insight into the profile of the survey respondents that participated in the study. This serves to provide a clear indication of the broad sphere covered in analysing the sample population.

Figure 1-3 Profile of the Survey Respondents



The researcher applied the statistical method of random sampling inclusive of the following primary moderators:

- Gender (Male 47% and Female 53%).
- Marital Status (Single 48% and married 52%).

A systematic and elimination process was followed in order to ensure that the sample reflects representation on the moderator of dependency as the perceived notion is that people with DCG responsibilities show a greater tendency towards work-life crisis:

- Dependent care giving status (48%).
- Non-dependent care giving status (52%).

In the same format conscious segregation was done on the levels of work or job type in order to ensure that the moderator of increased job responsibility and level of accountability was considered whilst studying the impact of work overload on the applicability of WLB policies.

Therefore both management and general employees were consciously targeted as a group whilst applying the method of random sampling consciously.

- Management (49%).
- General Employees (51%).

The geographical delineation of the sample reflects extensive geographical diversity as both organisations studied have South African employees stationed in overseas countries. These subjects were included in the study by means of the primary – as well as the secondary research method (research survey and the concomitant interview). It is important to note that the subjects outside the Western Cape Province were South African employees, regarded as virtual managers that travel frequently from a formal base in Cape Town and travel as frequently as twice a month for periods that varies from three days to 1 month.

- Johannesburg (Both organisations).
- Cape Town – Western Cape (Both organisations).
- Port Elizabeth and East London – Eastern Cape (Both organisations).
- London (Both organisations).
- Dubai (Organisation that specialises in petroleum and Global Aviation).
- Malaysia (Organisation that specialises in petroleum and Global Aviation).

3.5 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research was to gain answers to the following research questions posed:

- What level of work-life conflict is currently experienced by employees within organisations that apply WLB models?

- Are WLB models applied in South African organisations effective or merely “nice-to-have” concepts?
- Are tangible results or actual value added to the bottom-line of these organisations?
- What restraining forces hamper exact European cloned WLB models within South African organisations?

3.6 Summary

The research mainly focused on organisations with international ties, aspiring towards becoming world-class competitors and pre-eminent organisations. Both organisations studied reflect an organisational structure underpinned by a shared Board of Directors with both local and international delegates and a shareholding structure weighted more towards the element of European ownership. The random sampling process was consciously managed to include all levels of employees for the sake of representation and to provide data that offers a holistic pool for the purpose of statistical analysis.

The next chapter, **chapter 4**, covers the analysis of the research results in a joint format.

The researcher will primarily focus on dissecting the data in response to the research questions posed in Chapter 3.

The chapter will provide an insight to the reader on the current organisational dynamics, as derived from the actual results. Amongst others, the reader will be exposed to concepts such as:

- Role overload: which refers in short to the multiple diverse tasks individuals are to perform and which adds to role confusion.
- Role conflict indicators within the subjects’ individual capacity.
- Family to Work – and Work to Family interference.
- Indicators of High versus Low Work Life Balance.
- Analysis of WLB moderators, etc.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

This study provides an analysis of the research results as it applies to the sample population subjected to this study. The results drawn from both organisations were concomitantly analysed as one group in order to provide a general view on the similarities in the WLB systems applied.

4. Introduction

The researcher utilised the introduction section to provide a general analysis of the current practices prevailing within the studied Petroleum – Global Aviation organisation. This organisation is publicly supportive of WLB practices, as decided upon by their European counterparts.

4.1 Analysis: Petroleum Specialist – Global Aviation

Research into this organisation reveals that the aspect of WLB became a reality in 1994 and was transcended from the Head Office in Europe (London). The policies reflect a range of flexible working arrangements and work-life assistance programmes. The latest version of a WLB charter was updated in 2002 and serves as a guideline to the formal policy for the Global Aviation division. The following key initiatives are identified with the WLB charter. Main extracts from the organisations' WLB Charter is stipulated in the synopsis below, stipulated as Insert 1-4.

4.1.2 Insert 1-4 Work Life Balance Charter 2002

Vision

It is the Global Aviation's commitment to getting a sustainable working culture. We do so not least because we firmly believe it to be good for the business:

- *Striving for a healthy Work Life Balance helps to create a culture of focus on efficiency and relentless shredding of non-value adding activities. This is the culture we aspire to,*
- *We need people to bring ideas and energy to their work and the likelihood is that they will have little of either if they spend all their time working. Our output rates tend to diminish as more and more hours are worked,*
- *We need to provide a working life that is part of a competitive overall employment offering to attract and retain the best talent,*
- *A long-hours culture encourages poor management discipline. In the long run, businesses tend to make very poor use of assets and services that are provided free of charge (like their employees' family time),*
- *A long-hours culture is not supportive to safety and health.*

With this charter we want to be clear on our aspirations and values when it comes to Work Life Balance. As a business, we also will provide the necessary tools for each individual to manage their Work Life Balance. Managing Work Life Balance however is a personal responsibility for all of us.

Commitment

We are committed to the following:

1. Focus

We strive to bring hours down to acceptable proportions by ruthless prioritization, focus on efficiency and relentless shredding of non-value adding activities.

All managers and staff to analyze overtime and root causes for work/life balance issues on the basis of time writing. Focus needs to be on reduction of non-value-adding processes and ruthless prioritization and focus on the issues that really matter. Prioritization means that we agree to stop certain activities. Individual 'Goals' may have to be adjusted accordingly.

2. Reduce travel to a minimum

Travel is reduced to a minimum. All Regions and Functions will provide a year plan of meetings. Non-direct customer related travel outside this plan needs to be signed off by a VP before booking the trip. Although we continue to follow our existing travel policy to reduce costs and will continue to fly by the cheapest route, we remain committed that cheaper fares should not lead to extra nights from home. If an extra night away can be avoided by taking a more expensive trip, an employee is entitled to take the more expensive one. Meetings need to be scheduled in a way that avoids staff having to travel during the weekend. If avoidance is not possible and travel takes place during the weekend, staff are entitled to, and expected to take time off in lieu.

3. Flexibility

Aviation endorses a flexible approach to work. This includes the possibility of working from home and a more flexible approach to working time during the year wherever possible. Long hours during a certain busy period should be compensated in time (and preferably not in money) in a less busy period.

Tools and actions:

Individuals, who feel this could improve their work life balance, are invited to discuss this with their supervisor. Line managers will endorse this more flexible approach as long as it fits the business needs. Conditions will be discussed and confirmed. Lap tops are available for those who work from home; in some countries home office terms and conditions apply.

4. Culture and controls

We aspire to a culture in which it's considered absolutely normal that everybody takes their leave and to a work-organisation that enables everybody to do this and has the controls in place to monitor this. No work during weekend, vacation or days off unless subject matters are truly urgent in nature.

Tools and actions:

All Regional VP's will -with maximum staff engagement- agree regional and local WLB action plans as part of the People Survey approach. These will be discussed by the ALT to decide on additional global actions. The ALT will review the approach and will agree on the roll out of new OP products like ENGAGE – pause for people.

The following elements were identified as the key drivers of the policy:

- Employee Assistance Programmes (No defined elements).
- Flexible working Arrangements.
- Reduced hours.
- Reduced Workload.
- Continuing Part-Time Practices.
- Flexitime.
- Telecommuting.

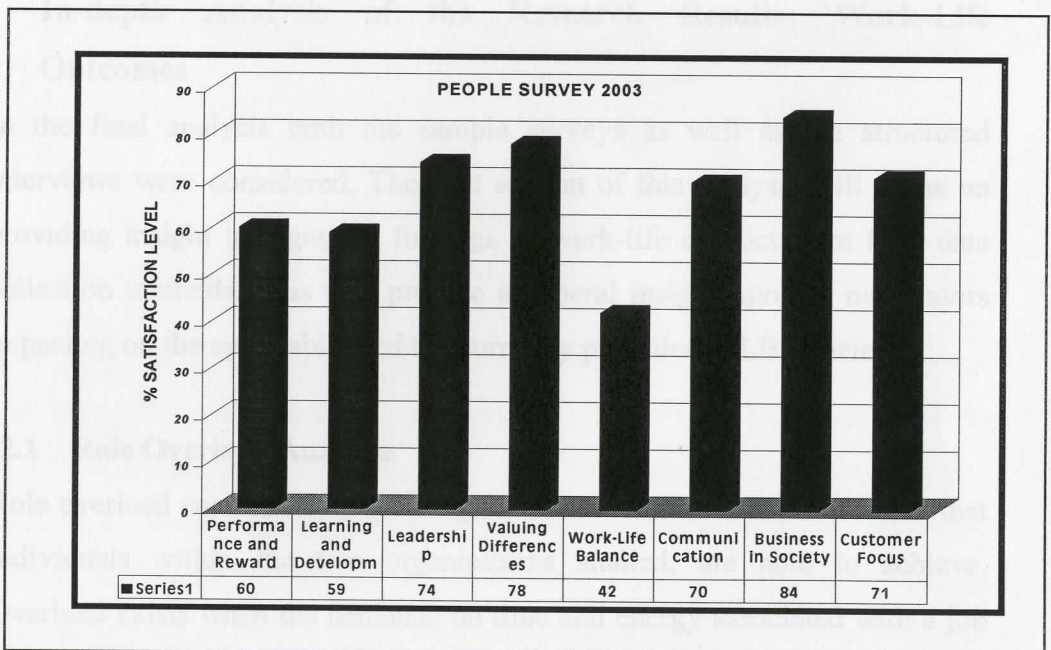
A major significant shortfall of the WLB Charter is the fact that no controls and measurements of how these practices relate to the business deliverables were identified. Discussions with employees and management provide insight into the difficulty of accessing these practices on an ongoing basis. One such statement of a manager supports the concern:

“How do we exercise these things on elementary jobs like our information analysts, who are already short staffed?”

4.1.3 People Survey

- The organisation under discussion conducted a people survey in 2003 where employees’ satisfaction levels were tested on various organisational satisfaction factors. Amongst these were the construct of WLB which scored the lowest point of 42 within the survey.
- The results of the 2003 People Survey conducted are encapsulated in Figure 2-4.

Figure 2-4 Employees Satisfaction Survey



Management from Global Aviation takes pride in the fact that they claim the system to be developed to the teeth and is supported by global controls and accountability structures.

The aspect of WLB was even identified as one of the Key Performance Indicators on the organisations' Balanced Scorecard. However, the researcher ascertained that the People Survey 2003 proves the contrary. Even though the WLB system has been propagated for the last ten years, it gained the lowest score amongst the organisation's employees.

Personal targets reflected in the WLB Scorecard include:

- Address concerns re excessive travel and workload.
- Promotion of the use of teleconferencing.
- Conducting meetings between 08:00 and 17:30 local time.
- Spouse Programmes included in zonal meetings.
- E-mail policy with regard to weekends.
- In-house recreational programmes.
- Flexible approach to work: Working from home.
- Enforcing a leave policy.

4.2 In-depth Analysis of the Research Results: Work-Life Outcomes

In the final analysis both the sample surveys as well as the structured interviews were considered. The first section of this analysis will focus on providing insight into general findings of work-life conflict from both data collection methods. This will provide a general insight into the moderators impacting on the applicability of the currently prevailed WLB policies.

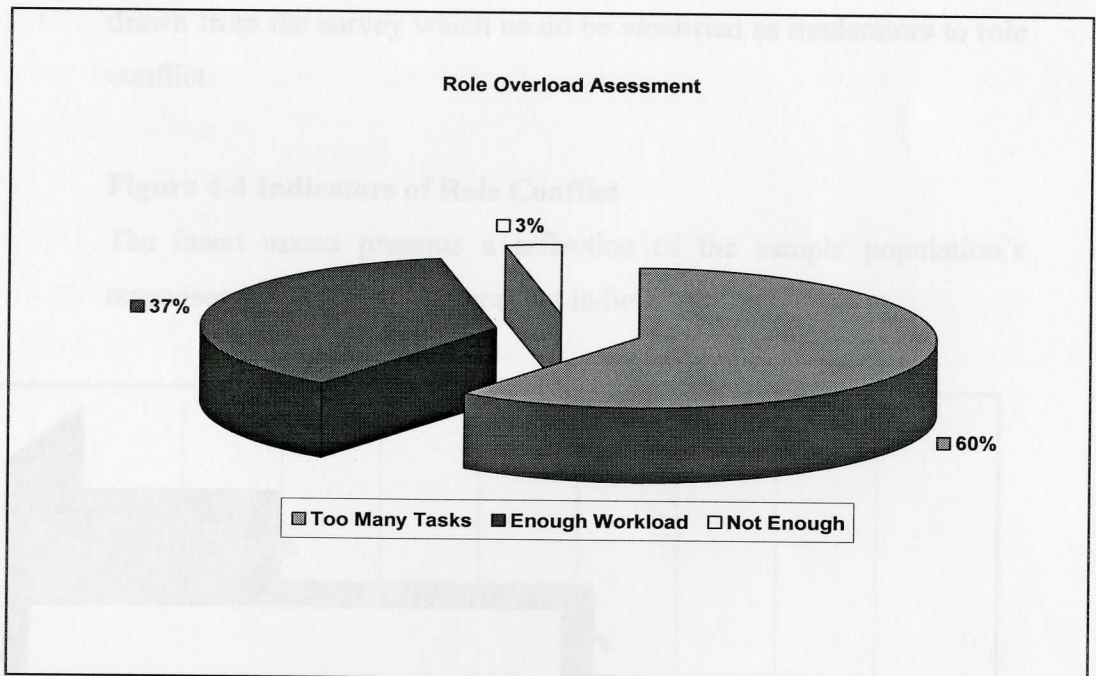
4.2.1 Role Overload Analysis

Role overload could be seen an integral moderator on the level of WLB that individuals within the two organisations studied, are able to achieve. Overload exists when the demands on time and energy associated with a job role are too great to perform the given task at optimum output.

It is imperative to note that Top Management's directive through Human Resources reveals that the organisation is capable of creating a balanced working environment through the set policies and work-life practices propagated.

Figure 3-4 Role Overload Assessment

The figure below provides a graphic presentation on the element of perceived role overload experienced by the total sample population.



Data suggests that the phenomenon of role overload is strongly prevalent within organisations studied in this research project. Data indicated that 60% of the sample population reflect that they have too many tasks to perform, and most of the time it is not related to their formal job description. Out of the sample population 37% of the subjects indicated that they have enough tasks to fulfil and hence are not subjected to the construct of role overload, whereas 3% of employees indicated that they are under-utilised.

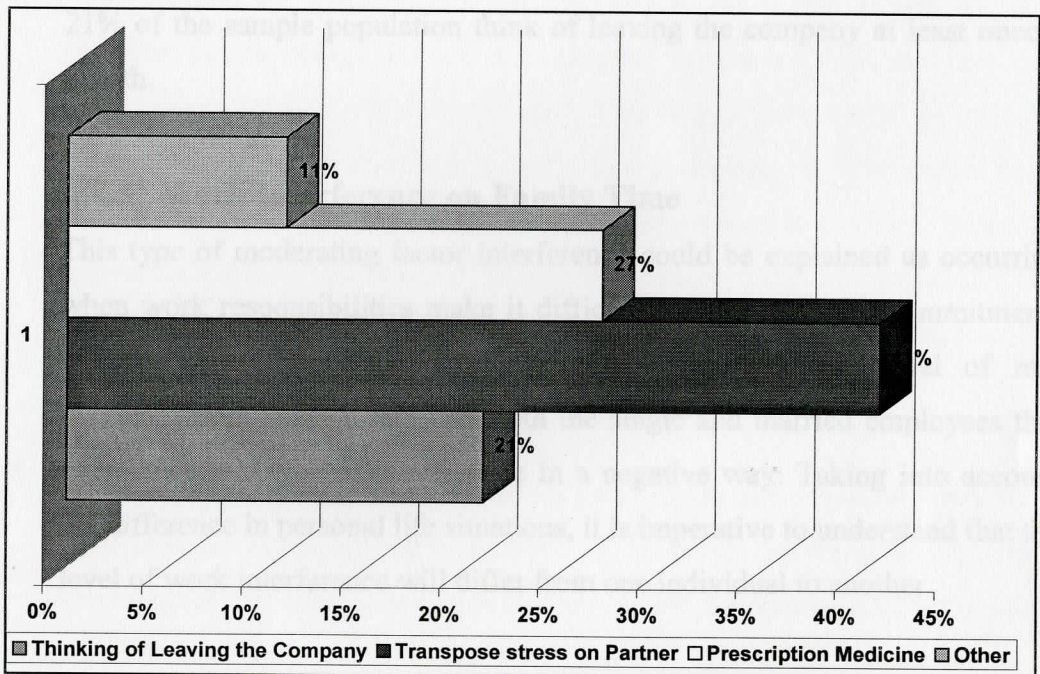
From the structured interviews conducted with management, it was identified that role overload is viewed to be associated with physical signs and mental conditions. Role overload could be regarded as the main contributor to role conflict. The analysed data therefore contradict management's generalisation of physical signs as associated with role overload and therefore warrants the researcher to identify other forms of impacts associated with role overload.

4.2.2 Identified Indicators of Role Conflict

Within the following sections the researcher seeks to evaluate data drawn from the survey which could be identified as moderators to role conflict.

Figure 4-4 Indicators of Role Conflict

The insert assess presents a reflection of the sample population's responses on identified role conflict indicators.



The sample of 60% which indicated that they are experiencing a huge role overload was further investigated. The survey results were further analysed to allow the researcher to focus on the secondary behaviours as a result of role overload.

The survey reveals that 27% of the sample population use prescription medicine to cope with the increasing pressures brought about by role overload. Employees with a high role overload show a tendency to experience a negative spill over from work to family. The results further reflect that 41% reports low family satisfaction in the sense that they transpose their levels of stress brought about by role overload on their partners at home.

This data is consistent with recent studies' findings in that work and family systems are highly interlinked and that negative conditions at work will most likely spill over at home. A further more concerning factor is the finding that 21% of the sample population think of leaving the company at least once a month.

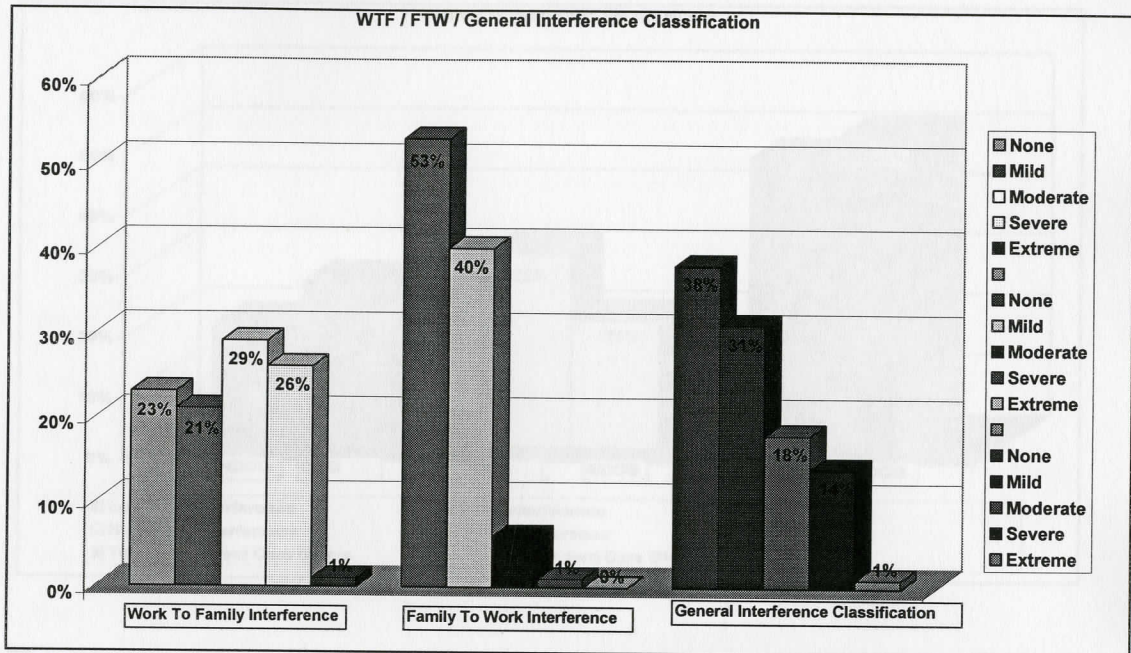
4.2.3 Work Interference on Family Time

This type of moderating factor interference could be explained as occurring when work responsibilities make it difficult to honour family commitments and therefore concomitantly contributes to the increased level of role overload. Data suggest that it is both the single and married employees that experience this type of interference in a negative way. Taking into account the difference in personal life situations, it is imperative to understand that the level of work interference will differ from one individual to another.

Evaluating this tendency is imperative as it is closely related to the testing of the perceived success of the currently existing WLB systems.

Figure 5-4 General Interference classification

The figure below provides a classified comparison between WTF and FTW interferences and also reflects a picture on the total level of interference.

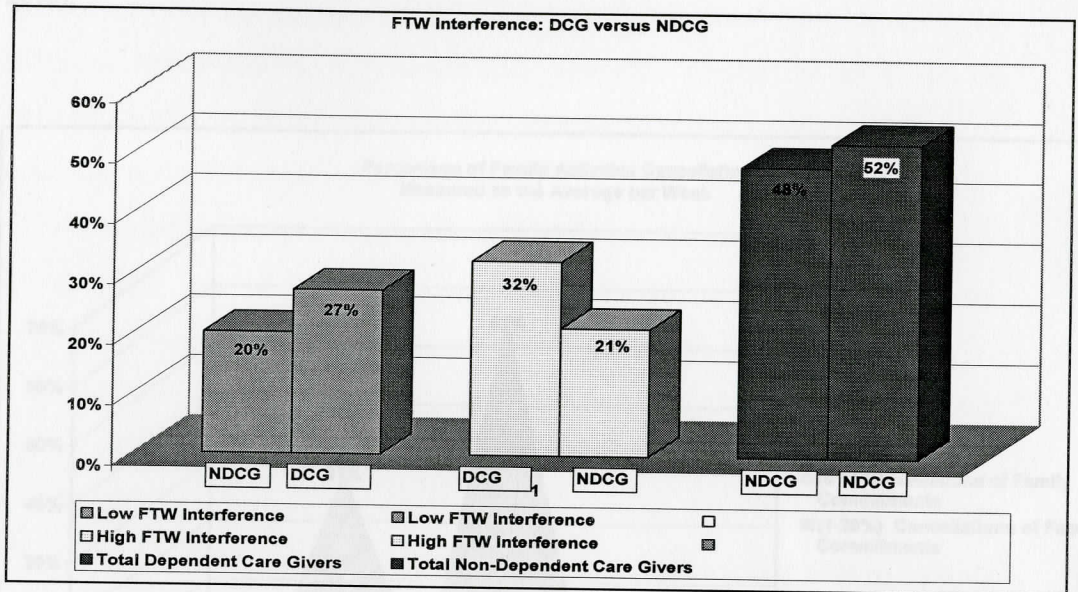


Findings suggest that 23% of the sample population experience no WTF interference. A total 76% of the sample population indicate that they experience a form of WTF interference. This ranges from a level of mildness to severe. Further discussions indicate that this form of interference could have a negative impact on the employee's performance in the long run as it is a clear indication of no definite balance between personal- and work life. This phenomenon results in role confusion, which will further entrench role overload.

Data further indicates that 53% of the subjects do not experience any FTW interference. Therefore 46% indicate a level of interference of family responsibility on work responsibilities. A further investigation into the notion of FTW interference indicates that those subjects with dependent care responsibilities are more susceptible to high levels of FTW interference. This is supported by the following data.

Figure 6-4 Family to Work Interference: Dependent Care Analysis

An analysis on dependent care as a FTW interference moderator is reflected in the insert below.



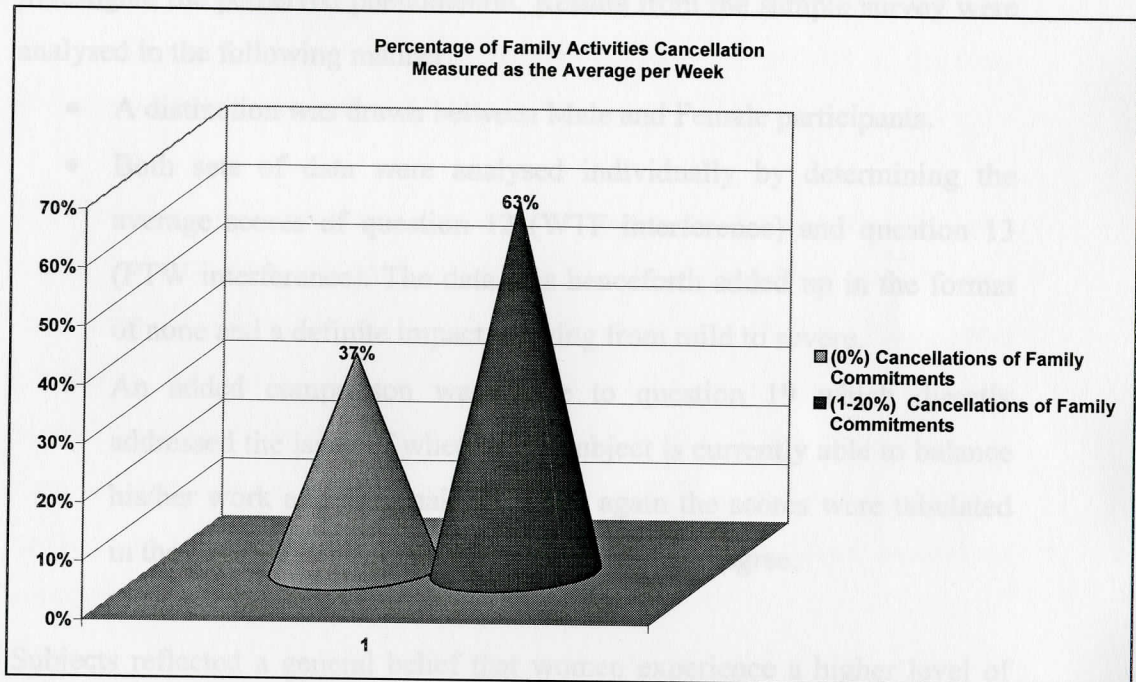
The survey results reveal that 32% of the dependent care givers and 21% of the non-dependent care givers experience a high level of FTW interference. The Sample population consisted of 52% dependent care givers and 48% non-dependent care givers. These are in most cases the subjects that experience higher levels of job stress.

4.2.3.1 Impact on Family Commitments

The researcher further analysed the data presented in figure 5-4 and henceforth investigated the impact of SWAH and increased working hours on family commitments. A question was posed in the survey to gain an understanding of the level of imbalance in existence within the confinements of the subjects' house. The question asked an average percentage indication of how many times the subject had to cancel family commitments in respect of work commitments.

Figure 7-4 Family Activities Cancellation

The insert below provides a broad view on the trend of cancellation of family activities, measured as an average per week. Ranges determined are (0%) and (1-20%).



The data reflects that 63% of the target population had to cancel some of their family commitments within the week of participation. This ranges from one event to 5 events.

It is derived from the data that the construct of WLB cannot only be considered as applicable to married, dependent care givers or in particular working mothers. Rather, it appears from the data on family responsibilities, work overload and SWAH that all employees are subjected to the negative impact of an imbalance created by various nuisance factors.

High career aspirations and the quest for development are in no way successful deterrents to family responsibilities.

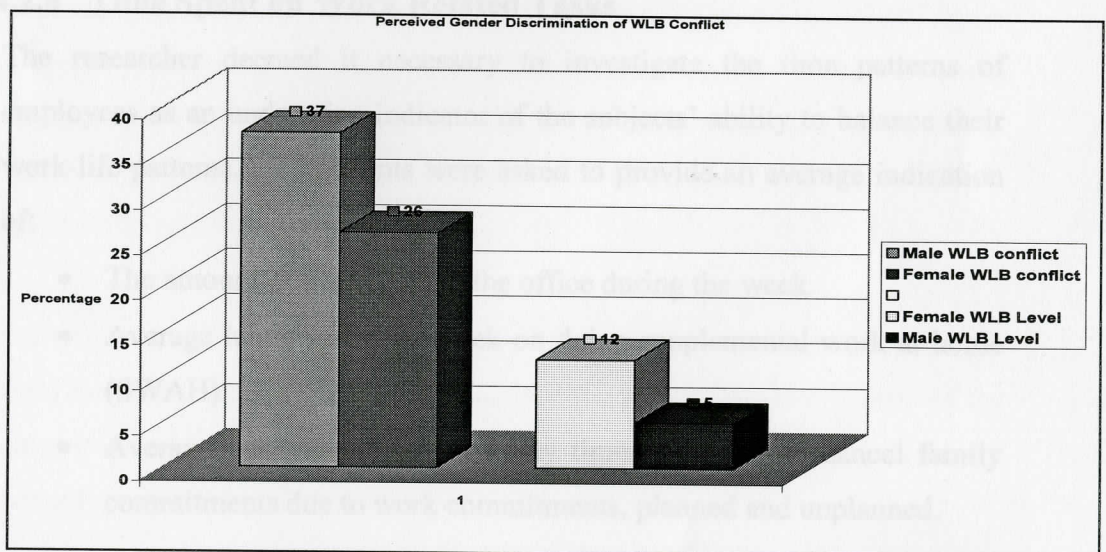
4.2.3.2 Perceived Gender Discrimination of WLB Conflict

Through the interview format of data collection, the researcher discovered that there is a perceived notion amongst the male subjects of the sample population that the constraints of WLB conflict impact more severely on them as breadwinners. The researcher therefore deemed it necessary to investigate the perceived phenomenon. Results from the sample survey were analysed in the following manner:

- A distinction was drawn between Male and Female participants.
- Both sets of data were analysed individually by determining the average scores of question 12 (WTF interference) and question 13 (FTW interference). The data was henceforth added up in the format of none and a definite impact, ranging from mild to severe.
- An added comparison was made to question 19 which directly addressed the issue of whether the subject is currently able to balance his/her work and personal life. Once again the scores were tabulated in the two main answer streams of disagree and agree.

Subjects reflected a general belief that women experience a higher level of WLC than men. The results, as analysed from responses, are reflected in figure 8-4.

Figure 8-4 Perceived Gender Discrimination of Work-Life Conflict



The total sample population consisted of 47% male and 53% female participants. Results indicated that the perceived notion that males are experiencing a higher level of WLB conflict is confirmed in this study with males experiencing a degree of 37% work life conflict and females a degree of 26% work life conflict. It was further established that 12% of the female population reflected the capability to maintain a level of balance between their work and personal life in comparison to only five percent of the male subjects within the sample population.

The presented data confirms the perceived notion that males experience a higher level of work life conflict and hence find it more difficult to balance their personal- and work life. The follow-up interview with male participants alluded to the fact that their responsibility as primary breadwinners weighs more heavily in their performance as an employee and thus warrants more time spent at work and taking up extra responsibilities. A number of family moderators were considered in this analysis such as personal aspirations amongst the male subjects.

However, 100% of the male population subjected to the structured interview agreed that the most crucial moderator within WLB conflict is their family's financial situation.

4.2.4 Time Spent on Work Related Tasks

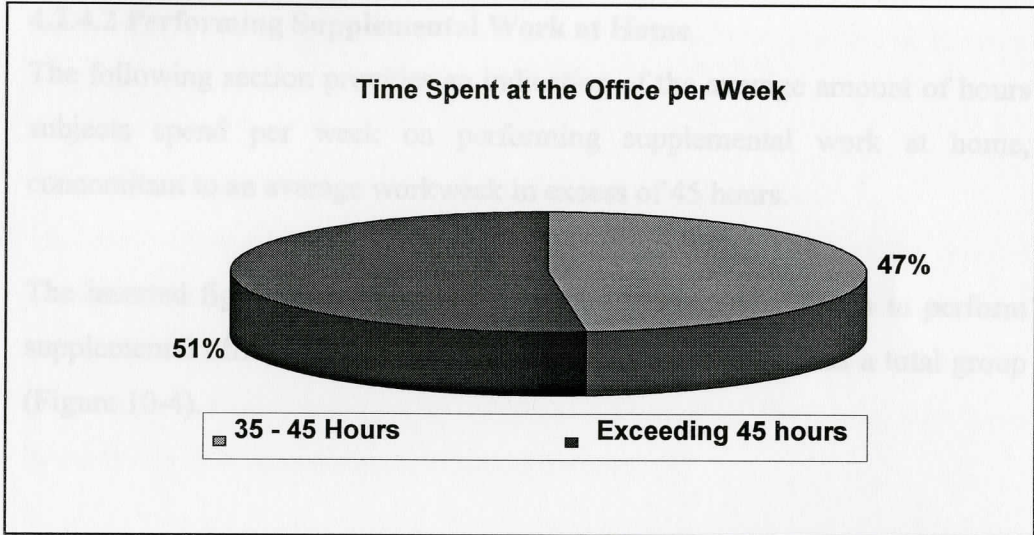
The researcher deemed it necessary to investigate the time patterns of employees as an underlying indicator of the subjects' ability to balance their work-life patterns. Respondents were asked to provide an average indication of:

- The amount of time spent at the office during the week.
- Average hours spent per week on doing supplemental work at home (SWAH).
- Average percentage of how many times they had to cancel family commitments due to work commitments, planned and unplanned.

4.2.4.1 Time Spent at the Office

This measurement is included to indicate the tendency of subjects to work overtime. The insert (Figure 9-4) below reflects a graphic presentation of the results drawn from the total sample population.

Figure 9-4 Time Spent at the Office per Week



The researcher derives that 51% of the organisations' employees need to supplement normal office hours in order to finalise office projects. This means in essence that they work in excess of a 45 hour workweek. The structured interview revealed that this is a normal tendency that has increased over the past ten years. The general belief is that information technology is intended to aid a reduction in working hours. However, the produced results confirm the contrary. A larger section of the employees are subjected to substituting the needed hours from their personal time and thus would have a greater difficulty balancing work and family.

Interviews conducted reflect that 60% of the sample population spend more time than they want to at work, whilst the contrasting situation of 40% of the employees who do not spend as much time as they would like at work due to security restrictions, also exist.

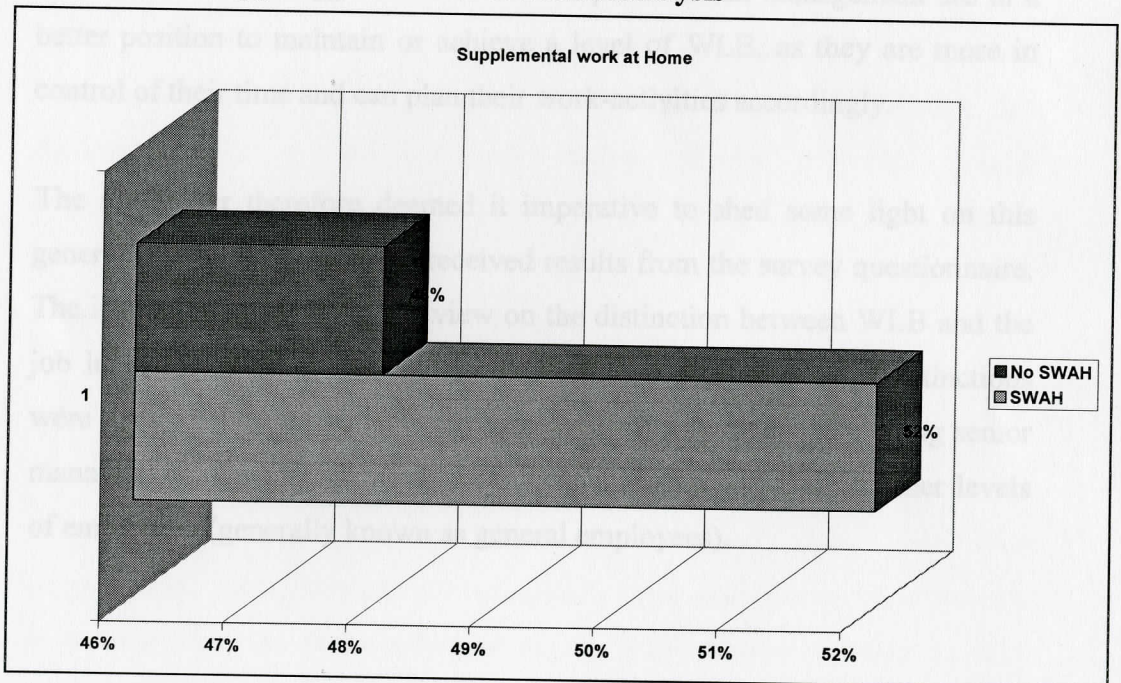
It is imperative for management to understand that both ends of the continuum are equally likely to be unhappy. The one group is disadvantaged and marginalised as they are forced into the situation of underemployment, whilst the other group is subjected to immense levels of pressure through overloaded responsibilities.

4.2.4.2 Performing Supplemental Work at Home

The following section provides an indication of the average amount of hours subjects spend per week on performing supplemental work at home, concomitant to an average workweek in excess of 45 hours.

The inserted figure provides a view on the tendency of subjects to perform supplemental office work at home. The sample was analysed as a total group (Figure 10-4).

Figure 10-4 Supplemental Work at Home Analysis



Results derived from the survey reveal that 52% of the subjects reveal the tendency to perform from 1 to more than 10 hours SWAH on average per week. This trend is contradictory to the principles of WLB and it provides an explanation of the high level of role overload and role conflict.

This data supports the findings relating to WTF interference and supports the notion that work demands have increased with the advent and rise of the new economy principles.

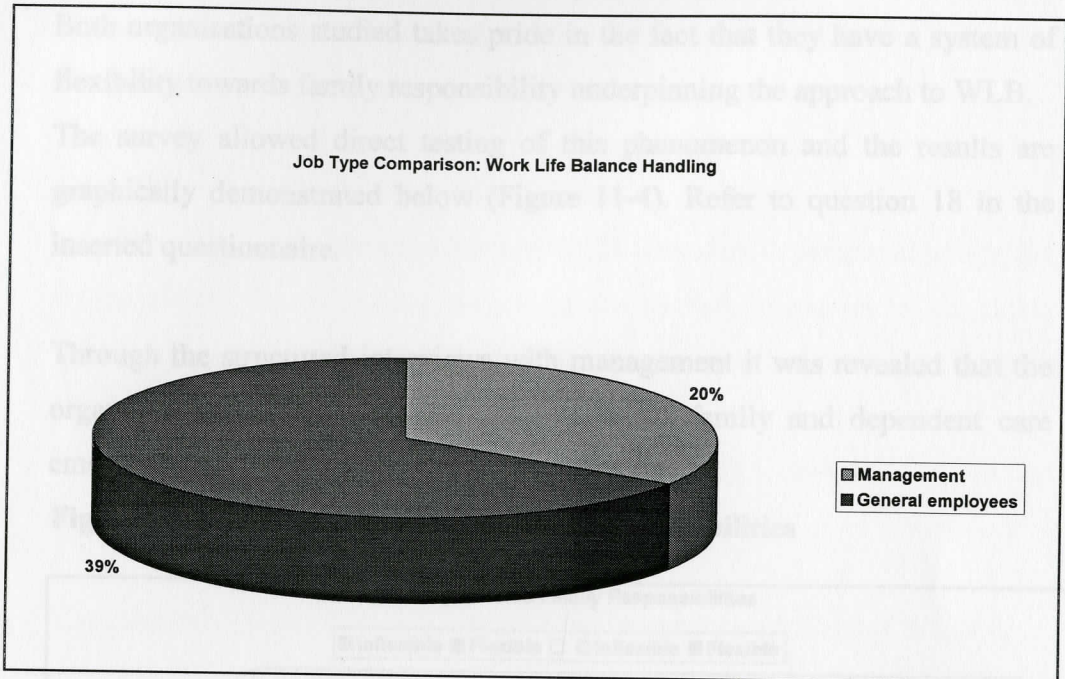
4.2.5 Job Type Differences and the level of WLB conflict

The study determined that the generally accepted belief was that the type of job the individual holds might have a moderating impact on the attitudes and outcomes examined within this analysis. The researcher bases this contention on the information drawn from discussions with general employees who have lower levels of responsibility and accountability.

Discussion results suggest that the notion prevails that management are in a better position to maintain or achieve a level of WLB, as they are more in control of their time and can plan their work-activities accordingly.

The researcher therefore deemed it imperative to shed some light on this generalisation by utilising the received results from the survey questionnaire. The inserted figure provides a view on the distinction between WLB and the job level of the subjects (Figure 11-4). In analysing the data, distinctions were drawn between two levels of employees: Management (including senior management, top management and middle management) and all other levels of employees (generally known as general employees).

Figure 11-4 Work Life Balance Level versus Job Level



Results indicate that only 20% of management indicated the ability to maintain a balance between their work and personal life. In comparison 39% of the general employees stated the ability to balance their work and personal life successfully. Further investigation into the phenomenon yields that management are reported to be more highly educated, to receive greater remuneration, to spend more time on work and energy in the work role, to have greater mobility and to be more highly committed to and involved than their counterparts in non-professional roles.

4.3 Specific Analysis of Work-Life Balance Moderators

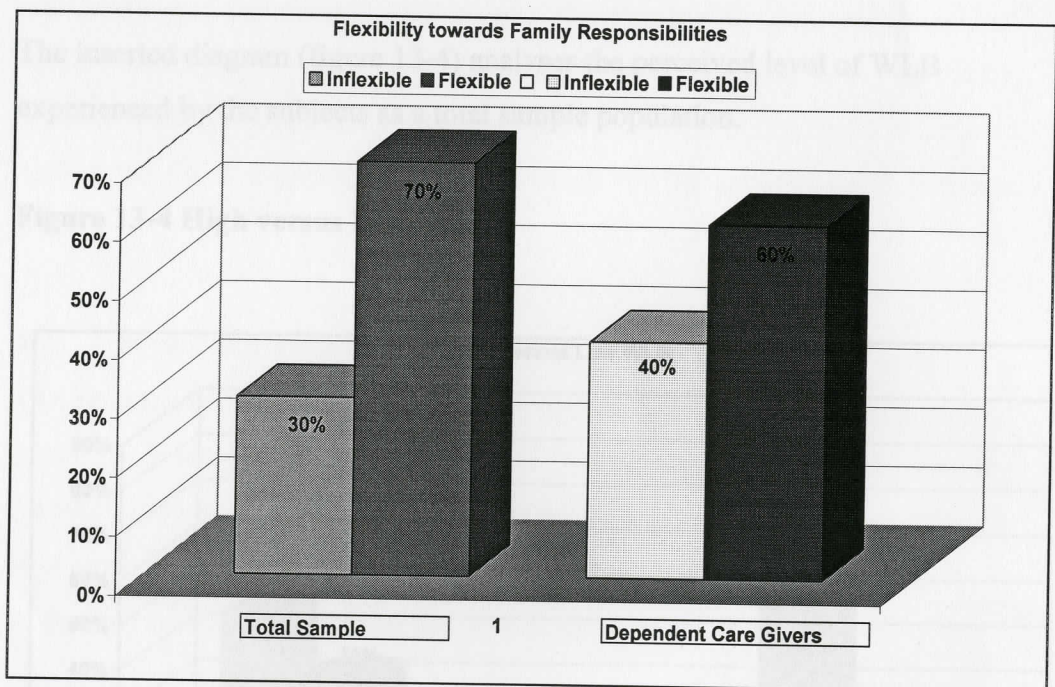
This section provides an analysis of WLB moderators as it applies to the sample population subjected to this study. The results drawn from both organisations were concomitantly analysed as one group in order to provide a general view on the similarities in the WLB systems applied in both organisations.

4.3.1 Flexibility towards Family Responsibilities

Both organisations studied takes pride in the fact that they have a system of flexibility towards family responsibility underpinning the approach to WLB. The survey allowed direct testing of this phenomenon and the results are graphically demonstrated below (Figure 11-4). Refer to question 18 in the inserted questionnaire.

Through the structured interviews with management it was revealed that the organisations follow a flexible policy towards family and dependent care emergencies.

Figure 12-4 Flexibility towards Family Responsibilities



The researcher derives that 30% of the sample population perceived the organisation as inflexible when it comes to family responsibilities and dependent care. In contrast it was identified that 70% viewed management as having a flexible approach.

It was imperative to do a cross-check validation with the responses received from those who have dependent care giving responsibilities.

These subjects' responses could be described as follows: 60% agree that the notion of flexibility is applied and 40% of the target population claims that the organisation is strict and very inflexible.

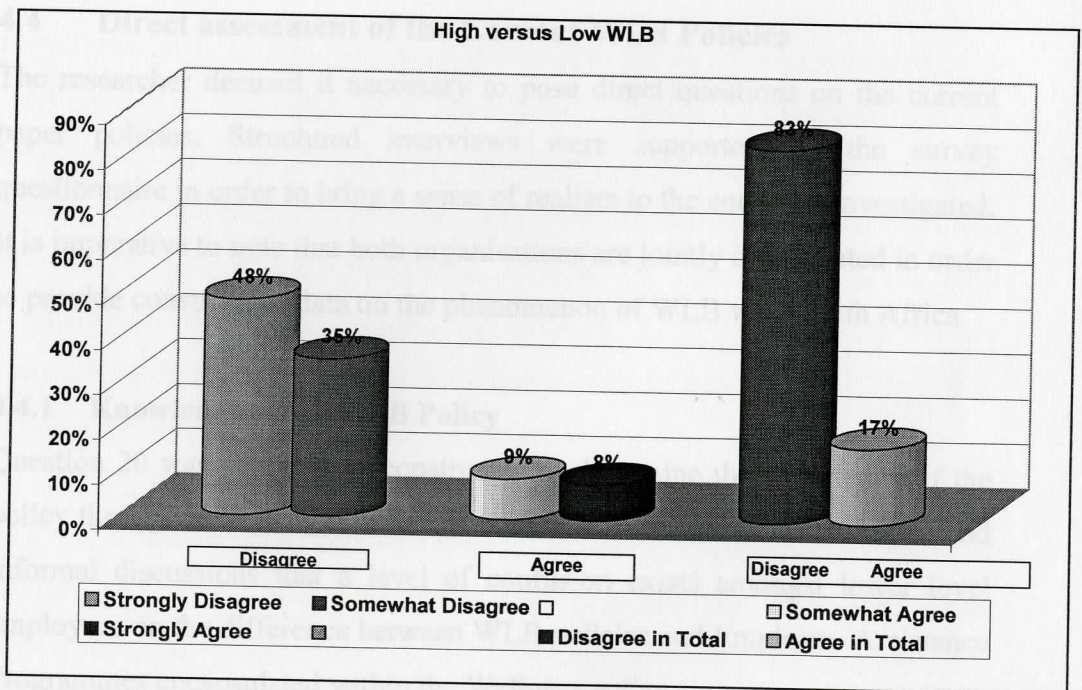
4.3.2 High versus Low Work Life Balance

In order to determine the total level of WLB, currently experienced within the organisations, the researcher calculated the overall responses to the direct question posed regarding the level of WLB experienced by the participants. Refer to question 19 on the inserted questionnaire.

The validity of the findings was tested by drawing a comparison with the indication of experienced role overload.

The inserted diagram (figure 13-4) analyses the perceived level of WLB experienced by the subjects as a total sample population.

Figure 13-4 High versus Low WLB



The researcher deliberates that the above results supports the argument that the companies' WLB policies are not suffice in creating a generally accepted level of balance. A total of 83% of the sample population disagree with their ability in succeeding to enjoy a balanced level of work-life. The remainder of the sample population represents 17% who indicate their ability to successfully balance their work and personal life. These responses are identified as coming predominantly from senior management and the level one employees.

Data suggests that middle management is undergoing an immense struggle to balance their work and personal life. This is brought about by both a vertical and horizontal continuum of pressure experienced by this organisational layer. Horisontally, internal pressures from colleagues and vertically, organisational demands from top management result in tipping the scale in such a way that a negative impact is made on these individuals' personal lives.

4.4 Direct assessment of the Current WLB Policies

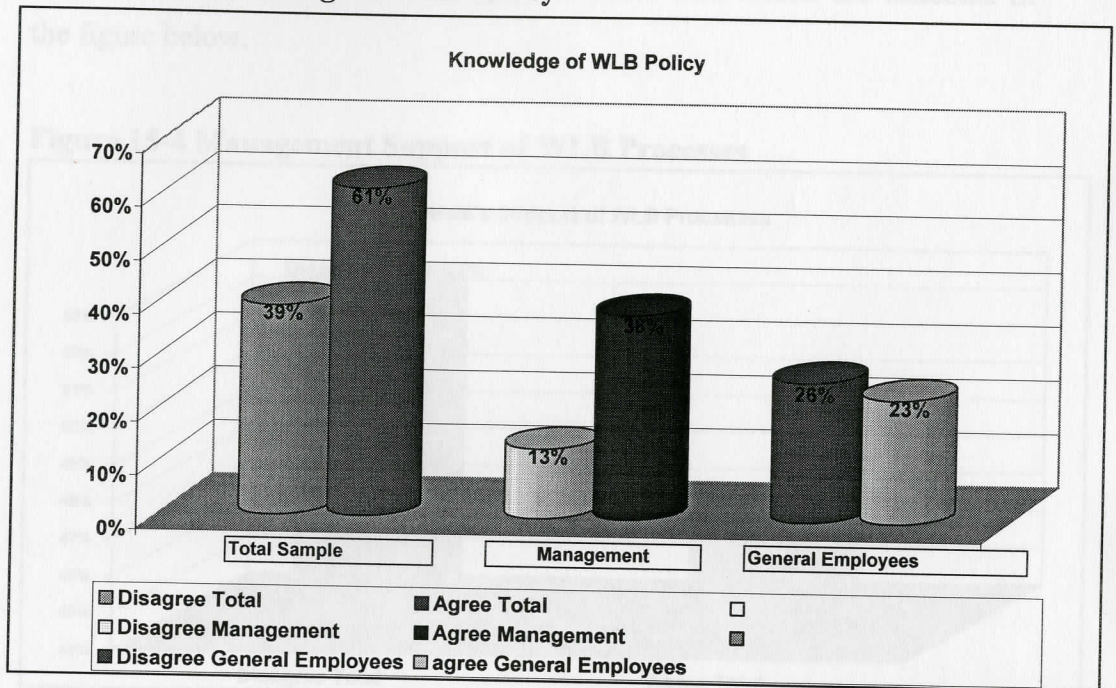
The researcher deemed it necessary to pose direct questions on the current paper policies. Structured interviews were supported by the survey questionnaire in order to bring a sense of realism to the construct investigated. It is imperative to note that both organisations are jointly investigated in order to provide constructive data on the phenomenon of WLB with South Africa.

4.4.1 Knowledge of the WLB Policy

Question 20 was deliberately constructed to determine the knowledge of the policy throughout the organisation. It was detected within the interviews and informal discussions that a level of confusion exists amongst lower level employees on the difference between WLB policies and Employee Assistance Programmes encapsulated within the Wellness policy.

Figure 13-4 provides an indication of the knowledge levels currently in existence around the implemented WLB models and policies.

Figure 14-4 Knowledge of WLB Policy

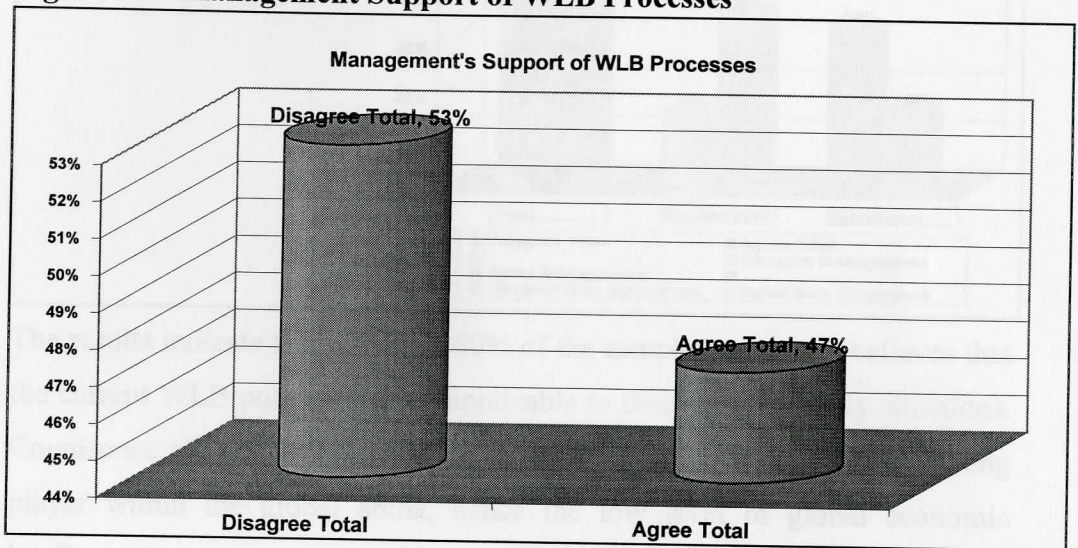


Data from the sample survey suggests that 39% of the organisations' employees are not aware of a WLB policy that is in existence. This is overwhelmed by 61% of the organisations' employees who are aware of the policy. The subsequent interviews conducted indicated that the identified knowledge gap is predominantly around the specific controls and programmes encapsulated within the policies. This data raises a further question as to on which level of work no knowledge was reflected. Therefore it was imperative to analyze the data further.

The results drawn reflected that 13% of management was not even aware of the policy in relation to 26% of the general employees. Even though the knowledge gap is identified at the lower levels of the organisation, the implementation of the WLB strategy which is to be driven by management raises a further question on this level's knowledge gap.

The researcher explored the knowledge gap experienced amongst certain managers and finds it imperative to question management's level of support in applying the processes stipulated by the WLB policy. Question 22 within the survey directly addressed this phenomenon. The results are reflected in the figure below.

Figure 15-4 Management Support of WLB Processes



The results are self-explanatory in the sense that 53% of the target population perceived their managers of not being supportive of the application and gaining access to WLB processes. The structured interviews with managers reflect that the focus on productivity and the eradication of high levels of absenteeism plays a major role in the non – supportive attitude of the ideology of WLB. The aspect of exploitation is a major concern raised and the lack of South African - specific controls warrant middle managers to rather steer away from the policy.

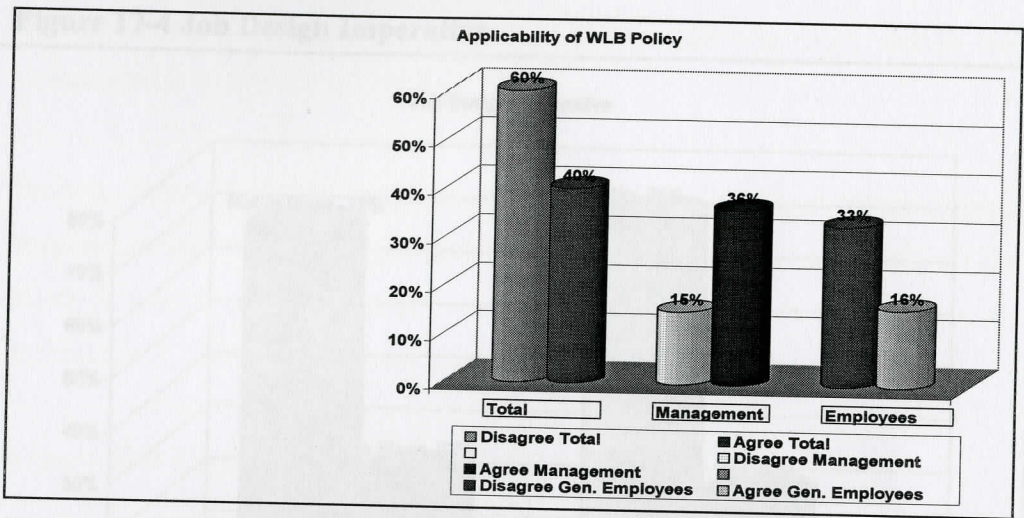
4.4.2 Application of the Policy

The research survey was utilised to determine the applicability of the current existing WLB policies on the unique needs of the organisations' employees.

Both management and general employees were included in question 24.

The following figure provides insight in the data gained on this phenomenon.

Figure 16-4 Applicability of WLB Policy on Employees' Needs



The results indicate that a total of 60% of the sample population believes that the current WLB policies are not applicable to their unique family situations. Cognisance should be taken of the fact that South Africa is still a young player within the global arena, hence the low level of global economic intellectual capability of its employees. A total of 40% of the total population agreed that the policies are applicable to their respective work-life needs. The data further suggests that 36% of management agreed to the applicability of the current WLB policies in relation to 33% of the general employees that disagreed with this deliberation.

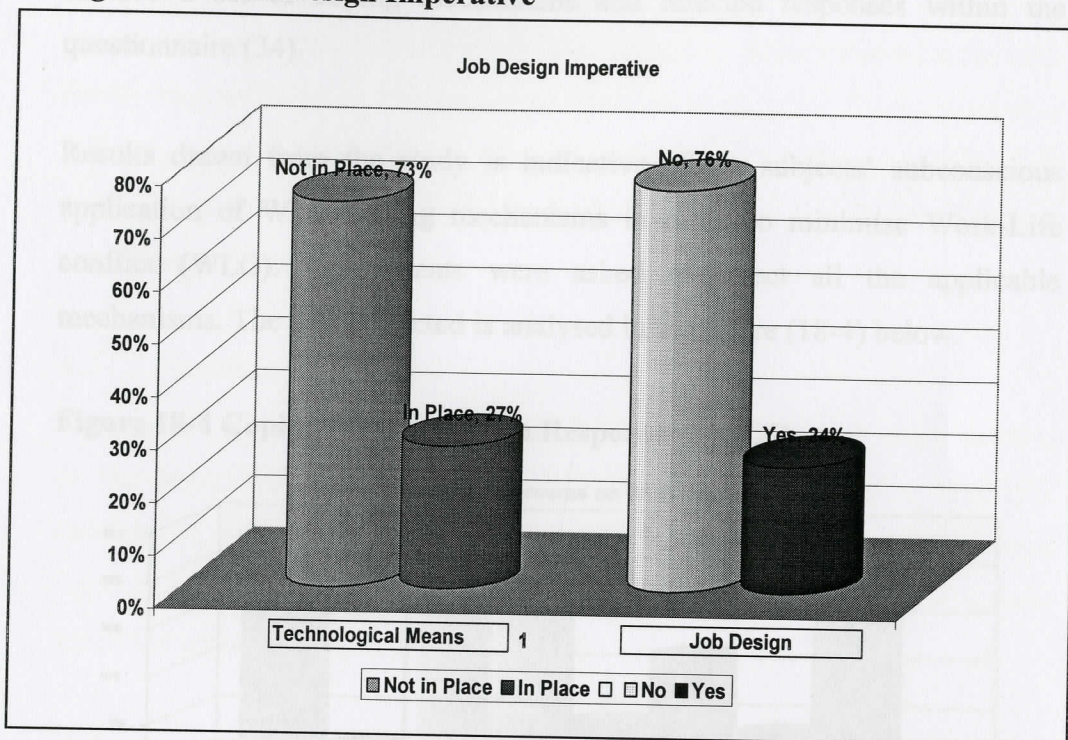
4.5 Job Design Imperative

European cloned WLB policies depend heavily on the concept of virtual job design which requires job content and technological assistance that is of a virtual nature.

The researcher posed question 32 and 33 to determine the existence of these imperatives. Both managers and general employees within the sample population were subjected to this question.

The following inserted figure addresses the issue of job design in relation to technological means to facilitate flexi time programmes.

Figure 17-4 Job Design Imperative



Data through the survey revealed that 73% of the total sample population alluded to the fact that their organisations do not have the technological means to support a European cloned WLB system. The positive confirmation of 27% was mostly by senior management who are in possession of business mobile units. Concomitant to this is the indication that 76% of the sample population believed that their job content and design are heavily based on on-site execution and management. It can be concluded from these statistics that the notion of micro-management is heavily applied within the organisations, studied in this project, in order to enforce a level of visible productivity.

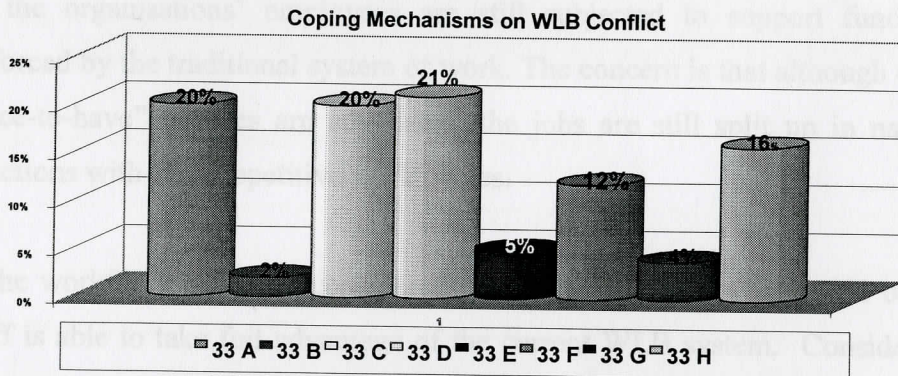
Top management reflected the 24% category that does not have direct reporting on a micro-management level, but manage outputs on a high level of accountability.

4.6 Coping Mechanisms in response to Work-Life Conflict

To underpin the necessity of a South African designed WLB system, as well as the reinforcement of the existence of Work-Life conflict, the researcher devised a set of coping mechanisms and directed responses within the questionnaire (34).

Results drawn from the study is indicative of the subjects' subconscious application of WLB coping mechanisms in order to minimise Work-Life conflict (WLC). Respondents were asked to select all the applicable mechanisms. The data collected is analysed in the figure (18-4) below.

Figure 18-4 Coping Mechanisms in Response to WLC



Data suggests that 20% of the sample population coped with work-life conflict by leaving things undone around the house, thereby cutting down on family responsibilities. The existing wellness support systems within the organisations are utilised by 2% of the respondents, which included medical and psychological programmes. Managers in particular, supported the notion of getting by on less sleep.

This coping mechanism was chosen by 20% of the respondents.

Outside activities involvement, were also limited and 23% of the sample population indicated that they cut down on outside activities to cope with the increasing demands of work.

Only a limited number of participants were in a fortunate position to survive with one income, therefore only 5% identified one partner as being responsible for family responsibilities. In order to create a level of balance 12% were planning family vacations together with their partners. Only 4% of the respondents could limit their job involvement to allow more time for their family responsibilities. The increased level of work is in direct correlation with an increased level of stress. The indicating factor of this research study is that 16% of the targeted sample population transposed their levels of stress onto their partners at home.

4.7 Summary

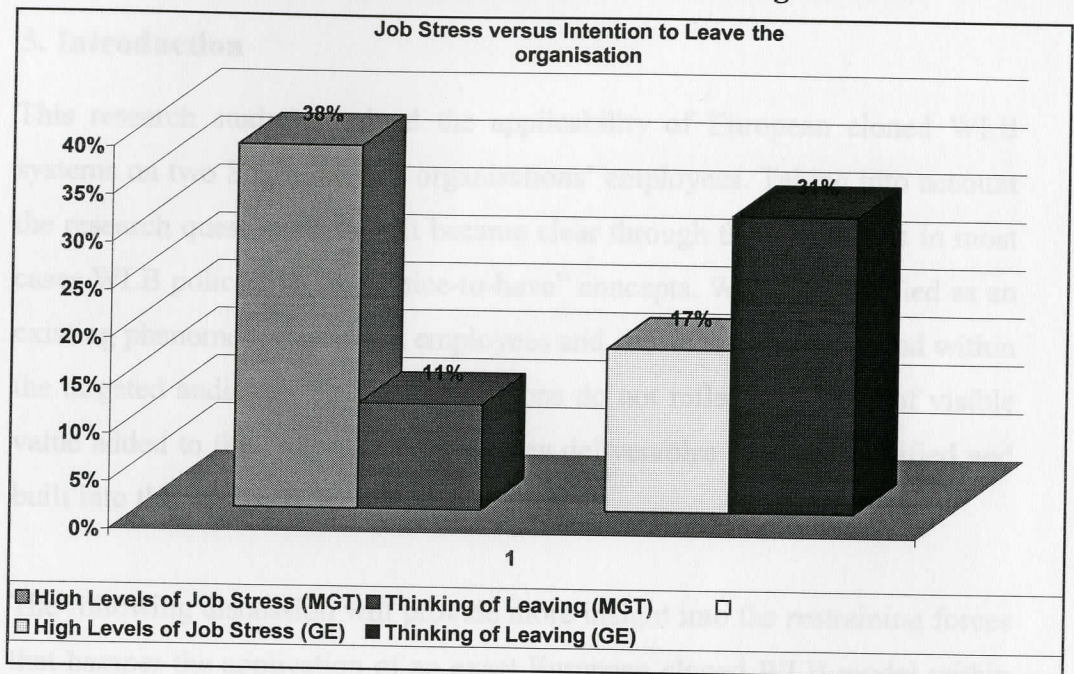
Discussions with management and employees indicate that as much as 60% of the organisations' employees are still subjected to support functions enforced by the traditional system of work. The concern is that although these "nice-to-have" policies are advocated, the jobs are still split up in narrow functions with short repetitive work cycles.

If the workforce profile is considered it becomes clear that only 40% of the staff is able to take full advantage of the current WLB system. Considering infrastructural problems, such as portable business units and positions that are fully "de-jobbed" (working on projects and not a conventional 9 – 5 job), the WLB system in place is restrictive in the sense that a top-down approach is maintained, not assessing the needs of the bulk of the organisations' employees. Involving the staff as the key driver will ultimately ensure the effectiveness and the viability of such a system.

This poses a further challenge to the workforce, because total involvement will require skills pertaining to judgement of what is good for the business and employees simultaneously.

The figure (19-4) indicates the responses gathered on the constructs of job stress and intention to leave.

Figure 19-4 Job Stress versus Intention to Leave the Organisation



In an attempt to gain a better understanding of the organisations' dynamics, the researcher analysed the general trends of job stress in relation to the intention to leave the organisation. It was identified that 38% of the organisations' managers experience extreme levels of job stress, whilst 11% of the managers cite an intention to leave the organisations. In contrast, only 17% of the organisations' general employees are subjected to extreme levels of stress, whilst 38% intend leaving the organisations. The researcher alluded to the fact that the perceived levels of stress experienced are in direct correlation to role overload.

Chapter 5 will cover discussions on the research results, as well as recommendations made by the researcher in dealing with the realities of WLC. A comprehensive analysis of the structural problems, identified as constraints, hindering the successful application of a cloned WLB system on the studied South African organisations. Recommendations in the format of functional necessities are presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Introduction

This research study examined the applicability of European cloned WLB systems on two South African organisations' employees. Taking into account the research questions asked, it became clear through the results that in most cases WLB policies are just “nice-to-have” concepts. WLB is identified as an existing phenomenon amongst employees and shows an upwards trend within the targeted audience. These organisations do not reflect any form of visible value added to the bottom-line as the key deliverables are not quantified and built into the Balanced Scorecard approach.

The following discussion will provide more insight into the restraining forces that hamper the application of an exact European cloned WLB model within South African organisations.

In many ways these findings are not surprising. The popular press and media have been preoccupied over the past several years with things such as “time crunching”, going back to “simpler lifestyles” and “coping with stress”.

Contrary to the belief that South Africa is still a young player within the global economic arena, this study derives that the South African workforce experiences more difficulties balancing its different roles and responsibilities than in previous years. This is supported by the fact that empirically, a large number of South African researchers, in an increasing range of disciplines and publications, are examining the issue of job satisfaction in general.

5.1 Discussion and Recommendations

5.1.1 Restrictions on the Application of a European Modelled WLB System to the South African Workplace

As established, extensive overseas research has been conducted, focusing on the gains of a comprehensive WLB system. However, what is not explored are the implications and the limitations of applying the overseas WLB system in its purest form to the South African workplace.

The researcher established that management sought to introduce a few forms of job flexibility through the WLB model. This indicates a drive towards some harmonising work – and personal life. This specific drive, although a useful form of WLB, has a too strong focus on hours of work with little regard to the actual measuring of outputs achieved.

It need to be clarified that the approach of this study is not against a WLB system as a whole, but on the contrary propagates the implementation of a system that takes into account the structural and social adversities underpinning the South African workplace.

5.1.1.1 Skills Shortage within the South African Labour Market

This section seeks to establish that the critical skills shortage in South Africa's Economically Active Population (EAP) provides an inadequate level of human intellectual development or maturity needed for the full implementation of a comprehensive WLB system (specific reference to the exploitation of "family-friendly" policies).

A study conducted by the Human Science Research Council concludes that South Africa experiences a critical skills shortage across all sectors of the economy, (HSRC 1999:1). It is reflected that the vast majority (70%) of the 273 organisations involved reported that they did not have an adequate skilled human resources complement. Barker (2002:140), supports these findings and state that even though the educational levels of the labour force increased over the last two decades, there is still a large number of illiterate people forming part of the country's economically active population (EAP). Statistics compiled by the Joint Education Trust (1994) revealed that the country had 7.5 million people; aged 15 years and older who were illiterate and "severely under-educated". Nearly 3 million were totally unschooled and another 4.5 million had so little primary education that they were "barely literate". These statistics therefore provide a worrying insight into the maturity levels as required by a WLB system.

It could therefore be concluded that in order for WLB to become a business

Routing the argument back to the organisations studied, it became clear that this national trend is also experienced with these organisations. The recruitment exercise for both organisations becomes tedious and expensive, as certain specialist positions need to be re-advertised up to three times. The general quality of external applicants is poor, taking into account the employment equity targets contracted with government. This further puts a dampener on the successful integration of a European WLB model. This trend is substantiated by the organisations' tendency to bring overseas experts into their South African based companies to facilitate the upskilling and translation of business drivers.

South Africa has the lowest working morale in

the world and it is negatively affected when workers are unclear about what

The introduction of a comprehensive WLB system requires employees to be self-sustainable and to take control of their jobs in the sense that all incentives need to be utilised in a way that ensures the realisation of the organisations' overall business objectives. This in essence means that the workforce should be intellectually business-focused whilst utilising the WLB system.

This in turn will ensure that the system is not abused; rendering the business strategies unachievable.

Further exploration of research reveals that a comprehensive WLB system utilises driving forces provided by the new economy, in which people are required to work with their brains instead of their hands alone. It is therefore imperative for employees to understand that combined with the 24 hour global economy, working time is no longer restricted to office hours. Therefore the organisations require a strong business-focused staff, whilst concomitantly increasing their staff's level of cognitive ability. The reality is that behind the glossy advertisements, showing futuristic electronic equipment within these organisations is the reality of basic routine tasks and less skilled jobs that still need to be performed.

It could therefore be concluded that in order for WLB to become a business imperative the country and in essence these organisations need a more skilled workforce who are more flexible and adaptable, multi-skilled, innovative and creative and matured whilst developing ownership of the business strategy.

5.1.1.2 Work Ethic: Changing the Attitude to Work

South Africa appears to be suffering from an almost universal absence of a proper work ethic. The averaged absenteeism rate of 20% within organisations studied in this project is but one example. Proudfoot Consulting (2003: 10) supports this in a recent survey conducted on South African business. Proudfoot notes that South Africa has the lowest working morale in the world and it is negatively affected when workers are not clear about what is expected of them and why. This increases the likelihood of unnecessary absenteeism, which becomes a real adversary facing the South African workplace.

Linking the phenomenon of work ethic to the underpinning values required by a successful comprehensive WLB system raises serious questions about the readiness of the South African workplace for a cloned WLB system.

However, it is necessary to assess the aspect of work ethic from a holistic perspective; therefore management too should be warranted to take accountability for the low level of work ethic. Johnston and Packer (1987:36) support this statement and reflect that the restricting forces on developing a high morale might be management's lack of general understanding of what it takes to motivate employees to become stakeholders in creating a successful business in the globalised economy. The dominant management strategy employed over the past ten years within the organisations investigated was one of cost cutting and reengineering, rather than a sole focus on people development. This reflects that changes in the economy, coupled by the need to compete globally led many organisations to reduce staff and restructure employment to support cost cutting measures. More recent studies by Lowe and Schellenberg (2001: 23) support this conjecture by linking restructuring and downsizing to decreased trust, commitment and work ethic.

Taking into account all these findings, this study therefore derives that management's position over the past ten years is a contributing factor to low staff morale and ultimately the entrenchment of a low work ethic.

5.1.1.3 Organisational Commitment Lacking?

Linked to the WLB approach, organisational commitment measures the employees' loyalty to the organisation and its success. Various researchers are congruent in the fact that an individual who has a high commitment level exerts extra effort on behalf of the organisation and has a strong desire to remain with the organisation, (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979: 247). The derived hypothesis from various readings led to the belief that the overall commitment level of the South African workforce is questionable.

What makes the South African workforce unique, in this instance is the fact that there is a clearly established polarisation between the highly committed and the low and non-committed (Ebby and Freeman 1999: 463).

Linking the phenomenon to work ethic reflects that various variables, such as job satisfaction and levels of motivation, collectively work together to enhance the commitment levels of employees. Organisational commitment in its total state forms part of the value system needed for the effective implementation of a WLB system that contributes to the success of the business.

The studied organisations, in this research project, both went through a process of uncertainty in the sense that some form of restructuring has taken place. Worrying is the fact that the level of organisational commitment include 12% of employees that think about leaving the organisation on a weekly basis. Therefore it could be derived that a level of unwavering organisational commitment is lacking, questioning the ability to practically implement the propagated WLB system.

5.1.1.4 High Level of Absenteeism as Reflective of Poor Work Ethic

The WLB approach, as connected to the business strategy, requires employees to have a strong focus on value-adding production time. However, the South African labour market has a proven track record of high absenteeism levels, costing the company millions in revenue losses. This is identified within the researched organisations as a major concern. A 20% averaged annual level of absenteeism is experienced, particularly the trend of week end and week start absenteeism.

Martin Westcott, CEO of PE Corporate Services (2003), claims that the strew of public holidays peppering the South African calendar means a less productive workforce and mounting costs to the business.

It is estimated that one public holiday can cost a company with 500 employees up to R1 million a day in turnover. The most severe impact is not the actual public holiday, but the absenteeism before and after, gauging the low level of work ethic.

Assessing the data related to the derived value system required for the success of a comprehensive WLB approach, it could be concluded that what South Africa needs is a workforce that focus on individual quality contribution. This should be driven by people who love what they are doing, whilst enhancing the organisations' success. Only then can the WLB system be safeguarded against employee-centred abuse and minimal contribution towards productivity outputs.

5.1.1.5 Disputant Relationship with Trade Unions

In assessing the components of a comprehensive WLB system, cognisance should be taken that full implementation of these elements border on the altering of the employees' conditions of employment. This poses a unique challenge for the South African workplaces considering the implementation of a cloned WLB system. Barker (2002: 89) suggests that the Trade Union movement is still predominantly bordering on a militant approach towards new economic workplace practices, because of its linkages with job losses. The organisations, studied in this research project, revealed that Trade Unions in essence still do not speak to the economic directives, but tend to steer business cases towards the political arena. Management still experiences militant attitudes from Trade Union officials at a local level. Research by Duxbury & Higgins (2001: 23) indicates that overseas organisations can have a more responsive approach to changes in the new economy. Flexibility is enhanced, because the third force is eliminated or curtailed and direct negotiations with the workforce, focusing on the "bottom-line" can take place. Research by Bendix (2000: 741) supports this trend and authenticates that in the so-called First World countries Trade Unions are losing ground.

This reflects that macho management or at best, sophisticated Human Resources Management is the dominant organisational mode.

Current behaviour, the legacy of distrust and the lacking business competitive focus of Trade Union officials reflect that the intended WLB system might be greeted with antagonism.

5.1.1.6 Strategic Aligned Human Resources Function

A WLB approach does not only require new economy modelled behaviour from management and employees, but more importantly from the Human Resources professionals who need to drive the organisational change process. This requires the strategic alignment of the HR strategy with the overall business strategy, which is facilitated by a pivotal relationship between line management and HR professionals.

5.2 Rigidity in the Labour Legislative Framework

The researcher identified within the studied South African organisations that the HR function is still busy managing nuisance factors such as administration. There is however, a trend to align the HR deliverables with the broader business deliverables identified on a strategic level. Current attitudes towards HR as a function is still that of a non-contributing support unit. Before the success of the existing WLB model could be envisaged these organisations need to embark upon capacity building ventures in order to prepare HR departments for the new trends in a globalised economy. Specific focus should be on developing competencies that will allow these individuals to approach soft-edged issues (propagated by a WLB system) with a business – oriented frame of mind.

Data from current research revealed that even though one of the organisations made WLB a Key Performance Indicator on the HR Balanced Scorecard, no targets were achieved. A statement by Scholtes (1998:122), might explain this failure. Scholtes focused on the importance of HR's ability to develop and sustain support systems for the success of a WLB system.

He rightfully says that:

"An all-empowered, motivated, teamed-up, self-directed, incentivised, accountable, re-engineered and reinvented workforce cannot compensate for a dysfunctional support system."

It could therefore be concluded that the HR architecture needs to be integrative of a strategic approach, in order to facilitate WLB as a strategic business imperative. This argument further raises a major and valid question to the predominantly operationally focused HR functions. WLB evolves around individualising work practices and individual well-being.

How will the HR department aligns itself in order to monitor and manage these aspects when in most of the business units of the organisations a value chain has not even been developed to identify what and how the individual creates and contributes value to the organisation?

5.2 Rigidity in the Labour Legislative Framework

The researcher deemed it necessary to explore a few elements propagated by the organisations' WLB systems and to draw a comparative analysis with the stipulations of South Africa's *Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) (75 of 1997)*.

Analysing the underlying principles and intent of the WLB systems, the researcher concludes that in order for a comprehensive WLB system to be successful it should be supported by a flexible legislative framework. On the contrary, the South African labour legislation is notorious for the rigidities it poses to the realities of the business world. Whilst there appear to be a genuine desire on the part of government to balance the power, most of the changes favour the union and not the business.

As indicated, the WLB approach requires a flexible approach towards work practices, which allows the individual organisations to regulate the system through balancing the employees' needs with those of the business.

It is also established that within the over-regulated labour legislative framework of South Africa, this type of common-good interaction cannot be exploited to its fullest.

5.2.1 WLB: Annualised Hours versus BCEA

Annualised hours is a system whereby employees work a specified number of hours, and a pattern of working, over a 12-month period, as determined by the needs of the business. Employees can roster working times in accordance with the peaks and troughs of the business. The business therefore doesn't have the extra cost of overtime.

This practice is not supported by the BCEA and is in total contravention because of the regulation of working hours. According to *Section 9 of the Act* an employer cannot permit or require an employee to work more than:

- 45 hours per week.
- Nine hours out of every 24 hours for a five-day workweek.
- Eight hours out of every 24 hours for a more than a five-day workweek.

The rigidity is not per se reflected in the stipulations of the Act, but more in the fact that the needs of the organisations, studied in this research project, are directly ignored, especially with the introduction of Sunday hours. This legal stipulation allows for overtime, but at an added cost and reflects the over-concentration on the structure of the job itself and not on the work to be done (de-jobbed theory), as required by the new economy.

5.2.2 WLB: Personal Leave versus BCEA

The implemented WLB system propagates that the employee must be entitled to leave for personal matters, which should be available on short notice without being asked to provide a reason for absence. This is beside the other special leave measures, indicated in the section on "What does WLB Encompass".

It is envisaged that such stipulations would give employees the flexibility to deal with personal/family matters with a large degree of confidentiality.

Section 27 of the BCEA makes provision for seven days per annum special leave. However, employees who work for less than four months and at least four days a week for an employer do not qualify for this leave. More restrictive is the fact that employers are allowed to ask reasonable proof of the event, before remuneration is paid.

The crux of the argument is that if WLB is to be deemed successful within the South African workplace, government should adopt a non-prescriptive approach to legislation drafting. The current labour legislation framework puts too much emphasis on regulating internal agreements of organisations.

Government should provide a legislative framework with sound general principles, which could be adapted to the individual organisations' needs. This however does not imply non-regulation of exploitation and the defamiation of basic human rights.

5.3 Recommendations

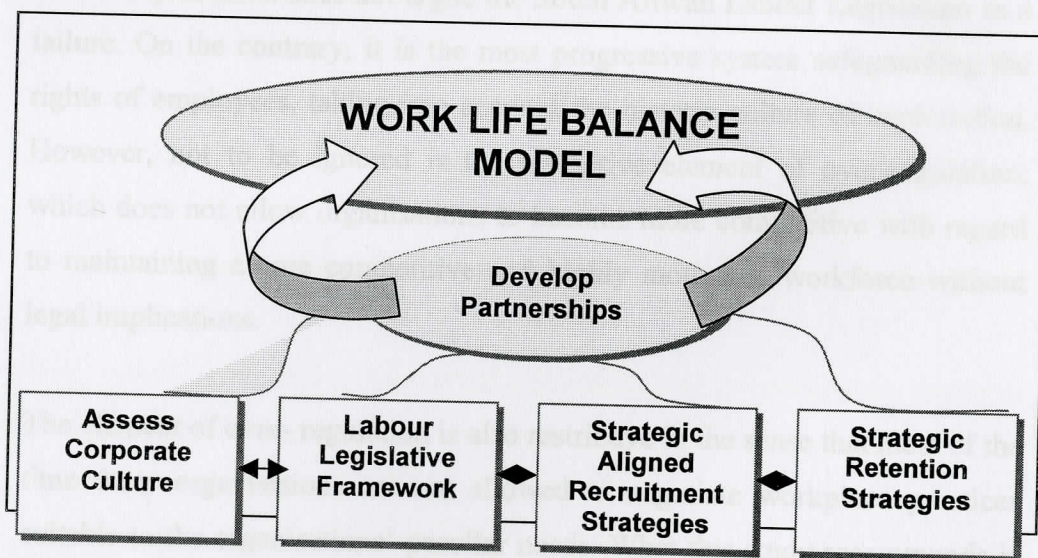
Research portrayed in this study upholds that there's a transformation in the way in which South African families organise their work. This has substantially heightened the need to introduce flexible working options in order to assist employees to cope with balancing these competing facets. The transformation is reflected in the strong trend towards dual earner families, increase in male carers and the sustained growth in lone parent employment.

It is high time that South African business, as a whole, adapts the way in which work is organised. What is visibly prevailing is a work system, which is not aligned with the family system, therefore the high level of role conflict.

In hindsight, the biggest restraining force that discourages a WLB approach is the set of structural problems, of which some has been highlighted as being identified within the organisations, studied in this project. Therefore the recommendations of this study will not focus on a practical model of a WLB system, but more on the working practices that will ultimately provide a solid foundation for the rejuvenation of the current WLB models in order to become country- and organisation specific.

The following diagram will provide a comprehensive view of the recommended principles to be followed before these organisations can consider reaping success from their current WLB models.

Diagram 3-5 Work Life Balance Principles



5.3.1 Assess and Change the Corporate Culture within the Organisations

The values propagated by the WLB systems are dependent on a corporate culture that establishes a climate, which is supportive of “family needs”. It was ascertained from the subjects that if they perceive their organisation as a promoter of balance, they will consciously increase their level of work ethic. Changing the corporate culture therefore facilitates changing the employees’ attitudes towards work.

It is widely believed that corporate culture change is the key towards changing employees' behaviour and socialising their actions towards enacting competencies supportive of the common business cause. The new economy is relentless. It is about changing the norm, changing the values and changing deeply entrenched cultures and perceptions of success. South African organisations should realise that the process of moving beyond policies and programmes towards cultural change takes time, energy and patience, and warrants a collective approach. However, this effort can only be realised to its fullest extent when the maturity- and skills levels of the workforce are developed to match standards of competencies required by the new economy. The current over-dependence of the organisational culture around "face-time" and "hours worked", without measuring outputs is restrictive in itself.

5.3.2 Facilitate a more Flexible Labour Legislative Framework

This study in itself does not argue the South African Labour Legislation as a failure. On the contrary, it is the most progressive system safeguarding the rights of employees, taking into account the historic culture of exploitation. However, not to be ignored is the restrictive element of over-regulation, which does not allow organisations to become more competitive with regard to maintaining a core competitive and highly motivated workforce without legal implications.

The element of over- regulation is also restrictive in the sense that most of the time these organisations are not allowed to negotiate workplace practices suitable to the organisations' peculiar needs. What this study recommends is that government sets the foundation of non-exploiting stipulations, which could be adapted towards unique organisational requirements.

5.3.3 Strategically Aligned Recruitment Strategies

It is profoundly imperative for organisations to balance the right people with the appropriate people that will ultimately ensure organisational success.

The reality is that because of the cumbersome process of recruitment and selection exercises, management still employs non-value-adding people.

This is a luxury no-one can afford within a globalised economy. Of course, in the South African context, which requires companies to align their employee profiles with the demographics of the population, recruitment is a lot more complex. What is therefore required from HR is intensive high level involvement in mentoring programmes in order to ensure that the staff profile fits the competencies required by the overall business objectives.

If a successful WLB system is considered, South African business needs to re-assess the fibre of their respective organisations. Strategic talent acquisition should raise the recruitment bar to compete and appoint only the best from a highly skilled pool. Fortunately, as the search for talented and skilled human capital proves itself to positively influence the firm's bottom-line, more and more organisations have realised the strategic importance of people management and the approach required to attract and retain this valuable asset. Building a highly talented, motivated and properly skilled staff will ensure that the level of business intelligence and maturity, as required by a successful WLB system, is achieved.

5.3.4 Develop Partnerships: Considerations for Employees / Employers / Trade Unions

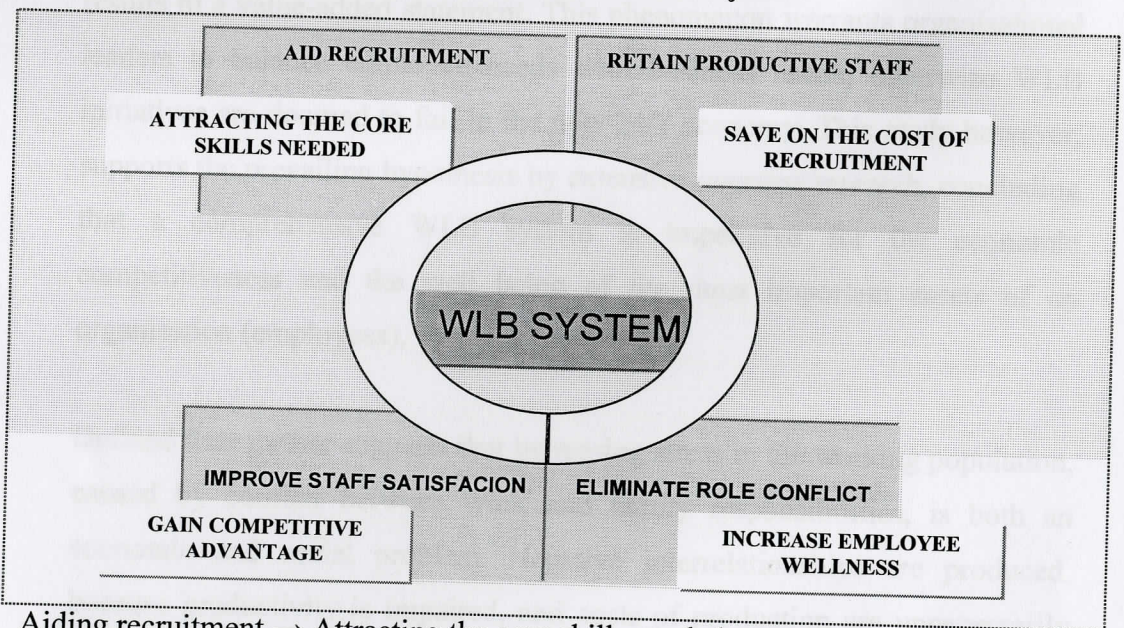
The researcher alluded to the fact that the relationship between the majority of South African organisations and Trade Unions are militant in nature and borders on non-existence. This is brought about by the legacy of apartheid where unions played a militant role in facilitating the process of democratisation. However, if the South African workplace wants to draw benefits from an individualised WLB system these relationships need to be re-visited. Partnerships between employers and Trade Unions can benefit all parties concerned by providing the workforce with a direct voice and an ongoing channel for developing WLB as a business case.

Where a labour- management partnership forms part of a collective bargaining agreement, and a joint committee carries out initiatives, a unionised workplace can be an ideal environment to model genuine employee participation in creating work-family solutions. Such partnerships are not easy to accomplish or sustained. In order for leaders, on both sides, to view WLB as a priority, the partnerships require adequately developed human resources, financial capital, and training in problem-solving and mutual trust. The challenge therefore is to develop skills that will enable parties to move from an adversarial to a collaborative relationship.

5.4 Essential Deliverables of a WLB System

The researcher identified that a comprehensive WLB system can only add value to the business if it reflects the following deliverables:

Diagram 4-5 Essential Deliverables of a WLB System



1. Aiding recruitment → Attracting the core skills needed.
2. Retain highly skilled and productive staff members → Saving on recruitment and training.
3. Improve customer service → Gaining a sustainable competitive advantage.
4. Eliminate role conflict → Increase employee wellness.
5. Improving morale → Increasing productivity.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6. CONCLUSION

The researcher cites it imperative to re-visit the research questions within this section as a guideline to gauge the success rate of this study.

Are the WLB Models applied effective and does it add any significant value to the bottom-line of the researched organisations?

What constraints hamper exact cloning of these policies?

It is concluded that the shortcomings of existing WLB initiatives as applied within local MNCs are reflected in their inability to measure and reflect results in a value-added statement. This phenomenon warrants organisational leaders to balance employee needs with business needs, otherwise WLB initiatives are doomed to fail in the new 24/7 economy. This study however, supports the prevailing hypothesis by extensive overseas research, concluding that a comprehensive WLB system is imperative for the economic competitiveness and the well being of the most important assets of an organisation (employees).

Defined data further suggests that increasing stress in the working population, caused by conflict between work and family responsibilities, is both an economic and social problem. Negative interrelationships are produced, because productivity is impaired, and costs of production are unnecessarily high. It is undeniably established that the dimensions of the problem have also increased in South Africa over the past decade and warrant urgent attention.

However, there has been a suggestive move towards implementing flexible workplace practices within South African companies like the current. The major shortcoming identified is the lack of strategic intervention within the policy formulations as well as the inability to inculcate the WLB policies into these organisations' culture.

The internal and external forces steering overseas organisations towards adopting a more practical approach towards WLB are also experienced within South African workplaces. However, unique constraints within the South African labour market are identified to be major constraints affecting the success of a comprehensive WLB approach. It is imperative that these organisations that currently have WLB policy formulations in place should change the approach from a sole employee-centred focus towards developing a comprehensive business case for the system, rather than accepting a European business case.

Extensive overseas research cites a whole spectrum of benefits or value-adding practices that can be drawn and measured from a WLB system. However, this is an area that the South African counterparts still need to be exposed to. The major challenge to South African management will be significant, as they should learn to manage worker outputs, rather than the workers, as it has been determined within this study.

In assessing the workforce profile of the South African labour market, government stands out as the largest employer. Therefore government should gear towards becoming a "Best – Practice / Model" employer leading the way in the implementation of a purely South African WLB system. In other words, the focus should be on introducing appropriate policies that facilitate easier movement in a globalised economy, enact pro-active legislation, and change the accountability framework towards the employee rather than the employer.

This study upholds the notion that a WLB system in its purest form cannot be applied to the South African workplace as a result of a lack of 21st Century business competencies. The conventional notion of an employment contract is challenged by the WLB system. Therefore the South African workforce is in critical need of a new competency profile. Competencies underlined by the WLB approach and therefore required by employees include the:

- Ability to self-manage output requirements.
- Ability to drive self-learning and ownership.
- Ability to self-drive measurable results.

Management also have a responsibility towards this process and should mirror competencies enabling them to:

- Manage output, more than people.
- Identify value-adding practices and to provide performance enablers.
- Transcend the characteristics of integrity and trust as the basis of partnerships between the employer and employee.

6.1 Recommendation for Further Studies

This study provides the groundwork for extensive research into the phenomenon of WLB within South African organisations. The first challenge is to conduct organisational-specific research on the constructs needed as the key drivers for an organisation-specific WLB system. Data suggests that in excess of 60% of employees find it difficult to create a balance between their work-and life responsibilities. A further avenue of research to explore is therefore to provide insight to management on how WLB practices could be developed in definite measurable key performance indicators. The ultimate challenge for South Africa is making WLB a functional part of the Balanced Scorecard.

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