

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE WITHIN A MAJOR
RETAIL COMPANY IN DURBAN**

Robyn-Lee Wagner

202522029

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Business Administration**

Graduate School of Business & Leadership

College of Law and Management Studies

Main Supervisor: Dr. Emmanuel Mutambara

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Cecile Proches

2019

DECLARATION

I Robyn-Lee Wagner declare that:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the following individuals, without whose assistance, this study would not have been possible:

- ‡ I thank my God and saviour for his grace and mercy upon my life, for giving me the strength and guidance to push through, especially at times when I felt lost and defeated.
- ‡ To my friend Lesal, thank you for your precious time and for trusting in me with this research project.
- ‡ To all the participants who so generously gave up their time for the study, thank you for giving life to my research and for sharing and trusting me with your valuable information.
- ‡ To my supervisor for all his advice, time and support.
- ‡ To my wonderful parents, words cannot express the love and gratitude I have for your presence in my life, for believing in me and supporting me through all of it. To my dad for his words of encouragement and pep talks, and my mom for her prayers and listening ear.
- ‡ To my son Zachary, for managing his school work, for his understanding and always trying to cheer me up with music and dancing.
- ‡ To my dearest friend Lameez, thank you for all the printing, for checking up on my progress, for the laughs and more importantly for our friendship which brings so much joy.
- ‡ To my aunty Caroline, for your words of encouragement and always checking up on me.
- ‡ To my group (The Legends), Nigel, Nikita and Kerry-Lyn, from meeting as strangers at the entrance exam to becoming a group that is more like family. Without your support I would have never made it this far. Thank you for your friendship, for your guidance and help, for all the laughs and for the snacks at lectures.
- ‡ To my friends, thank you for being my cheerleaders, especially Nadia and Melissa for always making me feel special.
- ‡ To my work colleagues for their support and encouragement, especially Emma.

┘ And lastly, to my husband Gerard, for his patience and support through all of it, for his academic guidance, kindness and consideration and for believing in my capabilities always.

ABSTRACT

The retail industry is the fourth largest contributor to South Africa's Gross Domestic Product, therefore, industry competition, economic, and political changes all carry a significant impact on business operations. Good service delivery and customer retention are imperative to business sustainability, and employees need to provide high levels of performance and meet challenges facing the industry. As employment fluctuates and changes in operations adapt to the environment, employees face various challenges that impact their personal lives. Work-related illness, mental health, and bias practices are experiences that most employees face at some point in their careers or working lives. Separating the experience between work and home is not always easy. Work-life balance (WLB) is a phenomenon that seeks to define a state of equilibrium in which both personal and workspaces are equal. Juggling life's competing demands can be tiring and stressful and is known to negatively impact productivity, health and commitment. A lack of WLB should, therefore, be regarded as a critical business risk, after all, what is a business if not for the productivity of its employees. This study explores the perception of the work-life balance WLB of employees in the retail industry. The key assumption of this study is that WLB of employees is a vital factor for successful business performance and productivity. The study aimed to explore employees' perceptions of WLB in a major retail supermarket in South Africa; and determine the level of support provided by the company to achieve WLB. Pertinent work-life balance research studies and academic literature shaped the theoretical framework underpinning the subject. A qualitative research method was selected, which supported an interpretive approach to the study. Data was collected through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with ten long-serving, store employees (including managers) from a leading, national, retail supermarket in Durban. Interviews were transcribed, and data analysed through the thematic analysis method. Research findings indicated that managers experienced poor working conditions, which significantly impacted their personal lives. Common themes emerging from the data included the impact of organisational culture on WLB, gender bias practices, and its impact on female leaders' career developments. The study confirms the impact of poor WLB on both employees and the business. A key recommendation emerging from the study is for the company to conduct an organisational cultural audit as key concerns such as poor working conditions and gender bias practices relate to the company's culture in some way, shape or form.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|------|---|
| SOP | Standard operating procedure/s |
| RMDP | Retail management development programme |
| VTE | Variable time employees |
| WLB | Work life balance |
| WLOC | Work locus of control |

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The South African trade industry consists of five divisions: food and beverages, wholesale, motor, accommodation, and retail. The South African retail industry is the country's fourth-largest Gross Domestic Product contributor (Stats SA, 2017). In 2017 all major supermarkets led industry growth, South African consumers spent R31 900 per second in retail stores, which generated R1 trillion worth of sales for the industry (Stats SA, 2017). For every R100 spent by consumers in the market, R44 was spent on general dealers. 2014/2015 retail industry data confirmed a total of 812 000 people employed in the South African retail industry.

Due to the country's slow economic growth, consumers are forced to re-evaluate spend, and consequently, industry competition increases in order to retain and attract customers. To meet customer's needs and gain competitive advantage, extended shopping hours have now normalised to regular shopping hours within the industry. Over the years a trend emerged which introduced longer shopping hours, moving away from the traditional 8am to 5pm operating hours. Supermarkets within shopping malls now operate 7 days a week with weekend shopping hours extended as far as 8pm. Although longer shopping hours have been the norm at most convenience stores, larger shopping malls have adopted a similar concept.

Shopping malls are looking to address the needs of the market, and extended shopping hours are the new trend shaping the retail industry. Because the major supermarket retailer, hereinafter referred to as *Company X*, is situated in a high growth, affluent suburb, competition is fierce, and therefore adopting the trend of extended shopping hours is vital to remain competitive. Longer hour's means that Company X employees now need to spend more time at work thereby shortening their private time. Extended shopping hours also means employees need to perform their duties for longer periods. Repetitive movements, inadequate task variety, or breaks, working under time pressure, are known to pose risks to employees' health (Nesher and Sonnentag, 2019). Occupational-related illness and injuries cause significant loss to the employer in the form of lost productivity and the worker and their family in the form of stress, worry, insecurity, and uncertainty (Bhattacharya, Schulte and Anderson, 2013).

Companies demand loyalty from workers accompanied by high levels of productivity, engagement and motivation to meet business objectives. However, employees need to create boundaries between work and their personal lives to retain balance. This is not always possible as workplace stresses, fatigue, exhaustion etc. make it especially difficult for employees to separate emotions and experiences attached to work. At times these work-related experiences and emotions spill over into our personal lives and impact the way we behave and manage our personal relationships and responsibilities. Previous research and academic literature on WLB suggest that workplace initiatives enable employees to manage their work lives and personal lives simultaneously, buffers against risks such as burnout and absenteeism.

Looking at one specific store of a major South African supermarket retailer, this study explores the perception of the work-life balance (WLB) of employees in the retail industry. The research aims to show the impact of WLB on business performance and employee well-being and to provide useful strategies that can help the company enable WLB for its employees. This first chapter introduces the concept of WLB through the background of the study, and outlines the aims, problem statement, and objectives of the study. Research sub-questions are identified, and the methodology is summarised. The chapter further highlights the contributions of the study and provides an outline of the chapters to follow.

1.2 The Background of the Study

Work-life balance is not a new concept to the 21st century, it dates back as far as the 18th century when manufacturing laws restricted the working hours of women and children, the former because of their roles as caregivers in households. The term was used sporadically over the years, but, during the 1980s Women's Liberation Movement, it was brought to the fore to accommodate working women through flexible work schedules and maternity leave (Raja and Stein, 2014). Although the concept was developed with the primary focus on women with children, today WLB advocates are less gender-specific; they recognise all employees and take into consideration other commitments as well as those of the entire family (Lockwood, 2003).

Juggling life's competing demands can be both tiring and stressful and result in lower productivity, sickness, and absenteeism; WLB should therefore be a conscious consideration for all employees in all organisations (Lockwood, 2003). Diverse family structures in today's

workplace call for organisations to gain knowledge about the interface between work and family relationships and how this impacts the workplace. The focus of WLB can no longer simply be the typical nuclear family without consideration for single earning mothers, single and childless employees with elderly care responsibilities, families with shared custody, grandparents as caregivers, and blended families (Lockwood, 2003).

The South African community has also experienced changes in traditional family roles resulting in many more women working and shaping and changing workforce demographics. Social transformations have brought about dual career couples, and the breakdown of the nuclear family has resulted in single-parent homes (Aarde and Mostert, 2010). While there is no single universal definition for WLB, the concept has been used to mean different things to different individuals or groups. For some, it could mean giving more time to their work, and for others it could mean setting boundaries to ensure that their work does not encroach on their responsibilities outside the workplace.

Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) defined work-family balance as the achievement of role-related expectations that are shared by individuals, their role-related partners, in both the work and family domains (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007). Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) carried out a ground breaking study of more than 800 businesses in the US. They found that combinations of work and family are dominant roles for both male and female employees in modern society (Morrow, 2001). Similarly, the study showed that partner support had greater influence, when employees felt their employers/organisations were unsupportive of their responsibilities outside the workplace. This means that one domain of support will compensate for the lack experienced in the other (Morrow, 2001). The fundamental assumption drawn from these definitions is that work and life are two separate domains.

A European study carried out by Dragano, Lunau, Bambra, Eikemo and Van der Wyl (2014) emphasised the role of the workplace as a determinate variable of health and well-being of employees. They found that job strain, effort-reward balance, and job insecurity make up the key risk factors for poor health (Dragano, Lunau, Bambra, Eikemo and Van der, 2014). In a similar study, carried out in four Nordic countries, Antai, Oke, Braithwaite and Anthony (2015), found that lack of control over work schedule and job insecurity was related to increased absenteeism and low productivity (Antai, Oke, Braithwaite and Anthony, 2015).

Abe and Fields, (2016) study conducted in South Africa found that wellness programmes were geared to addressing issues of family stress and did not address work-related stressors (Abe

and Fields, 2016). Karkoulian, Srour and Sinan (2016) looked at WLB in relation to work locus of control (WLOC), and perceived stress. WLOC interrogates the extent to which people believe that they have control in their work settings. Perceived stress refers to the degree of stress experienced by an individual in an incident, the influences of their environment, and the person's ability to cope with stress (Karkoulian, Srour and Sinan, 2016).

Results show that perceived stress had a direct relationship with WLB, and possible stress reduction strategies that are specifically tailored to WLOC could be beneficial to employees and organisations. The study further found that levels of perceived stress at work among male participants showed a high level of personal life interference compared to female participants (Karkoulian et al., 2016). The retail industry is vigorous, fast-paced, and extremely competitive. In South Africa, both retailers and suppliers face challenges relating to the country's political environment, economic changes, and social issues, technological, legal and environmental conditions. Companies need to remain agile to compete, and these pressures are trickled down to all employees. Working conditions are characterised by shift work, long hours, early mornings with a clear focus on productivity and service delivery.

The well-being of employees is therefore essential to the business's success because they are responsible for generating revenue. "Organizations focus upon increased revenue generated by its employees, competitive workforce and employee dedication for achieving its strategic goals in order to meet the challenges of 21st century" (Tariq, Aslam, Siddique and Tanveer, 2012, p. 577). One of the biggest challenges facing business operations today is managing the talent pipeline through cost-effective recruitment, training and retention, and productivity through optimal performance and enhanced profitability. WLB impacts growth and profits since work-life programmes are known to enhance productivity and increase returns on investment.

Labour costs and particularly health care costs incurred by organisation can be considerable, and companies have become wary, therefore, it makes business sense to understand the impact of WLB. A gap is presented insofar as WLB studies usually focus on professionals with high work demand levels and high pay levels, and may not necessarily consider lower level employees which require little or no investment and may be easily replaceable. This exploratory study subsequently looked at store level employees in just one store within a major South African supermarket retailer.

1.3 Motivation for the Study

The retail industry employs a significant amount of the South African population and is characterised by high levels of pressure in the face of economic fluctuations. These pressures filter from the executive level to store level, impacting employees in various ways. The environment in which one works and spends most of their adult lives plays a significant role in the general wellbeing of employees. The study of WLB has become popular in organisational research because it provides several avenues to understanding the impact of the work environment on both the personal and professional lives of employees.

1.4 Focus of the Study

The study focused on employees of one supermarket store within a national chain of a major South African supermarket retailer.

1.5 Research problem

The world we live in is evolving at high speeds which calls for businesses to respond faster, intellectually, and professionally. The retail industry faces challenges imposed by the ease of online shopping, which has expanded customers' expectations for refined service delivery. At the store level, expectations of the workforce are increasing, demanding high levels of dedication and performance. Employees are required to be resourceful, display individualism and autonomy, and have the capacity to multitask. They are also expected to maintain high productivity levels without making unreasonable demands on their employers and organisations (Hari, 2017). It is, therefore, imperative for HR practitioners, managers and employers to understand the impact of WLB on company productivity.

Over the years a trend emerged that introduced longer shopping hours, moving away from the traditional 8am to 5pm operating hours. Supermarkets within shopping malls now operate seven days a week with weekend shopping hours extended as far as 8pm. Although longer shopping hours has been the norm at most convenience stores, larger shopping malls have adopted a similar concept. Shopping malls are looking to address the needs of the market and extended shopping hours is the new trend shaping the retail industry. Because the Company X is situated in a high growth, affluent suburb, competition is fierce and therefore adopting the trend of extended shopping hours is vital to remain competitive.

Longer hours means Company X employees now need to spend more time at work thereby shortening their private time. Female employees in particular, find it difficult to manage their personal and family responsibility because most of their time is spent at work. Extended shopping hours also means employees need to perform their duties for longer periods. Some manual tasks carried out by supermarket workers are known to pose risks to employee's health such as repetitive movements, standing and walking for long hours, strenuous movements, as well as working under time pressure, inadequate task variety or breaks (Nesher and Sonnentag, 2019). Work activities and physical hazards are known to cause considerable risk in the form of fatal and nonfatal injuries.

Injuries cause significant loss to the employer and worker as well as the economy. Although such injuries are covered under workman's compensation, a significant loss is still experienced by the employer in the form of lost productivity, to the worker and their family in the form of stress, worry, insecurity and uncertainty (Bhattacharya, Schulte and Anderson, 2013). Previous research and academic literature on WLB suggest that workplace initiatives that enable employees to manage their work lives and personal lives simultaneously, buffers against risks such as burn out and absenteeism. Previous research and academic literature on WLB suggests that workplace initiatives enable employees to manage their work lives and personal lives simultaneously and buffers against risks such as burn out, absenteeism, low productivity and high level of staff turnover.

1.6 The Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore employees' perceptions of WLB in a major retail supermarket in South Africa, and to determine the level of support provided by the company to achieve WLB.

1.7 The Objectives of the Study

- to explore the impact of working conditions on WLB in a major retail company,
- to determine employees' understanding of the concept WLB in a major retail company,
- to establish the factors which affect employee work-life balance in a major retail company in Durban,
- to investigate WLB practices in a major retail company, and

- to recommend strategies to support WLB with in a major retail company.

1.8 Research Questions

- What is the impact of working conditions on WLB in the retail industry?
- Do employees have an understanding of the concept WLB, and what impacts this balance?
- What are the factors which affect employees' work-life balance in a major retail company in Durban?
- Are the employees aware of any WLB practices being carried out in the company, either formal or informal?
- Do the employees perceive their managers and organisation to be supportive in managing the balance between work life and personal life?
- What strategies can be recommended to enable WLB in the company?

1.9 Significance of the Study

WLB is a vital element to obtaining a healthy working environment. Having WLB is known to help employees reduce stress and prevent health problems as a result of job burnout. Therefore, extended retail hours does not necessarily contribute to profit and productivity if employees are not performing their duties optimally. Companies want hard working, loyal, productive employees and as such need to create an environment to enable this desired behaviour. Prioritizing WLB saves the employer money through reduced absenteeism due to illness or work avoidance, reduced injuries on duty caused by fatigue, and increases productivity through healthier and happier employees. Companies attract investors by providing a competitive advantage, of which a company's human capital is a vital element. High levels of staff turnover can pose a risk to investors as it can indicate dissatisfaction within the organisation as well as a loss of skills and knowledge (Hitka, Kucharčíková, Štarchoň, Balážová, Lukáč and Stacho, 2019). The wellbeing of employees also has a direct effect on the government in that productivity affects revenue and hence taxation, i.e., government income. Out of every 100 South Africans, 82 are dependent on the public health care system (Stats SA, 2017). Therefore, workplaces that promote the wellbeing of their employee's physical and mental health actually

Indirectly reduces the burden on public health care facilities.

1.10 Brief research design and methodology

A qualitative research design best supports an interpretive philosophy to research. The nature of this philosophy is such that it needs the researcher to make sense of the subject and build the theory associated with the study. In this case the concept of WLB and the associated social constructed meanings attached to this phenomenon are explored or investigated. The study employs a qualitative research design where ten participants were interviewed. Interviews took place at the company premises in central Durban, South Africa. All questionnaires were analysed using qualitative data analysis computer software package, NVIVO.

1.11 Outline of the dissertation

Chapter 2 discusses the literature review, and chapter 3 explains the research methodology. Chapter 4 presents data collection results, which are discussed in Chapter 5 in comparison to relevant academic literature. Chapter 6 concludes the study and provides recommendations for consideration and future research on WLB.

1.12 Summary

In this chapter, the reader was introduced to the concept of WLB. This chapter further outlined the aims, problem statement and objectives of the study. Research sub-questions were identified and methodology summarised. The chapter further highlighted the contributions of the study, provided an outline of the chapters to follow and finally provided a summary. The next chapter presents a literature review drawn from popular academic research on WLB.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this chapter is to provide a platform for understanding how the study is theorised and developed within the context of work-life balance and the retail industry. This chapter looks at current literature and theoretical framework that addresses the issues of work-life balance concerning work-family conflict, working conditions, organisational culture, policies, and practices. This section aims to analyse several research studies that were previously conducted and how the issues around work-life balance have developed.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Historically, work-family research had focussed on the conflict that existed between performing different roles in society and, more specifically, the roles that an individual performs at work and home. Several theories have been proposed by researchers to understand and explain the factors influencing work and personal life. A useful framework for exploring different context that impact work-life balance initiatives in the workplace is *institutional theory*, which examines organisations rooted in institutional environments that have significant influence on the policies and practices adopted and implemented by those institutions. According to this theory cultural expectations can create institutional pressures towards the adoption of specific policies (Ollier-Malaterre, Sarkisian, Stawiski and Hannum, 2013; Pasamar and Valle, 2015).

This theory is relevant to the objectives of this study. It provides a deeper understanding of the circumstances under which work-life balance policies and practices are considered by organisations. **Border Theory** and **Boundary Theory** are two fundamental theories that study role conflict and its influence on work-life balance. These theories explain that an individual has agency to develop various boundary management strategies within the segmentation-integration continuum. This means that an individual can construct, maintain and negotiate to create a division between their work and family life roles, or choose a strategy that integrates both work and family roles to create a balance. Boundary theory is a cognitive theory of social classification that looks at the meanings individuals attach to home and work, and how they transition between these two domains as a continuum ranging from segmentation to

integration (Baltes, Clark and Chakrabarti, 2010). However, seldom do employees experience complete segmentation or integration. In exceptional circumstances, for example, an assassin who may conceal their occupation from family can achieve complete segmentation; on the other hand, a monk who lives and works in the same environment can achieve full integration.

Clark (2000) introduced a new dimensional, border theory, in contrast to the boundary theory, this theory concentrates only on work and family domains. He argues that an individual role functions within a specific domain of an individual's life, divided by different borders; emotional, bodily, or temporal (Clark, 2000). The focal point of this theory is the relationship between work and family borders. Individuals should manage the relationship according to their circumstances, levels of flexibility, and the limitations of an individual to cross over boundaries between work and personal life (Vodanovich, 2006).

The ease of transition and integration will determine the level of conflict experienced by the individual. It is on the foundation of these two spectrums that various other theories have developed. In the following sections, we discuss four major work-life balance theories that are applicable to the objectives of this study, which are: *Structural Functionalism, Segmentation, Compensation, Supplemental and Reactive Compensation, Spill-Over, Role Enhancement, and Work Enrichment*.

2.2.1 The Structural Functionalism Theory

This theory emerged after World War II and was influenced by the industrial revolution, which brought about significant advancements in machinery, manufacturing, mass production, and more importantly, labour organisation. This era, challenged the traditional roles of both men and women as both entered the workforce, which contributed to the distinct separation of work life and family life. The theory suggests that an employee's life can be separated into two separate spheres, productive, and emotional. Productive life involved the area of work in which one produced a product or service, and emotional life encompassed all aspects of home life which included time spent with children, family, spouse, and oneself (Kumar and Janakiram, 2017). This theory is vital within the work-life balance framework. It is the first account in which roles and responsibilities of work and life were separated into two different domains.

2.2.2 Segmentation Theory

This theory suggests that work and life was viewed as two different segments, which did not affect each other. Segmentation is said to occur naturally when an individual actively suppresses thoughts, behaviours and feelings in one domain which leads to some level of disconnection which is supposed to bring some level of balance between work and life (Murthy and Shastri, 2015; Kumar and Janakiram, 2017). According to Michel, Bosch and Rexroth (2014) employees can struggle with an unwanted psychological preoccupation in the form of work-related cognitions, emotions and associated energy levels during personal time (Michel, Bosch and Rexroth, 2014). The theory suggests that for employees to enable a balance between work and their private lives, mutual departure (both cognitive and emotional) of work and life is important to minimize the influence on each separate entity. Segmentation theory is perhaps one of the most relevant theories to this study because it speaks directly to borders and boundaries that are most times necessary to avoid spill over into either domain.

2.2.3 Compensation Theory

This theory suggests that when an employee is not satisfied in one domain, either work or home, they try to find added satisfaction in other domains. The theory proposes two types of compensation that occurs; firstly when an employee decreases participation in the domain in which he feels dissatisfied and increases participation in the domain in which he feels satisfied, and secondly, in responding to dissatisfaction in one domain the employee works towards earning extra rewards in the domain in which they experience satisfaction (Murthy and Shastri, 2015). Clark (2000) and, Kumar and Janakiram (2017) both emphasize the contradictory relationship that exists between work and life and the inherent need for employees to satisfy voids experienced in one domain with gratifications from the other domain (Kumar and Janakiram, 2017; Clark, 2000). Compensation theory is relevant to the study because it highlights how employees develop coping strategies to achieve some level of balance.

2.2.4 Supplemental and Reactive Compensation

Compensation theory focuses on the behaviour of employees in their search for alternative rewards in the other domain. However, supplemental and reactive compensation theories are two dichotomies of compensation theory that focus on the motive behind work-family compensation behaviour of employees. Supplemental compensation takes place when an employee experiences a dissatisfaction and inefficiency of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in one

domain and therefore make every effort to supplement a lack of reward within the other domain. Whereas, reactive compensation occurs when an employee experiences something unpleasant or undesirable in one domain and seeks for a more satisfactory experience in the other domain (Lavassani and Movahedi, 2014).

2.2.5 Spill-over Theory

An employee's behaviour, attitude and emotions all play a crucial part in maintaining balance between their work and life domains. The spill-over can bring about both positive and negative experiences, a positive spill-over is experienced when an employee is content and happy in one domain they can experience the same in the other domain. Similarly, negative spill-over is experienced when an employee experiences stress and unhappiness in one domain and feelings of dissatisfaction may spill over in the other domain (Murthy and Shastri, 2015: Lavassani and Movahedi, 2014). Edwards and Rothbard (2000) provides two interpretations of spill over, the first being a positive association between work and life satisfaction and values, and the second being the transfer of skills and behaviours between domains such as exhaustion from work is experienced at home or when family stresses affect work demands (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). This theory is relevant to the study because it provides a deeper understanding of the psychological impact of experiences at work and home and how these affect behaviours and attitudes.

2.2.6 Role Enhancement Theory

This theory suggests that combinations of specific roles can have more positive than negatives effects on employees' well-being. For example, managing different roles brings about rewards such as income, increased self-esteem and social relationships, and feelings of accomplishment and success. Therefore, employees' participation in one role can improve as a result of participation in the other role (Lavassani and Movahedi, 2014). Role enhancement allows us to view the relationship between work and life from a positive view rather than a conflicting view.

2.2.7 The Work Enrichment Theory

This theory was developed by Green and Powell (2006) and explains the relationship between work life and family life. This theory has gained popularity amongst scholars and is comparable to that of role enhancement. It seeks to explain and more positive relationship between the two domains of work and life. Enrichment is explained as the degree to which an employees

resources such as their skills, values, and competencies, as well as their mood and level of satisfaction, enhance the quality of life in the other domain (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006).

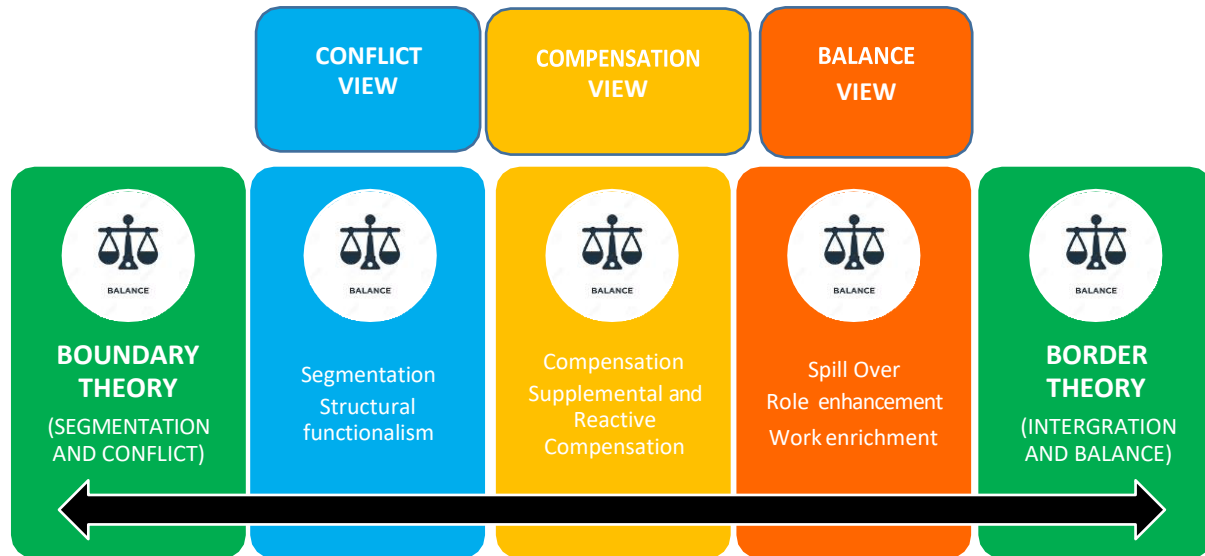


Figure 2.1 Work-Family Views: Segmentation-Integration Continuum

Source: Adapted from Lavassani & Movahedi (2014, 9)

2.3 Literature Review

2.3.1 The structure of the retail sector

As retail business hours have expanded to operating seven days a week so to have work schedules. Employees are expected to avail their time on weekends. While some work standard hours, others need to be available for early morning starts accompanied by long hours that continue into the evening. One can say that employees are now expected to show work commitment and loyalty in more obvious ways (Doble and Supriya, 2010). It is, therefore, safe to assume that employees are spending more of their personal time at work than at home. The use of modern technology in the workplace allows businesses to contact employees at any given time, making it especially difficult to maintain boundaries between the work and personal domains. According to Bobat, Mshololo and Reuben (2012) technology takes attention and time away from aspects of employees personal life through the increased availability of employees whether they are physically present or not (Bobat, Mshololo and Reuben, 2012). Long working hours and intensified pressure and demands are all factors that contribute to the

growing concerns of work-life balance within the retail industry.

2.3.2 Role conflict

Initial work-life balance research focussed on a conflict framework which suggests that work-family conflict is experienced when pressures, obligations, and behaviour in one role hinders fulfilment of responsibilities and participation in another role. Work – family conflict is defined in terms of the conflict that occurs when an individual is faced with the obligations and pressures of both roles. Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) identified three distinct areas of conflict-related to failure to balance work and family responsibilities: *time-based conflict*, *strain-based conflict*, and *behaviour-based conflict*. Because individuals cannot physically perform two roles simultaneously, time-based conflict is experienced through an inability to manage responsibilities of one role because of time dedicated to other domains. On the other hand, strain-based conflict is experienced when the role in one domain spills over and impacts interactions within the other domain, causing strain. Lastly, behavioural-strain conflict is experienced when an individual actions, for example, leadership or interpersonal style, that are accepted, praised, and sometimes rewarded in one domain become incompatible desired behaviour in the other domain (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). On a more positive note, work-life balance can also be defined as satisfaction, and fulfilment in managing multiple roles, although this is a rare perspective.

2.3.3 Gendered perspective

Globally, societies have pushed for equal distribution of both work and family responsibilities between men and women, and conflict between these two roles brings about challenges for individuals and organisations. Professional women in the 21st century are faced with the remarkable challenge of balancing their various responsibilities, and research has shown that women identified eight different roles they are expected to fulfil; employee, provider, spouse, mother, caregiver, friend/confidant, sister/child, and community member (Dilmaghani and Tabvuma, 2019). However, not all women necessarily place the same importance on each role and therefore distribute their time differently. That being said, the amount of time given to each role can be closely related to women's life-stage and experience. For example, a new mother may prioritise most of her time on her new baby and less time developing her career, whereas a mother that has grown children may have more time to build her career. Career success, as well as physical and mental health has been known to have a direct impact on how each role is balanced and managed. Kotze and Whitehead's (2003) study on 24 professional South African women, found that health and well-being concerns such as insomnia, fatigue,

depression, panic attacks, and cancer, were raised as result of imbalance (Kotze and Whitehead, 2003). Workplace stress experienced by employees is known to prompted changes in their physiological, psychological and behavioural functions, which can be harmful to individual health, and to the organisation, adversely impacting performance (Lundberg and Cooper, 2010). Feelings of guilt and the need to choose between time with their children rather than on themselves posed an extreme challenge in managing both nutritional and physical health. Key results showed that the women experienced imbalance with regards to their personal relationships with the spouses and partners, as well as the lack of time to enjoy leisurely activities (Kotze and Whitehead, 2003). In fact, similar findings were echoed in Huang, Xing and Gamble's (2019) study on retail stores in China, where marital status was significantly associated with female employees well-being, while job position was significantly associated with male employees' well-being (Huang, Xing and Gamble, 2019).

The struggle for women to balance a management career and family responsibilities is apparent in Brue (2018) and, Cross and Murphy (2017) leadership research which revealed that women battled with WLB and gender bias cultures which lead to pressure to comply with status quo leadership approaches (Brue, 2018; Cross and Murphy, 2017). Dilmaghani *et al.* (2019) large scale study (covering most occupations) based on data from the Canadian General Social Survey found that women in management and education experienced a lower level of WLB satisfaction than their male counterparts (Dilmaghani et al., 2019) and that a female-specific pattern drove the disadvantages experienced by females in management. Although organisations received pressure to grow more women into leadership positions, women continue to be underrepresented in these roles. Research shows that men and women hold very different experiences concerning leadership development and execution, and matching career demands with family demands. While women are more inclined to leave their management careers to fulfil their family responsibilities, lack of flexibility around working hours at management levels creates a barrier for both men and women in those positions, particularly those with children, as one participant expressed in Cross *et al.*, (2018) study "*There is no director going home to pick up a child from school, and there is no director taking parental leave*" (Cross et al., 2017). Coping requires a person to invest their own conscious effort to solve or manage interpersonal problems to minimize conflict and stress in either part of their lives. Research suggests a combination of practical ***coping strategies*** that could be adopted: planning ahead weekly; proactively planning; problem-solving and

securing support needed, time out for exercise; and minimising the importance of a situation. Gregory and Milner (2009) identified two types of coping strategies practiced by women, 1) women in dual-career households and some single women make choose to follow a typical male career pattern which allowed for them to maintain domestic help and 2) resisting forced mobility but developed joint mobility strategies with spouses which avoided complete withdrawal from the competition (Gregory and Milner, 2009).

However, these strategies were limited in that they were only practiced amongst those employees (and couples) that were highly qualified. The integration of work and life roles has been closely related to women's professional and private lives. As a coping strategy, women are known to plan many of their personal responsibilities around their working day and within the vicinity of their workplace (Bobat et al., 2012). For example, employees make use of gyms and schooling for their kids that are in close proximity to their workplace. This level of integration undoubtedly assists employees in managing their health and family responsibilities to some extent. However, this level of integration may not be possible in retail due to the nature of business which requires employees to work beyond the normal, contractual hours.

2.3.4 Social support

As discussed earlier, role conflict is a continuous challenge that can vary over time, and workers with younger kids and or caregiving responsibilities have reported constantly feeling conflicted. Coping strategies, as well as social support, are equally important in creating a balance between work and life. Social support encompasses emotional, instrumental, and informational resources available to an individual that regularly reduces stress and supports wellbeing within a domain. Balkin, Reiner, Hendricks, Washington, Mcneary, Juhnke, and Hunter (2018), Kotze (2013) and, Lundberg and Copper (2010) identified support structures most needed: support from husband relating to their attitude and overall emotional support; paid household - domestic support; family support, especially grandparents who assisted as caregivers; childcare support; community support in the form of spiritual support; and support from friends (Kotze and Whitehead, 2003; Lundberg and Cooper, 2010; Balkin et al., 2018). According to Clark and Bower (2016), lack of affordable and quality child care presented major barriers for successful work engagement brought about by ongoing stress due to limited resources to provide adequate care for children (Clark and Bower, 2016). Research suggest that individuals acquire and sustain crucial resources that aid in reaching goals, attaining assets, or better well-being. Resources used to meet role responsibilities include finances, supportive environments, personal qualities such as optimism and resilience, and access to important information. Social support resources are valuable to employees because they are

instrumental in solving problems, attaining goals, managing stress, and reinforces both mental and physical health. Gaining more resources is born from the desire to improve one's life but also to protect against perceived loss. Resource loss inflicts far greater psychological stress than resource gain improves wellbeing, and prolonged resource depletion stems from erosion of energy, personal worth, and performance (Brue, 2018).

2.4 The impact of working conditions on work-life balance

Studies have further shown that long working hours, job satisfaction, and work-life balance are linked to occupational stress, job burn out, and various mental health issues. According to Doble and Supriya (2010) study, more women felt that work affected their sleep while more men reported exhaustion due to job burn out. The negative impact of working conditions is further illustrated in one retail manager's response, "*We work here, it's late, and you're tired and exhausted. I have an indigestion problem because I eat late, I arrive home after seven; you can't sleep if you have indigestion*" (Bobat et al., 2012, p. 229). Over time, increasing fatigue levels reduces performance levels and impacts workers mental and physical health (Young, 2018). Typical tasks in the retail sector includes heavy lifting and repetitive motions, while cashier position requires either standing or sitting for long hours while cold storage facilities requires employees to move in and out of warm and cold temperatures throughout their day (Zeytinoglu Lillevik, Seaton and Moruz, 2004) These physical work factors can lead to a various occupational health conditions such as back problems, poor circulation, and colds and flu's. Hsu, Bai, Yang, Huang, Lin and Lin (2019) and Choi and Kim (2017) found that in most Asian cultures taking on extended working hours are often perceived as a commitment to your job, while shorter or regular hours is often perceived as a sign of weakness (Hsu, Bai, Yang, Huang, Lin and Lin, 2019: Choi and Kim, 2017). Workers felt obligated to work excessive hours even though it was illegal.

In business, perceptions of long working hours are generally associated with high levels of productivity, however, the impact of poor work-life balance due to continuous extended working hours are reported to adversely affect productivity, job satisfaction and health. The South African Wholesale & Retail Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) 2014/2015 report revealed that the workforce within the sector was characterised by increased casualization of employment (Mason, Malgas and Khatle, 2018). In the mid-1980's, retail trade was characterised by full-time employment with casual employment reserved for just for peak periods during the work week. Restructuring of the sector during the 1990's saw a decline in

full-time employment, with vacant, full-time positions of those that left converted into casual jobs (Zeytinoglu et al., 2004). In keeping up with various forms of human resource best practices, many companies are striving to support and encourage work-life balance amongst their employees in ways that improves loyalty and help employees manage their overall wellbeing. The idea of working time arrangements has become increasingly popular in work-life balance research especially in industries that are highly pressurised and impacted by changing economic conditions, industry developments, corporate restructuring and intense labour relations, such as South Africa's retail industry. In order to manage these demands, new forms of working time have emerged, such as flexible contracting, flexible shifts, and flexible working time arrangements.

Hadjisolomou, Newsome and Cunningham (2017) found that flexible contracts within the food and retail industry meant that employees had to be readily available and prepared to work overtime without having much choice (Hadjisolomou, Newsome and Cunningham, 2017). While, Mani, Kesavan and Swaminathan (2015) suggest that the ongoing use of flexible contracts is linked to labour force planning issues that resulted in systematic understaffing during peak trading hours, causing unnecessary pressure on key management staff (Mani, Kesavan and Swaminathan, 2015). The climate of 'forced availability' through the use of flexi contracts can be disruptive to an individual's work and personal life in that it can bring about feelings of uncertainty and frustration. A more positive outlook was found in Zülch, Stock and Schmidt (2012) study of a large retail chain that implemented a flexible shift system which took into account the employee's desired working time. Requests for certain working times were almost always taken into account, while changes in scheduled working times at short notice occurred only sometimes. As a result, all employees experienced a high level of satisfaction with their working time (Zülch, Stock and Schmidt, 2012). Research has shown that working parents, caregivers, and unmarried employees, would welcome flexible working hours. Flexible work arrangements include both formal and informal agreements with all and or individual employees, and forms of flexibility will be different for each industry and department. UK legislation affords the following rights to request flexible working conditions: parents of children aged under 17, parents of disabled children aged under 18, and relatives who look after adults requiring care. Even under these challenging, special conditions, the law just covers an employee's right to ask for flexible work conditions and not the right to have it (Future Work Institute, 2012). Although the legislation is limited in its approach, it demonstrates the progressive nature of labour laws in responding to work-life balance issues.

2.5 The role of organisational culture in work-life balance.

Previous literature has defined organisation culture in many different ways, however, the most agreeable definition is “the way we do things around here” (Hayduk, 1998). Organisational culture is, therefore manifested in the typical characteristics of the organisation and looks at the right way of doing things and how problems are understood within the organisation. Organization culture is explained as a system of shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with an organisation’s people, structures, and control systems to produce behavioural norms (Northouse, 2016). In summary, culture is the cognitive framework, which consists of attitudes, values, behavioural norms and expectations. According to Sun (2008) culture may be thought of as ‘software’ within an organization, since it is ‘software’, managers should study it carefully and try to understand how each element of ‘software’ works on the basis of ‘hardware’ (viewing an organization as operating hardware) (Sun, 2008).

Organisational culture relates to access to work-life balance initiatives and how and when employees can make use of these initiatives. Within the framework of organisational justice, perceived managerial support and career consequences of using work-life balance initiatives, as well as perceptions of justice and injustice with regards to work-life balance policies are known to act as barriers in employee uptake of work-life benefits (Webber, Sarris and Bessell, 2010). Similar issues were raised in Daverth, Hyde and Cassell (2016) study which looked at perceptions of fairness on line managers’ decision making. Findings suggest that some managers did not agree with the company’s ethos of supporting employees with caregiving responsibilities. In contrast, others felt work-life balance initiatives were rather contentious and that it was their responsibility to avoid creating tension and resentment within their teams and departments (Daverth, Hyde and Cassell, 2016). What was interesting was that managers highlighted that they received little direction on how to deal with work-life balance issues, however they did experience general pressure to keep such arrangements to a minimum. Sánchez-Vidal, Cegarra-Leiva and Cegarra-Navarro (2012) explain that perceived accessibility is a critical determinant of usage. If employees are required to make decisions on the availability of work-life balance practices, it is important that they have a true and fair view of what the firm is offering (Sánchez-Vidal, Cegarra-Leiva and Cegarra-Navarro, 2012). The most difficult, but most important issue highlighted here are the attitudes and behaviours prevalent in the organisation that must be addressed to remove barriers and facilitate

communication and access to the benefits of work-life balance initiatives.

2.6 Work-life balance policies and practices

Work-life balance practices in the workplace are those behaviours that are intentionally carried out to enable flexibility and autonomy with regards to time and presence in the workplace, work-life balance policies develop as a result of this intentional practice. Examining from an institutional perspective, organisations adopt and implement change in order to ensure legitimacy even if technically ineffective. Therefore organisations may adopt policies and practices in response to coercive pressures to conform, such institutional pressure could influence an organisation's predisposition towards the use of work-life benefits. Pasamar and Valle (2015) and, Sutton and Noe (2005) identified three kinds of institutional pressures: coercive pressure, mimetic pressure, normative pressure. *Coercive pressure* looks at all work-life balance issues mandated by law and strictly enforced by a large number of regulatory bodies. However, *mimetic pressure* looks at most of the successful organisations in the industry that have implemented work-life benefits. This type of pressure is further supported by media coverage that sends a very strong message to employers that you cannot stay in business nowadays if you do not adopt work-life measures. However, *normative pressure* views work-life balance as a moral obligation. In this instance, an organisation always does its best to promote work-life balance and would do so even if not required (Pasamar and Valle, 2015; Sutton and Noe, 2005). Previous research has confirmed the implementation of work-life balance policies and practices in organisations improves both organisational performance and employee benefits such as higher jobs satisfaction, motivation and organisational commitment, ultimately resulting in less turnover and improved retention.

Gregory and Milner (2009), and Jenkins, Bhanugopan and Lockhart (2016) propose three categories that capture employees' work-life balance priorities: working time arrangements (limited as these categories do not capture solo living) (the total working hours and opportunities for flexibility); parental leave entitlements; and facilitation of childcare responsibilities (Gregory and Milner, 2009, Jenkins Bhanugopan and Lockhart, 2016). Although some organisations' do provide work-life balance measures, take up of such opportunities is often influenced by: gendered perceptions of policy use, work culture, the extent of support received from managers and colleagues, possible consequences on career progression, and the organisation's expectation of time. Such measures are often aimed at professional, highly skilled employees in an effort to attract and retain talent (Gregory and

Milner , 2009). However, those employees within managerial roles are often known to do whatever is necessary to get the job done. They will, therefore, be unlikely to take up any work-life balance measures available. Therefore, one can deduce that taking any form of work-life balance measures can to some extent, leave employees feeling marginalized.

For men, perceptions of entitlement (valid claims to family responsibility) and the business environment are two common barriers that often prevent them from openly choosing work-life balance over their jobs. Consequently, men are commonly known to take advantage of gender-neutral measures such as flexi-time, in order to manage their personal and professional obligations (Gregory and Milner, 2009). The way men and women manage their relationship between work and home is predicated on gendered societal norms, impacting their ability to shape their day-to-day commitment. Wilkinson, Tomlinson and Gardiner (2018) found that solo-living, childless managers and professionals, were either not sure whether their organisation had a work-life balance policy, or thought that their organisation had a policy, but were not clear on what it covered because they felt it was not relevant to them or felt that they were largely overlooked and dismissed by employers and colleagues (Wilkinson Tomlinson and Gardiner, 2018). Not only does this suggests an existing perception that work- life balance policies and practices are aimed at accommodating working parents only and not all employees. It also presents a gap in terms of implementation and communication of policy access and benefits.

2.6.1 Types of flexible working practices

According to the South African Board of People Practices (SABPP), Flexible Work report (2008), the following flexible work practices and other alternative work arrangements are known to promote work-life balance where possible. **Part-time working** means employees are contracted to work fewer hours than full-time working hours while **term-time working allows** employees contracted on a permanent basis the flexibility of taking paid/unpaid leave during school holidays. **Job-sharing** is a part-time variation that requires working with and sharing responsibility of a job between two or more people. However, **flexitime** allows employees to choose and control their jobs within limits. **Compressed hours** are actually compressed working weeks (or fortnights). This practice does not reduce working hours but rather reallocates work into a block schedule.

Annual hours refers to the total number of working hours to be covered in a year, although, hours may vary in quantity. Employees may have little control over working patterns. **Mobile working/teleworking** permits employees to work all of their time or a portion of their working

week at another location. **Career breaks** or sabbaticals are extended periods of leave, usually unpaid up to five years or more. **Commissioned outcomes mean** no fixed hours but only a target output measure that an individual strives to work towards. With **zero-hours contracts**, an individual has no fixed or guaranteed hours of work, payment is received for hours worked, and individuals need to be available when needed. **Working from home on a regular basis** allows employees to work from home instead of working at the office (Abbott, 2018). When designed suitably for a business, a flexible working-time model can provide several advantages for both the workforce and the company. These include efficiency, reduced employee stress, better performance, reduced absenteeism, increased employee loyalty and control of work schedule. However, disadvantages occur as flexible work arrangements are not suitable for all workers. Some prefer working in traditional office spaces which makes for a clear demarcation between their work lives and personal lives (Abbott, 2018). Working from home options also gives off the impression that one does not really fulfil the full working hours and as such expectations of continuing with work after hours almost becomes a norm. Therefore one can deduce that these disadvantages can be more to the detriment to the worker than the business. In retail, day-to-day shop floor employees and managers are unable to work from home or remotely the constant need of physical presence in store. Career breaks may work to the detriment professional develop, especially females aspiring towards management positions. Mobile working is currently, forcibly taking place with the expectation of retail staff to be always reachable even after working their full hours for the day.

2.6.2 Recommendations

In an attempt to meet the challenge of work-life balance within the retail industry Brandwood Woolnough, Halo, and Davidson (2008) and Abbott (2013) provide the following recommendations for the retail organisations. An increase in wage budgets for store managers to manage the staffing demands to meet the demands of operating hours, thereby allowing managers to work fewer hours themselves and enabling them to have some level of work -life balance (Brandwood Woolnough, Halo, and Davidson, 2008: Abbott, 2013). Awareness of the extent to which childcare responsibilities impact on employees' career progression, especially women in the industry.

Develop proper channels of communication of information to employees and implement monitoring systems to capture issues affecting them, such as organisational climate surveys and open forums (Brandwood et al., 2008). Effectively enforce working time regulations thereby ensuring that all employees, especially managers take regular breaks and keep to their contractual hours. Retailers and labour organisations can also be pro-active in changing the

culture of long working hours and overtimes that characterises the entire industry. Employees can be provided with resources to help them think through their own work/life balance issues and find solutions, and 3) Pragmatic education programmes, improving the coaching skills of managers and providing in-house mentors and professional coaches/counsellors can all be useful (Abbott, 2013).

2.7 Summary

This chapter aimed at unpacking WLB in relation to working conditions within the retail industry and provided perspectives on the accessibility of WLB initiatives offered in organisations. Over the years, new concepts have emerged to capture the effects of managing these two roles: namely work-family balance, work-family conflict, work-family accommodation, or interference. These concepts highlight the pressures as well as incompatibility that can exist as a result of managing roles of work and family. High-performance organisations are also known to have raised expectations regarding their employees time available their energy levels and their overall work commitment. With the dual role managed by most women, one can see the unique challenges they are faced with to find balance between competing expectations of work and home (Kotze and Whitehead, 2003). The next chapter discusses the research methodology adopted for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter discusses the research process. It draws on information used to select participants, data collection analysis. The Chapter also discusses the role of the researcher in qualitative research in relation to ethical management of the process. The Chapter ends with a discussion on validity and reliability in qualitative research and how this was accomplished in the study. This research explored employee perceptions of WLB and to determine the level of support provided by company X to achieve WLB and is aligned with the objectives. The study adopted an interpretivism research paradigm that enabled qualitative data collection through the use of semi-structured interviews.

3.2 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions of work-life balance of employees within a private retail company and to determine the level of support provided by the company to achieve WLB.

3.3 Research Paradigm

To enable research we need to have an understanding, ideas, and beliefs about the nature of reality, what can be learnt about it and how one goes about gathering the information? Ontology and epistemology form the foundation of research inquiry. Ontology looks at the nature of reality, and here is where the researcher starts to question their surroundings and reality. While epistemology looks at how we know what we know about the world that surrounds us. Here the researcher forms assumptions about a certain reality and debates “the possibility and desirability of objectivity, subjectivity, causality, validity, generalisability” (Patton, 2002, p. 134).

According to Reham and Abdulaziz (2016) there are three paradigms or approaches to research: *positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory*. It is important to understand each approach and the researcher’s ontological and epistemological beliefs in order to understand and interpret the

study (Rehman and Abdulaziz, 2016). Creswell describes research paradigms as a worldview that entails a basic set of beliefs that guide action (Creswell, 2017).

3.3.1 Positivism

Positivism draws on the assumption that “reality exists independently of humans” which is “governed by immutable laws” (Rehman and Abdulaziz, 2016, p. 53). The ontological positions of positivism tries to understand the social world like the natural world, focussing on the cause-effect relationship fundamental to nature. Once established, it can predict certainty to future occurrences. The epistemological position of positivists is objectivism; here the researcher looks at a phenomenon external to their own beliefs and values. This object approach makes use of language and symbols (numerical data) to interpret findings, thereby eliminating human interference. This approach deems research good quality if it has internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity, results can therefore be generalized to larger populations and used to build theories (Rehman and Abdulaziz, 2016). Rehman and Abdulaziz (2016) criticized the positivist approach because scientific methods are not always successful when applied to human behaviour (Rehman and Abdulaziz, 2016). This lead to the emergence of the post-positivism approach. The ontological position of the post-positivism acknowledges the possibility of the researcher’s own values and belief system does have an impact on what is being observed. This approach is experimental in nature as it aims to analyse and “...reduce the ideas into a small, discrete set to test, such as the variable that comprises hypotheses and research questions” (Rehman and Abdulaziz, 2016, p. 36).

3.3.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism rejects the assumptions of positivism and instead “believe in socially constructed multiple realities...it is not possible to know reality as it is because it is always mediated by our senses” (Rehman and Abdulaziz, 2016, p. 55). The interpretive epistemology approach is subjective in nature and acknowledges the impact of human perceptions in social research, where social phenomena is understood through the experiences of the participants. Interpretive methodology analyses data through the inductive or deductive approach. The inductive approach looks for the emergence of patterns and broad common themes in the data, while the deductive approach pre identifies themes and patterns. Data collection is qualitative in nature because it is mostly verbal and gathered through semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, group sessions, observation, personal notes etc. Reham and Abdulaziz (2016) criticized the interpretivism paradigm for high levels of interference

with the study and “incapable of yielding theories that could be generalised to the larger population and the involvement of the researcher with participants which leads to lack of objectivity” (Reham and Abdulaziz, 2016, p. 56). *This study adopted the interpretive paradigm* because the aim of the study was to explore employees understanding of WLB which was achieved through qualitative research methods which gather personal information and experiences about the phenomena WLB. Although the approach is limited in generalisability and reliability, findings are still reliable for that particular environment to impact action because it takes into account of the complexities in the social world.

3.3.3 Critical Theory

The aim of this approach is not only to understand the social content in which the phenomena is studied but to also to bring about changes. The ontological position assume that reality is impacted by history and shaped by “cultural, political, ethnic, gender and religious factors” (Reham and Abdulaziz, 2016, p. 57). While the epistemological view is that no phenomena can be studied without being affected by the researcher’s own perceptions and beliefs. Critical researchers endeavour to bring to light the beliefs and actions that limit human freedom with the ultimate aim of transforming the situation. The critical approach looks at the justices and injustices that exist in society, and exposes oppressive structures that construct inequality. Methodologies included critical ethnography, critical discourse analysis, critiquing ideology etc., results are generated through qualitative methods, as described in the interpretive approach.

3.4 Research Design and Methods

According to Creswell (2017) research designs are known as strategies of inquiry within three research approaches; qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Research design has evolved over the years as computerized technology grows and advances ways to analyse data and create new procedures for carrying out social science research (Creswell, 2017).

3.4.1 Qualitative

A qualitative research design best supports an interpretive philosophy to research. The nature of this philosophy is such that it needs the researcher to make sense of the subject. In this case the concept of WLB and the associated social constructed meanings attached to this phenomenon are explored or investigated.

The qualitative research design further supports the abductive approach to theory development in that it allows the researcher to reach conclusions on the basis of evidence and reasoning (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016).

3.4.2 Quantitative

Quantitative research design supports a positivism research philosophy in that the focus is strictly scientific method designed to produce pure data that is not influenced by human bias. This type of research design is commonly associated with the deductive approach to theory development, focusing on data to test theory (Saunders et al., 2016). Quantitative research is highly structured and examines relationships between variables and requires a typically large sample from the population. These relationships are measured numerically, using statistical and graphical techniques. Results can be generalised back to the population.

3.4.3 Mixed Method

Mixed methods include both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques and analysis. It supports the deductive, inductive or abductive approach to theory development in that both qualitative and quantitative research can be used to test theory, as well as develop a deeper theoretical understanding (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.4.4 Chosen Method

Qualitative data collection is non-standardised and therefore allows for flexibility in the research process to suit the interactive environment, a mono method was selected because it supports one research paradigm (interpretive) and consists of one single data collection technique, semi-structured interviews, together with corresponding qualitative analytical procedures (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.5 The Location of the Study

The study took place at the supermarket premises of a major South African retailer, situated in La Lucia, Durban, South Africa.

3.6 Population and Sample of the Study

According to Saunders *et al.* (2016) the full set of elements and characteristics from which a sample is taken is called the population (Saunders et al., 2016). The targeted population of the study are individuals employed within a national, major retailer, Company X.

The sample was selected according to the following, common occupational categories found within a supermarket. Participants were purposefully selected for their job function to ensure an even representation of job categories at store level. A total of 10 employees were interviewed.

Table 3.1: Participants demographics

| No. | Job title | Employment type | Years of service with the company | Gender |
|-----|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Store Manager | permanent, full time employees | 17 years | Female |
| 2 | Assistant Store Manager | permanent, full time employees | 17 years | Female |
| 3 | Customer Services Manager | permanent, full time employees | 37 years | Female |
| 4 | Services Manager | permanent, full time employees | 16 years | Female |
| 5 | Bakery Manager | permanent, full time employees | 17 years | Male |
| 6 | Cashier | Contract – variable time employees | 15 years | Female |
| 7 | Office Cashier | Contract – variable time employees | 10 years | Female |
| 8 | Warehouse Assistant | permanent, full time employees | 15 years | Male |
| 9 | Canteen Assistant | Contract – variable time employees | 16 years | Female |
| 10 | Bakery Assistant | VTE | 12 years | Female |

Source: Compiled by the researcher

3.7 Sampling Method

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017) there are two main sampling techniques used in survey research; probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The significant difference between the two techniques is that in probability sampling all persons of a population have a chance of being selected, and the findings are likely to accurately represent the entire population and therefore results can be generalised back to the population. However in nonprobability sampling, members of the population are not given an equal chance of being selected, rather members of the population are purposefully chosen for particular traits/characteristics/commonalities that exists in the population, findings generated cannot be generalised back to the population as the sample does not represent the population (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.7.1 Probability Sampling

The probability sampling method is also referred to as the representative sample because it is associated with survey research strategies. It is advised that collection data be drawn from the entire target population, with no less than 50 cases (Saunders et al., 2016). The most important characteristic of probability sampling is that all members of your population have a known and an equal chance of being selected. Types of sampling techniques include, systematic, stratified, cluster and multi-stage sampling (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.7.2 Non-Probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling provides a range of techniques to selecting a sample. Such sampling can be used when a researcher aims to carry out a qualitative, pilot, or exploratory study. Non-probability sampling does not allow the estimation of sampling errors, and may be subjected to bias. Also, information derived from a sample cannot be generalized back to the population. Types of nonprobability sampling techniques include purpose, snowball, convenience, self-selection and quota sampling for large populations. This type of sampling is particularly useful when the researcher has limited resources (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.7.3 Chosen Sampling Method

The chosen method for this study is non-probability sampling in the form of a purposive sampling technique. The sample for the study was selected purposefully, based on their common characteristics as employees which best enabled the researcher to answer the research questions. The sampling method chosen was semi structured interviews which allowed for the gathering of information-rich responses from participants and provided the flexibility for probing questioning

during data collection.

3.8 Construction of the Instrument

Harrell and Bradley (2009) note two types of qualitative data collection techniques; semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Using the proper technique for primary data collection is significant in ensuring that data is collected in a scientific, consistent manner and the chosen instrument will work to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings (Harrell and Bradley, 2009). The research instrument identified for this study was semi –structured interviews performed through one-on-one discussions between the interviewer and participant which emphasised the closeness of interaction and engagement which allowed participants to express themselves openly and with ease. The interview schedule consisted of a set of open-ended questions, such questions have no predefined options or categories included and the participants provide their own opinions and perceptions. The interview schedule was developed in English.

3.9 Data collection

In order to avoid bias that could affect the reliability and validity of the data it was important to ensure that the researcher's appearance and presentation was appropriate for the interview and setting. Interviews were conducted at the business premises, the store of the retail company, the researcher was provided with a private office space in which to carry out the interviews. On the day of data collection, all interviews were arranged with the help of the store manager who had previously informed employees about the study and the request for volunteers to participant in the study. The researcher also informed the store manager of the need for representation in the sample for the study. Interviews were conducted at the business premises, the store of the retail company, the researcher was provided with a private office space in which to carry out the interviews. Participants were firstly introduced to the background of the research study with objectives explained. In the promotion of credibility, participants were further explained their contribution in the study and the way in which the data would be used. Each participant was presented and explained the details of the consent form, with additional time set as for thorough reading and understanding. Participants were assured that confidential information was not being sought. The interviews were carried out face-to-face, to ensure that participants felt confident and safe to share their opinions and experiences. Although 1 hour

was set aside per interview, the duration of interviews varied with each participant. Some interviews lasted as little as 15 minutes while other went on past the allocated time. The researcher recorded all responses to enable uninterrupted interaction, opportunities to probe answers for further questioning, transcribing and safe keeping.

3.10 Data Analysis

Interview data will be analysed using NVIVO and conventional content analysis. The researcher will attempt to identify emerging themes and sub-themes. Using the principles of thematic analysis. Transcripts will be read and reviewed for themes and thereafter individually coded to NVIVO to determine thematic similarities and differences between the responses of the participants (Harrell and Bradley, 2009).

3.11 Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research is often criticised in comparison to the rigour, creditability, validity, and generalisability commonly associated with quantitative research (Noble and Smith, 2015). Qualitative research is characterised by experiences and perceptions and therefore no two people can experience a situation in the same way. For this very reason it makes it difficult for qualitative research to conclude generalisability. Although validity and reliability tests cannot be applied to qualitative research, there are debates around whether validity, reliability and generalisability should even be considered in evaluating qualitative research. In the general framework of research, validity refers to the integrity and application of selected methods used to undertake a study and the accuracy in which the findings reflect the data collected. Reliability looks at the consistency in which the analytical procedures are carried out (Noble and Smith, 2015). In an attempt to ensure credibility of the study, the study adopted strategies to enable trust such as; awareness of biases in sampling and ongoing reflection of methods to ensure adequate depth and relevance of data collection and analysis; careful recording of findings and record keeping, ensuring that interpretation of data is clear, transparent and consistent; and the use of data triangulation which applied different viewpoints to enable comprehensive findings (Noble and Smith, 2015).

3.12 Bias

The main characteristic of qualitative analysis is to provide a detailed description of the study, however, it also allows for specific distinctions to be drawn from that data. The main limitation of qualitative data analysis is that findings cannot be shared with the broader population with the same confidence and certainty as to the findings of a quantitative study (Atieno, 2009). Two types of bias that exists in qualitative research; participant bias and researcher bias. In order to limit participant bias, data collection consisted of open ended question to gather a truthful response rather than an agreeable or disagreeable response. Some questions were phrased differently to avoid habitual responses and boredom. To avoid researcher bias in the study, data collection consisted of straight forward questions, leading questions can prompt a favourable response to pre-existing assumptions and as such were avoided (Shah, 2019).

3.13 Ethical considerations

Qualitative research is interpretive and, as such, can be incorrect or biased, sometimes controversial. To circumvent this, special attention was given when recording responses and further questioning carried for clarification. It was essential to obtain informed consent before the participant agreed to form part of the research project (Jelsma and Clow, 2005). The issue of participant involvement in checking of data and subsequent interpretation was addressed from the onset. It was further explained that final interpretation and presentation of the data rests with the researcher. Should participants have final control over the interpretation of the data and reporting, it would be affected by personal influence and bias. However, the autonomy of the participants may be compromised if this is not granted (Jelsma and Clow, 2005). There are also serious issues concerning confidentiality which was addressed through detailing the entire research process for participants.

3.14 Summary

Although the qualitative research method is best suited to our exploration of WLB, its limitations are clear. This chapter noted that careful selection of participants, data collection and analysis are all essential to the success of the study. Ethical management of the research process in relation to the role of the researcher was highlighted in ensuring the credibility of the study. The questions around the validity and reliability in qualitative research were explored and concluded with strategies that could enable this.

CHAPTER 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to explore employee perceptions of work-life balance within a major retail company. The previous chapter provided a detailed explanation the research methodology applied for the study. Through the purposive sampling method, a total of 10 participants were selected for interview. A breakdown of the participants' demographics is provided for in Chapter 3. The sampling method chosen was semi structured interviews which allowed for the gathering of personal experiences and flexibility in communication during data collection. This chapter presents the after a findings emanating from the thematic analysis of data gathered from participants interviews.

4.2 Analysis of data

All participants interviews were recorded, transcribed, and responses analysed by linking and grouping common themes. Main themes as well as sub-themes emerged from the analysis, which are provided in the following summary table.

Table 4.1: Summary of themes

| MAIN THEMES | SUB-THEMES |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 4.2.1 Understanding work-life balance | |
| 4.2.2 Working conditions | 4.2.2.1 Contractual working hours vs long working hours 4.2.2.2 Job duties 4.2.2.3 Expected availability after working hours 4.2.2.4 Health concerns |
| 4.2.3 Organisational culture | 4.2.3.1 Career development 4.2.3.2 Gender inequality 4.2.3.3 Generational issues |

| | |
|---|---|
| 4.2.4 Coping strategies | Keywords: Changing behaviour, male career pattern, family support and mentorship. |
| 4.2.5 Policies and practices promoting work-life balance. | 4.2.5.1 Formal policies and practices 4.2.5.2 Informal practices |

Source: Compiled by the researcher

4.2.1 Understanding of work-life balance

Although not all participants had previously heard the term work-life balance, all participants were able to provide a meaning to the term. Responses showed a clear understanding of the separation between work life and home life.

“I think it’s about balancing life in general and the workplace” (R6).

“It means at work you must be comfortable, must not over work. You must feel free and enjoy work. You also need to have some time to relax, some family time” (R10).

However, managers described their understanding of work-life balance in relation to their job functions, long working hours and constant need for open communication and availability after working hours.

“My perception is me working an 8 hour day and maybe over and above that on a rare occasion working the overtime, but not a norm the way it is now. And also when I am at home I must not be disturbed and answering and be responsible for the things that are happening at work. Because I am carrying work home” (R2).

“That there is supposed to be a balance between your working life and obviously your home life where you are supposed to be able to function in a sane way and be able to live normal, but it does not happen in reality” (R1).

“Here we suppose to work an 8 hour shift, if this actually happened then one could say their time is balanced between their family and work. But right now it is not, it is the industry” (R4).

All managers felt that they would be able to achieve work-life balance if they were to work their set contractual hours and leave work on time, time to take work breaks, the flexibility to plan their time off to their own personal plans and circumstances.

“Start work at 8 and finish at 5 and keep to those hours. The consistency. And during this time you must be able to complete your part of your work. Because in reality you are always covering either for absenteeism or short staffing” (R4).

“Where I can work my 45 hours shift for the week and I can go home after. A proper tea and lunch break. Just that moment to time out, re-energise, refocus and come back” (R1).

However, some participants felt that they would be able to achieve work-life balance through secure employment, and keeping personal time and issues completely separate from work.

“I think when I am at work I need to deal with the work stuff, and when I am at home I need to deal with the home stuff. You not supposed to bring the home stuff at work” (R6).

“Permanent work & maybe benefits. To feel more secure. Even at home, if I have money I can manage to do what I like to do at home, I like to buy furniture and clothes”(R10).

In general, most responses to interview questions, emerged with a strong distinction between the experiences of managers (supervisory staff) and the other employees (non-managerial roles). These difference come through very evidently throughout the results discussed in this chapter.

4.2.2 Working conditions

The working conditions experienced by participating managers was flagged a serious concern, while other participants communicated contentment with their working environment. Managers complained about continuous, extended working hours with no compensation, the expectation to be available outside working hours, and concerns about their overall health and wellbeing. These concerns emerged consistently and therefore make up the following sub themes discussed below:

4.2.2.1 Contracted working hours vs long working hours

Participants were either permanently employed or employed on a contract basis. Half of the participants were employed on contract basis despite being with the company for 10 years or more. Permanent employees worked Monday to Friday, 9 hours per day with a 1 hour lunch break, and Saturday for 5 hours, a total of 45 hours a week. Employees are also expected to

work alternate Sundays and public holidays for which they are remunerated. Employees working on a contract basis also known as variable time employment (VTE), are employed at a maximum of 45 hours per week, but usually work 35 hours a week with 2 days off per week. These employees are only provided with opportunities to work overtime when there is a shortage of staff. Despite their legal contract hours, managers complained about the continuity of extended working hours they are expected to provide, as two participants explained:

“I opened up the store at 4:30am today (Saturday) and I was supposed to leave at 9:30am, and now it is 3pm” (R5).

“Over and above the official 45 hours, we do not work less than 60 hours a week, Sundays are rotated between managers, all the staff work 8 hours a day, not management” (R2).

Managers had received no compensation for working additional hours and sacrificing their personal time for the benefit of the company. These long working hours were further exacerbated by issues of short staffing within the company, particularly the lack of assistant managers and trainee managers. The time needed to perform duties and manage responsibilities far outweighed the prescribed working hours.

4.2.2.2 Job duties

Job duties formed a strong link in the prevention of WLB of employees. As managers explained a typical day at work, it was apparent that there were not enough hours in their day to carry out all their duties despite their early morning starts and skipping lunch breaks due to workload. Job duties were characterised by repetitive tasks, some requiring heavy lifting and physical stamina while others required lots of walking, talking and long hours on your feet. Short staffing meant that employees took up tasks that belonged to an entirely separate job function, which caused a lot of frustration. Managers complained of exhaustion and irritability most days and felt that this impacted their personal lives, leaving little time for family or hobbies.

“And when it comes to the afternoon you are so exhausted that you can’t even think or be creative...by the time you get home you are so irritated and annoyed, you don’t want to speak to your husband, you don’t want to have any interaction with your children because it involves noise” (R1).

For managers, the usage of cell phones during the work day was considered an important tool to help run the store especially. However, the company does not provide a cell phones or

subsidies for their store level managers, despite regular communication between regional management and senior management via instant messaging. The store manager participants in 9 different company WhatsApp groups all of which share important information that needs to be shared with staff and instructions that needs to be actioned. Although there is Wi-Fi in the store, it is not available to the staff, the store manager shares her access with her two assistant manager to enable them to communicate effectively throughout the day. The use of communication technology was a serious contributing factor to the poor WLB balance of managers, while other employees did not highlight the need for much use of this technology during their working day. 10 years ago the company implemented the business tool programme Skills for Africa Programmes (SAP), at that time most staff did not received training on the system because they were not computer literate. The aim of the programme is to increase productivity by supporting daily job functions through the combination of technical and soft skills elements. The company never resumed official training and over the years and staff have taken it upon themselves to learn to navigate the system, which had also limited access to company policies and procedure. This impacted WLB in that unnecessary amounts of time was spend on operational activities that could have been managed SAP. The full capabilities of the system had yet to be experienced.

4.2.2.3 Expected availability after working hours

The general manager often carried out surprise visits just before store closing times, managers were expected to handle any issues raised followed by photos for proof, all of which had to be done before leaving the store, which often meant working into the evening. The store manager and assistant store manager complained that little consideration was given for their private lives and personal time, and that most times they felt vulnerable to the general manager because his leadership style was very intimidating. Managers carried work home with them because they were expected to be available after hours, even while on leave, because of this they were unable to mentally switch off.

“If he feels he is going to walk in at five or three o’clock and you supposed to be leaving soon, you can’t leave because he is in the store, and if there is anything wrong do not leave until it is sorted out. It is a dictatorship. So you end up not having a life at all” (R2).

“At 9pm I am still receiving messages and getting phone calls. On a weekend when I am not working I still must communicate with the store... I can’t be present in anything

else I am doing. It is an expectation that even when you are off you are still contactable. The kids get irritated and crabby because my attention is diverted away from them” (R2).

4.2.2.4 Health concerns

Participants expressed concerns around job burn and attributed poor health and wellbeing to poor work-life balance. Some managers were particularly concerned about their health, especially about the high rate of heart attacks amongst colleagues and following previous experiences with colleagues that had passed away early in retirement. There was a strong fear of not living through retire due to job burn out. Participant 1 reminisced about a colleague who gave 35 years of service and passed away just after retirement and implied that his sudden fall to illness could have been due to withdrawals from the fast pace and stressful environment of retail. A few participants noted patterns of absenteeism amongst colleagues, most of which was a cause of sick leave. Managers were concerned that patterns of sick leave signified a bigger problem in terms of general health of their staff as most staff return to work with medical certificates. Health benefits in the form of medical insurance/aid which is subsidized at 50% is offered by the company. All managers within the company were obligated to take up this benefit, while for others it is voluntary. Very low levels of absenteeism was experienced amongst managers as most pushed themselves to a point where they can't work anymore, explaining that there is almost a need to show physical proof that you are not well. While the purpose of vacation leave is meant to allow employees opportunities to spend time with their family, holiday, relax and unwind. Managers find it challenging to take up their vacation leave for three main reasons; 1) leave requests need to be provided months in advance, 2) even if leave is approved, it can be reverted closer to the time and, 3) at times validation is requested as to why you want to take that leave, for example, a flight booking, wedding invitation etc.

4.2.3 Organizational culture

Emerging strongly from the results was the impact of organisation culture on work life balance and the development and advancement of female leadership within the company.

The company culture of Company X was influenced by the retail industry culture in which it operates, participants explained that survival is key because the industry is rigid, tough and highly competitive, it is a case of sink or swim. It was found that majority of participants traded their work-life balance for opportunities for career advancement. Females that been through the company's training managers programme had found the organisational culture to be very

geared for the development and success of men and often found themselves going above and beyond what is required of their jobs just to succeed. Although the company's training management program form the starting point for leadership career development, the program is designed to instil company culture and groom acceptable behaviour.

4.2.3.1 Career Development and performance management

All managers within the company have been through the company's retail management development programme (RMDP). Entrance into the programme requires nomination, skills assessment and psych evaluation, and the process is managed by regional Human Resources. During RMDP participants picked up that most managers in the industry were frustrated about their job responsibilities and the negative impact it had on their family life.

Based on success in RMDP, staff can be further nominated to participate in the international programme. This programme provides training in different countries such as China, New York and Sydney. Other FMCG companies such as Spar and Woolworths, also participate in this development programme. Despite being a highly sort after programme in the retail industry, the company did not have a formal policy and female managers were unaware of the rules that govern the selection process.

4.2.3.2 Gender inequality

Female managers experienced levels of gender discrimination in various stages of their career development while male participants did not raise any concerns about their career development within the organisation. Female managers raised concerns about the setting of performance targets and measurements which was different for men and women in the company, although managers performed similar roles and with similar skills set. When bringing forward these concerns during performance appraisal, female managers receive no legitimate reasons for the practice. The roles and responsibilities of women as mothers, wives and care givers was viewed as a weakness and a problem in terms of their performance.

“Because you want to go home and see to your children, nurse a sick husband, or you didn't come to work because you got this thing to do and that thing to do, and as far as they are concerned if you are not handling things the way a man handles issues, then why should you be marked the same” (R2).

It generally takes much longer for a female employees in the company to grow to managerial levels in comparison to their male counterparts. Female leaders do not feel supported and

valued by the company. The company had recently employed a national talent manager to manage to manage the development of staff and employment equity. One of the mandates in employment equity is to develop women leaders in the industry and although there was an increase in female promotions within the region, the performance of female managers is not taken seriously and therefore there is an uncertainty as to whether promotions were awarded based on gender or performance or both. The store manager explained that she consistently received poor scores (despite good department performance) for the last two years and was still promoted. She was told that her low score was due to not meeting sales targets, which she found unfair as the entire region performed badly at that time. She believed that being part of a racial minority group (coloured) she was only promoted to meet equity targets although she felt she performed well, therefore the current policy of quotas actually worked against women.

4.2.3.3 Generational issues

Most managers felt that younger, newly recruited staff seem to be clear were clear about their boundaries between work and their personal lives, as many were are unwilling to perform tasks outside their job descriptions or put in extra hours when needed. This exacerbated existing issues of short staffing, ultimately resulting in managers performing extra tasks themselves. In recent times it has been become more common for staff to resign once they reach senior levels because of the amount of extra (personal) time that is required to managed duties and responsibilities attached to senior roles within the company. All participants were long serving employees whom associated loyalty and job commitment with passion and the ability to go the extra miles, and managers found it difficult to instil this culture with the younger staff because for them work was associated work with set job functions and income.

4.2.4 Coping strategies

Female managers *adapted their behaviour* to cope with the culture of the company and believed they had taken on a very male approach in managing their roles in the workplace. Years of grooming to company culture caused females leaders to manage situations with little emotion and empathy, which meant holding back on female instincts and focusing on the culturally, appropriate response. Taking on *a typical male career path* meant that female leaders consented to carry out their careers against the same expectations held to their male counterparts and therefore expected to limit their participation with family responsibilities and secure the necessary help needed to manage any work interference. Unable to effectively carry out their role as wife, mother, and caregiver etc., *family support* was highlighted as a key area

to enable career advancement. Having a support system at home in the form of grandparents and immediate family was a relief for female managers because they were able to hand over care of their children to people they could trust.

“I think if I did not live with my mother-in-law, I will have been dead, because who is going to feed my children and make sure they bath and checking up on homework...I don't have time to do any of that. This affects the relationship with my husband in a big way” (R1).

Although the company does not have a formal mentorship programme, managers have recognised the importance of **mentorship** with their staff which they accredit to their own positive experiences during various stages of their career within the company. Developing a mentorship relationship was also a way of coping with organisational culture, the idea of having someone experienced that is able to teach you valuable lessons that will help you in the workplace. Participants 1 and 2 provided valuable insight in their responses.

“I still go back to my old store manager...so never mind he put me in enquiry, but he knew what the outcome of the enquiry was going to be because there were certain lessons I needed to learn, that is was not taking him serious on” (R1).

“It is a help to have someone like that because you can feel like you are all on your own, and you are” (R2).

4.2.5 Policies and practices promoting work-life balance

Participant results indicated that the company had implemented policies and practices that supports WLB. However, employees have also taken the initiative to develop informal practices to support WLB.

4.2.5.1 Formal policies and practices

Aside from the statutory leave policies that promote WLB, the company had implemented a policy that offers health benefits to all store managers. This policy requires that all store managers, after one year of service in the position, carry out annual full medical examinations. These medicals are compulsory with expenses fully covered by the company and separate from the standard benefit of subsidized medical aid offered to all employees. The policy requires store managers to follow through with medical advice derived from these check-ups. Store managers also receive an additional two weeks' vacation leave after one year of service in the position, although managers were not sure if this benefit formed part of a formal policy.

Because of work load and other unfavourable working conditions described earlier, managers felt that the additional leave was more about staff retention rather health benefits.

“Right now I am so on the fence about these medicals, because do I have to wait for something to happen to me, a lot of our store managers have recently had heart attacks, some have taken stress leave, either for fatigue or anxiety” (R1).

More recently, the company carried out an employee wellness initiative in stores across the country, informing staff about nutrition and healthy living. Managers were unsure how this will progress in the future or if it was the start of a developing practice that would eventually form into a policy.

4.2.5.2 Informal practices

Managers have identified the importance of building mentorships amongst colleagues and have taken the initiative independently or outside of any direct instruction or training from the company to build these relationship with the staff. The store manager found value in instilling rituals to build relationships and moral amongst her staff, the introduction of morning huddles allowed for opportunities for colleagues to connect with each other and plan the day ahead together. Female managers in particular felt that is was important to give support to each and connect on a personal level as they had experienced in during their time in the company.

4.3 Summary

Despite the negative experiences participants associated to their working environment, many still displayed loyalty and commitment to the company. Many felt that WLB would be achievable if regulations to working hours were respected and enforced. A common thread in results suggests that current organization culture prevents the attainment of personal WLB practices and inhibits the development of female leadership within the industry. In the next chapter results are discussed in relation to the literature provided on this topic.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings of the research results presented in the previous chapter. The discussion is organised to answer the five research objectives of the study and to contextualize results against previous research and literature.

5.2 Understanding WLB

While some employees had not heard about the term WLB, many understood it as a natural process or desire to separate the professional from the personal to strike a balance. Strongly emerging from the findings was WLB of managers strong linked to their long working hours and job function. Findings further suggest that employees were also fully aware of the separate roles of work and home and the possible interference that could occur between these two domains. Definition included the need for balance in the form of working set hours, the ability to function psychologically and non-interference of work related issues during personal time. These findings are consistent with a Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) conflict framework which suggests that employees experience time-based conflict because they are unable to perform function in two roles places at the same time which is further exacerbated by long working hours (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

5.3 Poor working conditions

The findings gathered from this theme indicated that the WLB of employees is severely impacted by the working conditions which within they operate. Complaints about long working hours with increased expectations of availability after hours, together with concerns about stress and job burnout were amongst the more serious aspects of working conditions that arose from discussions. The changing dynamics of the retail industry has expanded retail operations to seven days a week, which means that employees are now spending more time at work than at home. Findings suggest that despite complaints of long, extended working hours, older long serving employees related the ability to manage under these conditions as a sign of loyalty and

commitment to their work. Similar findings in Doble and Supriya (2010) study explained that retail employees are now expected to show work commitment and loyalty in more obvious ways (Doble and Supriya, 2010). Findings suggest that managers consistently work a significant amount of overtime and because of this the company is in violation of the regulated working hours. Managers felt unappreciated despite performing to their optimum. Feelings of not being compensated adequately usually equates feelings of not being appreciated. South African labour law limits the amount of overtime hours that can be carried by an employee in a week to allow for proper rest periods and stipulates the necessary remuneration that needs to be awarded for such overtime. Some managers at company X equated the amount of over time worked to a year's worth of working hours.

While managers are fully aware of their legal rights, they have not taken up any company grievance procedures to lay an official complaint against the employer. Similar findings were generated in Hsu, Bai, Yang, Huang Lin and Lin (2019), and Eunsuk and Jiyun (2017) Asian studies, where employees perceived working normal hours as a sign of weakness and at most times felt obligated to working excessive hours despite fully understanding the violations of their employment contracts (Hsu et al., 2019: Eunsuk and Jiyan, 2017) Similar perceptions are echoed in Young's (2018) study, where long working hours were linked to increased levels of productivity although it reduces overall performance in the long run due to poor mental and physical health (Young and Information, 2018). Health concerns related to job function emerged strongly amongst female managers. These concerns developed as a result of illness and death amongst colleague which they attributed to job function. Career success, physical and mental health, has been known to have a direct impact on how each role is balanced and managed.

Kotze and Whitehead's (2003) study on 24 professional South African women, found that health and well-being concerns such as insomnia, fatigue, depression, panic attacks as well as cancer, were raised as result of imbalance (Kotze and Whitehead, 2003). Workplace stress experienced by employees is known to prompted changes in their physiological, psychological and behavioural functions, which can be harmful to individual health (Lundberg and Cooper, 2010). These findings are significant for business productivity because health issues, especially psychological, mean that the company can experience a sustain decrease in productivity from their employees. Results indicate high level of sick leave amongst staff and very low levels amongst managers. Managers associated low level of sick leave with high levels of job responsibility. A European study carried out by Dragano, Lunau, Bambra, Eikemo and van der Wyl (2014) emphasized the role of the work place as a determinate variable of the health

and well-being of employees and found that job strain, effort-reward balance and job insecurity made up the key risk factors for poor health (Dragano et al., 2014). Anthony (2015) study revealed that lack of control over work schedule and job insecurity increased the rate of absenteeism (Anthony, 2015). WLB issues impact the company's bottom line and health care costs incurred by organisation for improving employees' health can be considerable. Developing WLB initiatives are strongly associated to increased productivity and increase return on investment.

Managers attributed excessive working hours to short staffing issues which increased their work load because they managed several task outside their job descriptions. Mani, Kesavan and Swaminathan (2015) study suggests that systematic understaffing as a result of poor labour force planning which placed unnecessary pressure on key management staff. Findings suggests that the company has not made any strides to fulfilling key training management position in several departments within the store. It is unknown whether this issue is related to financial constraints pertaining to recruitment or whether it is an issue of poor succession planning in the training and development of staff for key positions. Daily operations of the business was integrated by SAP and managers reported limited use of the programmes due to poor implementation. As a result, the system was not utilised to its full potential in ways that would stream line activities of manager's job functions.

Findings suggest that the integrated use of the cell phone as management tool to successfully carry out management duties and responsibilities, meant that managers were contactable throughout the day and after hours. All necessary and important business communication was relayed to the store manager via nine different WhatsApp (instant messaging) groups. Managing the communication received from these groups required additional time for reading and responding which posed an additional burden on the store manager. The nature of instant messaging is based on fast, quick responses and therefore managers were expected to receive communication, action, and provide feedback with speed and efficiency.

Managers complained about the company's lack of respect for their personal lives as they were consistently expected to avail themselves for phone calls after hours and were unable to mentally switch off work. Managers reported work interference with family time, feeling of exhaustion, moodiness and irritability. Job expectations consistently imposed burdens which pushed boundaries, making it increasingly difficult for employees to find balance between their work lives and private lives. These findings are consistent with Bobat, Mshololo and

Reuben (2012) view that technology takes attention and time away from aspects of employees personal live through the increased availability of employees whether they are physical present or not (Bobat et al., 2012). These findings are relevant to spill-over theory which emphasises the impact of behaviour and emotions and its fundamental role in maintaining balance between professional and personal domains (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Managers had experience a negative spill-over of work into their personal time through the transfer of behaviour in the form of exhaustion and negative emotions generated from the workplace. These results are consistent with Michel, Bosch and Rexroth (2014) findings, that suggest employees struggle with unwanted psychological preoccupation in the form of work-related cognitions, emotions and associated energy levels during their personal time (Michel et al., 2014).

5.4 Culture of the organisation

The results suggest the culture of the company impacted negatively on career development of women, and encouraged and practiced a masculine approach to the working environment which was further instilled through company training programmes. Hayduk (1998) shared a similar description in his definition of organisation culture ‘the way we do things around here’ (Hayduk, 1998). One way of controlling expected behaviour of employees is to introduce them to the company culture at early stages in their employment, training programmes is one sure way of gaining this control. Female managers were subjected to gender discrimination in various stages on their career development which they attributed to company culture which mirrors the retail industry culture which is geared to the success of men.

Finding further suggest that female managers adapted their behaviour to cope with the culture of the company and believed they had taken on a very male approach in managing their roles in the workplace, which provoked strong emotion. While years of grooming caused females leaders to manage situations with little emotion and empathy. Findings reported by in Brue (2018) and Cross et al. (2017) study of leadership reflects comparable findings, where women in leadership positions struggled with WLB deriving from gender bias cultures which lead to pressure to comply with status quo leadership approaches (Brue, 2018, Cross et al., 2017). Similar sentiments were derived from Dilmaghani and Tabvumba’s (2019) large scale study (covering most occupations) which reported lower level of work-life balance satisfaction amongst women in comparison to their male counterparts (Dilmaghani and Tabvuma, 2019). Female managers raised concerns about the setting of performance targets and measurements

which was different for men and women in the company, although managers performed similar roles and with similar skills set. Feedback during performance appraisals indicated women's family responsibilities was viewed as a sign of weakness as it caused interference with work responsibilities. These findings suggest that there is no integrity in the performance appraisal process and further draws on the assumption that family responsibilities only forms part of a woman's role in society. Conflicting findings in Daverth, Cassell and Hyde (2016) study on perceptions of fairness in line managers' decision making indict that sometimes managers did not agree with the company's ethos of supporting employees with family and caregiving responsibilities (Daverth et al., 2016). One can therefore deduce that the perceptions of line have the power to promote or destroy company culture.

Female managers felt consistently undervalued in their performance and linked their promotions strictly to the company's equity targets. According to South Africa's Employment Equity Act business has a duty to grow women into key leadership positions, especially within minority groups. In spite of this female participant raised concerns on the slow trajectory of females to management position in comparison to their male colleagues. An important finding was that women openly expressed themselves and detailed accounts of their experiences, whereas male participants did not elaborate much on their perceptions and experiences nor did they elude to any concerns about their career development within the company.

Given the shared perception of the existing company culture, one can assume that male participants felt supported and valued. Cross's (2017) study drew similar findings that suggested men and women hold very different experiences in respect to leadership development and execution, and matching career demands with family demands. While Dilmaghani and Tabvumba's (2019) suggest, disadvantages experienced by females in management was driven by a female-specific pattern (Dilmaghani and Tabvuma, 2019).

5.5 Generational issues

Findings suggest that managers were frustrated by newer, younger employees in the company because of their perceived poor work ethic which they associated to an absence of loyalty towards the company. Younger staff were found to implement more boundaries between work and personal time in comparison to older, longer serving staff. What is interesting is that although managers themselves were fully aware of the difficulties they experienced with culture and managing their own boundaries between work and home, they failed to appreciate

the boundaries younger staff attempted to put in place between the personal and professional. One can assume that long serving managers, immersed in institutional culture will find the attitudes of new comers problematic. These findings pose a larger challenge for the company when engaging in succession planning because they are creating a toxic culture by expecting younger staff to operate under the same problematic conditions they themselves have been exposed to for years. According to Sun (2008) culture may be thought of as ‘software’ within an organization, since it is ‘software’, managers should study it carefully and try to understand how each element of ‘software’ works on the basis of ‘hardware’ (viewing an organization as an operating hardware) (Sun, 2008).

5.6 Coping strategies

Bobat, Mshololo and Reuben (2012) suggests that the integration of work and life roles has been closely related to the professional and private lives of women. Their study found that in order to cope with demands of work and personal life, women planned their personal responsibilities around their working day and often made use of gyms, and enrolled their kids in schools in proximity to their workplace (Bobat et al., 2012). However findings reflect differently as participants were unable to integrate their work and family responsibilities due to long, unpredictable working hours especially in the case of managers. The store manager signalled family support as a key coping mechanism that enabled her career growth. Because the company was not sympathetic to family responsibilities, the support of immediate family was crucial in the care of her children, which also gave her peace of mind.

Supporting this view are findings from Friedman and Greenhaus’s (2000) study of more than 800 businesses in the United States, which suggest that the influence of partner support is greater when employees feel their employers are unsupportive of their responsibilities outside the workplace (Morrow, 2001). While Huang, Xing and Gamble’s (2019) study on retail stores in China, found that marital status was significantly associated with female employees’ well-being, while job position was significantly associated with male employees’ well-being (Huang et al., 2019). Kotze and Whitehead (2013) and, Lundberg and Copper (2010) identified support structures most needed: support from husband relating to their attitude and overall emotional support; paid household - domestic support; family support, especially grandparents who assisted as caregivers; childcare support; community support in the form of spiritual support; and support from friends (Kotze and Whitehead, 2003, Lundberg and Cooper, 2010, Balkin et al., 2018). For females managers in the company, developing coping

strategies to minimize conflict between work and home, kept them in competition and enabled their career advancement. Gregory and Milner's (2009) research identified that in a strife to cope with work and family demands, women make a choice to follow a typical male career pattern (Gregory and Milner, 2009). Findings indicated that female managers also made a choice to take up a career path within the industry that was typically male dominated. The existence of these coping mechanisms indicate that employees experience an imbalance in their daily lives and have taken the initiative to reach a state of equilibrium.

5.7 Policies and practices that enable WLB

5.7.1 Formal policies and practices

In addition to statutory leave, store managers also receive an additional two weeks' vacation leave after one year of service in the position, although managers were not sure if this benefit formed part of a formal policy. There was also uncertainty around the wellness initiative that recently took place in store. This initiative was carried out regionally, participants were not clear on the purpose or plans around the initiative. Although the company has a training policy that communicates rules and regulations, managers were unsure of the rules that govern the selection process for the international retail training opportunity. Being selected for the international retail management training programme is a prestigious opportunity within the industry and has the ability to accelerate career growth and therefore access to this programme should be communicated effectively throughout the company. Information on career opportunities and any other within the company should be made accessible to employees. Similar findings from Webber, Sarris and Bessell (2010) study suggests that within the framework of organisational justice, perceived managerial support and career consequences of using work-life balance initiatives, as well as perceptions of justice and injustice with regards to work-life balance policies are known to act as barriers in employee uptake of work-life benefits (Webber et al., 2010). The company has a policy that offers additional health benefits for all store managers. These benefits are accessible after one year of service in the position of store manager, the policy requires managers to receive a full medical examination annually and to follow all medical advice resulting from these examinations. This benefit is fully covered by the company. These findings are especially relevant to WLB because it indicates the awareness of the company to the severe working conditions in which store managers operate. It further

assumes that the company also has genuine concerns about the health risk born out of managing the job function of this role.

5.7.2 Informal practices

Findings suggest that manager's take taken up the initiative to informal ways of supporting their staff's WLB. Morning huddles reportedly provide their staff with a chance to connect with each other. Mentorship was another informal initiative that managers in this store valued. Reasons this initiatives could be related to the fact that managers in this particular store have all been in the service of the company for more than 10 years, therefore they are fully aware and have the experience to understand the pressures of the environment in which they operate. What was interesting was that these managers received little direction on how to deal with staff concerns or moral.

5.8 Summary

This chapter provided a summary of results which signified various challenges experienced by store level, supermarket employees and managers. The comparison of results against popular WLB literature highlighted the imperative role of working conditions and organisational culture in achieving WLB. The next chapter puts forward recommendation to address the challenges emanating from the results and also provides suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions of work-life balance of employees within a private retail company and to determine the level of support provided by company to achieve WLB. The research was conducted through a case study approach in one store of a major retail company in South African. Participants included senior store management, middle management, logistical and shop floor employees. The findings derived from the results and discussion brought to the fore various challenges that works hampers WLB of employees. The objectives of the research was to determine employees understanding of WLB; explore the impact of working condition of WLB; establish factors that affect employee WLB; investigate the company's WLB practices, and finally to recommend strategies to support WLB. A qualitative research method was adopted and a total of 10 employees participated in one on one, semi-structured interviews. Participants were eager and provided detailed accounts of their experiences. The study provided a platform to share these experiences and a brought to the fore serious impediments to WLB, which employees what the company to address. This chapter highlights important findings and puts forward recommendations for consideration.

6.2 Conclusion

The key findings are discussed and aligned to the research objectives.

6.2.1 To determine employees understanding of the concept WLB in a major retail company

Not all employees had heard of the term WLB prior to the study, however all participants were able to provide their own definition and understanding of the term. For most employees, balance meant working set, contractual hours.

6.2.2 To explore the impact of working conditions on WLB in a major retail company

Current working conditions in the company was raised as a deterrent to WLB. Long working hours, lack of compensation for overtime, understaffing resulting in added duties and responsibilities, were all amongst the key findings impacting WLB of employees in company X. These conditions also created real fears of health deterioration, heart attacks and early death, amongst managers. Job security affected WLB of those employees on VTE contracts which impacted their financial stability and limited opportunities for improvement and resource gain in both their personal and professional lives.

6.2.3 To establish the factors which affect employee work-life balance within a major retail company in Durban

Lack of recognition for performance through loyalty and overtime worked related to poor working conditions, caused employees to feel undervalued and demotivated. The culture of the company impacted heavily on WLB through gender bias practices which impacted the performance and career development of female leaders while promoted a masculine norms and practices in the workplace. While individual managers informally supported the well-being and family responsibilities of their staff, regional management was found to be general unsupportive towards the wellbeing of their staff.

6.2.4 To investigate WLB practices in a major retail company

The company recently embarked on a wellness initiative which informed staff about the value of nutrition and a good diet. Managers have recognised the importance of mentorship and have initiated this relationship with their staff, this is not a formal practice of the company but one of their own initiative. The company recognises the impact of working conditions on their managers and as such provides additional health care benefits for all store managers which one can assume is to counteract the side effects of the stressful working conditions.

6.3 Implications of this research

This study contributes to the existing body of WLB literature by looking at the context of the WLB in retail in a developing country (South Africa), which was typically overlooked as most popular research focussed on the larger developed countries such as the USA and China. The findings of this study are particularly beneficially to the company because it drives home the

importance of WLB in gaining optimum efficiency and productivity in employees' performance.

6.4 Limitations of the study

Research was conducted through the case study method, of one store within a major national retailer chain. Results are therefore only applicable to this particular store and cannot be generalised to the wider population. Data was significantly influenced by participants' perceptions and experiences. While participants were selected to represent different job functions within the store, they were also selected for their availability on the day of field work.

6.5 Recommendations

The final objective of the study was to recommend strategies to support WLB in Company X.

6.5.1 Improving working conditions

- Immediate changes to improve working conditions include the enforcement of company's overtime and sick leave policies. High levels of overtime and low levels of sick leave was related to high levels of job responsibility and short staffing issues. The employer has a legal obligation to comply with labour regulations and the company's human resources has the responsibility to ensure that policies are implemented and practiced. Enforcing the overtime policy through information and feedback sessions at store level, provides staff and managers with an opportunity to ask questions and clarify any uncertainty. Also, compensation for overtime hours worked needs to be enforced, however overtime costs can increase significantly if issues of understaffing are not addressed. Compensation for overtime worked avoids having disgruntled employees and accumulated tensions. The purpose of sick leave is to allow an employee time to recuperate from whatever illness experienced and to return to work healthy to resume full job function. Findings indicate very low levels of absence due to illness amongst managers, managers worked through initial signs of sickness and only took up sick leave when sickness worsened and became unbearable. Having sick employees at work, risks the health and safety of other employees, this is further motivation for the strict enforcement of the sick leave policy. The development of standard operating

procedures (Kalusopa) for overtime and sick leave can provide employees with a step by step guide on the rules and regulations, ensuring that the occurrence is managed correctly each time.

- Effectively enforce working time regulations at store level– thereby ensuring that all employees, especially managers take regular breaks and keep to their contractual hours. Similarly, retailers and labour organisations to be pro-active in changing the culture of long working hours and overtimes that characterises the entire industry. Employees can be provided with resources to help them think through their own work/life balance issues and find solutions.
- Issues of short staffing was found to be the main link to aggravated working conditions resulting in poor WLB of managers within the store. Current practices are unsustainable and dangerous to both the business and its employees. An operational audit is recommended to assess key systems, procedures and process with the objective of improved overall productivity through effective operations. The audit will bring to light any risks and gaps in the current way of managing operations and thereby identifying opportunities for improvement. Senior managers should be informed of the results emanating from the audit and develop appropriate strategies with their teams to effect and implement change. In addition, it is recommended that full implementation and training on the current SAP is carried out. To invest in this system means that the company is serious and fully aware of the benefits it provides to daily operations in retail. The system also integrates Human resources and therefore all policies and procedure should be easily accessible to all staff.
- Unplanned store visits carried out by the general manager was conducted regularly and often resulted in managers working late into the evening which significantly impacted their personal time. Respondent 2 suggested store visits to be conducted during reasonable working hours and more hours allowed for correction/fixing problems if not urgent and disruptive to operations, which could be formulated into a set of company guidelines to govern store visits.
- Respondent 1 & 2 recommended the benefit of a company cell phone subsidy for managers because it is a needed operational communication tool, an issue that has been brought up before in store managers meetings and in union meetings. But how can one justify this when findings suggest that the use of cell phones as an operating tool amongst managers actually eroded WLB because it did not allow managers to switch

off from their work after hours. An official telephone subsidy could further encourage work irrespective of working hours. However, a cell phone policy must be designed well to ensure boundaries, governing working hours can include limitations of cell phone usage outside working hours, no emails on weekends, no WhatsApp groups on weekends etc.

6.5.2 Organisational culture

The organisational culture of company X impacted negatively on the career development of female leaders in the organisation and reinforced a male dominated approach to working environment. It is therefore recommended that the company carry out an organisational culture audit to identify culture deficiencies and opportunities for improvement and change. The culture of an organisation is imperative to creating sustainable competitive advantage in business. According to Testa and Sipe (2013), “for culture development efforts to be successful, leaders must first know the reality of the current organizational culture” (Testa and Sipe, 2013, p. 36). Research suggests the pairing of an organisational development researcher and an executive team to manage the culture audit process. The implementation of Testa and Sipe’s (2013) five step process is recommended, which consists of 1) *Identification of the organization’s vision, mission, values, and strategic goals*; 2) *A brief narrative on the desired culture*; 3) *Selection of the audit team*; 4) *Data collection*; 5) *Interpretation and reporting* (Testa and Sipe, 2013). As a form of maintenance, an employee satisfaction survey can be administered on an annual basis, which can generate statistical data to determine accurate findings.

Findings suggest that managers valued mentorship relationships they had experienced in their employment and as such have taken the initiative to create their own mentorship relationships with their staff. It is recommended that the company formalise a coaching and mentorship programme, to support professional and personal development, because managers in this store recognise its importance, which could be the case in other stores across the country. Allow staff and managers to provide input to build the programme, that way the employees will own it and utilise it. Review the programme on an annual basis to improve any deficiencies. According to Abbot (2013), improving the coaching skills of managers and providing in-house mentors and professional coaches/counsellors can all be useful for transfer of skills, collegial support and career development of employees (Abbott, 2013). In addition, the company should provide further communication regarding the company’s wellness initiative as staff were not clear of the intentions and future of the initiative.

6.5.3 Gender bias and career development

Eliminating gender bias practices increases the success of any retention strategies the company may have. Participants did not elude to whether the company had a gender discrimination or a discrimination policy. The development and implementation of such a policy is imperative for all employees in the company because current practices constitute unfair discriminatory practices that confine both men and women to traditional gender roles, associated behaviours and expectations. The policy must make provisions for appropriate channels for communication to report discriminatory practices and behaviour and further supported by training on gender bias to educate managers and staff. The communication and implementation of equity plans because staff are unsure of what those plans entail. In addition to this, transparency in performance and career development practices such as training and promotions.

6.5.4 Policies and practices

Recommended training of senior staff on importance of WLB for company productivity, especially given the impact of working conditions on WLB. When managers do not enforce company policies and procedures through practice, it exposes the company to risks because there is no alignment.

6.6 Recommendations for future studies

The recommendations for future studies are suggested to expand on existing literature available on WLB and issues emanating from the study. First, the results of the study were based on the participation and feedback from a limited group of participants in one store within a national retail chain and data collection and analysis was carried out through qualitative methods. Future studies should include most stores and staff within the company chain and should also include executive members of the group, such as regional management. This can be achieved through quantitative research methods which will present results that are more accurate, reliable and valid. Future research could also expand to include retail competitors within the South African industry, a comparative study will ascertain whether certain phenomena are applicable to the industry or to just one company. Second, findings indicated that organisational culture promoted gender bias practices. A qualitative study with a larger group of employees, consisting of an equal amount of men and women, from all the stores across, can be used to further investigate gender bias practices in performance and career development. Finally, the

results from the study provided significant finding on the impact of poor working conditions on employees WLB. A quantitative study can be developed on the findings of this study, to further examine working conditions throughout all the stores within the group. Findings can therefore be generalised to the population and used to develop strategies for improvement, on a national level.

6.7 Summary

The aim of the study was to explore employees' perceptions of work-life balance in a private retail company, and to determine the level of support provided by the company to achieve WLB. Results emanating from the study provided answers to all the research questions:

- Poor working conditions such as extended working hours impacted on the WLB of employees.
- All participants were able to provide an understanding of the WLB concept
- Other factors affecting WLB within the company was gender bias practices and the culture of the company.
- Current WLB practices carried out in the store emanated from industry and statutory regulations, employees were aware of these practices
- Findings suggest that most employees perceive their managers and to be supportive in managing the balance between work life and personal life.

The study now confirms that the company provides very little support in helping employees achieve WLB and signifies the importance of and answers the research problem by signifying the importance for HR practitioners, managers and employers to understand the impact of WLB on the overall success of organisations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed letter of consent

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL
For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Employee

My name is Robyn-Lee Wagner. I am a final year student in the Masters of Business Administration programme from the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, University of KwaZulu-Natal. My contact details are as follows:

Email: 202522029@stu.ukzn.ac.za
Cell no. 0795 504 7229

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on Work-Life Balance (WLB). The aim and purpose of this research is to investigate a sample of employees in a company in the retail sector's perceptions of work-life balance and to assess the level of support provided by their employer to achieve WLB. The study is expected to enroll 10 participants from this store. It will involve the administration of interview questions to each individual. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be an individual interview that will last between 1-2 hours of your time.

The study does not involve any risks. The study will provide no direct benefits to participants. However, we hope the study will create awareness as well as improve the understanding of WLB amongst employers and employees.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00000213/2019).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 202522029@stu.ukzn.ac.za, Cell no. 0795 504 7229, or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research study is voluntary, participants may withdraw from the study at any point by contacting the researcher via email, telephone or face to face communication.

In order to protect the confidentiality of your personal information the following steps will be taken:

- Access to research will be limited to the researcher and their supervisor
- All research data will be scanned, uploaded and stored on Microsoft Office One Drive, a secure cloud based file belonging to the researcher.
- Research data collected will be stored for a minimum period of at least five years.
- The hard copies of data will be kept for a period of 5 years and thereafter destroyed by shredding.
- The data stored on the cloud will be kept forever.

CONSENT

I _____ (Name) have been informed about the study entitled EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE WITHIN A MAJOR RETAIL COMPANY IN DURBAN by Robyn-Lee Wagner.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

Email: 202522029@stu.ukzn.ac.za
Cell no. 0795 504 7229

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focusgroup discussion YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix 2: Interview questions

Date: _____

Time start: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Age:

Race:

Gender:

Occupation:

QUESTIONS

I am now going to ask you a few questions about your work experience.

1. How many years of work experience do you have?
2. How many years have you been working for the group?
3. How many years have you been working in this branch?
4. What is your job title?
5. Are you employed on a contract or permanent basis?
6. For how long have you been employed in this current role?
7. What sort of tasks do you perform on a daily basis?
8. How many hours do you work in a typical week?
9. Have you heard about the term work-life balance?
10. What do you understand by the term work-life balance?
11. In your view, what would work-life balance look like?
12. Has the topic of work-life balance ever come up in conversation with colleagues or in general?
 - a. If so, how often do you talk to colleagues about work-life balance?
 - b. What is the nature of your conversations or exchange?
13. Have you ever talked to your manager/management about work-life balance?
 - a. If so, how often have you mentioned work-life balance to management?
 - b. What was the outcome of your conversations or exchange?
14. Are you aware of any policies that *could be* implemented to improve work-life

- balance or have been implemented to promote work-life balance?
- a. If yes, what sort of policies could be implemented?
 - b. If no, are you aware of any policies in general that could help improve WLB?
15. Are you aware of any practices (whether formal or informal) that have been implemented by your employer to promote staff members' work-life balance?
- a. If yes, what practices were implemented?
 - b. When were they implemented?
 - c. Do you have any ideas or suggestions?
16. Do you feel your current work environment promotes work-life balance?
- a. Why did you give the answer you did above?
17. In your opinion, who should be responsible for your achieving work-life balance?
- a. Could you please explain why you gave the answer you did?
18. Is there anything else related to work-life balance that you would like to add?
19. Is there anything about this study that you would like to ask me?

Thank you for your time given to this study

Time end: _____

Appendix 3: Turnitin Report

| dissertation | | | |
|--------------------|--|--------------|----------------|
| ORIGINALITY REPORT | | | |
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| SIMILARITY INDEX | INTERNET SOURCES | PUBLICATIONS | STUDENT PAPERS |
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Appendix 4: Ethical clearance approval letter



21 August 2019

Miss Robyn-Lee Ann Wagner (202522029)
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership
Westville

Dear Miss Wagner,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000213/2019

Project title: EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE WITHIN A MAJOR RETAIL COMPANY IN DURBAN

Full Approval – Expedited Application

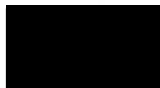
This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 07 August 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year from 21 August 2019.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Urmilla Bob
University Dean of Research

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

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