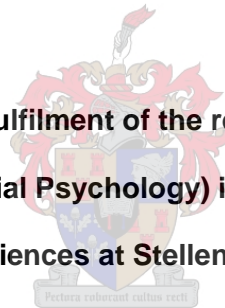


**ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE POLICIES WITHIN SOUTH
AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS**

by

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**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Commerce (Industrial Psychology) in the Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences at Stellenbosch University**



Supervisor: Mr GG Cillié

December 2017

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance has become an important concept in research and practice. However, very little South African literature has explored work-life balance and how it is perceived by managers and employees alike. Moreover, scant research attention has been given to the organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies within South African organisations. Extending previous international research, this study sought to gather South African-based information by exploring organisations' work-life initiatives. Using a qualitative, exploratory design, the present study designed and administered a semi-structured interview schedule. The procedure consisted of an initial design phase, followed by an administration phase. A semi-structured interview schedule was constructed during the design phase. During the administration phase, the newly developed interview schedule was administered to eight human resource managers from a variety of organisations across South Africa. The results from the interviews revealed that strategic intent, along with very specific internal and external factors, are important determinants of the implementation of work-life balance policies within the sample of South African organisations. Implications for practice include having a clear understanding of the organisation's strategy, having an organisational culture that favours the utilisation of work-life balance policies, and being aware that management is key in realising a healthy work environment. In addition, female employment in key positions promotes the implementation of work-life balance policies, as do Generation Y employees, while the need for greater work flexibility and transparent communication cannot be understated. Taken together, the present findings add value to the limited South African literature and offer foundational insights for future research in the field of work-life balance.

OPSOMMING

Die konsep van 'n balans tussen werk en lewe is een wat van belang is in beide navorsing en praktyk. Ten spyte daarvan is daar min Suid-Afrikaanse navorsing wat ondersoek ingestel het rakende die onderwerp. Geen navorsing is gedoen met betrekking tot die organisatoriese eienskappe wat verband hou met die implementering van beleid oor 'n werk-lewe balans in Suid-Afrikaanse ondernemings nie. Hierdie studie het probeer om Suid-Afrikaanse data te bekom deur ondersoek in te stel na Suid-Afrikaanse werk-lewe balans-inisiatiewe voortspruitend uit bestaande internasionale navorsing oor die onderwerp. Deur gebruik te maak van 'n kwalitatiewe, verkennende studie-ontwerp het die huidige studie 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoudskedule ontwerp en toegepas. Die prosedure het bestaan uit 'n toepassingsfase, voorafgegaan deur 'n aanvanklike ontwerpsfase. Gedurende die toepassingsfase is die ontwikkelde onderhoudskedule toegepas onder agt menslike hulpbronbestuurders wat 'n verskeidenheid organisasies in Suid-Afrika verteenwoordig. Dit blyk vanuit die onderhoude dat 'n strategiese bedoeling, tesame met baie spesifiek geïdentifiseerde interne sowel as eksterne faktore, belangrike determinante is vir die implementering van beleide oor werk-lewe balans in die monster van Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies. Praktiese implikasies van die studie sluit onder andere in dat 'n begrip van die organisasie se strategie, sowel as 'n organisatoriese kultuur wat werk-lewe balans bevorder, 'n sleutelrol speel. Verder word die rol van bestuur in die organisasie beklemtoon. Die studie dui daarop dat vroulike indiensneming, veral in sleutelposisies, die implementering van werk-lewe balans-beleide bevorder, en ter selfde tyd kan die behoefte aan groter werksbuigsaamheid en deursigtige kommunikasie nie onderskat kan word nie. Die huidige bevindings voeg waarde tot die beperkte Suid-Afrikaanse literatuur en bied verder fundamentele insigte vir toekomstige navorsing op die gebied van werk-lewe balans.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“By working faithfully eight hours a day, you may eventually get
to be the boss and work twelve hours a day”*

Robert Frost (1875–1963)

1.1 BACKGROUND

Since technology is so readily available and increasingly advanced in the twenty-first century – so much so that an individual is free to work any time, in any place and for any given length of time, the notion of long working hours, or ‘overtime’, is not as obscure as one would assume. This is largely attributable to virtually non-existent global boundaries and instantaneous lines of communication between countries that are far apart. Moreover, since globalisation has become so predominant, organisations are able to manage operations in different countries to the extent that production could take place in India and marketing in America, while the headquarters are in Japan. Notwithstanding the benefits of globalisation, there must be consequences of this advancement on both an individual and organisational level.

It can be argued that, in this century, the world is within reach of everyone. While many of the world’s countries are still struggling to recuperate following the global recession of 2008, multinational corporations such as Apple Inc. are launching one innovation after the next. However, behind all the excitement, employees are working tirelessly to maintain, and further enhance, the organisation. Employees are moreover responsible for keeping the organisation’s position as a market leader, and for buying and selling at precisely the right time. For these reasons, the organisation should prioritise employees’ well-being at all times.

Recently, increased attention has been paid to the concept of *work-life balance*, as it is known today. More specifically, emphasis has been shifted to the integration of an employee’s personal life with that of his work life. Considering the surge of interest shown both nationally and internationally, and not only by organisations but also by governments, it is easy to imagine this to be either a new concept, or simply a passing trend. However, the balance of work and family life has been under careful scrutiny for several decades. Moreover, increasing attention has been paid to the concept for several reasons. Among others, these include demographic and social changes, the

rise of women within the workforce, the rapid advancement of technology (which in turn has increased globalisation), as well as job insecurity owing to the constant advancement (Lewis, Gambles & Rapoport, 2007; Oosthuizen & Mostert, 2010).

In large part, the recent emphasis placed on work-life balance can be attributed to the increased employment of women. This is evident as, in earlier years, organisations fostered two assumptions: firstly, that the majority of employees would consist of men and, secondly, that woman would take care of (unpaid) domestic work (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). In the twenty-first century, however, this assumption no longer holds. With feminism being a major role player, the employment of woman experienced a major transformation that not only affected organisations on a micro level, but also the economy on a macro level (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006).

Presently, organisations compete in an international market to retain their skilled employees and, if the organisation is not perceived as an attractive opportunity, the skilled employees will not hesitate to move to an organisation that is willing to cater to their needs (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). In addition, if an organisation wants to attract the best employees it needs to have a competitive advantage over other organisations, or, alternatively, to offer the same package but with additional employee benefits to give the individual a reason to choose them over any other organisation (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010).

As women are increasingly ambitious about their careers, and with the 2008 recession forcing families to seek additional income, the concept of *dual-earning families* became the norm in most countries. As a result, more and more organisations are faced with the concern that the demands on both parents of dual-earning families are too high, which might increase work-life conflict and impact on individual stress, family relationships and family well-being (De Cieri, Holmes, Abbott & Pettit, 2005). Indeed, numerous studies have suggested that the lack of work-life balance not only has a negative effect on the employee, but also on the organisation itself (e.g. Bardoel, De Cieri & Mayson, 2008). Moreover, this imbalance can result in negative physiological responses, which may include, among others, insomnia, emotional eating, depression, burnout, as well as a decrease in motivation to engage in physical activity (Oosthuizen & Mostert, 2010).

In an overview of previous studies that raise concern about organisations still having an overly practical approach to the concept of work-life balance, it seems employers have the perception that, if a dual-earning family can manage to combine their work and family responsibilities, they will achieve work-life balance (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). However, it is not always possible to successfully balance these two life domains without additional support from the organisation (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). Specifically, support has to be provided by organisations that employees can utilise whenever needed. However, while work-life balance policies may exist on paper, this does not necessarily mean that they are followed through by management and employees (Kirby & Krone, 2002). It therefore is evident that the concept of work-life balance is complex and that organisations and employees do not yet have a mutual understanding of precisely what it entails at an operational level.

In practice, work-life balance policies are essentially human resource practices, and are geared towards reducing the potential impact of work-life conflict. Work-life balance policies can be categorised into four groups: a) support for a child, dependant or elder care, b) personal leave, c) employee-assistant programmes, and d) flexible work arrangements (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). An additional component is to provide the employee with resources in the form of flexibility (i.e. flexible working hours) to assist in the creation of a work-life balance. Taken together, these arrangements have been shown to have multiple positive effects on the attitudes of employees, which could ultimately impact the effectiveness and productiveness of the organisation (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). As such, there is little question that the implementation of work-life balance policies could result in positive effects, not only on the employee, but also for the organisation.

This trend is also observed in the literature, as previous studies have identified hundreds of different types of work-life practices (Bardoel et al., 2008). This emphasises the fact that organisations approach this element differently and that there is no universally accepted approach (De Cieri et al., 2005). Naturally, the varied approaches that have been identified are each associated with different implications and interpretations of work-life balance as a construct. This is also coupled with various motivations for the implementation of work-life balance policies in an organisation (De Cieri et al., 2005). Moreover, previous research suggests that

different levels of institutional pressure (i.e. pressure from both the government as well as from society) could contribute to organisations wanting to implement work-life balance policies in their own distinct way (see Wang & Verma, 2012).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

The concept of work-life balance has gained substantial recognition over the past two decades. Scholars from a variety of academic fields have vested considerable interest in trying to better understand work-life balance and its implementation strategies. Nevertheless, there are important gaps in the literature that warrant investigation. Firstly, research has yet to explore how work-life balance is responded to in third world countries such as South Africa. The term 'third world' carries an ambiguous connotation in the present study, as, firstly, there are the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South-Africa) – the fastest growing economies in the world, yet these countries are also largely dependent on economic activities that are externally influencing the way business is conducted. Very few studies have described the influence of this concept outside of classified first world countries. Secondly, limited resources are geared towards directing human resource divisions in the context of South Africa on exactly how to approach the implementation of work-life balance policies. Similarly, human resources also need guidance on what organisations should consider before implementing such policies, and how to convince organisations that it would be worth the effort.

Furthermore, based on previously mentioned examples, there appears to be an overarching assumption that the implementation of work-life balance policies is inherently beneficial, as is encouraged by most scholars. Mindful of this assumption, the question arises why only some organisations develop and implement work-life balance policies, while others do not. To this end it is worth investigating whether there is an underlying reason for this inconsistent trend. Along similar lines, it cannot be assumed that every employer is supportive of such policies, especially managers who are in favour of long working hours, which show employees' commitment to the organisation (Lewis et al., 2007). It therefore is important to observe how work-life balance policies are perceived by employers. Finally, it is necessary to establish a framework for implementing work-life balance policies within South African organisations as a guide for future practitioners. Notably, when new ventures are

based on scientific research, practitioners are better equipped to make informed decisions that are context specific, which ideally would increase the general success rate of work-life balance policy implementation within South African organisations.

The present study therefore aims to provide objective and insightful information regarding the concept of work-life balance within South African organisations. The insights gained are aimed at assisting practitioners within South Africa to make informed decisions before implementing work-life balance policies. The findings from the present study will also contribute to the general availability of any work-life balance research, as there is a general lack of context-specific research, especially within South African organisations. As such, this study will serve as a point of departure for future research, as it will be able to provide multiple recommendations for future studies owing to the wide variety of avenues this study could unveil. Therefore, the present research will make an important contribution to the future implementation of work-life balance policies. Indeed, any individual with a passion for employee well-being and a balanced life will be able to utilise the information presented to advocate for the implementation of policies that would lead to a more balanced work life.

1.3 RESEARCH-INITIATING QUESTIONS

Work-life balance has gained considerable recognition in recent years. In general, organisations can no longer afford to neglect the implementation of such policies to foster employee well-being. The question is, however, why certain organisations make provision for work-life balance policies and others do not. Also, how do organisations differ with regard to organisational characteristics that might influence their decision to implement such policies? With regard to the latter, organisations' responses to changing factors vary, not just between organisations, but also between sectors, both nationally and internationally. It therefore brings into question whether there are factors that are inherently part of an organisation that might contribute to the reasons why implementation differs so much. It is possible that there could be differences between cultures and that this accounts for differences on an international level. Based on previous studies, it appears that researchers ascribe differences to certain fixed characteristics of an organisation. To this end, the present study asks, firstly, what do the organisational characteristics associated with the provision of work-life balance policies in South African organisations consist of? Secondly, what other considerations

might influence an organisation's decision to implement work-life balance policies? In order to answer these questions, however, it is necessary to first define the concept of work-life balance for the designated context (i.e. South Africa).

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the present study was to clarify some of the important factors contributing to the current understanding of the concept of work-life balance. Other critical factors influencing the increased attention on this concept will be explored in detail to ensure that a comprehensive understanding is gained. Secondly, the present study aimed to closely observe the specific characteristics of organisations implementing work-life balance policies. Finally, the study considered the impact of institutional, resource-dependent and managerial factors on the implementation of work-life balance policies. Each of these factors is proposed to contribute towards the consideration and implementation of work-life balance policies. To achieve these aims, the present study pursued the following, specific objectives:

1. to explain the concept of work-life balance;
2. to explore organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies; and
3. to determine other considerations that may lead to the implantation of work-life balance policies.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There have been numerous attempts to better understand the complexity of the motivation behind organisations deciding to implement work-life balance policies. To this end, researchers have turned to theoretical conceptualisations to establish the antecedents of work-life balance policies. One of the more prominent theoretical considerations will now be put forward, before concluding the chapter with an overview of the various chapters that comprise this thesis.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) provides a relevant framework for the purpose of this study. The study was conceptualised, interpreted and understood through the lens of EST, as outlined by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1986). According to EST, the ecological environment is made up of four levels of interrelated systems,

represented as concentric circles in his model, and all of the systems interact with one another (see Figure 1.1 below). He refers to these levels as the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems.

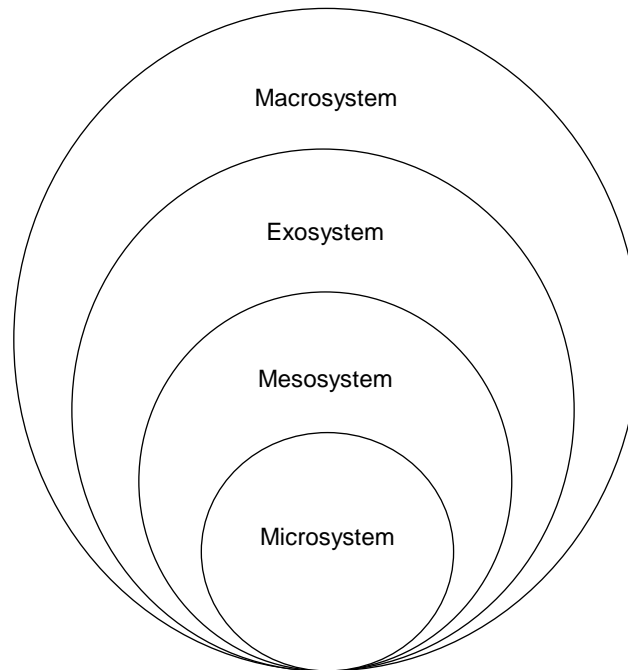


Figure 1.1. The four systems of Bronfenbrenner's EST (adapted from Coetzee, 2015).

Voydanoff's (2004) theoretical application of EST (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) to the interface of work and life provides the theoretical framework for the present study. From the perspective of EST, work and life are viewed as discrete microsystems consisting of patterns of activities, roles and relationships experienced in networks of face-to-face relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Voydanoff, 2004). The linkages and processes occurring between two or more microsystems comprise a mesosystem. When the boundaries between the work and family microsystems are sufficiently permeable and flexible, characteristics associated with the work and life domains influence each other. This joint influence between the microsystems of work and life compose what is called the *work-life mesosystem*.

Bronfenbrenner's EST (1979; 1986) has previously been used as a framework for understanding work-life balance (e.g. Hill, Erickson, Holmes & Ferris, 2010). In Hill et al.'s (2010) study, Bronfenbrenner's (1986) EST was used as a basis for considering the interactive relationships between the work microsystem and the life microsystem to explain the newly formed work-life mesosystem.

Organisations should not underemphasise the influence of macrosystem aspects when considering work-life balance policies; aspects such as governmental and economical influences and global markets are sure to pressure an organisation into a certain direction concerning work-life balance policies. Mesosystemic aspects include the community and the social desirability of work-life balance policies, highlighting that, if the community gains from the implementation of work-life balance policies, it might influence the organisation's considerations. At a microsystemic level, the focus shifts more to the organisation and its employees and their needs. The reciprocal influence between the microsystems of work and life compose what is called the work-life mesosystem (Hill et al., 2010). The EST suggests that this process is a combined function of process, person, context and time, implying the need for a fit between the employee and the environment (Grzywacz & Marks, 1999).

Taken together, the implication is that different characteristics within each sphere of the system elicit different responses from the environment, which in turn condition various employee-environment interactions (Grzywacz & Marks, 1999; Hill et al., 2010). Ecological Systems Theory thus serves as a complex motivation for why policies that promote the balance of the two domains should be considered. Although the complexity is not relevant for the present study, it is nevertheless noteworthy to understand that the combined effects of the two microsystems (work and life) form an interface between work and family that would be considered a mesosystem (Voydanoff, 2004).

1.6 OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 has introduced the concept of work-life balance and commenced with an overview of the current challenges facing employees, with special emphasis placed on dual-earning families. This was followed by the problem statement and rationale, which led to the research-initiating questions as well as the aims and objectives of the present study. This chapter has concluded with a description of the theoretical framework in which the present study is situated.

Chapter 2 offers a review of the literature and commences by discussing aspects surrounding work-life balance policies. This is followed by an overview of the various types of policies available and the associated opportunities and challenges. The chapter also presents the literature describing employee and management

perceptions of work-life balance policies, as well as associated organisational characteristics. The chapter concludes with an overview of the antecedents of the implementation of work-life balance policies.

Chapter 3 comprises the research methodology associated with the present study. The research design and procedure are described in detail, as a customised interview schedule had to be developed for the present study. The development of the interview schedule is described in detail before turning to the data gathering procedures and analyses. The chapter concludes with an overview of the inductive thematic analytical approach adopted in the present study.

Chapter 4 contains the results that were obtained from the present study. The results reflect several themes emanating from the thematic analytic approach employed during the analysis.

Drawing on the literature discussed in Chapter 2, Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the findings. Specifically, this chapter places the practical and theoretical contributions made by the present study within the context of the existing body of work-life balance literature.

Chapter 6 concludes this thesis with a discussion of the practical implications of the findings for organisations, emphasising the relevance for the South African labour market in general. Finally, the limitations of the present study are discussed and directions for future research are put forward.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The emphasis on work-life balance has significantly increased over the past two decades. While this is not altogether a new concept, the focus has shifted towards the integration of employees' professional lives with their personal lives. There is generally the perception amongst employees that their workload is too much to finish in normal working hours, which is moreover influenced by the increased participation by woman in the labour market, as well as the continued pressure to ensure that their skillset is current and up to date (Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne, 2007; Den Dulk, Peters & Poutsma 2012;). Originating mainly from a Westernised worldview, the concept of work-life balance can largely be considered a social construct. As such, work-life balance in western, industrialised countries may not necessarily reflect all issues in South Africa accurately (Epie & Ituma, 2014).

As mentioned previously, the recent increase in attention being paid to the concept can be attributed to organisations' realisation that it is important to manage work alongside the other life aspects of the employees (Lewis et al., 2007). Taken together – globalisation, the employment of women throughout the organisation (but also largely in key positions) and the rise of dual-earning families – each plays a significant role in the increased need for research on this topic. This applies especially to the South African context, where there is little to no research on the topic of work-life balance as a broad term, its specific areas of involvement, as well as employer involvement in the adoption of work-life balance policies.

It is important to clearly define the concept of *work-life balance* policies to gain a comprehensive understanding of what they entail. The complexity of this concept becomes apparent in that there are various types of policies that differ not only across organisations, but also across countries. The policies generally accommodate employees in two ways: 1) accommodating employees with children or a family, and 2) making provision for employees who only desire flexibility at work (Bardoel et al., 2008). As a result, the composition of the organisation's workforce is a determining factor in the implementation of work-life balance policies. While the composition of the workforce greatly contributes to the availability of such arrangements, the organisation

is also influenced by the sector in which it operates, as this determines service delivery needs. According to External Environmental Theory (Business Case Studies, 2017), no organisation operates in isolation and, as such, the sector is influenced by the current state of the economy, clearly indicating that macro factors are mediators in the role played by organisational characteristics.

Since work-life balance policies lead to controversial discussions, it is important to consider both the benefits and opportunities work-life balance policies bring, as well as the risks and challenges they might pose for organisations operating in various industries. Indeed, to be able to make informed decisions and present sound results for interpretation, the consideration of both sides of such policies is important. Along with the challenges and opportunities there will be other determining factors serving as mediators, which also need considerable exploring. Finally, the influence of management and employee perceptions of work-life balance is also of the utmost importance, as this determines the need, availability and support for such policies. In this chapter, a detailed review of the literature will be presented to provide a clear understanding of this concept, which will then serve as the definition adopted by the present study. In the next section, an overview of the various definitions will be provided, followed by a definition that has been selected for the purpose of this research.

2.2 WORK-LIFE BALANCE DEFINED

Language is far more than a form of communication; it is a system of representation (Reuben & Bobat, 2014). The very nature of people, including their thoughts, feelings and experiences, are all lived through and conveyed in language. When language or specific discourse is used, a certain audience is attended to. The way in which people use language can function in different ways for different individuals: at one end of the spectrum a certain way of communicating can privilege individuals, while at the opposite end it can disadvantage others. Likewise, language plays an important role in research, specifically in the understanding of the various key terms used. The way authors use a specific discourse can function as a method to rationalise certain ideas.

Work-life balance is an integration of two overlapping, yet diverse, discourses: the one emphasises the personal control of the individual's time and activities, while the other is concerned with the flexibility of the workplace (Zeytinoglu, Cooke & Mann, 2010).

The former applies mostly to professionals who are actively busy in the knowledge economy and struggle to find time for a personal life. Here, the focus lies on the personal responsibility of the individual and emphasises that the choice for balance should be made by them (Zeytinoglu et al., 2010). In this sense, work-life balance policies are believed to increase the autonomy of the employee and allow them to coordinate and integrate their work activities with their personal activities (De Cieri et al., 2005). The latter school of thought focuses on the employer and emphasises the balance between the workplace and the needs of the employees (Zeytinoglu et al., 2010). Here, the arrangement of benefits by the organisation for the employee is the element that helps to maintain work-life balance, as such arrangements generally meet the criteria for work-life benefits or policies (De Cieri et al., 2005).

The integration of these two discourses takes place when the arrangement is viewed from the employee's perspective. Specifically, for the employees, work-life balance is conceptualised as being able to meet the demands of family life as well as the responsibilities of work (De Cieri et al., 2005). It could also be considered as a way of creating a productive work culture where the focus is on minimising the tension between various domains of an individual's life. Ultimately, it is the integration of paid work, unpaid work and personal time (Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne, 2007). For the purposes of the present study, the emphasis will be placed on the personal control of the individual's time and activities. However, this discourse is not without controversy.

Numerous studies have been conducted in which the assumption holds that any work that is unpaid is included under the term *life* (Guest, 2002). The literature invariably suggests that balance between various domains is an individual's choice and, as logic suggests, so is imbalance. Such hermeneutically derived assumptions have dangerous implications and should not be excluded in the consideration of what constitutes work-life (Brady, 2008). Notably, the discourse used in numerous studies has caused confusion as to precisely what the researchers are referring to. The lack of explicit definitions for certain terms within this research field makes it challenging to interpret the results and implications of published findings. For instance, in studies conducted on work-life balance and work-family balance, the authors' terminology includes a different set of policies, indicating that one cannot use these two terms interchangeably (Hoffman & Cowan, 2008). Similarly, in Hoffman and Cowan's (2008) research, they refer to previous systematic reviews that have found work-family

policies to include maternity leave and other family arrangements, and where the term work-life was utilised, policies were more concerned with flexibility within organisations. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to understand what is meant by the terms work, life and balance. This understanding will determine how employees perceive the specific policies that are in place. In the following section, each concept forming part of the term work-life balance will be considered individually.

2.2.1 Work

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Weiner, Simpson & Proffitt, 1993) the word 'work' as a noun refers to "activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a result" or, alternatively, "a task or tasks to be undertaken". The work domain is very prominent in many individuals' lives, and although people work to fulfil their financial needs, it also provides individuals with a sense of purpose. The work domain moreover provides structure and opportunities to engage in meaningful relationships, and forms the basis for the achievement of status and self-esteem (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010). Throughout the present study, work refers specifically to paid work – the tasks undertaken in exchange for monetary reward.

Research has generally shown that the characteristics of paid work can be categorised into six groups, namely 1) structure, 2) social organisation, 3) norms and expectations, 4) support, 5) orientations, and 6) quality (Voydanoff, 2002). The structure of paid work includes aspects of the organisation such as size, composition and complexity. It does not only include various other considerations, such as the payment employees receive, benefits, job security and the number of work hours or work schedule, but also job-related transfers, travel and telecommuting. Job demands and pressures and the extent of the challenge, autonomy and self-direction are all part of the social organisation category, where norms and expectations associated with paid work are incorporated into job descriptions and duties, employment policies and the workplace culture. Supervisor and co-worker support are also considered as part of the characteristics, where involvement, commitment, aspirations and sense of community are all considered under orientation to work. Lastly, work-role quality is concerned with satisfaction with various aspects of the job, overall job satisfaction and job performance and productivity (Voydanoff, 2002).

2.2.2 Life

The Oxford English Dictionary (Weiner et al., 1993) presents numerous definitions for the word 'life' as a noun, one being "the condition that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter, including the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity and continual change preceding death". Taking this definition into consideration, it becomes apparent that human life has the capacity to grow and change throughout time before death. Life, for the purposes of the present study, will refer to activities that come naturally to humans and form part of the higher order needs of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943).

2.2.3 Family

According to Voydanoff (2002), the focus in work-life balance is largely on the term 'family', resulting in the characteristics being family focused. However, in the present study, a family focus runs the risk of excluding certain employees from the study, although there are certain characteristics that can be considered. Within the family structure, the number and ages of children, the extended kin as well as former spouses are important characteristics to consider. Others include (but are not limited to) the family division of labour, gender-related roles, general family support, the satisfaction with marital and parental roles and family life, as well as child development outcomes. These would also determine the influence life has on the consideration of the policies (Voydanoff, 2002).

2.2.4 Balance

'Balance' as a noun can be defined as "an even distribution of weight enabling someone or something to remain upright and steady", or "a situation in which different elements are equal or in the correct position" (Weiner et al., 1993). At the same time, balance is also a verb; as the Oxford English Dictionary puts it: "to off-set or compare; to equal or neutralise, to bring or come into equilibrium" (Weiner et al., 1993). Clearly, the definition implies that more than one aspect should be taken into consideration, in that the result would indicate harmony between the aspects or satisfaction with the value gained. Balance, per definition, also implies a 50:50 ratio, although for the purposes of the present study, balance will be considered a relative term interpreted

differently by various parties with regard to where the balance point lies (e.g. 70:30 ratio).

2.3 GENERAL THEMES IN THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE LITERATURE

Hoffman and Cowan (2008) observed that the terminology or language use should be carefully considered and that using the term work-family policies results in some employees not benefitting from the cover the arrangement provides as they perceive it as not being applicable to them. It therefore is important to determine what type of policy is in question when looking at the various arrangements that organisations might have in place. The shift in the use of language grew when countries realised that non-work responsibilities take many forms in addition to that of maintaining a family life (Brady, 2008). As will be discussed later, many arrangements may apply, and by specifying family-specific arrangements, organisations imply that employees without specific family duties do not have the need to maintain a balance in their personal life. Balance does not merely imply being able to fulfil all the role responsibilities, but also extends to the ability to maintain a position where stress and burnout do not occur, as well as feeling that one has control over activities taking place in one's life.

Another terminology issue addressed by Allen, Johnson, Kiburz and Shockley (2013) was the differentiation between flexitime and flexi-place associated with work-life balance policies. Since flexitime does not accommodate any location, it implies that the employee should be physically present in the office to complete his/her work. Specifically, it is simply the time when the employee is actually present at the organisation's premises that can be adjusted. Flexi-place, however, indicates that employees can complete their assigned work at any preferred location, although this should be done by a certain time (Allen et al., 2013). In addition, it is also important to distinguish between the mere availability of these policies and the actual use of them, as each may result in different perceptions. As mentioned previously, there is a definite difference between work-life and work-family policies, and how the policies are phrased would determine the perception thereof (Hoffman & Cowan, 2008).

In a study conducted by Maxwell and McDougall (2004), their definition of work-life balance was taken from the United Kingdom Department of Trade and Industry, which was concerned with the adjustment of work patterns, regardless of personal characteristics, in order to combine the responsibilities of various rolls. The key to

work-life balance is a variety of accommodating work arrangements framed in employment policies and procedures (Maxwell & McDougall, 2004). Work-life balance policies can also be defined as arrangements that decrease work-life conflict within the individual (De Cieri et al., 2005). The pressure of meeting different demands from different roles can have a negative impact on an individual, both mentally and physically. When that balance cannot be maintained or the demands cannot be met, it eventually could lead to unhealthy conflict and stress (De Cieri et al., 2005). The organisation might decrease the level of work-life conflict perceived by the individual by providing these arrangements and having policies in place.

An important aspect to consider is that having work-life balance policies available is a way of decreasing work-life conflict. Nevertheless, organisations very rarely implement them as a result of perceived work-life conflict amongst employees. For this reason, work-life balance is essentially focused on individual circumstances to assist employees in fulfilling aspirations and responsibilities to the benefit of both the employer and employee, and in turn society as a whole (Chandra, 2012). This concept is not an exclusive and precise definition; it represents different aspects for different individuals. It is a broad term that entails a variety of aspects and can be amended to suit specific contexts, such as organisations, cultures, countries and even levels of economic development (Chandra, 2012). It therefore is of great importance to understand the complexity of the concept, as it influences how organisations and employers go about choosing the appropriate policy for their organisation, as well as the actual implementation thereof.

Notably, throughout the literature, numerous definitions have been utilised in order to describe this phenomenon and, as previously mentioned, they have the potential to create confusion. In the present study, therefore, the terms work-life balance, work-life balance policies and benefits will be included collectively under the term work-life balance. It has been seen that the definition of work-life balance comprises numerous descriptions of the phenomenon, and in an attempt to create consistency for the purpose of this study the described definition of work-life balance should be seen in its comprehensive form as including all related policies.

2.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The interest in the interaction between the two domains of an individual's existence can be attributed largely to the changes that may occur within family structures, the changing nature of jobs due to economic, business and social developments, as well as the changing face of organisations (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010; Jacobs, Renard & Snelgar, 2014). While technology brings many advantages to society, it has also enabled employees to work longer hours and to perform job tasks at a variety of different locations. Nevertheless, individuals in the twenty-first century complain about the quality of life outside of work, yet at the same time have a constant need to upgrade general household standards (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010).

To this end, and as a result of the changing environment, the labour market has become intensely competitive, thereby increasing the pressure on employees to perform. Paid work therefore is becoming increasingly invasive in employees' personal lives. Various aspects have contributed to the increased attention to this concept, including the changing nature of work, work role stress, work schedules and changing work patterns. The increased popularity of the concept of work-life balance in this century could also be attributed to the change in career outcomes and gender roles within the two domains, the increase in dual-earner couples, multiple social roles, as well as a shift in organisational strategies (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010). There is little question that the world has evolved in many ways, which have subsequently changed the pace of business development.

Many researchers have undertaken to study the impact of engaged employees within the organisation. A 2003 attitude survey of more than 10 000 employees in 14 organisations by the Institute for Employment Studies confirmed several positive reactions to engagement, namely a positive attitude towards, and pride in, the organisation, a belief in the organisation's products and services, a perception that the organisation enables the employee to perform well, and a willingness to behave altruistically and be a good team player (Marshall, 2011). It furthermore reported that an understanding of the bigger picture and a willingness to go beyond the requirements of the job are also vital characteristics of an engaged employee. The contribution of engaged employees to organisations is therefore undisputed. Bearing in mind that some of the contributing factors include the changing nature of work,

organisations should ensure that they provide the employees with the necessary resources to be able to fulfil the demands that the job places on them. For instance, De Beer, Rothmann and Pienaar (2012) reported that the demands that paid work can place on employees are strongly associated with burnout and numerous other physical consequences, whereas engaged employees have access to resources that other employees do not have access to. Moreover, various studies found that organisations that actively promote the use of work-life balance policies had a 50% to 75% lower absenteeism rate than before the implementation of the policies (Southworth, 2014).

A study conducted within European borders (Méndez & Serrani, 2015) brought forward another point of view that signifies why the concept of work-life balance is important. For many decades, labour legislation has been written and developed according to a certain model, where this model was primarily based on a worker whose essential profile fits that of a married man. This indicates that the husband could take complete responsibility for his duties towards employment, as his spouse was not incorporated within the labour market and could take on all the responsibilities of the family and household (Méndez & Serrani, 2015). These authors are of the opinion that labour legislation needs to adapt to new realities and attend to the new requirements with new rules. Indeed, across many spectrums, including both social and political, the recognition of new rules is apparent. However, due to the lack of data and proactive, positive movement, very little has been done to adjust the labour legislation model.

Furthermore, Méndez and Serrani (2015) share an interesting point of view by stating that, according to European legislation, the reconciliation of work and family life forms part of an individual's constitutional right. The constitution prohibits discriminatory treatment and, by not adjusting the labour legislation model, there is arguably a very real risk of discriminating against working women (Méndez & Serrani, 2015). Notably, this will not be direct discrimination, but rather a form of indirect discrimination. The law could possibly make room for specific arrangements that are custom-designed per individual, but once again it would be necessary for various courtrooms to start mandating positive movement to create case law, as well as a new model for labour legislation. It follows that having solid information on work-life balance could contribute greatly in movement from a legislative point of view. The next section provides an overview of the available work-life balance policies, before turning to an overview of the various opportunities and challenges associated with such policies.

2.4.1 Types of work-life balance policies

Considering various definitions of work-life balance policies, work-family policies and work-friendly policies as well as the benefits they entail, the apparently simple concept of work-life balance contains a level of complexity that requires a more in-depth understanding. Any discourse used to explain this phenomenon demands different considerations regarding what exactly comprises such policies. Put simply, work-life balance policies include any organisational programmes or officially sanctioned practices designed for the purpose of providing a supporting role in order to assist employees with the integration of the paid work domain and other important life domains (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). To this end, various types of work-life balance policies have been designed.

2.4.1.1 Flexible working hours

This kind of work-life balance policy consists of flexibility in the time, location and amount of work to be done. Flexible working hours (or flexitime) can be defined as working part-time, term-time, having compressed working weeks, flexible shift scheduling options, working from home, or doing tele-based work. It also includes aspects such as job sharing and shorter work weeks for parents. This type of policy implies scheduling one's own work time around individual needs (Bardoel, Moss, Smyrnios & Tharenou, 1999; Ryan & Kossek, 2008; Chandra, 2012; Berg, Kossek, Misra & Belman, 2014).

2.4.1.2 Employee assistance programmes

Employee assistance programmes (EAPs) provide employees and their families with counselling assistance free of charge. These programmes are there to assist or advise employees regarding personal matters or decisions and are also available for use by their family. Such facilities can also include life skills programmes, subsidised exercise or fitness centres, relocation assistance, as well as a work and family resource kit or library (Bardoel et al., 1999; Chandra, 2012).

2.4.1.3 Child care, dependant care, or elderly care

Some organisations provide employees with the option of placing their children in day-care at work, which provides comfort as they are closer to and more accessible by

their children. This can also occur in the form of a subsidy for day-care payments (full or partial) in cases where the organisation does not have an on-site day-care facility. The other option is accommodating alternative time arrangements for parents with children under the age of 13, and accommodating employees when they need to attend to their children. This could include having gradual return-to-work options after childbirth, adoption or illness. Other organisations are considerate towards employees who have adults depending on them and provide a policy that includes the use of organisation phones or time allowed off work during the day when having to attend to the dependant. In addition, organisations may also offer additional child-care during holidays or have an organisation referral system for child care (Bardoel et al., 1999; Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010; Chandra, 2012; Berg et al., 2014).

2.4.1.4 Personal leave

Personal time off may be permitted for health, personal, caregiving, maternal, parental reasons or family leave. While these personal leave options are mostly regulated by labour legislation, when organisations provide leave over and above that which is required by law it is regarded as part of work-life balance considerations. What may also be considered as part of this category is the pay associated with time off, since not all organisations pay for overtime, whether the employee is eligible or not. This benefit is regarded as guaranteeing payment to employees when they take time off due to overtime worked or for other work-related reasons (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2012; Berg et al., 2014). Another type to consider is paternity leave granted to new fathers. This might include the father looking after the mother, as well as adjusting to a new baby in the home. Finally, personal time off can also be unpaid for reasons such as pursuing further education by means of sabbaticals (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2012; Southworth, 2014).

2.4.1.5 Virtual offices

Virtual offices bear a close resemblance to the characteristics of flexible working conditions, with the key difference being that the employee could be located in a different country whilst working for an employer in the United States of America (USA) or United Kingdom (UK), for instance. Virtual offices make use of advanced technology to accommodate the needs of the organisation and staff. In doing so, organisations are providing their employees with virtual offices to attract top-ranked employees

across the globe without requiring them to relocate (Hill, Miller, Weiner & Colihan, 1998).

2.4.1.6 Career path alternatives

Finally, some organisations provide their employees with career assistance by granting them sabbatical leave and re-entry schemes, along with phased retirement. Organisations undertaking talent management are more likely to consider employees' careers as a factor in their business plan (Bardoel et al., 1999). The next section presents a review of the benefits and opportunities associated with work-life balance policies, after which a review of the associated challenges is provided.

2.5 ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSOCIATED WITH WORK-LIFE BALANCE POLICIES

Globalisation has already affected the ways in which organisations are approaching top-performing employees, and executives expect this to accelerate in the future (Deloitte, 2009). For organisations to attract top employees from around the world, they need to distinguish themselves from the rest. Leading organisations are therefore starting the shift towards more innovative organisational structures that allow a different approach concerning the attraction of talent and catering for clients' needs (Deloitte, 2009). Efficiency drivers, deregulation, increasingly sophisticated technology, as well as virtual offices and around-the-clock office hours all contribute to the consideration of providing alternative arrangements (Lewis et al., 2007). Of course, multiple benefits and opportunities will make an offer especially attractive, the most prominent of which are discussed below.

2.5.1 Positive outcomes associated with work-life balance policies

The inaugural Director of the Centre for Work and Life at the University of South Australia, Professor Barbara Pocock, explained at a seminar held on 23 June 2011 that flexibility in the workplace is associated with numerous positive outcomes (McMahon & Pocock, 2011). Some of the positive outcomes associated with flexibility in the workplace include, for instance, an increase in organisational commitment and productivity, as well as improved employer-employee relations. Employee outcomes include less work-life conflict, reduced stress and the promotion of mental and physical health (McMahon & Pocock, 2011). Along similar lines, a study by Bourhis and

Mekkaoui, (2010) showed that work-life balance policies have numerous positive effects, not only on the users of work-life balance policies, but also non-users (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). As previously mentioned, attitudes and behaviours such as loyalty, citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction are known to increase. In the study by Bourhis and Mekkaoui (2010), the authors considered numerous results from previous studies to determine whether work-life balance policies influence organisational attractiveness. The overall conclusion was that candidates who consider themselves to be family-oriented are far more likely to commit to an organisation with work-life balance policies in place (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). This is true even if the candidates do not use the policies, as they are aware of them and that alone contributes to organisational attractiveness.

2.5.1.1 Attraction and retention of employees

In support of Bourhis and Mekkaoui's (2010) finding, Maxwell and McDougall (2007) demonstrated that there are mainly two driving forces for implementing work-life balance policies, namely the attraction and retention of employees. Specifically, to attract the best candidates for a position, the organisation needs to have a competitive advantage over other organisations, not only to foster an initial attraction to the organisation but, more importantly, to retain the employees once hired. Work-life balance policies have also been shown to decrease turnover, since employees become more committed to the organisation when they see that their needs are accommodated. As a result, organisations are more likely to preserve their employees and talent pool. In the various studies inspected by Maxwell and McDougall (2007), they established that organisations that implement work-life balance policies feel that these manage employees' stress levels better, leading to employees having a more positive approach to their work, and in turn promoting productivity. If the focus is on the outcome of work and not the pattern in which work is conducted, employees feel valued and derive a sense of autonomy, all of which contribute to a more favourable working climate (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007). This study also showed that it eases the management of employees, as they are more willing to work and positive about their tasks.

2.5.1.2 Perceived workplace support

In a study by Champion-Hughes (2001; see also Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill & Brennan, 2008), it was estimated that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power yielded a return of \$10 for each dollar invested in their benefits programme, as this programme helped to reduce turnover and improve recruitment. It is clear from the studies conducted that, as early as in 2001, organisations realised that in order to remain competitive within a global market they should aim to be family-friendly, as it contributes not only to the employee's quality of life, but adds value to the organisation as a whole. Champion-Hughes (2001) reviewed Hickins (1998) and found that perceived work-place support is the factor contributing most to job satisfaction. Respondents in that study listed work-life balance policies (benefits) as contributing to perceived workplace support, thus work-life balance policies influence critical attitudes and behaviour in a positive manner. The interesting thing about the studies mentioned, especially the Champion-Hughes (2001) study, is that merely the perceived availability of work-life balance policies fosters positive outcomes for both the organisation as well as the employees. The actual use of the policies is not the determining factor, but rather the awareness of work-life balance policies and the possibility for utilisation are associated with positive outcomes.

Wang and Verma (2012) discovered that organisations that offer work-life balance policies without being required to do so by the government send a positive message to employees that they are valued and that the organisation will go above and beyond what is expected to accommodate their needs. Thus, the availability of work-life balance policies serves as a competitive advantage for organisations in that employees are more likely to work harder to improve the quality of services rendered. This comprehensive study showed that the ultimate result would be an increase in organisational productivity due to employees feeling valued, leading to limited voluntary turnover and the attraction of top talent (Wang & Verma, 2012).

2.5.1.3 Job satisfaction and organisational commitment

A UK study by Nadeem and Metcalf (2007) reports a significant association between perceived availability of flexible working options and desirable employee outcomes. Organisational commitment and job satisfaction were once again found to be higher where work-life balance policies were available. Work-related stress was significantly

lower where employees had the option to compress their working week, reduce hours or change shifts. In this study, it also became apparent that the availability of work-life balance policies is not the only mediator involved, but so is the perceived support of work-life balance policies. To this end, it was observed that managers who openly support the work-life balance policies reported higher job satisfaction and organisational commitment amongst their employees. There is therefore little question that work-life balance policies have widespread influence in organisations, specifically concerning organisational commitment, intention to resign, and work-life conflict (Kirby & Krone, 2002).

Flexibility in the time, space and manner in which people engage in their work can arguably be considered a resource that facilitates performance and reduces demands in the work domain (Hill et al., 2010). Accordingly, Hill et al. (2010) observed that work-life balance policies not only result in positive outcomes for the organisation, but also have a significant positive effect on the psychological state of the employee. The mere availability of these options provides employees with an opportunity to schedule their life according to their personal needs and accommodate their work around that (Hill et al., 2010). The strongest business case for implementing work-life balance policies from an organisation's point of view is that employees can work longer hours if need be when there is flexibility. This reduces the problematic work-life conflict and the flexibility is implemented at virtually no extra cost to the organisation (Hill et al., 2010).

2.5.1.4 Reduction of work-life conflict

Most of the abovementioned benefits consider various results that come from utilising work-life balance policies. A major determinant of whether employees will actually make use of work-life balance policies is the level of work-life conflict employees experience. Work-life conflict is a major concern for most organisations, as the consequences tend to yield negative effects on the organisation, as well as on the individual, which may include depression, substance abuse and marital tension. Work-life balance policies serve as a means to reduce the negative results as they provide the employee with alternative techniques for coping in a stressful work environment. Any organisation that shows concern for its employees' well-being should be aware of the positive effect work-life balance policies have on reducing work-life conflict and, as

this study argues, should plan for implementation (Allen et al., 2013; Grzywacz & Marks, 1999).

2.5.1.5 Communication within the organisation

An indirect benefit associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies is the effect it would have on communication within the organisation. Work-life balance policies need to be communicated to the employees by the organisation, as well as by the manager in the different departments. Management needs to be effective in their communication techniques to ensure that they convey the correct message regarding their support of such policies. As a result, employees would not only feel more at ease with the policies, but an increase in communication would have a general positive impact on the organisation (Bardoel et al., 2008). In addition, the communication between the manager and employee would need to be effective to ensure that the utilisation of the policies does not result in misunderstandings that could have been avoided (Southworth, 2014).

It is nevertheless worthwhile to consider that most organisations that view their employees as a resource instead of an asset will not necessarily reap the benefits that such policies hold. When managing employees with this 'asset' approach, the integration of various policies will create a tendency for improved performance and less of an intention to leave. Moreover, it was found that the perception of the availability of such policies is not enough to yield the benefits. Instead, work-life balance policies need to be available, supported and utilised by employees in order for them to have a mediating effect on aspects such as intention to leave and workplace citizenship behaviour (Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne, 2007).

Notwithstanding the positive outcomes and benefits, the next section will provide an overview of the challenges that employers may face when implementing work-life balance policies.

2.6 DISADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH WORK-LIFE BALANCE POLICIES

The previous section reviewed and discussed the numerous advantages and opportunities associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies. Despite the benefits work-life balance policies hold, there are certain challenges or

disadvantages that can be identified. For example, in Bourhis and Mekkaoui's (2010) study, one of the challenges identified is that the positive outcomes of work-life balance policies are dependent on the needs of the employee or applicant. In their study, Bourhis and Mekkaoui (2010) sought to determine whether work-life balance policies contribute towards organisational attractiveness. Work-life balance policies imply that organisations adjust what they offer employees based on what the operations of the organisation allow, and overall the policy will influence the organisation, i.e. flexitime in a manufacturing organisation would influence production schedules (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). Therefore, before the organisational characteristics associated with the organisations that provide work-life balance policies can be determined, it is important to understand the challenges of narrowing down exactly what different work-life balance policies entail (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010).

2.6.1 Policy inclusion and exclusion criteria

Another interesting challenge associated with work-life balance policies is grounded in Boundary Theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Essentially, this theory states that individuals differ in terms of role segmentation and integration (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). Certain individuals are able to differentiate between roles and the expectations associated with those roles whilst maintaining certain boundaries between them, whereas other individuals can only manage the integration of roles and role expectations (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). Organisations providing work-life balance policies run the risk of clouding boundaries for individuals who prefer definite segments. Different policies and arrangements also are applicable to different levels, which significantly complicates the relatively simple decision on whether or not to provide work-life balance policies (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010).

It follows that organisations should be very clear on the meaning and inclusion of their policies when designing them, ensuring that each meaning is interpreted correctly by the employees and not over- or understating the offer from the organisation. When phrasing the policies, it is of the utmost importance to clarify what is included and what is excluded, as this would determine what the employees could hold them accountable for. This simple point serves as a challenge that can bring about several problems if not handled and communicated correctly (Hoffman & Cowan, 2008). Another

challenge identified by Hoffman and Cowan (2008) is the amount of responsibility the organisation is willing to take to ensure employees maintain a work-life balance. The organisation needs to decide where they factor their responsibility in and how they will motivate employees to utilise work-life balance policies, as it could be that the employees who require work-life balance policies are those who place work at the centre of their life and will not consider the use of the policies. This is a major challenge, as organisations can become too uninvolved or overinvolved with work-life balance policies post-implementation (Hoffman & Cowan, 2008).

2.6.2 Barriers to the implementation of work-life balance policies

Amah (2010) found that career consequences play a moderating role in the utilisation of work-life balance policies. Organisations might have work-life balance policies in place, but if employees perceive them to be harmful to their careers they will not utilise them (Amah, 2010). The study by De Cieri et al. (2005) identified several barriers that contribute to the difficulty of developing and implementing these types of policies. These barriers include an organisational culture in which the emphasis is on high organisational commitment and that rewards employees who work long hours, an unsupportive environment for employees who have commitments external to the organisation, and organisations in which policies like these are not supported by supervisors or middle management (De Cieri et al., 2005).

2.6.2.1 Gendered perception of policy use

Organisations also run the risk that a certain gender bias hinders the availability of work-life balance policies, as women experience the utilisation of work-life balance policies as a second glass ceiling (e.g. Zeytinogla et al., 2010). Instead of using the available policies to assist them to pursue a career and at the same time engage in a satisfying family life, women have noticed that utilising work-life balance policies derailed their chances of receiving promotions (Southworth, 2014). As reported in her early twenty-first century work, Hewlett (2002) found that 80% of high-achieving career women desired a family, whilst an alarming 55% were still unmarried, both of which were attributed to the demand of maintaining a career within an environment that lacked the appropriate policies to assist these women. Not only does the stigma bring about this challenge, but in some instances men perceive the policies to only be

available to female employees and as a result do not utilise the available policies when they need them (Southworth, 2014).

Furthermore, a multinational study conducted to determine various perspectives on work-life balance policies drew important attention to work-life balance policies, specifically the aspect of gender associated with these policies (Lewis et al., 2007). In all seven countries studied, it was found that men felt excluded from the family aspects of work-life balance policies and did not utilise them as women do, even though the organisations insisted that the policies were gender-neutral (Lewis et al., 2007). The study also found that, in South Africa, a country where HIV/AIDS is extremely prevalent, men reported feeling left out when it came to options to change their working practices (Lewis et al., 2007). Men tend to underutilise work-life balance policies in fear of being perceived as less committed to the organisation and therefore are not considered for the benefits associated with the policies (Kirby & Krone, 2002).

The study by Lewis et al. (2007) brought to light another challenge associated with work-life balance policies. In the discourse of what work-life balance policies entail, there is an emphasis on the concept of personal decision making or choice when it comes to making use of work-life balance policies (Lewis et al., 2007). This implies that balance is the sole responsibility of the individual and that, by providing work-life balance policies, there is no need to have a cultural or structural change in the organisation (Lewis et al., 2007). The biggest problem with this implied choice aspect becomes evident on a managerial and professional level, where employees are expected to work long hours and show their commitment. A South African respondent explained that employees are regarded as making a difference when working longer hours (Lewis et al., 2007). Approaches such as this 'high commitment' management, where commitment to the organisation is measured by the number of hours worked, have a double-edged nature and pose a challenge. While an approach like this might foster higher job satisfaction, it could also increase perceived work demands and intensity (Lewis et al., 2007).

The South African example above highlights the effect of teamwork and performance-related pay in some of the South African mines, where peer pressure results in longer and more intense hours worked by the employees (Lewis et al., 2007). The leaders within organisations also contribute to the challenge of work-life balance policies, as

they verbalise their ambitions to their subordinates, resulting in their subordinates experiencing pressure not to utilise the available policies (Southworth, 2014). Therefore, organisations should ensure that the choice aspect associated with work-life balance policies does not reach into the other dimension of the inherent nature of the concept and encourage longer working hours rather than more balance (Lewis et al., 2007).

Taken together, this arguably indicates that there should be a change in the culture of the organisation. The organisational climate and workplace culture affect the success of work-life balance policies, as biases attached to the policies will contribute to a poor success rate. Organisations should reconsider the tendency to refer to employees working twelve-hour days as role models, as this sends a mixed message when attempting to implement work-life balance policies (Adisa, Mordi & Osabbutey, 2017; Kirby & Krone, 2002; Southworth, 2014).

2.6.2.2 Practical challenges

When policies are extended to or utilised by employees, the problem of workload presents some challenges. For instance, when a new mother takes maternity leave, her work still needs to be completed and therefore it will become someone else's responsibility or a temporary worker needs to be employed (Kirby & Krone, 2002). This aspect alone poses a challenge to organisations, as they want to have family policies available but the actual work is still there when the employee is not (Kirby & Krone, 2002). Therefore, some employees might signal that they do not want other employees to utilise these policies, as this may result in an increase in their responsibilities. This shows the effect of peer pressure and an unsupportive culture, which pose a risk when considering work-life balance policies (Kirby & Krone, 2002).

Furthermore, some organisations expect their most ambitious or best performing employees not to exercise their right to make use of work-life balance policies. In these cases, an employee might be reluctant to take up or ask for the desired support if they perceive either their supervisor or their organisation to be unsupportive (Dikkers, Van Engen & Vinkenbunrg, 2007). For example, employees may reject opportunities for fear of signalling their prioritisation of family life over the demands of work. Indeed, this behavioural divergence has been linked to negative career consequences, such as fewer training opportunities and a general incompatibility with career advancement

(Drew, Humphreys & Murphy, 2003; Kirby & Krone, 2002). As a result, employees may be reluctant to take up work-life balance opportunities. In addition, since policies might contribute to communication challenges, organisations could be faced with the specific stipulations of labour legislation. Organisations might also experience a lack of accountability by policy users and could find it difficult to manage the utilisation of work-life balance policies (Southworth, 2014).

2.6.2.3 Trade unions

An Australian study (Gray & Tudball, 2002) brought to light the challenge that trade unions bring when organisations consider implementing work-life balance policies. Even though it was an Australian study, it bears resemblance to the problems South African organisations could face. This study found that active trade unions would decrease the likelihood of employee benefits being implemented, as trade unions tend to formalise work and decrease supervisor discretion (Gray & Tudball, 2002). The challenge is that most employees want to know that they are represented and that the union bargains on their behalf. However, unions make static arrangements and hinder flexibility in the workplace (Gray & Tudball, 2002). Since this study was conducted, the composition of the workforce has become even more diversified and complex, bringing new concerns into the equation regarding unions.

In the light of the above, a European study (Den Dulk et al., 2012) showed that it is not the mere presence of trade unions that poses the challenge, but rather the individuals who comprise the trade union. Unions dominated by men would be less likely to bargain for work-life balance policies due to men generally being in the position of breadwinner and having fewer family responsibilities (Den Dulk et al., 2012). In addition, studies in the USA have shown that there is a correlation between the policies and the presence of unions. In some studies, unions were positively correlated with leave benefits, but had a non-significant negative correlation with flexible working conditions and scheduling and part-time work. Nevertheless, Berg et al. (2014) provided significant implications for the union's role regarding work-life balance policies, as they suggested that the unions should actively engage in supportive behaviours when negotiating for the employees. It is uncertain what South Africans' verdict is on this matter, as there is currently no clear indication.

2.6.2.4 Relevance

Possibly the biggest risk and challenge work-life balance policies hold is relevance within the work context. Considering the challenge of relevance, organisations that operate in a manufacturing environment, which is primarily driven in terms of productivity (e.g. seven tons of tea per day), would not easily be able to introduce such policies in the production department, as employees are already working shifts to reach production targets. An additional risk arises if an organisation decides to implement such policies within the administration department of a manufacturing organisation, as it would be perceived as unfair by the production workers. More specifically, organisations trying to create a certain culture are faced with the two-fold challenge of work-life balance policies: the one side of the organisation might benefit greatly from such policies, while the other side operates in such manner that the policies cannot be implemented to the same extent, causing it to be perceived as unfair.

An overview of employee and management perceptions of work-life balance is provided in the next section, before turning to the organisational characteristics of work-life balance policies.

2.7 EMPLOYEE AND MANAGEMENT PERCEPTIONS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE POLICIES

As previously mentioned, one of the organisational characteristics that would enhance the probability of work-life balance policies is a supportive work and family culture, thus with minimal career repercussions in a situation where the employee makes use of work-life benefits (Amah, 2010). Employees who are career focused and who perceive work-life balance policies as having a negative effect on their career would generally not be in favour of these types of policies (Amah, 2010). There is therefore little doubt that a variety of perceptions and perspectives are associated with such policies.

2.7.1 Cultural influences

Employee perceptions of a positive work-life culture have been linked to improved job satisfaction and reduced intention to leave (Beauregard & Henry, 2009), and to work-family outcomes such as reduced conflict and improved well-being (Allard, Haas &

Hwang, 2011) and improved well-being and employee commitment (Grandey, Cordeiro & Michael, 2007; O'Neill et al., 2009; Frenkel, Restubog & Bednall, 2012; Straub, 2012). Notably, a study by Chandra (2012) investigated the differences brought about by culture in perceptions of work-life balance policies. The findings revealed that employees from different parts of the world have a different attitude towards work-life balance. Specifically, the study found that employers and employees located in Chinese organisations did not expect organisations to assist them with handling work-life conflict and believed work-life balance policies are unnecessary. Organisations located towards the Western side of the globe felt that they would reap positive results when they implemented work-life balance policies. Here, employees agreed that organisations have a responsibility to provide them with options to balance the demands of work and life (Chandra, 2012).

In Japan, men dominate the full-time work environment and any benefits that might exist in organisations can therefore only be enjoyed by the men (Lewis et al., 2007). It is apparent that in countries like Japan, women do not get to benefit from arrangements concerning family life. Men are pressured as they are regarded as the breadwinners, resulting in a situation where the policies exist, yet individuals do not want to make use of them or do not qualify to do so (Lewis et al., 2007). From this international study it became clear that individuals who find themselves with a heavy workload as well as being under immense pressure are grateful when their organisations introduce work-life balance policies, as these provide them with the opportunity to gain control over their life and reduce their stress levels (Lewis et al., 2007).

2.7.2 Organisational influences

In 2002, Kirby and Krone investigated work-life balance policies and showed that the way in which the policies are perceived differ between members of the organisations. For instance, when some employees make use of family leave, other employees may feel that their workload will increase due to the absent employee. This, in turn, could result in negative attitudes towards the employee on leave, making it clear that his or her leave of absence is not supported. This is especially true in situations where fathers of new-born babies request paternal leave to help the mother, leading to them experiencing resistance from co-workers as well as from management (Kirby & Krone,

2002). Employees who have no need for such policies and end up being burdened by the consequences, resent them. In such instances, work-life balance policies are seen as a source of unfair benefits at the expense of extra work and more challenging deadlines for those who are not on leave (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Ryan & Kossek, 2008).

The study further highlights that, even in 'work-friendly' organisations, management might send negative signals about the utilisation of work-life balance policies, as these policies make their work more difficult and are viewed as a disruption for the other employees. In some organisations, individuals perceive work-life balance policies as having a negative effect on their career and, as a result, feel pressurised not to make use of them. The managerial team therefore has a major impact, as they often have the power to give the final approval for whether employees can make use of the policies. They further determine whether cross-training takes place to support employees when they are not at work, as well as create the norm of supporting the use of work-life balance policies (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Ryan & Kossek, 2008). The discussion on organisational influences is expanded on in greater detail in later sections (see p. 36).

2.7.3 Managerial perceptions

Supervisors often find themselves in a difficult situation, as they feel pressurised to meet deadlines and increase profit, while at the same time having to remain sensitive to family matters and the personal lives of employees. Work-life balance policies do not always make it easier for them, but with open communication lines it has been shown that supervisors have a clearer idea of how to implement work-life balance policies and still reach deadlines (Kirby & Krone, 2002). With the correct support from top management, work-life balance policies serve to assist supervisors in carrying out their roles and expectations. Indeed, the support from supervisors regarding work-life balance policies is not just instrumental, but also emotional (Kirby & Krone, 2002).

Employers are mostly indifferent about the mix of monetary compensation and the non-financial aspects of the job that would produce the same output and still not increase the organisation's expenses (Gray & Tudball, 2002). Employers are willing to negotiate with employees on how they prefer to receive their compensation, and this negotiation includes the availability of extended work-life balance policies (Gray & Tudball, 2002). However, employers view these options as more valuable when made

available to employees in whom they have invested by means of training, career development and other employee initiatives. As mentioned previously, employers consider the cost benefits of work-life balance policies and this does not always turn out to the benefits of all employees (Gray & Tudball, 2002). This is somewhat problematic in South Africa, as many organisations work through unions and bargaining councils.

2.7.4 Employee perceptions

Bourhis and Mekkaoui (2010) found sound evidence that those organisations offering work-life balance policies are more attractive to potential employees than organisations without such policies. The study also discovered a very important aspect that organisations should be aware of: not only did employees who already have the need for family benefits find these organisations more attractive, but so did employees who, at the time, would not make use of most of the benefits available. The reason is that employees planning to start a family or with the foresight of alternative work arrangements, know that work-life balance policies are available, should the need for them arise.

Moreover, in various organisations across Great Britain in which there is separation between head offices and branches of the organisation, many employees did not perceive the availability of work-life balance policies as being applicable to them. The reason for this is that, even though the policies are written and implemented, they do not provide an accurate picture of the expectations of a specific branch (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). Consequently, employees will start to recognise that work-life balance policies exist and are available, yet are not for utilisation by them. When they are not communicated effectively, work-life balance policies will simply remain words on paper and employees will perceive them as a tool used by management to attract them and to demonstrate a sense of social responsibility, but other than that are not something to be put into practice (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). Other interesting findings from the Great Britain study include that the perception and perceived availability of work-life balance policies vary from individual to individual. In some cases, single employees were more aware of certain benefits, while in other cases only employees over a certain age knew that there were policies in place that catered for their needs. Most notably, employees with children were aware of on-site childcare facilities and family

time off. This information highlights how work-life balance policies are perceived from an employee's point of view and that this differs greatly based on their personal needs (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007).

It was also found that employees working for organisations that have work-life balance policies feel more valued, as they perceive the organisation to be concerned about their well-being. This perception is in line with the benefits that work-life balance policies hold, as employees who feel valued are more committed to the organisation and this serves as a form of competitive advantage (Wang & Verma, 2012). In organisations with certain strategies, for example cost leadership strategies, the supervisors and managers do not value the idea of work-life balance policies as the policies are not in line with the organisation's overarching business strategy (Wang & Verma, 2012). As discussed previously, work-life balance policies are not practical in every industry or compatible with certain approaches to business, and therefore not all high-level management will be in favour of such policies, even though employees might experience the need for certain benefits (Wang & Verma, 2012).

Finally, as mentioned previously, Generation Y employees place high value on work-life balance policies, as they provide a form of flexibility in the workplace. This generation is strongly in favour of work-life balance policies and argues that work simply needs to be done – the time and place are a matter of personal preference. Employees from this generation do not only enjoy the flexible aspect of work-life balance policies, but the additional career support and benefits also interest them.

The next section will provide an overview of the organisational characteristics that are commonly associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies, before providing an overview of the antecedents associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies.

2.8 ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE POLICIES

The mere availability of work-life balance policies in a working environment has been shown to have either no relationship, or a negative relationship, with identified outcomes, such as the attraction and retention of talented employees, job satisfaction and engagement. This can be attributed to the fact that the positive consequences of

work-life balance policies are bound by their successful implementation and utilisation. An inclusive workplace culture is a key aspect of the success of such policies, and their implementation can either remove or reinforce barriers to the development of such a workplace culture (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). It is important to determine the level of involvement of employers in the adoption of work-life balance policies. Organisational characteristics are therefore of great importance, as they serve as the base from which employers can work. In the study on talent management conducted by Deloitte (2009), most executives mentioned that they were applying the principle of product, and apply the concept of brand management to their talent management approach. Organisations indicated that they were deliberately building a so-called 'employment brand' to attract top talent. Certain CEOs indicated their personal involvement when it comes to attracting and retaining talent from across the globe, signifying their increased awareness of involvement and the importance of valuing employees. Indeed, executives across the globe are very aware of the competition and the constantly changing environment and are applying a hands-on, fully involved approach (Mosley, 2014).

2.8.1 Business strategy

Some have argued that the differences between organisations that implement work-life balance policies and those that do not, are systematic (e.g. Morgan & Milliken, 1992). This is because different industries receive different levels of pressure from the system in which they operate (Wang & Verma, 2012). It is also well known that organisations that have a good fit between their business strategy and their human resource strategy perform to higher standards. Therefore, it is sensible to determine which types of business strategies would support the implementation of work-life balance policies in specific organisations (Wang & Verma, 2012).

Porter (1980) defines the generic business strategy types as cost leadership, product differentiation, and focus. The central goal of cost leadership, operational excellence and exploitation is cost reduction, while the other dimensions of strategy (i.e. product leadership, prospector, exploration) focus on product differences, innovation, discovery and flexibility (Thornhill & White, 2007). The workforce primarily drives this strategy and provides quality service and maintains flexibility. Therefore, it is a business strategy associated with quality and the enhancement of flexibility. The main

driving force behind quality and flexibility-enhancement management is work-life balance policies. Organisations utilising this point of view tend to show their appreciation for employees and therefore do not have the need for unions or governments to motivate the implementation of policies such as work-life balance. Indeed, these organisations are aware that work-life balance policies would serve as a competitive advantage for them (Wang & Verma, 2012). In contrast to product leadership, cost leadership is defined by straight-line, mass production and repetitive work. The military-style management and long working hours make the adoption of work-life balance policies very unlikely, and therefore these organisations are not ideal for such policies (Wang & Verma, 2012).

2.8.2 Industry and size of the organisation

The industry as well as the size of the organisation is a characteristic that would certainly influence the implementation of work-life balance policies (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). Occupations that are associated with the organisation serve as a moderator for having work-life balance policies available. For example, considering plant and machine operators, the probability of having flexible working hours is highly unlikely, whereas professionals and managers are more likely to have flexible working hours (Gray & Tudball, 2002). Not only do the construction industries experience barriers, but industries such as hotels, restaurants and retail also are not considered as ideal for work-life balance policies (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007), while organisations with access to sophisticated technology are able to provide their employees with flexibility regarding their hours of work. Sophisticated technology is not readily available to all companies and can therefore be regarded as a characteristic of the organisation (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007).

Research further shows that the size of organisations influences the adoption of work-life benefits (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Osterman, 1995; Den Dulk, 2001). Larger organisations have economies of scale in their favour and, due to the organisation's size, are more likely to benefit from the status they would gain by offering work-life benefits (Den Dulk et al., 2012). Sizeable organisations are also in the position of having more advanced human resource departments that would ease the development and implementation of work-life benefits. Moreover, research has indicated that organisations in the public sector are more likely to be in the public eye

and monitored by government, and therefore consideration of these benefits is more likely. Organisations employing multiple professional workers are also more likely to utilise these benefits as a recruitment tool, and secondly as a means to retain those employees who are assets to the organisation (Den Dulk et al., 2012). The education level of the employees is most likely a determinant of the likelihood of implementation (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007).

2.8.3 High-performance work systems

Research indicates that organisations with high-performance work systems (HPWS) are more likely to have work-life balance policies in place, since work-life balance policies serve as motivation for employees to engage in these systems (e.g. Osterman, 1995; White, Hill, McGovern, Mills & Smeaton, 2003). When employees know that organisations cater for their needs, they are more likely to go beyond what is expected of them (Wang & Verma, 2012). High-performance work systems also imply that organisations invest in the training of employees and in fostering commitment. Implementing these activities is costly and it is therefore of great importance that the organisation retains the employees in whom they have invested. Work-life balance policies serve as a means of doing exactly that (Wang & Verma, 2012).

Moreover, there is substantial support in the literature for the fact that organisations with sophisticated human resource departments and comprehensive human resource policies are expected to have sound work-life balance policies in place, as this would be included in their normal human resource policies (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). In addition, the availability of human resource departments increases the effectiveness of communication throughout the organisation. Therefore, work-life balance policies will be correctly conveyed, thereby increasing the chance of proper implementation. Ultimately, this would uphold the utilisation of work-life balance policies (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007).

2.8.4 Individual characteristics

Individual family and personal life needs are not considered irrelevant or detrimental to profitability, but are deemed important to address to enhance organisational and personal effectiveness (Rapoport, Baily, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2002). For instance, on an

individual level, the type of occupation is shown to have a significant effect on access to work-life balance policies, in that blue-collar workers, service providers and managers are less likely to have access. Individual characteristics play a part when the use of work-life balance policies is considered, as the study by Rapoport et al. (2002) showed that women are 65% to 123% more likely to make use of compensatory time-off and the gradual-return-to-work policies respectively. In addition, the likelihood of utilisation of gradual return to work increases by 317% when an employee has at least one child under the age of 18, whilst the use of flexitime increases by 44% with every additional child that joins the household (Rapoport et al., 2002).

Another element of an organisation that would influence the consideration of work-life balance policies is the number of female workers employed. Women are still considered to be the main caregiver in the household, and as such these benefits would serve as a resource for them to utilise. Organisations with a substantial number of female employees therefore would derive great benefits from having work-life balance policies in place (Den Dulk et al., 2012). Research supports this consideration, as the probability of benefits being available in the organisation increases with economically active females or complex family dynamics (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007). Organisations that include career ladders and job security as part of their attraction methods are also more likely to implement work-life balance policies, in that they serve to ensure that what is promised to the employees is provided (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007).

2.8.5 Management

The abovementioned points have demonstrated that various factors influence both the availability, and the use, of work-life balance policies. Personal needs, the demands of the job, and aspects such as trade unions significantly affect the use of such policies (Berg et al., 2014). Nevertheless, for work-life balance policies to be effective, organisations should make a definite shift their its culture to overcome the barriers to implementation. To this end, supportive management is key when change needs to be implemented. Managers and supervisors therefore play a critical role in implementing work-life balance policies, as they are the people in charge of the activities of the organisation (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007). Resistance from managers when it comes to implementing work-life balance policies is very problematic. In

organisations where managers also work long hours, they might feel that employees should commit at the same level (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007). Favourable characteristics include strong leadership from managers and line managers, with commitment from the directors towards work-life balance policies, with this commitment being communicating on each level. This emphasises that the importance of work-life balance policies does not lie in the adoption of work-life balance policies, but in the implementation of work-life balance policies (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007; Ryan & Kossek, 2008).

Bardoel (2003) emphasises that management should play the role of an intentional and proactive change agent. Organisations that implement work-life balance policies successfully understand that it is not simply writing and having work-life balance policies available, but rather a change of structure and crucial leadership that would result in successful work-place adoption. If management was not actively promoting policies and the utilisation thereof, the employees would experience no positive communication. More recently, Bardoel et al. (2008) cautioned that organisational behaviour should not be overemphasised as it would leave little place for the importance of active management. Indeed, Ryan and Kossek (2008) suggest that policy implementation that consists of supervisory support, universality, negotiability and high-quality communication would be the main influencers when considering individual needs and signalling values. These aspects, in turn, would have a positive effect on employees' perceptions of inclusion in work-life balance policies, resulting in desirable workplace outcomes such as satisfaction, low turnover, and high commitment and performance.

2.8.5.1 Transformational leadership

Expanding on the above, organisations that foster transformational leadership are also known to be more likely to have work-life balance policies in place. The reason is that transformational leaders tend to focus on the needs of their followers and are more likely to show their support for and appreciation of their followers, thereby encouraging them to attempt innovative ways to accomplish tasks (Amah, 2010). It has also been shown that organisations in which communication is central during the implementation and utilisation of work-life balance policies understand that personal opinions and supervisor agendas influence the perceived positivity of work-life balance policies in a

negative way (Kirby & Krone, 2002). It is therefore important that an organisation's culture and values show its unqualified support for its employees (Kirby & Krone, 2002).

2.8.5.2 Supervisors' support

Supervisor support is an important element that determines access to work-life balance policies and involves general expressions of concern by supervisors that are intended to enhance employee well-being (House, 1981). A comprehensive study (Carlson, Witt, Zivnuska, Kacmar & Grzywacz, 2008) on such aspects showed, firstly, that supervisor support has a significant effect on four of the six practices measured (flexitime access, flex-shift access, compensated time off and gradual return to work, but not on compressed workweek and working at home). Specifically, task interdependency is associated with a lower likelihood of access to various flexible scheduling practices, as the more interdependent positions are, the more complex the implementation of flexible scheduling becomes within the organisation. Workload, however, does not seem to have a significant effect on access to flexible scheduling. Compensatory time-off and flexi-shifts seem to be used to a greater extent in departments with a demanding workload (Berg et al., 2014). Employees working in departments with a demanding workload seem to prefer the option of swapping shifts or trading hours worked for time off, as it provides them with flexibility.

2.8.6 Supportive climate

Another important organisational characteristic associated with the successful implementation of work-life balance policies is that of a supportive and inclusive organisational culture. From Amah's (2010) study it is apparent that organisations in which there is an understanding of the pressure of balancing demands associated with different life roles are perceived as supportive and are more likely to have policies in place. In an attempt to create an inclusive culture, employers consider the diversity of the workforce and how to ensure that all the employees perceive their needs to be taken into consideration (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). In general, organisations can view policy creation from a legal mandate, where the only reason certain aspects are included in policies is to ensure that all employees are treated equally as required by law. The culture could also take the perspective of access and legitimacy within policy creation, where more favourable policies are included due to the 'good business'

approach. This perspective is focused on attracting and retaining a specific target group of employees.

For work-life balance policies to be the most effective, organisations should create and implement such policies from a learning and effectiveness perspective, which is concerned with integrating various needs and values into the organisational culture as part of an adaption plan to the changing labour market (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). An organisation's culture is not simply a way of going about everyday business; it defines the organisation and its mandate. Therefore, when organisations support their employees as individuals, they are perceived as being work-life considerate (Amah, 2010). Organisations that have a supportive organisational climate are also associated with lower career consequences that result in individuals utilising work-life balance policies (Amah, 2010). It therefore is important that work-life balance policies do not have any negative results associated with them, whether for men or women who choose to utilise work-life balance policies (Amah, 2010).

2.8.6.1 Diversity

Organisations comprising of a diverse workforce are generally more open to considering work-life balance policies, as they want to attract and retain different types of employees with different needs, both women and men, who take on a variety of roles (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007). Organisations implementing work-life balance policies tend to feel strongly about how they reflect the organisation's culture and, as such, when organisations are truly dedicated to their employees they would not hesitate to determine the needs of the employees and implement the appropriate policies (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007).

2.8.6.2 Anti-overtime incentive schemes

As a final note in this section, organisations whose culture is to value employees who work beyond what their job description requires, stand for the opposite of what work-life balance policies offer. Chandra (2012) demonstrates how certain organisations offer employees substantial rewards and, by doing so, implicitly encourage overtime and an acceptance of work-life conflict due to the fact that it will be rewarded (Chandra, 2012). It therefore becomes clear that to discourage working longer hours and not to reward employees for overtime are organisational characteristics (Chandra, 2012). By

implementing work-life balance policies, such a work culture is the last thing the organisation wants to encourage, and it therefore is an essential characteristic (Chandra, 2012).

The next section will provide an overview of the antecedents that are commonly associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies, before turning to organisation-specific antecedents.

2.9 ANTECEDENTS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE POLICIES

A review of the literature showed that the antecedents to the implementation of work-life balance policies can generally be divided into three overarching categories: 1) demographic and personal characteristics, 2) family and non-family characteristics, and 3) work- or job-related characteristics (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010). The first category includes considerations such as gender, age, marital status and the personality type of the employee. The family and non-family category considers social support, parental stressors and family-role stressors, whereas work demands, hours spent at work, job stress, job support and flexibility at work can all be included in the third category, namely work- or job-related characteristics (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010). These antecedents are generally followed by various consequences, broadly comprising physical, psychological, behavioural, attitudinal and other consequences (e.g. job satisfaction, turnover intention, burnout, and life satisfaction). These consequences should be enough for an organisation to at least consider whether they would be beneficial to the organisation as a whole.

2.9.1 Organisation-specific antecedents

2.9.1.1 Cost-benefit analysis

As mentioned previously, work-life conflict is a major reason for stress in employees' lives and, if these types of policies are offered it would serve as a stress reducer. Gray and Tudball (2002) state that most Australian organisations perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine the financial implications of these benefits for the organisation in question. Work-life balance policies might not serve as a possible increase in profit for all organisations and, as such, not all organisations, especially those driven by financial performance, would implement work-life balance policies. It is not a simple

analysis to conduct, yet, when completed, any organisation will have a forecast of what policies such as work-life benefits might contribute to the profit of the organisation (Gray & Tudball, 2002). The cost-benefit analysis is a great consideration, especially in organisations where high turnover costs are experienced due to the high level of work-life conflict employees might experience (Bardoel et al., 1999).

One other contributor to the cost-benefit analysis would be the financial savings that result due to employees participating in job-sharing options (Southworth, 2014). When considering the cost implications of internalised stress, it makes financial sense to implement work-life balance policies should this be proven by the organisation's analysis (Bardoel et al., 1999). One aspect to reflect on when considering work-life balance policies is the chance of clouding employees' clarity on the matter by providing them with a way to work at home, which then might tip the balance to the wrong side and consequently overthrow the intended purpose of the policies (Hill et al., 1998). Such consequences emphasise the importance of conducting thorough research during the consideration phase.

Research conducted in the UK (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007) pointed to a few important facets that could influence the outcome of the consideration phase. These facets include the state of the market, the age of the establishment, the degree of competition, and the proportion of women in the workforce and in management positions. The internal labour market, the understanding of absenteeism, as well as job satisfaction also form part of the considerations. Organisations competing for a limited pool of labour feel more pressurised to implement work-life balance policies, especially since talented and professional labour is responsible for high competition amongst organisations (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). Other internal labour forces that should be considered when wanting to implement work-life balance policies are factors such as the average age of the organisation, the level of tenure present, as well as union membership (Bardoel et al., 1999), as these factors would influence the need for work-life balance policies as well as what types of policies one might want to make available. Older employees value flexitime less than younger employees, hence the level of tenure would influence which leave benefits are best suited, for example (Bardoel et al., 1999).

2.9.1.2 Proportion of women in the workforce

As mentioned previously, the proportion of women is critical when deciding whether to implement work-life balance policies, as work-life balance policies could retain mothers after the birth of a baby by providing them with alternatives and added flexibility in their choices (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). When management realises that the percentage of women is a vital factor in the organisation, it would make financial sense to ensure that they are retained and that the right policies are in place. Whilst the focus has arguably shifted towards working parents, the woman remains central (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). It is important to note here that the mere presence of a female labour force is not the determining factor, but rather the level of dependence on the female labour force (Bardoel et al., 1999).

In organisations in which female employees serve as key agents for success, it would make sense to ensure that these employees are accommodated as well as retained by the organisation (Bardoel et al., 1999). Beyond that, organisations consisting of a workforce with higher education are more likely to experience internal labour pressure, according to the UK study by Nadeem and Metcalf (2007). The authors also found that when an organisation measures job satisfaction and regards it as important, it will be more likely to consider work-life balance policies as a means of increasing job satisfaction (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). Indeed, Bourhis and Mekkaoui (2010) support the important role played by women when organisations consider implementing such policies.

The reality of dual-career families has also become more prominent over the decades, forcing organisations to reconsider their current structure (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). The terms 'dual-career' or 'dual-earning' couples indicate that both the man and woman value their career and would like to climb the corporate ladder, thereby placing them in the professional category and again bringing the idea of competing for talent amongst organisations into the equation. (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). Dual-career couples are mostly focused on surviving financially and rely greatly on their salaries. Indeed, Zeytinoglu et al. (2010) support the importance of the presence of female employees in the organisation and the contribution this makes to the consideration of whether to implement work-life balance policies or not. Importantly, the study emphasises the fact that dual-earning couples no longer just refer to working women,

but male employees are also taking on more responsibility concerning the household. When an organisation consists of enough employees that fall in this category it is essential to accommodate them in order to retain them, as well as to decrease absenteeism (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010).

2.9.1.3 Occupational level

A very important finding in the study done by Gray and Tudball (2002) is that, in Australian organisations, there are few differences between the workplaces that offer workplace policies. The main difference rests in the variations between availability of policies towards certain employees within the organisation. It was evident that most high-level employees had work-life balance policies available to them. Employees that serve the role of frontline workers are least likely to have work-life balance policies available to them. Whether the high-level employees use work-life balance policies or not is also determined by their occupation (Gray & Tudball, 2002). For this reason, the composition of different occupational positions throughout the organisation would play a significant role in the consideration process (Gray & Tudball, 2002). Work centrality can also be considered as a mediating role in that the more centralised the work, the less probable work-life balance policies would be in organisations (Amah, 2010).

Leadership in the organisation and a strong support structure are further influential factors in the implementation of work-life balance policies. Communication is necessary for effectiveness and, as a result, whether the organisation has driven and strong leaders would form part of the considerations (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007). The culture of the organisation would also be considered, and whether work-life balance policies define the organisation and what it stands for (i.e. values of the organisation) (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007).

2.9.1.4 Competitiveness of the labour market

Globally, employees with scarce skills have various career options, and turnover amongst these highly productive employees is costlier than they are beneficial to organisations. It follows that organisations that aim to be dominant in the global market should be interested in far more than merely profit. Organisations should shift their interest to a strategic approach regarding the attraction, retention and development of talent. Organisations that are dependent on scarce human and specialist skills are

particularly challenged in this respect. This is especially evident when an organisation attempts to attract and retain young employees, as job mobility is increasing and the younger generation places emphasis on employability and loyalty to their own career and experience (Robyn & Du Preez, 2013).

Talent retention is currently a challenge across all industries internationally; turnover is particularly problematic, as organisations lose their most talented and skilled employees. As a result, organisations are forced to be more proactive in their approach to retaining talented and young employees (Robyn & Du Preez, 2013). The Deloitte (2009) study on organisations' approaches to talent showed that a substantial number of international organisations have become aware that work-life balance policies serve as a major attraction for talented employees and that, if organisations want to recruit the best talent or a certain pool of talent, the availability of work-life balance policies is crucial. As such, talent management is becoming a focus point in many organisations and this serves to promote the organisations' talent management programmes. This therefore is helpful for an organisation to be more competitive in the global market to attract the best talent pool (Champion-Hughes, 2001). Indeed, De Cieri et al. (2005) place substantial emphasis on the competitiveness of the labour market. This is an important element that features prominently in the literature, suggesting that the greater the competition for talented employees, from the perspective of a global market, the more probable the implementation of work-life balance policies would be (De Cieri et al., 2005).

However, some policies can only be implemented with the right set of tools to support these benefits. For example, if the organisation wants to encourage people to work from home they should be equipped with the necessary technology that would enable them to do so, such as personal computers and mobile phones. Technology of this kind is not inexpensive and, before organisations can provide work-life balance policies, they should consider whether the necessary finances are available to provide all the tools needed (Chandra, 2012). From an international point of view, this aspect applies widely, as organisations located in India might not have the same technological accessibility as organisations based in the UK, for example (Chandra, 2012).

Finally, it is also important to understand that work-life balance differs between individuals as well as between organisations, depending on individual characteristics

as well as workload. Organisations should consider offering employees the choice to work as they please, as the result obtained would be more positive. At the point where organisations intend to write work-life balance policies for implementation, it is essential to establish at least a reference point of balance in the organisation, as this would determine the outcome of the policies as well as their successful implementation (Chandra, 2012). The strategies organisations create should ideally fit in with the organisation's culture and, in order to survive within the competitive market, the culture should be less focused on traditional pay and more on creating a working environment that allows employees to grow in the manner they prefer (Robyn & Du Preez, 2013).

2.9.1.5 Generation Y

The most recent reason for considering policies that help employees maintain work-life balance is the recruitment and employment of Generation Y employees. Generation Y employees were born between 1980 and 2000 and differ in their work ethic, relationships, how they manage change, and their perception of the organisational hierarchy (Glass, 2007). This generation is constantly looking to develop themselves in terms of skills, they are more progressive thinkers and process information quicker; they are also very eager to embrace change and are always seeking out the next challenge.

An important aspect to consider in the recruitment of Generation Y employees is making the organisation as attractive as possible and, in doing so, the employer needs to practise the organisation's values. Studies have shown that individuals of Generation Y are not willing to give up much of themselves for work in order to have a life while engaging in meaningful work. When they perceive the organisation as having work-life balance policies available, they would likely make use of them, and it therefore is important that work-life balance policies are not only available, but are implemented and active as well. When organisations decide to focus on recruiting from this generation they will certainly need to have work-life balance policies available, as it would be the determining factor when members from Generation Y decide on an organisation.

Generation Y employees, according to Martin (2005), are very self-confident, outspoken and opinionated. Unlike the previous generation they are easily bored and therefore move on to other interests without hesitation. Not only are they ambitious,

but they expect work and life to co-exist harmoniously. Organisations should consider work-life balance policies, since young, talented employees are driven to work harder and achieve their goals. However, they also hold high expectations of their employers in terms of benefits and flexibility, and managers may find their unique and flexible work style challenging (Robyn & Du Preez, 2013; Jacobs et al., 2014). Consequently, the demand for different management styles will certainly have an impact on human resource policies and procedures.

The motivating factor for this generation moves away from the monetary, extrinsic reward focus and leans instead toward intrinsic motivation – enjoying a more fulfilled and balanced life. They will leave organisations if they do not receive these intrinsic rewards. As a result, this generation would challenge the belief that time invested equals effort and would expect organisations to consider individual contributions. Organisations should be mindful of all these aspects, as the correct policies would need to be in place, along with frequent strategic recognition, in order to meet the needs of the new generation whilst avoiding the micro-management pitfalls (Robyn & Du Preez, 2013).

2.10 Summary

Work-life balance adds a rich complexity to the current work environment. Not only does it challenge the assumption of how work is defined, it further challenges organisations regarding their expectations of employee performance. This chapter has attempted to provide a detailed review of the literature on the implementation of work-life balance policies. The chapter commenced with an overview of the definitions of every aspect surrounding work-life balance policies, revealing that the term work-life balance is a complex phenomenon. This was followed by an outline of the various policies that are available, along with the associated opportunities and challenges. It was shown that work-life balance policies comprise a variety of arrangements that are geared towards helping the users maintain a balance between the various spheres that make up their life.

The chapter has also presented the literature describing employee and management perceptions of work-life balance policies, as well as organisation-specific characteristics. It was emphasised that organisations need to take responsibility for assessing the benefits that the availability and support of work-life balance policies

may hold for the organisation. All decisions taken need to make financial sense, in which case the benefit will always exceed the cost in the long run. The chapter concluded with an overview of the antecedents of the implementation of work-life balance policies, demonstrating that certain characteristics and antecedents would increase the likelihood of successful implementation of work-life balance policies. However, as mentioned above, not all organisations operating in different industries will yield the same benefits associated with the implementation of such policies. In the next chapter, the research methodology associated with the present study will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study sought to extend previous international research on the development of a systematic process of measurement that enables managers to obtain and evaluate evidence about the performance of work-life initiatives. Building on and extending previous studies (e.g. Lobel & Faught, 1996; and more recently Bardoel et al., 2008), this research sought to develop a South African-based semi-structured interview schedule to explore organisations' work-life initiatives. The present study addresses three gaps identified in the work-life balance literature: (1) very little South African literature has explored the concept of work-life balance; (2) scant research attention has been paid to work-life balance policies and their associated organisational characteristics; and (3) there is no South Africa-specific work-life balance interview schedule with which to explore potential organisational characteristics that are associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies. Ultimately, the present study aimed to contribute new knowledge to the relatively sparse literature on work-life balance policies within South African organisations, thus offering foundational insights for future work in this regard.

In this chapter, the research methodology of the study is presented. The chapter begins with an overview of the qualitative, descriptive research paradigm that directed the study, including the advantages and limitations of this paradigm. This is followed by an overview of the sampling procedure, as well as a brief look at the reliability, validity and generalisability of the procedure followed. Next, since a customised interview schedule had to be developed for the present study, the development of the instrument is described in detail, before turning to the data gathering procedures and analyses. The chapter concludes with an overview of the inductive thematic analytical approach that was adopted in the present study, as well as ethical considerations.

3.2 DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Descriptive research is unique in that it does not fit neatly into either the qualitative or quantitative research methodologies. Descriptive research can draw on both methodologies within the same study, as it differs from inferential statistics – that aims to determine cause and effect – by describing what is without changing the

environment (i.e. descriptive research does not manipulate any aspect of the environment). Descriptive studies can be conducted to demonstrate associations or relationships between things in the world around us, as they involve gathering data that describes events and then organises, tabulates, depicts and describes the data gathering. This method aims to reduce a large sample of raw data into manageable patterns of data, which the reader can understand and interpret.

3.2.1 Advantages of descriptive research

Descriptive research can yield rich data that leads to important recommendations. Within environments on which little information exists, the study would call for the description of the man-made phenomena in terms of the form, structure and activity, relationships with other phenomena, and other important elements for consideration. This method is less expensive and can be conducted amongst hundreds of participants and cover a lot of material if need be. Moreover, since this methodology does not manipulate the environment, and because it can apply to both qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies, the researcher can handle large amounts of raw data and present findings in a simple, yet comprehensive, manner.

3.2.2 Limitations of descriptive research

One of the limitations of descriptive research is the dependence on instrumentation for measurement and observation; researchers often need to work for many years before such instrumentation is perfected for the measurement. Certain remarks within debates concerning this method have accused descriptive research of being less pure than the more traditional experimental, quantitative research designs. Moreover, descriptive research presents a possibility for error and subjectivity. Biases within the questionnaires that are developed are common within descriptive studies. This limitation was noted and borne in mind throughout the data gathering and analysis.

3.3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Using a qualitative, exploratory research design (Creswell, 2009), the present study integrated practitioner and research understandings of work-life balance to explore its application in a sample of South African organisations. As is characteristic of many qualitative studies, the aim was to obtain richness of understanding of the participants' views, rather than generalisability (Bardoel et al., 2008). This approach

fits within the category of constructivist-interpretive identified by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), in which terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. The procedure consisted of an initial design phase, followed by an administration phase. During the design phase a semi-structured interview schedule was constructed, after which an expert panel was consulted for input and feedback. During the administration phase, the newly developed interview schedule was administered to eight human resource (HR) managers from different organisations. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the research methodology of the study.

Table 3.1. *Summary of research methodology*

Objective	Methodology
1) Design interview schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of semi-structured interview schedule • Consultation with expert panel
2) Administer interview schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer semi-structured interview schedule to eight HR managers • Thematic analysis

3.3.1 Sampling procedure

Key informant sampling was chosen because the participants were most likely to be knowledgeable about the issues being researched and able and willing to communicate about them (Kumar, Stern & Anderson, 1993). The broad population from which the sample of organisations was drawn consisted of a list of organisations currently known to have active work-life balance policies. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) consists of seven broad sectors according to which organisations can be listed. These are financial, industrial, resources, retail, gold mining, telecommunications and all shares (JSE Security Exchange South Africa, 2013). These categories are further subdivided into 88 sub-sectors that specify the organisations' descriptions. A shortlist was compiled to draw a representative sample across numerous sectors. An attempt was made to include units of analysis consisting of both small to medium enterprises (< 100 employees), as well as medium to large enterprises (> 100 employees).

To ensure that the most representative and adequate sample was selected for the present study, the HR manager from each organisation that had been short-listed was contacted telephonically to answer biographical questions relating to the organisation. Furthermore, to ascertain each organisation's familiarity and commitment to work-life balance, the HR managers were asked to provide information on various aspects, including the organisation's position regarding the concept of work-life balance policies, and what led to the decision to implement work-life balance policies. This was useful in understanding additional factors that might contribute to an organisation's decision on whether to implement work-life balance policies. The final sample of participating organisations comprised eight South African organisations, each representing a different sector, which had active work-life balance policies in place. The sectors represented were the financial industry, information technology, fast-moving consumer goods, human resource consulting, business consulting, medical, retail and hospitality.

Owing to the lack of research on work-life balance policies in South African organisations and the organisational characteristics associated with their implementation, it was necessary to conduct an inclusive study comprising the various sectors as well organisations of different sizes, if only to ensure that South Africa's diversity was captured. It is worth noting that determining which sectors would automatically be excluded was beyond the scope of the present study.

3.3.1.1 Advantages of sampling procedure

Qualitative research techniques are extremely useful when a question is too complex to be confirmed by a hypothesis. They nevertheless are easier to plan and carry out and, due to the broader scope of the sampling procedure, would ensure that sufficient data is collected. A noteworthy advantage is that qualitative research designs do not require as large a sample size required by quantitative studies. Shortlisting organisations that meet the criteria would ensure that no resources were wasted unnecessarily and that the data gathered would be value adding, contributing directly to the richness of the study (Flick, 2002).

3.3.1.2 Disadvantages of sampling procedure

Although time and resources are spared with this research design, the method still requires accurate planning to ensure that the results obtained are as accurate as possible. Furthermore, qualitative research cannot be analysed statistically as with quantitative results, and therefore can provide only a guide to themes emanating from the participants' transcripts (Holiday, 2002). As such, it is far more subject to biases and the researcher runs the risk of not remaining objective. A note of this limitation was made during the development of the study for the researcher's consideration. In addition, the shortlisting of organisations ran the risk of excluding organisations that could have provided valuable research information. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to ensure that no organisation that met the criteria was excluded from the study (Flick, 2002).

3.3.2 Reliability

Within a qualitative framework, reliable research refers to the consistency of research findings and relates closely to the quality of the research process (Holiday, 2002). Any careless act in the data gathering process is a threat to reliability, as ambiguity of various kinds could cause the research to become less reliable. To this end, the research question and the design of the present study were developed and described in a clear and unambiguous manner in order to preserve reliability, such that every step of the research was congruent and consistent with the former.

To address possible reliability issues regarding data gathering and analysis, all data was collected and analysed by only the researcher, thereby minimising the effect that multiple observers could have on the reliability of the study. Throughout the present study, research methods, analyses, interpretation and findings were shared with relevant peers and academics within the qualitative research field. As part of methodological rigour, peer debriefing ensured that critical feedback and suggestions were provided throughout, and the incorporation of their suggestions strengthened the analysis (Holiday, 2002).

3.3.3 Validity

Qualitative research is considered valid insofar as it is useful and worthwhile in assisting the researcher, participants and others to gain deeper insight into and

understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon being researched (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003). The present study provides findings that provide rich, reflective material for the implementers of work-life balance policies with regard to raising their awareness of the organisational characteristics that would contribute to the implementation of work-life balance policies, as well as enhance the probability of successful implementation. The findings also benefit policy developers (HR managers) in that they offer them insights and perspectives from other HR managers who have developed and are currently implementing work-life balance policies. The findings therefore offer guidance in the process of developing work-life balance policies in that reasoning is addressed, as well as organisational characteristics affecting their decision making. Research validity was furthermore attained by clarifying and checking the participant responses, both during the interview and at the end of the research (Flick, 2002). Furthermore, individual viewpoints and experiences were verified against other participants and, ultimately, a holistic picture was constructed of those who participated based on the contributions of a range of participants (Van Maanen, 1983).

Research validity is moreover said to be enhanced if it proves to be believable, coherent and logical, given the research question, data gathering, analysis and interpretation of the material (Miles & Huberman, 1994). An attempt was made to ensure validity in that a unified, non-contradictory and comprehensive picture of the participating organisations was presented, in a manner that addressed the main research question, namely what are the organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies?

It is suggested that the validity of research is also enhanced through the suggestiveness and potential for the research to provide fertile ground for raising questions that stimulate further research and interpretation (Kvale, 1996). This is particularly applicable to the present study, since there is no South Africa-based research on the organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies. The present study adds value in that South African organisations can gain insight into what is presently being done to ensure that companies remain on track with their employment policies.

3.3.4 Generalisability

Generalisability refers to the transferability of conclusions to other contexts to demonstrate that the results of the work at hand can be applied to a wider population (Merriman, 1998). This statement was challenged by Patton (1990), who argues that the purpose of qualitative research is not to produce generalisations as with quantitative research. With this in mind, the participants for this study were selected to provide 'information-rich cases' to study in-depth and specific operating methods. By offering a comprehensive account of the feedback given by the managers, the researcher succeeded in indicating the extent of transferability of the present study's findings to other environments. This view is confidently expressed by the researcher, in line with what commentators like Borgman (1986) have suggested. It is acknowledged that the understanding of a phenomenon is gained gradually, through several studies, rather than from one major project conducted in isolation. As such, in an attempt to launch an exploration into this presently under-researched field, particularly within South African organisations, the research site constituted multiple settings in which the phenomenon under investigation was implemented. Furthermore, the emphasis of the present study was mainly on exploring the organisational characteristics and providing a foundation to compare the results of subsequent studies.

Nevertheless, it is the view of the researcher that, to a certain extent, the present study can be considered generalisable in that the themes identified can be tied to broader themes relating to organisational characteristics and policy implementation, as seen in the literature review. Due to the fact that the research was conducted across multiple settings, it is strongly believed that the findings easily would relate to other environments in terms of the organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies.

3.3.5 Interviewer bias

Interviewer bias refers to the manner in which the researcher impacts and affects the data emanating from the interview (Flick, 2002). The semi-structured interview method used in the present study is rich in investigative potential, but is always subject to the intrusive effects of interviewer bias, both during the interview and in the analysis of the transcripts (Lillis, 1999). During the course of the present study, however, several

tactical approaches were used in an attempt to limit bias. Firstly, to ensure complete and consistent coverage, a semi-structured interview schedule was designed to be utilised during the interviews so that all the themes under investigation were covered. This was also an attempt to minimise researcher intrusion through the pre-specification of neutral questions and probes. Second, a six-step method was used to develop theoretical propositions from the qualitative data. This process ensured that an audit trail was available from the transcribed text to the results of the analysis, through successive stages of data reduction and summarisation in the development of theoretical propositions.

Third, interview bias was addressed through the researcher clearly articulating her intentions to the participants on two occasions, namely when the participants were first approached to participate and indicated their willingness to participate, and also when the interview was about to commence. This included discussions on the researcher, the main purpose of the research and the intention with the findings. An in-depth explanation of the aims of the present study was provided to ensure that the participants understood completely. Finally, the researcher employed a self-reflective approach to mediate interviewer bias by monitoring how emotions might bias the findings, while being mindful of preconceptions and attempting to suspend personal judgements so that the data could be collected in an unbiased manner.

3.4 INSTRUMENT DESIGN: THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

As mentioned previously, no South Africa-based work-life balance interview schedule currently exists, as the concept of work-life balance is still relatively new. Based on a review of the literature, and expanding on the work of Bardoel et al. (2008), a three-part semi-structured interview schedule was designed to explore organisations' work-life balance initiatives in South Africa. The interview schedule comprised three sections, each with the aim of eliciting specific information about the relevant organisation (see Appendix C for the complete interview schedule).

3.4.1 Design phase

The design of the interview schedule took place in a manner that ensured the data eventually gathered would provide sufficiently detailed information on the organisational characteristics. Section A covers the biographical component of each

participating organisation, with the main objective being to understand the intrinsic details of the organisation. Section B deals with the current work-life balance policies available in the organisation, where participating organisations can simply indicate the availability of the various options listed. The last section, Section C, comprises the pre-selected questions that form part of the semi-structured interview schedule, with the objective of gaining an in-depth understanding of the participating organisations' characteristics. Each of these sections are described in more detail below.

3.4.1.1 Section A: Biographical component

Section A of the interview schedule comprises nine closed questions concerning the organisation's biographic information. In this section, eight different organisational characteristics are reviewed, namely gender ratio, age range, marital status, number of dependent children, occupational groups, sector in which the organisation operates, employee tenure and highest qualifications. Each of the abovementioned characteristics is essential for determining whether the organisation provides work-life balance policies, whether the employees have the need for work-life balance policies, and which of the various policies are more valued within the organisation. The biographical component of the interview schedule is illustrated in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2. *Biographical information of organisation*

Size of the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-50 • 50-100 • 100-150 • 150-200 • 200-250 • > 250
Total male and female employees (%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % Male • % Female
Known dependent children (%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No children • One or more children
Total number of employees in occupational groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers • Professionals • Line workers • Other (if many, please specify)

Sector organisation operates in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial • Industrial • Resources • Retail • Gold mining • Telecommunications • All shares • Other (please specify)
No. of employees working at organisation for (%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-2 years • 2-5 years • 5-10 years • More than 10 years
Highest qualification (all employees; %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 9 • Grade 12 • Degree or diploma • Higher

3.4.1.2 Section B: Current work-life balance policies of organisation

Section B of the interview schedule assesses the current work-life balance policies that are available within the organisation. In this section, the managers are required to provide details on the considerations that initially led to their organisation implementing work-life balance policies (see Table 3.3, p. 61). This section comprises five closed questions regarding the current work-life balance policies of the organisation. By combining sections A and B, a foreseeable advantage for future research is that inferences can be made on the sector, size and occupational level associated with work-life balance policies. However, this falls beyond the scope of the present study. For the purposes of the present study, insight into the availability of policies within South African organisations will be provided, as well as organisational considerations (see discussion of research results in Chapter 5).

Other key issues that will be determined by the completion of these sections are, firstly, the fit between the organisation's business strategy and the HR strategy; and whether the organisation follows a product leadership business strategy and approaches motivation from a high-performance working system point of view. Secondly, key issues such as the effectiveness of communication throughout the organisation, and whether the organisation is focused on attracting Generation Y employees. Finally, key information on talent management focus, labour competitiveness and the overall culture of the organisation will be provided by completing sections A and B.

Participants are provided with the following instruction:

Please identify which of the following work-life balance policies are available in your organisation. If the policy is similar to the one described, please indicate the similarities as well as the differences. Also, please bear in mind that your organisation might have one arrangement available per section, which also qualifies as work-life balance policies. Please circle all applicable options.

Table 3.3. *Current work-life balance policies of organisation*

Child- and dependant-care benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation provides day child-care centre • Arrangements for elderly care • Programmes for emergency care of ill dependant or child • Summer and weekend programmes for dependants • Alternative arrangements for employees with children under the age of 13
Flexible working conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexitime • Job sharing • Part-time work • Compressed work week • Shorter weeks for parents • Work from home • Home telecommunicating
Time off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternity leave • Paternity leave • Leave for family emergencies
Virtual offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of the option • Not available
Employee assistance programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling assistance • Relocation assistance

3.4.1.3 Section C: Organisational characteristics

The third section (section C) is more specific and detailed. This section differs from the previous two not only in detail, but also in the types of questions asked. It comprises 27 semi-structured questions in which the participating HR managers are not limited to closed questions, as in the previous two sections. In terms of the rationale for the questions included in this section, it is important to bear in mind that the literature review highlighted certain key organisational characteristics associated with favourable circumstances under which the implementation of work-life balance

policies would take place. The characteristics that were highlighted include, among others, the involvement of the CEO, the communication throughout the organisation, perceived support from management and supervisors, as well as an overall supportive culture in the organisation. Leadership styles are also viewed to be a key characteristic, along with the HR policies available and the perceived expectations of supervisors. Table 3.4 below provides an overview of the organisational characteristics that are covered in the third section of the interview schedule.

Table 3.4. *Overview of the included organisational characteristics*

Objective	Description
To determine whether the organisation has any policies considered to be a work-life balance policy	What policies are available, how available are work-life balance policies throughout the organisation, who are the employees that can utilise the described policies?
To determine whether the organisation focuses on the concept of an employment brand	Does the organisation brand itself to attract certain employees, is the organisation's CEO active and involved within the organisation?
To determine the organisation's business strategy	Product leadership is when the organisation is focused on rapid growth, flexible production and resource development; cost leadership is when the organisation consists of straight-line production, mass production and repetitive work; focus is when an organisation is concerned with a specific niche; one question determines what the organisational business strategy consists of.
To obtain information on the overall human resource policies	Are the organisation's policies comprehensive and does the organisation perceive the policies in such a manner that they cover all relevant organisational aspects? Do all the employees know what the policies and procedures are?
To determine the size of the organisation	To determine whether the size influences the decision about whether to implement work-life balance policies.
To obtain employee skill level	The educational level, career level as well as skill level of the employees within the organisation.
To obtain female employee figures	Economically active female workforce, ratio of female employees to male employees.
To assess communication within the organisation	How clear is the line of communication throughout the organisation?
To acquire industry-specific information	The level of influence the industry-specific trends exercise on the implementation of work-life balance policies.
To assess technological advancement	Determine the level of advancement of the organisation's technology and whether or not the level of sophistication has an impact on the implementation of work-life balance policies.

To assess managerial influence	The determining role management plays in the implementation with regard to its level of support for the policies, whether strong leadership is influential, the level of managerial commitment to these types of policies, how actively promoting change assists with the success of implementation, how clear management communication plays a role, and the overarching role of change management where policies like this are implemented.
To determine organisation's culture	Determine what influential role the culture of the organisation plays in the implementation of work-life balance policies. Is the overall culture perceived as supportive and diverse, does the organisation push for long working hours, is there clear communication, success rate of newly implemented policies, etc.
To assess the impact of macro- and mesosystem factors	What influence does the current state of the economy as well as the direct environment/sector in which the organisation operates have on considering implementation?
To conduct a cost-benefit analysis	Weigh up the cost of writing and implementing such policies against the long- and short-term benefits that are associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies.
To assess the state of the labour force	Considering aspects such as age, competition for labour, proportion of female labour, position of management and the presence of dual-career employees.
To assess the labour pool	The labour force's availability, needs, values as well as demands.
To determine generations and specifications	To which employees are work-life balance policies applicable in terms of utilisation and perceived utilisation, as well as the organisation's focus on recruiting Generation Y employees and limited talented employees with some form of rare skill.

From the above list of objectives, the target organisational characteristics were identified and the third section of the interview schedule, namely semi-structured questions, was constructed. The development of the interview guide is explained below.

3.5 DATA GATHERING METHOD: THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

3.5.1 Developing the interview questions

The semi-structured interview schedule questions were developed based on Table 3.4 above. Each characteristic, as determined by the literature review in Chapter 2, is covered by the questions to ensure the depth of the data gathered is sufficient. The questions developed, as well as the instructions, follow.

Participants in the interview are provided with the following instruction:

This section will cover specific details regarding your organisation. The concept driving this section is that of an interview. The objective is to provide the researcher with comprehensive information regarding the organisation to determine which aspects contribute towards the implementation of above identified work-life balance arrangements in the form of official organisational policies. You are once again reminded that any information you provide is anonymous and confidential. Please listen to each question and provide a detailed answer. There are no correct answers, I am merely interested in your opinion and any information you are willing to share.

Question 1: Would you say that the nature of the work in the organisation consists of straight line work, mass production and repetitive work? Please provide more detail regarding the nature of the work done within the organisation.

Question 2: When you describe the organisation, would you say rapid growth fits the description? Flexible production? Rapid resource development?

Question 3: Please describe the organisation's business strategy as comprehensively as possible.

Question 4: In your opinion, is it essential that the human resource policies and procedures are developed in such a manner that they clearly align with the organisational business strategy? Would the strategy be compromised if the policies do not directly support this strategy? Would you say that policies within the organisation are vital for the strategy's success?

Question 5: Please provide a general description of the role that the organisation's CEO/MD plays. Would you describe the CEO/MD of the organisation as being involved and visible in the general organisational processes, or merely at a strategic level?

Question 6: To the best of your knowledge, would you agree that the general procedures of the organisation involving all employees are communicated effectively and in an understandable manner? Are you comfortable to confirm that this communication takes place to the extent that each employee is aware of all organisational policies and procedures?

Question 7: When changes are made in any organisational policy, regardless of who is affected by the change, are these changes communicated clearly across the organisation to all employees to ensure transparency?

Question 8: Based on feedback from official as well as non-official procedures, according to your knowledge, would you state that the organisation's manager and supervisor are supportive when it comes to their team's careers? The team's family? How about general well-being? Is there any substantial evidence that you can provide to support your statement?

Question 9: In your opinion, to what extent do the managers support the work-life balance policies that are available and encourage their team members to utilise work-life balance policies? Would you say there is visible resistance from the managers regarding work-life balance policies?

Question 10: In your own words, please describe the organisation's culture as comprehensively as possible.

Question 11: Do you consider the organisation as one that values high-performing individuals by placing a major emphasis on reaching targets and performance ratings? Do you have a performance management system? If so, who is responsible for the ratings of the employees? Who supervises whether developmental plans are implemented to ensure an increase in performance from one review period to the next?

Question 12: Does the organisation value individual contributions?

Question 13: In your opinion, does the top managerial team (EXCO level) understand that the employees have various role demands?

Question 14: Would you state that the leaders within the organisation are understanding and supportive towards their subordinates' personal circumstances?

Question 15: Can you say with confidence that all employees are familiar with all the human resource policies in the organisation, and further that all managers implement and support work-life balance policies to the extent they were intended for?

Question 16: How often do the supervisors/managers expect employees to work overtime? What is the organisation's average overtime?

Question 17: Does the organisation reward employees when they accomplish more than what is expected of them and, if so, how are the employees rewarded?

Question 18: Does the organisation attempt to ensure that employees do not take on more than they are able to handle? And should the organisation become aware that an employee is constantly under severe stress, what actions does the organisation take?

Question 19: Please describe the employee brand that you are attempting to portray in as much detail as possible. Do you believe that you are aiming to attract highly talented employees? How competitive is the market for the type of employees you attempt to attract?

Question 20: Would you say that the strategy of the organisation includes attracting more Generation Y (currently 18- to 27-year-old) employees within the next five years?

Question 21: Is the organisation flexible (not very dependent on the specific workforce) in terms of its workforce?

Question 22: In general, does the organisation value economically active females and perceive them as hard to replace? How many key positions are assigned to female employees?

Question 23: How often do you research the needs and values of your current workforce? What usually serves as a driver for doing so when you do aim to determine the needs?

Question 24: When the information gathered during such research indicates that the organisation is misreading its employees, does the organisation utilise this information to adjust its approach to employees and incorporate this into its strategic plan?

Question 25: How big a role did the economy play before deciding to implement the current work-life balance policies? And would you anticipate a change in work-life balance policies should the economic climate change drastically?

Question 26: To your knowledge, are some of the policies available in the organisation limited to a specific group of employees?

Question 27: Please describe the process that was followed by answering the following: firstly, what led to the organisation considering the implementation of work-life balance policies? Secondly, how was it decided which policies to implement? Thirdly, what was the process followed to develop the policies? Who all were involved during this process? From those individuals, who were the key role players involved during development? Were any of these individuals from key positions within the organisation? Fourthly, please explain the process followed when implementing the policies throughout the organisation? Finally, how successful would you describe the implementation of the policies to be?

3.5.2 Consultation with expert panel

Once a pool of semi-structured questions was compiled, consultations were held with four qualitative research experts within the field of industrial psychology to evaluate the content of the interview schedule. Each expert was sent the original interview schedule (32 questions) for comments and feedback via electronic communication. Suggestions using comments and track changes were made by each expert to refine the schedule. All comments and suggestions were considered and any comment or suggestion that subsequently overlapped (i.e. was mentioned by more than one expert) was immediately accepted as an adjustment to the original interview schedule. The suggestions were then evaluated according to the value they might add, and any suggestion that met the criteria was then taken into account in amending the original interview schedule. The original interview schedule was amended, resulting in the removal of five questions to end up with a total of 27 questions. This strategy was adopted to enhance the trustworthiness of the present study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

3.5.3 The semi-structured interviews

Each manager was approached via e-mail in order to gain institutional permission to conduct interviews, and this was followed by a telephonic conversation in order to address any concerns the participant might have. The HR managers were given the option to conduct an interview either face-to-face or, due to location constraints, via Skype, as some participants were situated in other provinces. The participants were

asked to mention a time that suited them so as to decrease the adverse impact that the interview might have on their productivity. Although most participants wanted to participate in the research, it was understood that report building would be essential to gather all the information required for rich data. The interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes, and although there were very specific questions included in the schedule, some of the participant did not elaborate enough and probes had to be used in order to ensure that there was rich data.

The interviews were conducted by using comprehensive interview techniques and, as such, each answer could be captured within context whilst clarifying any aspect that seemed ambiguous. The interview schedule aimed to elicit dialogue and to provide the interviewee with the opportunity to elaborate on concepts and answers. The eight individual interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission to capture the participants' words verbatim, and the interviews were subsequently transcribed (more detail in the analysis section below). Additional field notes or interview notes were kept, along with all other documentation pertaining to the study. Finally, no physical harm was caused as a result of the participants taking part in the data gathering procedure. However, the nature of the interview may have resulted in participants considering aspects of organisational life (time off, work schedules, managerial styles) they had not previously considered. The interview may also have made participants aware of their unhappiness with aspects of their working lives, thereby unintentionally diminishing work satisfaction.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.6.1 Transcription

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim using ATLAS.ti version 8 (Scientific Software Development [ATLAS.ti], 2003). The original transcriptions were outsourced to a transcribing organisation, which signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure the data remained secure and adhered to the ethics required for this study. The transcribers were reimbursed for their time and all the transcriptions were uploaded to ATLAS.ti for data analysis. All transcriptions were checked for accuracy and completeness and then the transcribed data was entered into the qualitative data management program, ATLAS.ti version 8. Listening to the recordings and checking the interviews allowed for immersion in the data. In order to ensure the transparency

of the data analysis it is essential to utilise a program such as ATLAS.ti, as the software provides the user with functions to support a robust analysis. Software programs such as ATLAS.ti allow researchers to confidently analyse data according to the methodological strategy best suited to answer their research questions.

In an effort to ensure the rigour and transparency of the data analysis in the present study, the choice was made to use ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis computer software. The program, currently in its eighth version, assists with qualitative data analysis by providing the user with functions to support a robust analysis. The program developers modelled the software on grounded theory methods, allowing users the option to create free codes and to visualise their coded work in a network space. Computer-aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) has been available since the early 1990s to assist researchers with the management and analysis of text-based data that later go on to support the analysis of image-based, audio and video data (Friese, 2014). There are various methods of qualitative data analysis and inductive thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the data in the present study.

3.6.2 Inductive thematic analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts. The thematic analysis was conducted according to the guidelines set out by authors Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis and content analysis show similar characteristics; however, for the purpose of this study, the use of thematic analysis and the ATLAS.ti program was of value in the quality of the reporting. In their experience and during their review of the literature pertaining to thematic analysis, a large discrepancy was found between what thematic analysis is and how to go about conducting it. Therefore, in order to maintain transparency, the decision was made to conduct the analysis as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 2) study has provided a six-phase “theoretically-flexible approach” that produces a comprehensive and holistic reflection of the data. An inductive thematic analysis differs from a theoretical thematic analysis in that the themes identified are closely tied to the data themselves, as opposed to being fitted to a pre-existing coding frame. Although Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) EST was used to organise the themes that emerged from the data, the data were not coded or bound by the concepts related to the theory. The theory provided a suitable lens through

which to interpret and make sense of the findings. Semantic themes, which merely described the data, evolved into latent themes, which allowed interpretation of the themes within a broader theoretical context. The six phases are shown in Figure 3.1 below, as set out in the Braun and Clarke (2006) study. The figure also shows how ATLAS.ti was used to facilitate each of the steps.

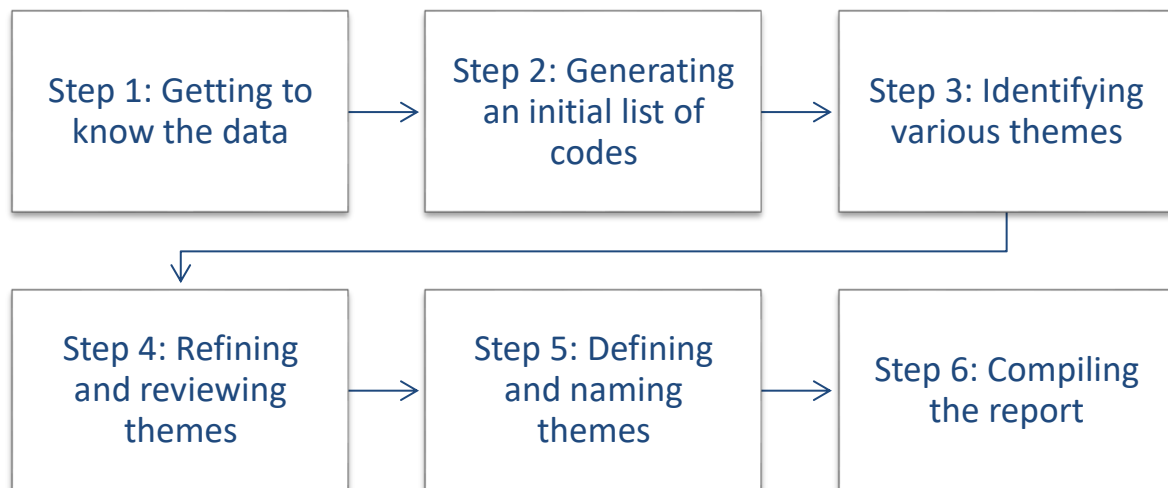


Figure 3.1 Six steps of thematic analysis (adapted from Braun and Clarke 2006 as used within ATLAS.ti v8).

Step 1. Once the data had been collected, the process of familiarisation oneself with the information that had been collected was followed. Part of this entailed reading and re-reading through the transcripts to search for meanings and patterns throughout the data, and recognising potential codes to use for the formal coding step. All the transcripts were imported into ATLAS.ti (as primary documents) and ideas for initial codes were collected using the memo function of the software as the transcripts were reviewed. Within ATLAS.ti the user can create free codes from a list using the memo function (Friese, 2014).

Step 2. Once the initial ideas for codes had been collected, the codes were reviewed for redundancy before importing them for use within ATLAS.ti. Friese (2014) recommends creating as much structure in the code list as possible early on to reflect transparency in the coding of the data. Semantic codes (descriptive codes) were used initially to describe the quotations of interest in a meaningful way. Saldana (2016) has offered ideas for other types of codes that can be included to facilitate coding, such as

emotion codes (to code for feelings), attribute codes (to code for age, gender, occupation, etc.), and versus codes (to highlight contrasts). Friese (2014) encourages the use of multiple layers of coding, as coding in such a way allows for the use of the advanced functions of ATLAS.ti, for example the code-occurrence table and the query tool. Coding in itself is an iterative process and requires constant back and forth until there is overall satisfaction with the codes generated.

Step 3. Once the data had been coded initially and a long list of codes had been produced, the analysis had to be refocused on the broader level of themes. During this step, latent codes were developed and codes with interrelated meanings or ideas were sorted and grouped into potential themes. In ATLAS.ti this was done by grouping codes into families. Not all codes grouped into a family necessarily represented a separate theme. As Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 10) explain, “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set”.

Step 4. This step involved the refinement of the themes developed in step 3. During this step, all themes identified were re-evaluated in order to ensure that there was enough supporting data for each theme, after which redundant themes were removed. Themes that were shown to be similar were merged into other suitable themes. In ATLAS.ti the network view function was used to facilitate the decisions made on themes. This phase also meant going back to the level of the data and reading through all data segments that warranted inclusion in the theme. In the network view and through the use of appropriate filters, all the data segments pertaining to a theme were reviewed in order to decide whether there was an overall fit.

Step 5. Following the satisfactory establishment of themes that represent the data collected throughout, each theme was given an appropriate name. At this stage, another level of refinement was used and theme names were considered based on theory and data. This is clarified in the results that follow. During steps 4 and 5, memo writing was used to reflect on the content of the themes and to synthesise the overall meaning pertaining to the theme. Memos developed in ATLAS.ti were attached to the relevant networks.

Step 6. Step six involved the presentation of the results of the data. This is done in the results section in the next chapter.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to the commencement of data gathering, ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University, and institutional clearance was obtained from the participating organisations to allow access to the contact details of the HR managers. Each selected organisation was contacted personally to take part in the study and then the consent form was read to each participant. The consent form introduced the researcher and the purpose of the study, provided participants with a brief outline of the study, and explained the conditions of confidentiality and anonymity under which they were participating. The participants were also made aware that, without written informed consent, the researcher would not be allowed to use the information obtained from the participants. Each organisation was approached via personal communication to explain the purpose of the study as well as the procedure. Utmost care was taken in ensuring that the corresponding participant completely understood the process.

Voluntary participation was encouraged because of the time and input required from the participating organisation. In addition, voluntary participation was emphasised since the information received was confidential (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). There was a cover letter accompanying the interview schedule for each participant's perusal. The document conformed to the Health Professions Council of South Africa's (HPCSA) Ethical Code of Professional Conduct (HPCSA, 2016) by ensuring that the participants gave their informed consent in several ways. Firstly, the nature and rationale for the research were explained to them. Secondly, it informed participants that participation in the research was voluntary, and that they may withdraw from participation at any time prior to their participation without negative consequences of any kind. Thirdly, the cover letter explained that responses would remain anonymous and would not in any way be linked to the participants. In the event that participants wished to discuss any aspect related to the research, the researcher and the research supervisor's contact details were provided. Finally, the cover letter indicated that a summary of the complete research results would be made available to the research organisation on request. Written consent (see Appendix A) as well as institutional permission (see

Appendix B) was subsequently provided by the organisation as well as by each designated participant.

3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented an overview of the research methodology associated with the present study, commencing with a brief discussion of the qualitative, descriptive research paradigm. The advantages and limitations of this research methodology were explored in the light of the aims and objectives of the study. A detailed discussion on the research design was presented by covering topics including the population from which the sample was drawn, the sampling procedure, instrument development, data gathering and the analysis procedures that were followed. The chapter concluded with the ethical considerations associated with the present study. The next chapter presents the results that were obtained in the study.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the information that was obtained from the participating organisations through interviews that were conducted with eight HR managers. Following a six-phased thematic analysis, a comprehensive list of themes and sub-themes was produced that summarised important information regarding the experiences of the participants with regard to their organisation's work-life initiatives. Information regarding organisational characteristics – the descriptive component, will be discussed first, followed by the thematic analysis – the inductive component.

4.2 ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS (DESCRIPTIVE COMPONENT)

The first two sections of the interview schedule comprised biographical questions relating, firstly, to the characteristics of the participating organisation and, secondly, to the types of work-life balance policies currently available and active in the organisation. Both these sections will now be discussed.

4.2.1 Biographical information

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below contain the biographical information relating to the participating organisations. Of the eight participating organisations, two had fewer than 100 employees while six had more than 100 employees. The total number of female employees present in the participating organisations amounted to just below half of all employees (48.61%), while the total number of male employees was slightly above half (51.39%; the total number of employees from all participating organisations amounted to 4 667 individuals). Furthermore, roughly 3% of all employees across the organisations comprised of managers, whereas less than half (45.83%) were line workers, and even fewer (11.82%) were professionals. The remainder (39.2%) comprised general employees or fell into the category of 'other'. Half of the organisations represented the All Shares Index, namely Sales and Marketing (12.5%), Hospitality Industry (12.5%), and Consulting (25%), while the rest of the participating organisations represented the Financial Industry (12.5%), Resources (12.5%), Retail (12.5%) and Telecommunications (12.5%). Half of the participating organisations'

Table 4.1. *Participating organisations*

No.	Industry category	Sector	No. of employees	Male/female ratio	Highest level of education	Years in operation	Work-life balance policy	Occupational specific differentiation
1	Resources	Fast-moving Consumer Goods	> 250	889 M 226 F	Grade 12 Degree or Diploma	5–10 years	Informally available	30 Managers 200 Professionals 535 Line workers 350 General
2	Telecommunications	Information Technology	0–50	9 M 19 F	Degree or Diploma	5–10 years	Formally available	4 Managers 6 Professionals 10 Line workers 8 Other workers
3	Retail	Retail	> 250	682 M 1191 F	Grade 12	0–5 years	Not available	42 Professionals 784 Line workers 1047 General
4	All Shares	Sales and Marketing	200–250	160 M 72 F	Grade 12 Degree or Diploma	5–10 years	Informally available	43 Managers 66 Professionals 123 Line workers
5	All Shares	Financial	100–150	61 M 49 F	Degree or Diploma	3–5 years	Formally available	9 Partners 16 Managers 85 Professionals
6	All Shares	Hospitality	100–150	62 M 84 F	Grade 12 Degree or Diploma	5–10 years	Informally available	26 Managers 2 Professionals 105 Line workers 13 Learners
7	All Shares	Human Resource Consulting	100–150	7 M 133 F	Degree or Diploma	3–5 years	Formally available	10 Managers 98 Professionals 32 Line workers
8	All Shares	Business Consulting	0–50	28 M 7 F	Degree or Diploma	3–5 years	Formally available	8 Managers 20 Professionals 7 Line workers

employees had tenure of less than five years, while the other half reported tenure of five to ten years. Nearly all employees had completed grade 12, while 87.5% of the organisations reported that their employees had obtained an undergraduate qualification and/or a postgraduate qualification as their highest qualification.

Table 4.2. *Summary of biographical information of participating organisations*

Description	Number
Size of the organisation	
0-50	2
50-100	0
100-150	3
150-200	0
200-250	1
> 250	2
Total male and female employees (%)	
Male	51.39%
Female	48.61%
Known dependent children (%)	
No children	37.42%
One or more children	62.58%
Total employees in occupational groups (%)	
Managers	3.00%
Professionals	11.82%
Line workers	45.83%
Other (general workers or learners)	39.2%
Sector organisation operates in	
Financial	1
Industrial	0
Resources	1
Retail	1
Gold mining	0
Telecommunications	1
All shares	4
Other (please specify)	0
Number of employees working for the organisation for (%)	
0-2 years	10.6%
2-5 years	37%
5-10 years	39.8%
More than 10 years	12.6%
Highest qualification (all employees; %)	
Grade 9	11.5%
Grade 12	52.1%
Degree or diploma	31.9%
Higher	4.5%

4.2.2 Current work-life balance policies

A summary of the work-life balance policies in the participating organisations is presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3. *Work-life balance policies in participating organisations*

Type of work-life balance policies	No. of organisations
Child- and dependant-care benefits	
• Organisation provided day child care centre	1
• Arrangements for elderly care	0
• Programmes for emergency care of ill dependant or child	0
• Summer and weekend programmes for dependants	0
• Alternative arrangements for employees with children under 13	0
Flexible working conditions	
• Flexitime	7
• Job sharing	0
• Part-time work	1
• Compressed work week	1
• Shorter weeks for parents	0
• Work from home	4
• Home telecommunicating	2
Time off	
• Maternity leave	6
• Paternity leave	0
• Leave for family emergencies	7
Virtual offices	
• Availability of the option	2
• Not available	6
Employee assistance programmes	
• Counselling assistance	3
• Relocation assistance	2

In terms of the work-life balance policies that had been implemented across the eight organisations, one organisation reported having child and/or dependant or child care benefits, with no other organisation reporting any specific benefit relating to child and dependent care. In terms of flexible working conditions, seven organisations reported having flexitime available, four provided work-from-home options, one had compressed work week options available for employees, and two organisations gave home telecommuting, virtual offices and shorter weeks for parents as options for flexible working conditions. Time off was given in the form of maternity leave in the majority of the organisations, although six of the organisations had more favourable maternity leave arrangements, in the form of either payed time off, or a pay increase

(more than four months) semi-paid time off, while none provided paternity leave and all eight provided leave for family emergencies.

Furthermore, it was reported that seven of the eight organisations were willing to make additional arrangements for family responsibility leave, which was more favourable than what is stipulated in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Virtual offices were available in two of the organisations, while the rest did not provide this option to their employees. The reasons for this will be discussed later in this chapter. Finally, three organisations provided counselling as an option for employees, while two provided assistance in the event of employees relocating.

4.3 RESULTS FROM THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS (INDUCTIVE COMPONENT)

Based on the data obtained from the specific questions in the interview schedule, the themes that emerged reflected a “patterned response” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10), not only due to the frequency with which the response emerged in each dataset, but also, according to the researcher’s judgment, whether it captured an idea important in answering the research question. This process resulted in the identification of a composite list of themes from each of the respondent groups. Emerging themes, namely strategic approach, external factors and internal factors, sub-themes and illustrative extracts are presented in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4. *Emerging themes and sub-themes, with illustrative extracts*

Themes	Sub-themes	Illustrative extracts
Strategic approach	Strategic Intent	You know if you do things in silo and you know you developing your policies without understanding your strategy and what your goals are then things tend to fall apart [...] (Telecommunications)
	Comprehensive Organisational Culture	It is super important that culture is largely what drives us and it’s often the unwritten things as well, it’s how we speak, it’s how we engage [...] (HR Consulting)
	Active Involvement of MD/CEO	The head of a division or the head of an organisation plays a phenomenal role [...] (Business Consulting)

	Organisational Structure	He has a target and within the division he would then need to develop people, I would say when he was gone by us there was more divisional focus and the structure was in silos [...] (Business Consulting)
External factors	Economic Impact on Organisations	But because the economy is what it is, we will hold back to 10 of those positions [...] (Sales and Marketing)
	Operating Industry	It's retail, retail is a very tough industry. You know mmm, for example, April/May there is no leave [...] (Retail)
	Overarching Nature of Work	So, if they have really tight deadlines and they really pushing [...] (Telecommunications)
	Competition for Scarce Talent	Because it's very niched and a lot of people are coming to us for skills that are not actually in the market [...] (Telecommunications)
Internal factors	Female Employees in Key Positions	Well eighty percent of our organisation is female [...] (Telecommunications)
	Focus on Generation Y within Organisation	They will ask for exactly what they want, which is a good thing, but it is something that we need to adapt to [...] (Manufacturing)
	Organisational Communication	You have web, you know you have a hundred different ways to communicate with someone and I think the old school way was you had to be in an office [...] (Telecommunications)
	Organisational Transparency	There is no consistency [...] (Retail)
	Overall Managerial Support	I think it does distinguish us from other organisations because they are involved [...] (Manufacturing)
	Overall Organisational Support for Policies	The expectation is for you to sort yourself out. We cannot sort things out for you that is why you are there [...] (Business Consulting)

4.3.1 Theme: Strategic approach

This theme, strategic approach, and the network of associated sub-themes, are presented in Figure 4.1 (p. 87). Throughout the present study it became apparent that a major determining factor for whether organisations decide on either formally or

informally implementing any work-life balance policies was the strategic approach adopted by the organisation. Participants reported that it was not only the approach, but also whether the organisation had a clear strategy and was aware of the impact of the strategy on various other parts of the organisation. Most of the participants could easily share their strategy, as well as how they experienced factors relating to the organisation strategy, such as the organisation's culture, whether they had specific systems in place and whether HR was essential to the success of the organisational strategy. Some of the participants mentioned essential characteristics of their organisations:

We just came from a workshop now and set this year's key goals and areas of achievement. And each manager has sort of identified tasks which are going to create a success for the whole organisation (Hospitality Sector, Cape Town).

We would like to be the number one distributor, but really, we would like to be the number one employer too (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

I think the goal was to make money and grow, but I do not think so much growth so fast. I think it (the organisation) has grown immensely and yes, I do not think it's about money, one must be honest with yourself, I think they tried to keep it stable, but it got a little bit out of hand (Retail, Johannesburg).

The above statements indicate that the organisations were aware of what their goals are and what they wanted to achieve, and they had systems and processes in place for how they would like to get there. The participants confirmed that their strategic approach had a direct effect on how they approached their work, and this resulted in benefits such as work-life balance policies being implemented. In terms of the strategic approach of the organisations, four sub-themes were identified, namely strategic intent, active involvement of the MD/CEO, comprehensive organisational culture, and organisational structure, which are discussed below.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme: Strategic intent

Specific to the organisations' strategic approach is the concept of strategic intent. Each of the participating organisations was able to describe its strategic intent and why this had an impact on how they are operating the business. Many participants could either

comment on their five-year plan or on the organisational vision and the essential role it plays in decision making. The participants further reported that most of the organisation's employees were aware that they are operating with a very specific strategic intent in mind. One participant mentioned:

See our strategy is first and foremost excellent customer service. We cannot do anything without our customers (Retail, Johannesburg).

Other participating organisations mentioned their strategies to be:

Rapid growth. Yes, it has been rapid growth for the last three years [...] it has most definitely been the driving force behind much of our decision making (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

I think whenever you have your, you know if you do things in silo and you know you developing your policies without understanding your strategy and what your goals are then things tend to fall apart [...] we know that we need to develop our resources in order to achieve our strategic goals (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

We wouldn't do the policies and then say this must be the strategy, it would definitely be the other way around [...] we are currently in the process of changing much of the organisation in order to support our growth vision (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

It wouldn't be very good but we don't exist without good business strategy so you know if we want good people then we have to have good policies (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

Rapid growth has been the focus for the past few years. Growth, obviously with the growth, the resources had to increase as well uhm ... but with the growth does not come the full process of what we can do (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

Rapid growth was a big focus and as part of the strategy and for the first time in our history, at least for the part four or five years, there was a lot of individual development plans, performance management programmes, there was money allocated to self-development, there was a budget that you could work on [...]

much of that has changed now and we are definitely feeling the impact (Business Consulting, Cape Town).

The participating individuals voiced their opinion on their organisation's vision and strategy and the impact it had on operations. The majority of the participants commented that their organisational strategy had major implications for their policy development in favour of work-life balance policies. A few participating organisations mentioned that their strategy had a negative effect on the balance that employees attempted to maintain in that it drove the workforce to perform. Clearly, based on the interviews, strategy had a direct impact on policy development and indirectly affected the workforce as well.

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme: Comprehensive organisational culture

A major requirement for any strategic approach is the way the organisation focuses on the culture it is creating through its operations, policies and procedures. Throughout the present study, the participating organisations reiterated the unmatched value culture brings to the strategy of the organisation. Culture could be defined in numerous ways, but the outcome always related to the overall impact this specific element had on the organisation's success, as one participating organisation said:

It is super important that culture is largely what drives us and it's often the unwritten things as well, it's how we speak, it's how we engage, the principles are there and we refer to them often but we don't necessarily speak to someone and say I'm now going to speak to you and we going to discuss things around the principal of functional order, I will say dear have you gone to a line manager, that's your first port of call and so in the way we engage with people we are aware of our principles and how we should interact and if we have somebody coming into our organisation that is counter all of that it just isn't going to work (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

Other viewpoints regarding culture included:

Culture drives the type of person you want, so the culture fit is incredibly important for us because our principles are godly principles and we have what we call godly enriching meetings so this morning we had where people are free to come and sit for half an hour to 45 minutes to sit and to sort of meditate and

to pray and to be involved in what we do and people don't have to so again the liberty not to (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

Okay it's very family oriented well the guys that are here, ja everybody is very friendly, very helpful and I think you all know that at the end of the day you a team. Professional Development Plan time we kind of run it together and yes, we do highlight training needs that come out of there and then we got to get that into our training plan or if it's not, add it in and get it going (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

Our culture is very innovative, but it is tough and expectations is [sic] exceptionally high. But we value the people and we have only the best, we have no formal performance rating system in place, but if for example somebody has not had an absent day for six months, we will get them up here and give them a chocolate to recognise what they are doing (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

While the concept of an organisational culture manifested itself in different ways, all eight organisations reiterated that the culture they had created up until the time of the interview had a direct effect on the workforce. There was consensus that culture drives decision making and, if it is imperative for the organisation to maintain a healthy culture, the policies developed will support that understanding. Even though all the organisations were driven by performance and it became clear that their standards were high, very few placed a formal emphasis on performance ratings or high-performing individuals. Team work and delivering on expectations were highlighted, and rewards and recognition rarely came from working harder than expected. Interestingly, the organisations valued healthy employees with a determined mindset and agreed that driving performance or high-performing individuals did not contribute to the culture they were trying to instil.

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme: Active involvement of MD/CEO

It could be imagined that the active involvement of the Managing Director (MD) or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is to be assumed. However, it became apparent in the present study that this is not always the case. As a result, participating organisations that reported that the MD or CEO was still actively involved also highlighted the impact

this had had on the development and implementation of work-life balance policies. The following quotations typified the participants' views:

It is a sort of top-down approach and saying this is what we want, but it's kind of a discussion that we have and everybody brings their ideas together before we actually go out there and draft something (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

The two directors are very much involved so they are still kind of hands on (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

We really do appreciate it because I think it does distinguish us from other organisations because they are involved [...] I mean there used to be a time when they used to phone, well they do for their direct people now, but there was a time when the CEO would phone everyone for their birthday (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

I want to tell you they are incredibly involved, they are in our store every week [...] We see one of our directors three times a week (Retail, Johannesburg).

They are in their offices every day, and they are involved with everything in the organisation (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

She is here every day and managing the organisation, it is so refreshing to have a female as a managing director, her guidance brings another dimension to the organisation (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

The participating organisations all made mention of the active decision-making involvement of the CEO or MD and the impact this has had on the strategic intent and organisational culture. Most organisations believed that their CEO or MD generally added value by ensuring that the organisation remained a leader in its industry. The participants emphasised that the managers understood that policies ought to change so as to remain relevant, and had often been the driving force behind the changes.

4.3.1.4 Sub-theme: Organisational structure

Most organisations appeared very specific with regard to the design of their operations. The participating organisations highlighted that the way their organisation

was structured, with specific reference to job roles, played an important role in implementing work-life balance policies. The following responses illustrate the structure of the organisation:

He has a target and within in the division he would then need to develop people, I would say when he was gone by us there was more divisional focus and the structure was in silos it was almost like every division was doing their own things (Business Consulting, Cape Town).

We have a strong board that has their own opinions so you cannot really do your own thing because there are very strong opinions and this all depends on how old the business is and also how strong the culture of the business is so there is a very strong opinion on the culture and the philosophy of how we conduct our business (Business Consulting, Cape Town).

So, we have two generations working here. So, we've got the generation that started the family and then we've also got the generation that where the sons and the daughters are now working here [...] What I think we need to just distinguish between we've got highly skilled people that work here and we've got semi-skilled and unskilled that work here so we have masses of people that work on our floors, on our factory floors but 75 percent of our workforce are packers so I mean our factories are different to a normal factory in that they are beautifully (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

We wonder, what is our new big wave, what is the next thing we going to be involved in and that requires good resources [...] So, we offer the contract staff or permanent staff the option to become involved (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

It's pretty much I would say a flat structure. We have two directors so they are listed on the board and so they pretty much run the CEO/COO organisation because they are running different spheres of the business. And then there are senior management and probably like two middle managers there and then the resources, that's pretty much it (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

It is nine directors that all sit at the boardroom table and will make decisions, but there is one senior partner who is just a senior partner but doesn't like to

say this is how we do things so right now it is nine people steering the ship (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

We are part of a group, and we then all answer into a board of directors quarterly [...] and I operate to a prepared plan within a budget and I am accountable or responsible for that budget and everything within that they will let me do (Hospitality, Cape Town).

Our staff complement consists of sales staff, in other words technical staff, which goes into theatre, when surgery is done with the patients and gives technical advice to the doctors on the product. Our customer service is our staff who basically make sure that the products are delivered in time for the operation. This is the logistics part of the organisation. Umm and then we have shared services. We provide shared services to all our divisions, finances, HR, invoicing, such type of people (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

Largest number of stores is corporate, in other words, we have directors who have a joint venture and every shop is then managed by a manager under his structure (Retail, Johannesburg).

Collectively, these quotations indicate that the majority of the participants had a complex structure that they have to manage, which might hinder policies being implemented effectively across the whole organisation. The next section provides an overview of the second theme that emerged from the present study, namely external factors.

4.3.2 Theme: External factors

The theme external factors, and the network of associated sub-themes, are illustrated in Figure 4.2 (p. 93). External factors proved to be another important determinant of the implementation of work-life balance policies. Often, the lack of formal policies was assigned to the industry within which the organisation operates. Many organisations expressed that the South African market places a major constraint on their work-life balance initiatives. Four sub-themes emerged, namely economic impact on

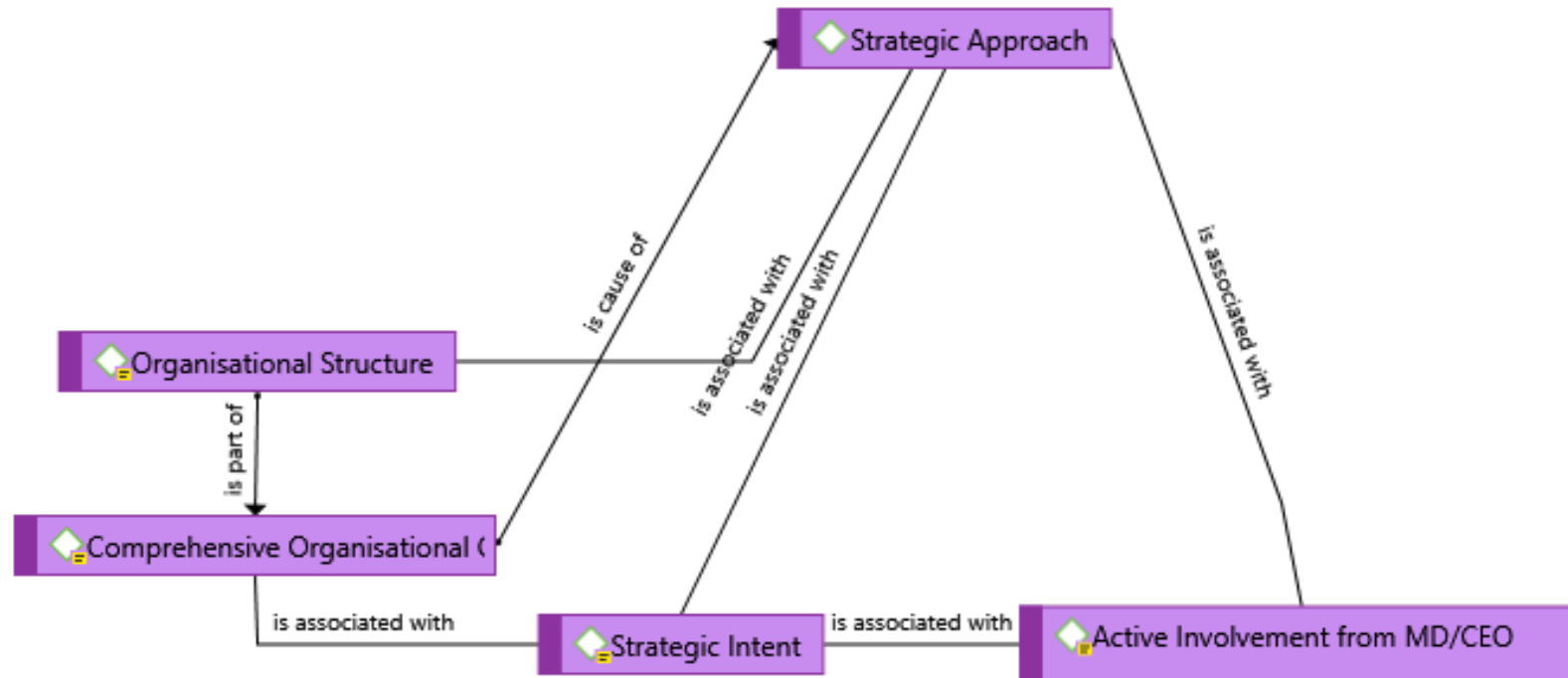


Figure 4.1. Illustration of the theme strategic approach, and the network of associated sub-themes that were derived from the present findings.

organisations, operating industry, overarching nature of work and competition for scarce talent, and are discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme: Economic impact on organisations

The economy is unpredictable in South Africa, and according to the findings of the present study, economic movements are having a very big impact on the way organisations make decisions regarding their employees. Although many organisations reported that, for the time being, the impact was still minimal, some indicated that the uncertain economic times were directly affecting decision-making:

They are highly skilled people and the training that we send them on is very expensive as well so ja, if the economy takes a dive then we in trouble, so ja it's critical (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

Irrespective of the economy is like people have to make use of our services [...] we are lucky in that manner (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

So, it means immediately that the economy has made us to get rid of people who have not been replaced (Retail, Johannesburg).

But because the economy is what it is, we will hold back to 10 of those positions and see how we release by July and then say that, okay, let's go with that (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

We have so much pressure from our customers to lower our unit costs (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

This means that, currently, South Africa's economy is not assisting organisations in making decisions that are healthy for the workforce, as they are forced to manage the employment component based on financial results. Although some organisations mentioned that they were finding ways to work around this reality, it clearly remains a challenge that organisations have to face.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme: Operating industry

Based on the literature review, it could be argued that the industry within which the organisations find themselves should have a direct impact on the implementation of work-life balance policies. However, the organisations indicated that they were able to

find ways around the industry, even though it brings along challenges. The nature of the operating industries has certain adverse effects on decision making, yet some managers have discovered ways to work around those effects. Feedback describing the impact of the participating organisations industries included:

It is manufacturing and there is [sic] challenges and it is challenging, but I think the people here they understand the best and whatever it takes to be the best, and uhm I think there is definitely mutual respect here and an understanding that you are a person, you got the organisation but you also have a family life (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban)

Its retail, retail is a very tough industry [...] and in this type of industry, you must hardly have balance (Retail, Johannesburg).

What we do is very diverse in that obviously we are in the hospitality industry (Hospitality, Cape Town).

We are in sales and marketing and we sell medical devices (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

Clearly, organisations understand that their industries bring along challenges and that the challenges are not unique to their specific organisation, but are experienced all around. Nevertheless, decisions are still being made to work alongside those challenges to bring forward solutions that assist the employees in maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

4.3.2.3 Sub-theme: Overarching nature of work

The nature of the actual work being done by the employees has been shown to be a main determining factor and is indirectly influenced by the nature of the industry within which the organisation operates. Participants referred to challenges with regard to maintaining balance and reaching the deliverables agreed on for the job. Organisations that fully supported work-life balance policies mentioned:

The information management space. So, we are a consulting organisation and we focus on information quality and we do a lot of data migrations master data management, data governance. So, we do a lot of project work. So, if they have really tight deadlines and they really pushing, they do get a bit frustrated you

know if people are not around when they need them but normally they would call in a team member and they will discuss it with them (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

Other participating organisations mentioned challenges brought about by the nature of the work:

It is very rigid and you have to follow very strict guidelines and yeah there is a lot of overtime, we are aware of it but it is not excessive and it is not every day more than that I can't tell you the exact and I mean a lot of them will put in every second of overtime so they get more money whereas other departments' people will work an extra hour and not put it down. (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

So, although we are doing production line work we don't take you up unless you have a matric [...] This is a very tough environment and expectations are exceptionally high (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

It is retail, all that those people do is work (Retail, Johannesburg)

There is no real balance [...] The system that we have is not well balanced, it is not good for your family (Business Consulting, Cape Town)

They are very target driven [...] Yes, obviously, their incentives are paid out of their targets, so if they do reach their target, they will not get their incentives. So, what we usually say to the reps, if they are in the theatre in those extraordinary hours of the day or night, as I have explained to you now, do let them take back that time [...] We also have departments that work shifts, which brings another element to the organisation (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

It is fast paced so something will happen today and then they will say they want it tomorrow (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

If you need to go to the hospital then what happens is we would take over the projects but they need to come back and finish the project but we don't dictate that you should work on a project that another person is working on (Business Consulting, Cape Town).

Staff are also taught to multitask, so if we short in like the restaurant, someone from front office knows what to do. So there, there is a you know pipeline of people who can stand in for any position (Hospitality, Cape Town).

It depends on the type of work you are doing. We have some resources that manage to work from home at least three days a week and we get some that have to be at the office five days a week or they have to be on site. So, it all depends on the type of role you are in but it doesn't matter, if you have an issue then you willing to talk about it (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

Typically, the nature of the work could be a barrier when implementing policies in support of work-life balance. Nevertheless, the organisations reported that they used their knowledge regarding the nature of the work to design the policies in a way that was aligned with the nature of the work, rather than the inherent job requirements of the employees.

4.3.2.4 Sub-theme: Scarce talent competition

In organisations in a niche talent market, or in a situation where entry into the organisation is considered to be very high due to technical or organisational requirements, the participating organisations reported that they would rather accommodate their talent than risk losing it, as the industry is very competitive and they pride themselves in having highly talented individuals. When asked about talent management, the following responses were typical:

I mean if our policies are not there to support them and help them meet their goals we can obviously lose people which is you know not what we want so we got to make sure they are aligned because it does impact at the end of the day (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

Very much so and the human capacity is very much part and parcel of that because without the people you can't do that. We have a management process with which we developing people called Humanity, which is actually around, you know, that our key sort of performance area or indicator is on our people management and we feel that's going to be the differentiating factor in ten years' time (Hospitality, Cape Town).

With what we are doing, but like I said we still cater for the flexitime because we do know that the more you invest in somebody, the less likely that they will move onto another organisation (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

I mean we hire the best and that is what we strive for and like I said it is quite a niche environment (Telecommunications, Cape Town)

Our people are the ones who make us money and they are not well and you are paying for them so obviously (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

The nature of the organisation determines the type of individual required to perform within the organisation. The consensus was that one needs to invest in talent or risk losing it to your competition. As such, organisations structure themselves in a way that attracts and retains talented individuals, as human resources are their main assets. In the next section, the third theme that emerged from the data, namely internal factors, is discussed.

4.3.3 Theme: Internal factors

Numerous internal factors stood out in explaining why some organisations implemented work-life balance policies in a formal manner by way of written policy, versus an informal manner, as well as why some organisations were struggling to successfully implement work-life balance policies. (Please refer to Figure 4.3 (p. 103) for the network of sub-themes that relate to the main theme of internal factors). Although internal factors could become an endless list of options, the organisations referred to very specific elements that were affecting how they approached a balanced workforce. Six sub-themes emerged, namely active female employees in key positions, focus on generation Y, organisational communication perspective, organisational transparency, overall managerial support and overall organisational support, which are discussed below.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme: Female employees in key positions

In the present study, it became evident that the presence of female employees ensured greater emphasis on the availability of favourable working conditions. More favourable maternity leave policies were reported by the majority of the participating

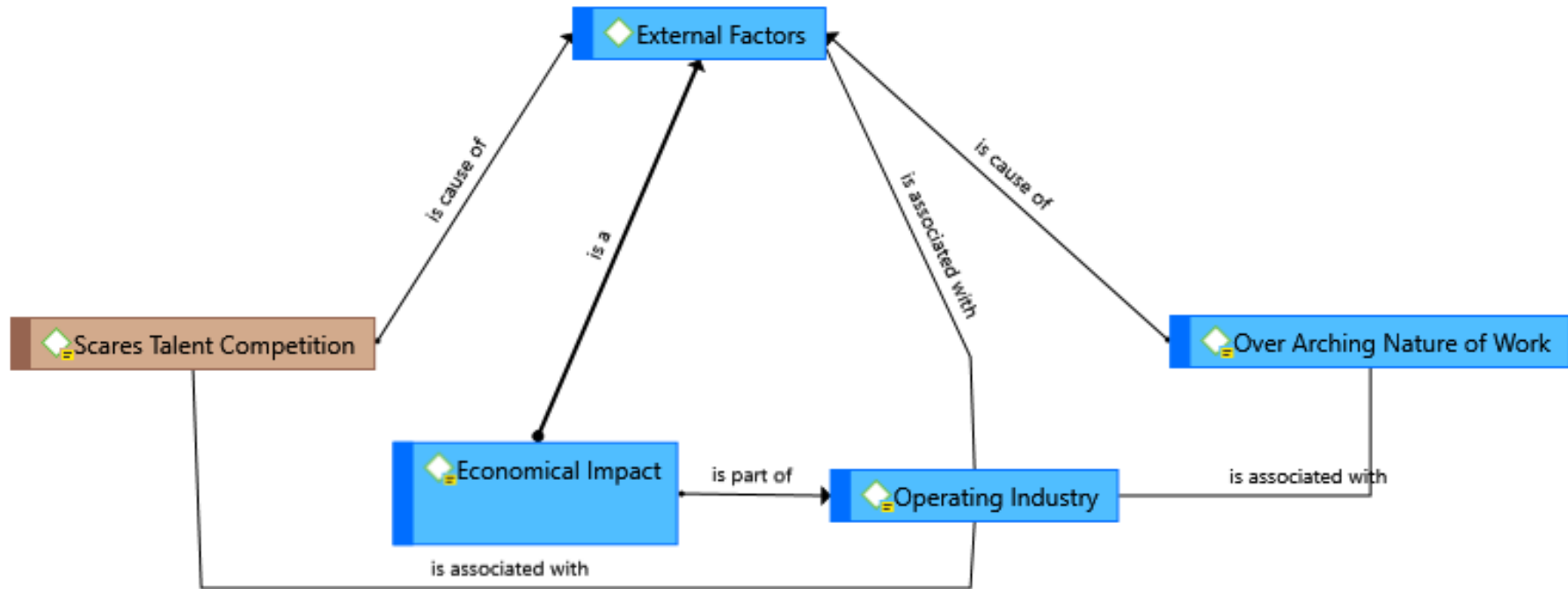


Figure 4.2. Illustration of the theme external factors, and the network of associated sub-themes that were derived from the present findings.

organisations; organisations that had female employees in key or management positions frequently reported having increased flexibility in their working conditions. A participating organisation explained the impact of woman within the organisation as follows:

Our families are very important. We are largely women in the organisation, a lot of moms and that comes first because if you aren't, the nonsense about leave your problems at the door when you walk into the office, that's absolute nonsense [...] It is refreshing to have an MD female [...] Our whole senior management is female (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

The above quotation demonstrates the impact woman in key positions might have on the structure and culture of the organisation. These participating organisations have many policies in place that encourage a balanced lifestyle, whilst at the same time placing emphasis on high standards and performance. It therefore becomes clear that females are a driving force in the development and implementation of work-life balance policies. Other participating organisations supported this notion:

We have three female directors out of the nine [...] and then in terms of managers we have more females than male [...] There are certain ways where there's definitely a gender equality in a boardroom meeting and the coffee cups need to be cleared the boys will need to get up and do it (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

Well eighty percent of our organisation is female, but I think in key positions probably about four or five at this time [...] it is a major factor that the COO is female, she values her family time (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

We have some consultants but very few women in key roles (Business Consulting, Cape Town).

There are quite a few females, like it's fifteen, I think (Hospitality, Cape Town).

Everything else that we have here is applicable to everybody and the only reason we don't have a maternity policy for wage people is that 50 percent of our workforce are women and these women have a lot of babies [...] We have a lot of strong women in middle to senior management positions [...] the

maternity leave policy changed when she started working as a senior manager, and it changed very quickly (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

I have to give an estimate, only a few women are in key roles, it is probably because we need them here all the time [...] and children do not want Daddy, they want Mommy (Retail, Johannesburg).

The above illustrate the impact of women, where the organisations that do not have work-life balance policies in place emphasised that there were only a few females in key roles or at management level.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme: Focus on Generation Y within organisation

Many of the participating organisations understood that the younger generation is vigorously entering the workforce, but some have yet to comprehend the impact that this will have on the manner in which business operates. The participating organisations placed some emphasis on the impact of Generation Y employees on employment terms, but only a few grasped the size of the impact. One participating organisation mentioned:

So, we have two generations working here. So, we've got the generation that started the family and then we've also got the generation that where the sons and the daughters and the maternity policy came into being because the first daughter had a baby, the new leave policy came into being because the son of one of the directors works here and he's young, he's what do we call them, Generation Y and so that's what they want. They want more leave and they want to be able to do sporting things and so I see work-life balance policies evolving as the generations change (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

Another participating organisation emphasised the importance of employing the youth:

Definitely we employ straight from the youth and they're the generation of the future you know and you got generations are changing continuously and much faster and quick adapter so we are having more adapt to the different generations that are management style so we can't treat all levels the same

way. Alright and if necessary we would look to assist that person because they are only going to become frustrated, demotivated if they not actually going to be achieving their own career goals so we would rather support them in their development so that possibly they can come back for an even more senior position later (Hospitality, Cape Town).

Organisations that find it more difficult to focus on bringing the youth into the workplace described some challenges they are facing:

Because we work in such a technical field, it's a lot of time we cannot do. So, we need someone with at least five to six years of experience. We have a plan where we want to start them, and in a year or two or three, if there is a position open, then give them a position, because then they have had two years in our organisation to train them (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

One of our strategies is to try and employ more you know junior staff and kind of upscale them and the young staff are more aware about that so like you say your policies, but it is very difficult and a bit slow at the moment (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

Organisations that focus on stepping into the Generation Y sphere agreed that things need to change:

And we've just started a whole new strategy on that which will start with how we communicate, where we communicate, the kind of imaging and so on that they are seeing. So that's being rolled out from now. The message that we are trying to get across is that, you are going to get the best exposure that you can get as a trainee (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

You know I'm realising but I'm mindful that I was at a generation when people would look at me and go like oh my word look how forward and so I'm mindful of that (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

Overall, the organisations found themselves challenged by the Generation Y employees and mentioned that they were frequently taken aback by the way in which the youth operate. Nevertheless, they could not deny that the youth are bringing new

skills and innovative thinking. Although all the participating organisations were at a different stage of understanding the Generation Y gap, they were moving towards implementing policies to support the younger generation's needs.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme: Organisational communication

Based on the literature, effective communication is vital for the successful implementation of work-life balance policies. In a situation where organisations understand that communication is not clear and often leads to misunderstandings, the HR manager within that organisation was unsure of how work-life balance policies are perceived and experienced. Organisations that are more confident that their communication systems are in place and effective are more certain regarding the implementation of work-life balance policies. The following quotations describe the views of the participants:

The constructive communication again is quite a biggy and we have enough meetings and either an operations meeting or we have a principal session training where people can speak if they feel that something is not right and I've had one or two staff come to me in the past and go you know this is the interaction I had with my line manager and not even necessarily a senior manager member but with my line manager and ask for advice and my first thing to everybody is do you want me to deal with it or would you first like to deal with it (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

You have web, you know you have a hundred different ways to communicate with someone and I think the old school way was you had to be in an office and someone had to see you that you were being productive and that's not the case you know (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

We will either put things up on our boards all over the organisation or we will go to specific departments and discuss the things directly with them (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

So, they do not necessarily have the administrative capacity, so as a result, one of our biggest problems is that their communication to the worker is not always 100% right and that is a very big problem (Retail, Johannesburg).

I don't think anyone gets more than they can handle and everyone knows who to go speak to if things aren't going well (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

They will go to the manager and say I'm sick or my daughter is sick and you know I need to be on day shift because you know there's this problem in my community because there's gangsters or whatever then we will make a plan to put them on day shift for a while but we don't make it a, again it's not a policy, it's a specific situation and we communicate it so that people don't think okay now everybody can go on day shift because everybody wants to work day shift obviously (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

4.3.3.4 Sub-theme: Organisational transparency

Many of the participating organisations had formal policies in place, yet it was often stated that policies are informally available to certain employees at a specific job level, therefore not formally captured in organisational policies. The participants shared their experiences as follows:

That's always been quite big and sometimes you need to have conversations that aren't always the kind of conversations you want to have but you need to have them but we do need to formalise it but I want to try to formalise it as informally as possible (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

There is no consistency. In other words, my store and another store do not have the same paperwork, disciplinary code or leave forms, so I think it's vital that everyone, because it's a big organisation, works, and works on the same level, same standards. I had to tell them it's the rules, if you're not staying, you're out, finishing point and done, non-negotiable (Retail, Johannesburg).

We obviously we meet with our staff quite regularly so it's actually myself or one of the directors that will go forward and we meet with the staff, explain to them what it's about and we then make sure we have a repository that's available with a whole lot of information so our staff can access it at any time (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

So, we have one session with every employee with every induction process, HR needs to point out all the highlights so we have to go through it in a lot of detail with every single person (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

Everyone that put on their laptops or iPads, will go there first and everyone gets updated ... if there are changes or a new policy (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

Everybody has access to that and everybody has access to look at it. It gets reviewed properly on an annual basis and any changes then get advised to everybody (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

Some participating organisations were also clear that an attempt was made to ensure that the whole organisation was not aware of the work-life balance policies, as a feeling of unfairness might develop. Organisations mentioned that they attempted to be transparent regarding changes in policies at the organisation, but this often was not the case. Attempts were made to be as transparent as possible to increase trust within the workforce, but policies often only applied to specific levels within the organisation, which made transparency a challenge.

4.3.3.5 Sub-theme: Overall managerial support

The findings of the present study clearly indicate that management plays a key role in successful operations. Employees who feel supported by their manager under any circumstances are more likely to approach the manager to arrange alternative working methods. In addition, the organisations mentioned that the impact of managerial support cannot be understated, as each of them could point to the effect of management on the employees and the organisation:

So much so, so again from a senior management level we've all been given the liberty to you know go to the odd this or the odd that and they very clear with their next level so Mrs X is MD and is always clear, this is how I manage you and you now then need to manage your people in a specific way and again the expectation is that we still work very hard I can assure you, there's no you sit back and relax, people work hard in order to have a little bit of time to go and do what they need to do (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

I mean I've just bought a young man a pair of running shoes because he came to ask me, and he honestly wants to support his team members [...] We are tight on the standards, absolutely not negotiable on the standards, and that is across the board. But we do understand, you know, that you are human and we want to treat you like a human. You will say, look here this is the issue and you know them being open and not sort of close the door [...] we often make mention of this tight loose principle (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

But they also know what they want. A manager cannot afford to relax because he can walk in at any time. My mid-manager feels nothing. My mid-manager wants to operate operationally. In other words, they do not care if an elderly is pregnant or sick or his child has chickenpox, he feels feathers. My junior manager is again, because he's from there and not everyone has good conditions at the houses, sympathising them to such an extent that they sometimes get clouded to tell the guy just take off while, even if they cannot really take off (Retail, Johannesburg).

If it is something they want to raise and we just bring it up in our ops meeting with our directors and then we decide there whether something is worth exploring (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

Our managers, in fact our whole culture is one of friendliness and openness and open-door policies and accessible managers, so I would say by and large the managers do care about their staff and what is going on with them (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

I think the leaders are in tune and the culture is that you need to sort your own things out because it is an individualistic culture. It is not like there is a baby that needs constant attention (Business Consulting, Cape Town).

We also very mindful once it's a written policy, we are still from a size wise flexible in terms of if there is something major happening in your life or there is something that you are dealing with we will be flexible to allow you to take a little bit of time, outside of your normal leave and sick leave and so on (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

Irrespective of whether managers have a positive or negative impact on the organisation, it was clear that they have an impact that would affect how operations are conducted. Furthermore, it seems that the more invested the managers are in the employees, the more likely their input is to have a positive effect on the organisational culture. This, in turn, affects the utilisation of the policies and procedures in place that favour a balanced lifestyle.

4.3.3.6 Sub-theme: Overall organisational support for policies

The final sub-theme that emerged related to the overall organisational support for policies. Specifically, the HR department often found it challenging to implement new and alternative working arrangements as organisations became accustomed to the status quo. The HR managers who managed to implement work-life balance policies each reported that, initially, they had some resistance from the older generation managers, whereas HR managers who received organisational support reported having implemented these arrangements fairly easily:

Looking a lot more intense at the HR strategically and are putting strategies in place to help our vision (Sales and Marketing, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

I think it was a collective effort I'm not sure if they were made partners yet, they were some socio directors and myself. And collectively we just looked at what could work, the only thing, was we were told that we need to have some cool hours where there are people in the office. There have to be people in the office between that time and this time and we just played around with the rest [...] Yes, it is a success but it probably you know [...] Unfortunately, we have really old-school partner and when I say old school I'm only saying like 55, he's not ancient but he does not understand this new movement. So, if I work from home maybe one day a week, it would be fine but with him it's somehow an impossible thing to comprehend (Finance, Cape Town and Johannesburg).

So we have the organisation business school where we have you know 90 percent of what we run in the organisation business school are internal programmes that have been developed specifically for what we call pathways of careers, so people get to do that and then we have people that approach us and say they want to study and why they want to study and if it's in line with the

business and we think it's going to add value then we do consider you know [...] someone approaches us we will consider it as long as they have considered how they going to fit it in and they've got their manager on board and there's a whole process [...] most of this department makes use of flexitime every day [...] I think there's an understanding that you know you given this on flexitime but you need to still meet your work performance standards (Manufacturing, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban).

So, from a qualification and educational point of view we have associations and relationships with colleges. We will assist and finance employees ... on an incentive basis but as the minimum we would cover fifty percent of their course cost, as long as it was part of their job (Hospitality, Cape Town).

We do not focus much on balance, I think. But we would like our staff to be happy (Retail, Johannesburg).

They had this agreement with us and it might not even be in the policy but if they pick up the phone and they have a situation and you know we allow them to work from home or you know we look at their report and if they worked a lot of hours we will be like you know what you need two days leave and you don't actually have any on your annual leave so you know take it, it's fine (Telecommunications, Cape Town).

The MD is always clear this is how I manage you and you now then need to manage your people in a specific way and again the expectation is that we still work very hard I can assure you, there's no you sit back and relax, people work hard in order to have a little bit of time to go and do what they need to do (HR Consulting, Cape Town).

The majority of the participants reported strong support from their organisations for the policies that assist in maintaining a work-life balance, even when there was some resistance. It seems to be a real focus of the HR department to encourage departmental managers to implement the policies with individuals who have a need for such policies. Even within industries that have difficulty in implementing them, the managers would still consider individual cases based on merit to ensure that they are able to assist their employees (see illustrative quote on p. 104):

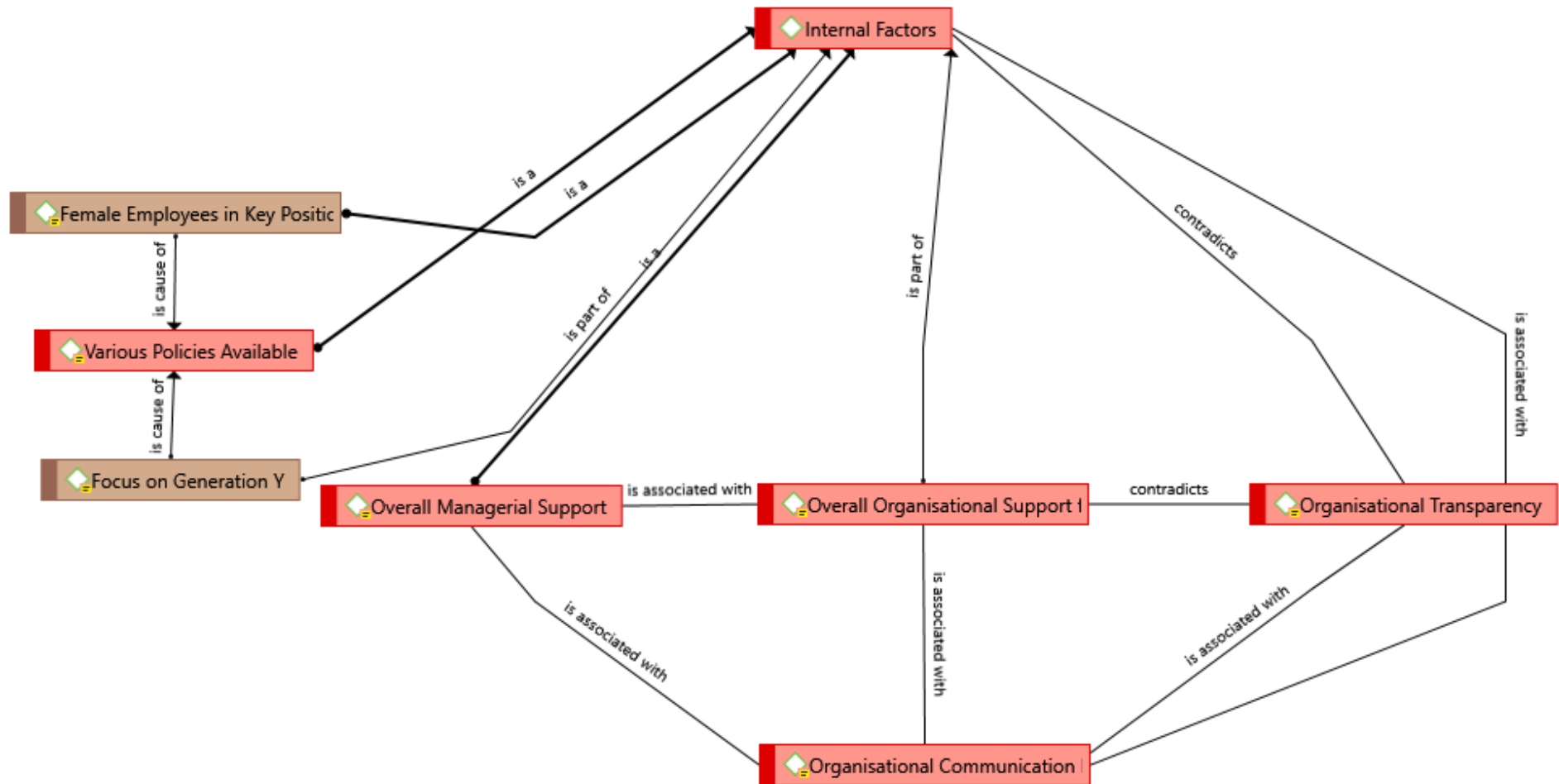


Figure 4.3. Illustration of the theme internal factors, and the network of associated sub-themes that were derived from the present findings.

We work 24 hours, so yes, it is very difficult to balance work hours [...] I mean there is you know that and one is thinking about that sort of scenario, doesn't need to be but we would handle each situation as it came and if there isn't a policy in place we would look at the circumstances (Hospitality, Cape Town).

4.4 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the results of the findings that were obtained in the present study. The first part presented the organisational characteristics of the organisations that participated in the present research. This included a summary of biographical characteristics, including, among others, the total number of employees in each participating organisation, the various sectors represented, educational background of employees, as well as the various levels within the organisations. What emerged from the study is that the participating organisations consisted of a diverse group, each representing unique characteristics and a few overlapping characteristics. The second part reported on the information gathered through the semi-structured interviews. Themes and sub-themes were identified and discussed, with illustrative quotes from the interviews with the HR managers. In the next chapter, the research results will be discussed in relation to the literature review from Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research results presented in Chapter 4 are discussed and interpreted in the light of the literature review (see Chapter 2). The discussion begins by exploring the findings, which reveal that, within the broader Ecological Systems Theory, strategic intent, along with very specific internal and external factors, are major determinants in the implementation of work-life balance policies in organisations. Each factor is explained through the various elements that influence the factor in such a manner that it is either associated with the factor or a cause of the specific factor.

5.2 STRATEGIC APPROACH

Various elements of Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) were discussed in the literature review, and it was argued that various systems affect each other and, as a result, there are indirect consequences due to the systemic impact. In the context of the present study, the impact that various systems have is clear in that the strategic approach theme comprises of different systems affecting each other. Overall, the effects relate directly to the implementation of work-life balance policies within organisations.

Strategic intent. The finding of strategic intent associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies in organisations is mostly in accordance with the literature as discussed in Chapter 2 (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007; Chandra, 2012; Wang & Verma, 2012). The respondents emphasised how essential it was to have a vision or a strategy or any organisational objective that drives the organisation in a very specific direction. In particular, the more specific and clear the strategy of the organisation, the more likely the organisation would implement various policies and procedures to support the strategies developed. It is expected that, if the strategy is specific to the workforce, the policies would directly support the specific strategy (Lewis et al., 2007). It was also mentioned that the managers are focused on ensuring that their approach to implementation is systematic in order to ensure that they achieve the target determined. Even if this is not the case, the findings show that the organisations attempted to support their strategy with well-developed implementation plans and

ensured that all the policies and procedures were in place to support the implementation plan, specifically referring to work-life balance policies. Often, organisations made mention that the strategy was a driving force in terms of what needed to happen in HR, and that the HR department could not operate separately to the strategy.

This finding supports the study by Wang and Verma (2012). Organisations are more confident in their strategy when they are sure that they have the systems, policies and procedures in place to drive the organisation towards the strategy. Some organisations had very challenging strategies and would require additional talented employees to be appointed, therefore they had to focus on presenting the organisation in a manner that would attract the employees they need to be successful. Some organisations even reported that if they were to lose these talented employees (as identified), they would not achieve their strategy and this would be detrimental to their success. The study by Lewis et al. (2007) aligns with this finding. Considering the evidence presented in the various interviews, as well as in the literature review, it can be inferred that, even within South African organisations, and depending on the strategy, if the organisation wants to be successful the policies should align with the strategy and not contradict it. In this case, the conclusion can be drawn that it makes financial sense to implement work-life balance policies in organisations and that, in the long run, the return on investment would be significant, as was found in the Bardoel et al. (1999) study.

Comprehensive organisational culture. Studies by Ryan and Kossek (2008) and Amah (2010) largely support the important role organisational culture plays in the implementation of work-life balance policies. In the present study, all the organisations participating in the study made mention of the large impact culture has on the organisation. During the interviews, in-depth discussions were held with the participating managers regarding the development of the organisational culture, what influences the culture in the organisation and how the culture manifests in the workplace. Clearly, the impact of culture throughout the organisation is significant and organisations ought to focus on the culture they are creating. Indeed, a supportive culture seems to be conducive to the development of policies such as work-life balance policies. Indeed, the managers participating in the study emphasised that, in their mission to create a specific culture, they fully understood that their plans should

be supported by substantive policies to reiterate what they are saying to their employees.

Interestingly, Amah (2010) notes that culture could also have a detrimental impact on the implementation of the policies, not least on their development. Chandra (2012) discusses how the behaviours that an organisation rewards become the norm in developing acceptable behaviour. Thus, if the organisation constantly rewards overtime (monetary or non-monetary rewards), employees will accept that the behaviour they should display is that of overtime. The majority of the organisations participating in the present study mentioned that they attempted to stay clear of rewarding employees solely on performance, as it contradicts the culture of teamwork they are trying to create. Again, it is essential to understand that all these organisations placed a major emphasis on success, although they achieved their success not simply by driving their workforce to exceed performance expectations. With the exception of one participant, no other organisation encouraged overtime or taking on more than what is required. Some participating organisations had systems in place to ensure that employees balance their lifestyle, as they operate in a very demanding industry. This type of decision making emphasises that policies should not only be available, but the culture should support the utilisation of the policies (Amah, 2010).

Nadeem and Metcalf (2007) argue that cultures in which performance is the only measure of success would most likely not foster the implementation of work-life balance policies. In the present study, managers reported rewarding certain behaviours in ways that were not always tied to monetary rewards, such as sending employees to a spa after the completion of a demanding project – clearly reinforcing that, after much input from the employee side, rest is the reward in order to maintain balance. The present research argues that this behaviour is the driver behind a culture that creates a setting where balance itself is a reward that employees work toward. Ryan and Kossek (2008) found that an inclusive workplace culture plays an important role in developing work-life balance policies, but this is not necessarily the case in South African organisations, as all employees do not always have access to the work-life balance policies. Although the findings do not completely contradict the Ryan and Kossek (2008) study on that point, it does provide insight into what exactly makes South African organisations unique in this regard.

Active involvement of MD or CEO. The essential role of management in the implementation of work-life balance policies is emphasised throughout the literature (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007; Ryan & Kossek, 2008). This aspect is supported by the present study, in that all the participating organisations had actively involved MDs and CEOs. It was reported that the MD or CEO is mostly hands on and well aware of what is happening within the organisation and the impact of their decisions throughout. Bardoel (2003) emphasises that management should play the role of an intentional and proactive change agent. Given the influence of strong management on the implementation of work-life balance policies, it became clear that, even within South African organisations, the role of an active MD or CEO cannot be replaced and is vital to successful change. In addition, the leadership style was said to play an important role in that the more focused the MD and CEO are on how they present themselves as leaders, the more likely that employees will accept the guidance they provide (Kirby & Krone, 2002). All HR managers made mention of their relationship with the MD or CEO, and the relationships were generally positive. The guidance that they received from their seniors played a vital role in initiating change.

Organisational structure. In a study conducted by Gray and Tudball (2002), it is argued that the difference in the implementation of work-life balance policies does not lie with the type of organisation, but rather with the employees of the organisation, thus placing emphasis on the organisational structure. In the present study it became clear that most participating organisations had a simple structure, but with complex connections. However, within South African organisations, as with the Gray and Tudball (2002) study in Australia, the position of the employee in the organisation seems to be a determining factor in whether the available policies can be utilised freely. The organisations argued that the lower the level of employment, the more difficult it is to implement and to manage. Hence, organisations with a seemingly flat structure had work-life balance policies available to nearly all the employees, whereas the more hierarchical the structure, the less likely the employees at the bottom were able to utilise the policies. Interestingly, the organisations reported that, even in relation to employees at lower levels they would consider individual cases based on merit. Other policies, such as career guidance, counselling and wellness, were not influenced by the organisational structure, as these could be managed from work. The next section

provides an overview of the external factors that emerged as a theme in the present study.

5.3 EXTERNAL FACTORS

In the context of EST, which might affect the implementation of work-life balance policies in South Africa, very specific elements stood out as influencing factors. Most of the elements are specifically related to circumstances within South Africa and can therefore be considered as a whole. Numerous studies have emphasised that the industry within which the organisation operates would be a determining factor in the consideration and implementation of work-life balance policies (Gray & Tudball, 2002; Maxwell & McDougall, 2007). Supporting this notion, the organisations in the present study stated that their industries often presented challenges to how they would like to manage their employees. Organisations operating in retail, hospitality and manufacturing face numerous challenges. These include the working hours, which require shift work, as well as the education level of some of the employees.

However, the industry itself is not the challenge, but rather the characteristics associated with the industry. Indeed, specific characteristics resulting from the industry in which an organisation operates could serve as a barrier to the implementation and utilisation of work-life balance policies (Den Dulk et al., 2012). It is very difficult to balance employees' work with their life if operations run 24/7 for 365 days of the year. Organisations reported that they needed to become creative and attempt to assist employees who struggled to maintain a balance, or who had personal circumstances hindering them from performing optimally at work. Other challenges were found to be a lack of resources to relieve employees when they were not at work, ultimately causing employees to be at work even when there were pressing home issues.

Furthermore, characteristics inherent in the nature of the job are seen to play a major role in the development and implementation of work-life balance policies (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010). As observed in the Koekemoer and Mostert (2010) study, a job often would require the individual to work in abnormal circumstances, such as being at the hospital at midnight or having to work 16-hour days in order to reach the project deadline. This would require of the organisation to alter its thinking processes and to become creative in providing solutions to scenarios such as these. The organisations also mentioned that allowing employees to take time off when they have a project

caused them to work abnormally long hours or under abnormal circumstances. Most organisations made mention that they were limited to a certain extent by inherent job requirements, although they found ways to accommodate the challenges this presents. The organisations mentioned that one way of doing so often was to consider individual cases based on merit and provide solutions that suit the specific situation at hand. Therefore not formalising any policy, but communicating that management is open for discussion, was the ideal solution in such situations.

As a final point in this section, the study by Robyn and Du Preez (2013) emphasises that competitiveness within the labour market is a catalyst for the development of work-life balance policies. Throughout the present study it was mentioned by some organisations that the initial reason they considered the development of work-life balance policies was because they had talented individuals whom they wanted to retain. It therefore is essential to ensure that the organisation can offer a competitive package in terms of their employment conditions to ensure that they remain the employer of choice. In the literature review it was mentioned that organisations competing within a global market for talent will be forced to amend their policies accordingly (e.g. Champion-Hughes, 2001). Competing organisations, even in South Africa, have had to amend the way they conduct business, as they now also compete with international organisations; complying with South African employment conditions is no longer enough to attract top talent.

In the next section, the internal factors that were found to be associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies are discussed.

5.4 INTERNAL FACTORS

Female employees in key positions. An expansive body of literature emphasises the important role that women play in the development and implementation of work-life balance policies (e.g. Bardoel et al., 1999; Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007; Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). Throughout the present study, a prominent theme was that, if women are in top positions within the organisation, there are policies in place that assist them to maintain a work-life balance. The nature of the policies varied from flexitime to shorter work weeks, as well as paid maternity leave for between four and six months. As none of these benefits are required by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997), it can be inferred that the

women within key positions brought about the consideration of work-life balance policies. Indeed, numerous studies suggest that organisations are forced to reconsider their position on work-life balance policies as women become more prominent in their success (e.g. Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010).

The participant from the manufacturing industry, for instance, explicitly stated that many of their policies were developed as a result of pressure from a woman in a very top position, and because the organisation did not want to lose her, it considered the suggestions put forward. Organisations in the retail industry, however, had very few women in key positions and, based on the interviews, this is mostly due to the constraints the industry brings in terms of work-life balance. Thus, according to the participant, instead of changing their view of work-life balance policies, they opted not to employ females in key positions to avoid having to accommodate their work-life needs. Bardoel et al. (1999), for instance, suggest that if organisations want to retain their female workforce and ensure they remain key agents for the organisation's success, the organisation should change its policies in order to ensure that female employees stay.

This matter has also received support in South African organisations. Due to state of the South African economy, organisations often find themselves employing women who, in certain cases, are also the only source of income for the family. It then becomes essential to adjust policies to accommodate the changing nature of work. In the present study, one organisation mentioned that each person they employ is responsible for three to six other individuals' well-being, hence it is essential to ensure that the employees are looked after. In this South African study it was seen that most of the organisations reported strong women in key positions, even as MDs for the organisation, thereby not aligning with the concept of the second glass ceiling as mentioned in Zeytinogla et al. (2010). The present study does, however, support the findings relating to the importance of dual-income families due to harsh economic times. Clearly, women are vital to the implementation of work-life balance policies and, with the right culture to support the policies, very little resistance will be reported for the utilisation of the policies.

Focus on Generation Y. Many important considerations are brought to light when discussing Generation Y employees, one of them being that Generation Y employees

will consider working conditions to a greater extent *before* accepting a job offer at an organisation (Glass, 2007). The present study observed that the HR managers understood that offering a job to prospective young employees brings about a whole new set of conversations. The organisation needs to be able to cater for the needs of the new generation in terms of a balanced lifestyle. The present study reports that most of the younger generation do not see the value in an overemphasis on work, but would rather work for a lower salary if it means they can maintain a balanced lifestyle. At the same time, it is reported that the younger generation expects their career to develop much faster than what the organisation is ready to present to them, and this brings a challenge in the retention of Generation Y employees in South African organisations.

In the literature review, Generation Y employees were described as very self-confident, outspoken and opinionated (Martin, 2005). The present study supports this finding, as the organisations mentioned that they were having discussions about promotions six months after employment. One particular manager mentioned that her experience is that the younger employees know exactly what they want and that they will tell you what they want. She continued by saying that she was not yet ready for the new way of thinking and they would definitely need to consider their Generation Y strategy in the near future. Other participating organisations agreed with Martin (2005) and emphasised that policies and procedures need to be adjusted, or else they risk losing talent to global competitors competing in the South African market. In the literature review it also was reported that the younger generation have a unique and flexible work style and that organisations are not used to ensuring engagement for employees who work in that manner (e.g. Robyn & Du Preez, 2013; Jacobs et al., 2014).

Organisations operating in technical fields are finding the abovementioned characteristic challenging and are exploring different strategies for how to include these workers in their workforce without adversely impacting their operating standards. Some made mention of the fact that they were not sure how they could deliver on the requirements of the younger generation, as they seem to have a sense of entitlement, whereas other participants mentioned that their strong will and desire to grow fast is often misunderstood as a sense of entitlement. The present study supports the finding

in the Deloitte (2009) report that, in order to manage the talent that the Generation Y employees bring, organisations would almost have to forget what they know about employees and engagement and learn everything from scratch, as virtually no research applies to Generation Y.

Organisational communication. Southworth (2014) emphasises that work-life balance policies are not only reliant on communication within the organisation, but also enhance effective communication. In the present study it was observed that organisations that encourage working from home have placed much emphasis on effective communication tools and how they manage communication throughout the organisation. Owing to the fact that employees do not have to be at the office on a daily basis, HR is driven to enhance their communication methods to make sure that the culture can be maintained, wherever the employee finds themselves. It was further evident that organisations understand the importance of excellent communication skills and the impact this has on operations. Arguably, miscommunication can cause work-life balance policies to fail, as employees might not understand how to utilise the work-life balance policies available. For instance, a participating organisation made mention of how an employee did not understand the maternity leave policy and the criteria assigned, and it caused conflict within the organisation. This could have been avoided if the communication on the criteria had been clear.

Gray and Tudball (2002) mention that the manner in which the implementation of policies is discussed with the employees is essential to successful implementation, and this is no different in South African organisations. The participating organisations admitted that much can be done to increase effectiveness, but that they often fall victim to thinking that they are communicating effectively when in fact many employees are not clear on the organisational messages being communicated. At the same time, some participating organisations could easily explain which steps were being taken to increase effectiveness in an attempt to increase overall organisational effectiveness. Indeed, Maxwell and McDougall (2007) report that communication is essential to organisational effectiveness, and emphasise that organisations are to ensure that all their operations are communicated effectively throughout. In the present study, some participating organisations agreed that the lack of communication was affecting the

organisation in a negative manner and that they definitely should consider mediating steps.

Organisational transparency. Nadeem and Metcalf (2007) mention that employees do not only need to be aware of the work-life balance policies that are available, but they also need to be sure that they can utilise them without any adverse consequences. Transparency is essential to the successful implementation of work-life balance policies. If employees feel that what is being presented is not what was communicated, the utilisation thereof decreases. Several organisations reported that some of the employees do not have access to the policies and this brings about challenges for implementation. Should other employees get to know about the arrangement and no justifiable reason can be provided for their exclusion in the matter, organisations are aware that it might have an adverse impact on their performance. Nadeem and Metcalf (2007) report that the more transparent the organisation is regarding its work-life balance policies, the less likely employees are to misuse the policy. Nevertheless, some organisations are still of the opinion that not all employees have the maturity to utilise the policies with the intent for which they were created and the fear of misuse remains prevalent.

Overall managerial support. The active role management should play in a healthy organisation was emphasised in the study by Bardoel et al. (2008). The authors mention that management is imperative to any success intended for the work-life balance policies and, should management in some way present a barrier, the policies would not encourage a balanced lifestyle. In contrast, they would evoke fear in the employees for utilising the policies. South African managers are still largely driven by performance and the stigma persists that long hours should be worked in order to be effective, whereas work-life balance policies encourage people to deliver on outcomes, irrespective of how that outcome is achieved. The participants reported that they were extremely focused on high-quality performance. However, the employees understand what needs to be achieved and the organisation takes the view that, as long as the outcomes are achieved, it does not matter how or where the work was completed.

Within organisations such as manufacturing, managers need employees to be there at core hours and others need to be on shift. However, management will approach HR

if somebody on their team needs special arrangements or if circumstances require them to be placed on the day shift only. This highlights the fact that, with a supportive manager, every employee can effectively maintain a balance when required, even if it is a temporary arrangement. Ryan and Kossek (2008) emphasise that policies are implemented more successfully once management shows its support for the utilisation of the policies. This relates to all policies, including career guidance, counselling and wellness. It is reported that, in South African organisations, managers often bring solutions to problems in their team if somebody needs special attention (e.g. counselling or wellness assistance). Most of the participants in the present study argued that their management team openly supported aggressive career development and would often suggest various interventions to increase the effectiveness of their team, or to meet a specific team member's developmental requirements. In fact, some organisations pride themselves on having business schools, special arrangements with tertiary institutions, and learners on their premises. According to Berg et al. (2014), managers who show an understanding of the challenges employees face are likely to get the most out of their team. This finding is widely supported throughout the present study and links back to supportive management. Although many managers can undergo training to increase their effectiveness, there is consensus regarding their impact on work-life balance within their team.

Overall organisational support for policies. Finally, organisations should understand the needs of their employees in order for the policies to make sense (Bardoel et al., 1999). If organisations distance themselves from the employees and what their needs are, it would become much more difficult to implement policies that add value to the organisation. Throughout the present study, the majority of the organisations reported that they have investigated the needs of their employees through some survey (e.g. via pulse, engagement or culture surveys) and that they would implement interventions on the basis of the results. Much of this research is done to ensure that the initiatives undertaken by the organisations are meeting the requirements of the organisation. Despite clear support being shown by the organisations, some organisations take extra care to remind their employees to do so if they have not made use of any benefit of late. Indeed, they want to ensure that their workforce is balanced and healthy.

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the findings in relation to the literature review. The discussion also provided a comparison between the present South African study and studies from across the globe, providing an opportunity to understand how South Africa compares to the other countries with respect to work-life balance policies. The findings were presented in relation to further descriptions of interview feedback to ensure that the conclusions drawn have sufficient depth.

In the next chapter, the implications of the present study are discussed for managers of organisations and recommendations are put forward, before delineating the limitations associated with the present study. The chapter concludes by making recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the study, as identified in Chapter 1, were:

1. to explain the concept of work-life balance;
2. to explore organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies; and
3. to determine other considerations that may lead to the implementation of work-life balance policies.

The focus of this chapter is to discuss the managerial implications of the findings that were obtained, as well as to suggest interventions that can assist organisations in decision making about whether or not they should engage in the development and implementation of work-life balance policies.

The organisational recommendations can be utilised by industrial psychologists and HR managers in organisations. The limitations of the present study will also be discussed, and recommendations for future research will be made.

6.2 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study offers some insight into the characteristics that are likely to lead to the provision of work-life balance benefits, as well as what organisations should consider before implementing work-life balance policies in South African organisations.

The findings of the present study suggest that South African organisations have a different approach to work-life balance policies compared with countries such as Australia, Britain and the United States of America, as discussed on the basis of the studies of Bardoel (2003), Bardoel et al. (1999), and Den Dulk et al. (2012). Organisations operating in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America have been able to navigate their way more successfully around maintaining performance whilst providing employees with the means to maintain work-life balance. However, the present study has provided valuable insights for South African organisations that are considering amending their employment arrangements in favour

of work-life balance. Firstly, the study has highlighted the importance of having a clear understanding of what the organisation's strategy is. The comprehensiveness of the strategy provides managers with indicators to guide them in their planning and decision making. Arguably, the strategy has a direct impact on the organisational culture and structure, which were found to be two other important determinants in successful policy implementation. It is also suggested that organisations spend enough time when determining what their strategy is over a longitudinal time frame and how that strategy relates back to year-on-year decision making. The organisations participating in the present research that were able to clearly identify their strategy and earmark their annual goals were found to be far more confident in their policies due to the fact that they believed their policies supported the organisation's strategy. HR managers are encouraged to understand the organisational strategy and the impact it has on every department to ensure that the manner in which they utilise the organisational strategy to guide their decision making adds substantial value to the organisation. Similar suggestions are made by Wang and Verma (2012), who encourage HR managers to align their departmental strategy with the organisational strategy in order to increase success.

Secondly, during the present study it was emphasised that an organisational culture that is favourable to work-life balance policies could greatly influence successful implementation. The findings suggest that organisations that focus on creating a culture that fosters commitment and performance alike are more likely to present policies that add value to their employees and ensure that the employees are retained within the organisation. To create a culture that aligns with this mode of thinking is not a simple task, and a decision needs to be made that the organisation will view its employees as stakeholders and not simply as production factors. HR managers are encouraged to revise their approach to the culture they are creating and to determine whether or not this culture encourages work behaviour that undermines work-life balance (i.e. employees taking on more than they should; shaming them for wanting to make use of leave policies).

Organisations that encourage a culture in which performance at any cost is rewarded are likely to discourage the use of work-life balance policies (Amah, 2010). It is therefore suggested that organisations consider an approach in which the emphasis is on performance and high standards, whilst at the same time encouraging employees

to maintain a balance and take breaks if needed. Many of the participating organisations emphasised this approach as being successful, as it ensured that performance targets were reached whilst at the same time keeping employees committed and motivated. To this end, it can be inferred that managerial support is essential to the successful implementation of work-life balance policies. This includes active involvement by the MD or CEO, as well as all other levels of management throughout the organisation. This finding is supported by Bardoel (2003), Bardoel et al. (2008), Berg et al. (2014), Kirby and Krone (2002) and Maxwell and McDougall (2007) who provide overwhelming support for a significant finding of the present study.

Thirdly, in the present study, emphasis is placed on the essential role of management within the organisation, and how management can either encourage a certain culture or be detrimental to the implementation of a specific culture. The participants mentioned that much effort is put into their management teams in order to ensure that they are of a high standard and that they display the characteristics conducive to a healthy work environment. Initiatives included coaching corners, training and development, weekly meetings and comprehensive goal setting and feedback sessions. In practice, HR managers are encouraged to take the initiative to work on the respective management teams and, by doing so, to ensure that the managers are equipped to lead teams effectively. Should the organisation be at a stage where work-life balance policies need to be implemented, it is suggested that HR provides an information session for all other managers to ensure that they understand each policy, the criteria involved, and the change it ought to bring. Essentially, this will equip managers to plan their operations around the amended policies and be proactive in ensuring that the policies are set up in such a way that the utilisation of them by employees would not have an adverse impact on their performance or the overall performance of the team. This is also important for the financial department in organisations employing large numbers of women, as maternity leave policies, if maternity leave is paid, might affect the cash flow of the organisation. The more informed the managers are, the more likely they are to take on the role of an active change agent (Ryan & Kossek, 2008).

Fourthly, organisations with females in key positions who are yet to consider the amendment of their employment policies are encouraged to do so. According to previous research, having work-life balance policies available for utilisation increases

the list of positive outcomes amongst female employees, including motivation, commitment and engagement (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010). In industries such as retail and hospitality, where the implementation of work-life balance policies is difficult, it is suggested that the available options should at least be considered. Furthermore, organisations could learn from the participating organisations to have work-life balance policies available in such a manner that utilisation is based on individual merit.

The same argument is valid for organisations that have an active focus on recruiting Generation Y employees. The findings suggest that there are many challenges associated with this approach, but it cannot be denied that a change in employment policies is imperative for the successful retention of Generation Y employees. In practice, organisations are encouraged to consider a variety of options, including arrangements for employees who actively participate in competitive sports or exercise, providing internal support for administrative burdens or ensuring that career guidance is offered as part of the employment arrangement. Generation Y employees have been said to value a variety of options, and organisations are encouraged to explore what could add value within the organisations, whilst at the same time meeting the needs of the younger employees (Martin, 2005).

A fifth organisational implication is that taking the initiative to implement greater job flexibility in the aspects of when and where work is done may be beneficial to both the organisation and its employees in their quest for work-life balance. The organisations reported that their talented employees were retained more easily due to the availability of work-life balance policies, while this at the same time served as a means of motivation. Employees are willing to put in long hours for difficult projects in order to reach the deadline, as they know that they will be able to take some time off after the job is done. In some instances, employees were sent to spas or received vouchers to that effect. Essentially, it highlights the idea of being offered the option to maintain a balanced lifestyle whilst flourishing in your career.

Finally, the findings present a clear indication that organisations considering the implementation of work-life balance policies should ensure that communication within the organisation is effective and efficient. Much of the success of work-life balance policies lies in effective organisational communication. The practical implication is two-fold: firstly, should employees who are making use of the policy not be able to have

clear access to organisational information, the organisation risks losing valuable input from these employees or experiencing other adverse impacts, such as deadlines not being achieved or project specifications being misunderstood. Employees who work flexitime or shortened work weeks need to be informed of meetings and schedules in advance so that they can plan their working arrangements around the organisation's requirements. As a result, organisations are cautioned to ensure that communication regarding the mentioned topics can take place freely, accurately and timeously. Furthermore, communication affects work-life balance policies in how management and employees express themselves with regard to the availability of the policies. The practical implication is that policies might be available, but if the discussion around the policies is always negative it will discourage the utilisation of the policies (Maxwell & McDougall, 2007).

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Although this study has unique strengths, several methodological limitations may have influenced the outcome of this study. The first limitation relates to the qualitative nature of the study. Since qualitative data cannot be statistically analysed in the same, comprehensive way as quantitative data and can only provide a guide to general trends, this type of inquiry is far more open to bias, subjectivity and personal evaluation. The researcher therefore is at risk of not being objective.

A second limitation relates to sample size. During this study, the sample size comprised merely eight organisations. The participating organisations provided valuable information that added significantly to the study, although there is a possibility that the saturation point for this particular study could be higher. It is suggested that this study is expanded by using a larger sample size.

A third limitation relates to sampling bias. The findings represent the perspectives of HR managers in a number of South African organisations. HR managers, in general, are more highly educated, have higher salaries, and have more experience of computer technology than the general population (Hill et al., 2010). Moreover, it is worth acknowledging that, while the focus was primarily on organisational outcomes, work-life initiatives may have broad impacts outside of work, particularly for the individual and the family, in areas such as mental health or marital satisfaction (see Bardoel et al., 2008). The potential limitation is that the data were gathered from a

single method and single source. Although Spector (2006) has argued that it is incorrect to assume that the use of a single method automatically introduces sampling bias, it is recommended that future research should build upon the present findings using data gathered from multiple sources. Future research therefore might seek to include stakeholders other than HR managers, such as employees, their families and representatives of other stakeholders in work-life issues.

Finally, geographical limitations could also have affected the results, as most of the organisations interviewed were located in urban areas. Organisations located in rural areas might have had a different perspective on not only the implementations of work-life balance policies, but also on the concept of work-life balance in general. It therefore would be worthwhile for future researchers to broaden the scope of the study in terms of geographical locations and populations. Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insight into the question of organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies in South African organisations.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Most research regarding work-life balance emanates from high-income, primarily English-speaking countries (for exceptions see Gartner, 1995; Kitching & Woldie, 2004; Adisa et al., 2017). The present study, however, was conducted in South Africa – a developing country that has largely neglected this field. More research is needed to explore work-life initiatives in other developing regions.

Furthermore, it is worth taking a closer look at the role of trade unions and labour legislation in relation to the implementation of work-life balance policies, and whether these two elements possibly create barriers to the implementation of such policies, especially within South African organisations. Quantitative research could attempt to find a relationship between the former variables to determine whether such barriers exist and how to overcome them in the future.

Another avenue that is worth considering is researching this topic by making use of the descriptive content analysis method used by Mariri and Chipunza (2011) in their study of corporate social governance. A descriptive approach to content analysis is beneficial in that it provides the extent of the implementation. It would be worth exploring the extent to which organisations implement work-life balance policies,

followed by why they do so, and how. In doing so, conclusions can be drawn to distinguish between variables influencing the degree of policy implementation.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Work-life balance has become an important concept in research and practice in the twenty-first century. However, it remains under-researched in developing countries such as South Africa. Indeed, the lack of research in South African organisations not only limits organisations in terms of guidance, but also in terms of creating new ways of thinking when designing policies and procedures within the workplace.

Building on and extending previous studies, this research contributes to the work-life balance literature by examining, from an organisational perspective, the practicality of implementing work-life balance policies in South African organisations. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to provide innovative research in South Africa relating to organisations that have found a way to implement these policies successfully. The researcher sought to pre-empt concerns from an organisational perspective by providing reliable information on industry practice, as well as implementation advice. Moreover, the study gathered data from organisations operating in different industries to ensure a diverse sample, which not only added depth to the results, but also makes it possible for other organisations to identify with the findings.

The results of the present study indicate, firstly, that even within a developing country such as South Africa organisations are addressing the need of employees to maintain a balance between their work and their family life. Secondly, the results offer insight into creative solutions to challenges that are characteristic of external factors such as the economy, operating the industry and competition for scarce talent. The participants showed a unique approach to the challenges faced, which can primarily be ascribed to their clear strategic intent. In addition, the management teams were aware of the goals of their organisation, and therefore approached strategic decision making in a manner that would align with, support and add value to the organisational strategy.

The present study adds value as it provides qualitative insight into the thinking of organisations and how the thinking can be turned into practical implementation. This research moreover offers a novel perspective in that it investigated the organisational perspective, thereby adding an understanding of the organisation's experience of the

change in working conditions and how it responds to this trend. The findings and discussion provide valuable insight into these matters. Nevertheless, it is important for future research to be undertaken to build on this study and to offer relevant themes. In addition, the results of future work must be filtered through to organisations for their practical use. It is essential that the findings of the present study do not remain out of reach of practitioners, as this will not lead to any significant change within South African organisations. Moreover, practitioners are encouraged to utilise the findings in a way that would contribute positively to the terms and conditions of employment in South African organisations.

In conclusion, this study has taken an initial step towards ensuring that managers in organisations have data to refer to when considering the implementation of work-life balance policies. The findings certainly add much value to the research field in South Africa, as the lack of research makes it difficult for practitioners to present a business case for implementing work-life balance policies. Although there still is room for value-adding research, the present findings represent foundational work within the work-life balance field.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies within South African organisations.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Corlia Fraser (MCom Industrial Psych) from the Department of Industrial Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will form part of the completion of the Master's degree thesis component. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your organisation forms part of the sample population stipulated by the study.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is aimed at providing South Africa-specific information regarding the organisational characteristics associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies. Ultimately, the researcher aims to gain an understanding of the reasons why organisations implement work-life balance policies and what were the antecedents that caused the consideration and the actual implementation.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we will ask you to do the following things in the comfort of your own space in the organisation:

Checklist:

- You will be requested to provide basic company information in the format of a checklist. The information required is to provide an overarching view of the characteristics of the organisation. Estimated time to complete is 5 minutes.

Structured interview:

- You will be requested to participate in a structured interview comprising fewer than 30 questions in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the reasoning behind the implementation of the work-life balance policies. Estimated time to complete is 45 minutes.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

According to our analysis there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study, other than setting aside some time to conduct the interview and to complete the checklist.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

No participant will receive any payment for participating in this study. However, it is believed that the results will enhance the quality of work within South Africa by providing practitioners with context-specific details on the implementation of work-life balance policies. It is further expected that this information could potentially provide organisations with a form of competitive advantage.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive monetary compensation for participating in this study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of ensuring that no unauthorised person gains access to any information gathered. By ensuring password-protected files as well as profiles, organisations are not at risk of confidentiality breach.

No information will be released to any third party for whatever reason. All information gathered will be included in the thesis. No individual results of any specific organisation will be reported. Only aggregated results will be reported.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Mr Gawie Cillie of the Department of Industrial Psychology of Stellenbosch University ([ggc@sun.ac.za/0218083595](mailto:ggc@sun.ac.za)) or Corlia Fraser ([corliafraser@gmail.com/0721184319](mailto:corliafraser@gmail.com)).

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at

the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to _____ by Corlia Fraser in [Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/_____] and the participant is in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. _____ was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the subject/participant] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [name of the representative]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other] and [no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____].

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION FORM

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jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**Subject: Letter of permission for research project**

Within the 21st century the concept of working all the time is not as far-fetched as it would've been years ago. Employees are under immense pressure to perform at a higher level than their competitors and therefore do not hesitate to be always on. This trend has seen a decrease in productivity and employers across the globe began to realise that proactive steps need to be taken to prevent burnout and uncontrollable turnover rates. By the year 2008, 80% of employers within the USA implemented some form of policy advocating the concept of work-life balance in order to provide their employees with the ability to balance the demands of the work domain with their responsibilities and demands at home. All topic-related research conducted was done within developed countries and within specific industries, resulting in limited relevance to South African organisations. The purpose of this study is to provide qualitative findings on the concept of work-life balance within the South African environment.

Studies have found that there are certain organisational characteristics that are associated with the implementation of work-life balance policies and that particular antecedents contribute to the consideration of implementation. This finding cannot be accepted in South Africa without critical investigation of context-specific differences. The study will contribute towards a national understanding of the phenomena and further add value by providing organisations and practitioners with guidelines and facts on work-life balance. The implications will add value in assisting South African organisations to join world-leading organisations to ensure a healthy corporate environment, whilst increasing organisational attractiveness. Organisations will be able to implement work-life balance policies to ensure that they are ahead of their competition and attract and retain talented employees.

We hereby request permission to conduct my research within your organisation. The qualitative structured interview will be conducted with the head of Human Resources of your organisation in order to provide us with the necessary understanding of

operations within the organisation that might or have contributed to the implementation of work-life balance policies.

No payment will be made to participants for taking part in this study. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with participants will remain confidential and will be disclosed only as required by law (the aim of the study is not to reveal the participating organisations). Confidentiality will be maintained by means of a coding procedure. The results of this study will be captured in the thesis as part of a Master's qualification. Participants' names will not be published. Participants can choose whether to participate in this study or not. If they volunteer to participate they may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. They may also refuse to answer any questions they do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw them from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Mr Gawie Cillie of the Department of Industrial Psychology of Stellenbosch University ([ggc@sun.ac.za/0218083595](mailto:ggc@sun.ac.za)) or Corlia Fraser ([corliafraser@gmail.com/0721184319](mailto:corliafraser@gmail.com)). Participants may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Participants are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of their participation in this research study.

We trust that you will kindly grant us institutional permission to conduct the work-life balance study in your organisation. Thanking you in anticipation

Yours sincerely,

Corlia Fraser and Gawie Cillie

I _____ [name of organisational representative] hereby give institutional permission for Corlia Fraser and Gawie Cillie to conduct their work-life balance study at _____ [name of organisation].

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview questionnaire

This is an interview questionnaire with the main purpose of utilising your organisational characteristics in order to provide an understanding of the concept of work-life balance in South Africa. This interview will have three sections; please answer all three sections as accurately as possible.

Also take note that all information gathered during this interview will be kept confidential and additional provision will be made to ensure that no unauthorised access to any data obtained is possible.

Thank you for taking time to provide me with this valuable information.

Section A:

Biographical Information of Participating Organisations

Size of the organisation

- 0-50
- 50-100
- 100-150
- 150-200
- 200-250
- > 250

Total Male and Female Employees

- ___ Male
- ___ Female

Known Dependent Children (%)

- No children
- One or more children

Total Number of Employees within Occupational Groups

- Managers
- Professionals
- Line workers
- Other (if many, please specify)

Sector Organisation Operates In

- Financial
- Industrial
- Resources
- Retail
- Gold mining
- Telecommunications
- All shares
- Other (please specify)

How Many Employees Have been Working at the Organisation for

- 0-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years

Highest Qualification (% all employees)

- Grade 9
- Grade 12
- Degree or Diploma
- Higher

Is There an Active Trade Union Operating Within the Organisation

- Yes
- No

The Level of Technology the Company Utilises

- Average level
- Above average level
- Excellent level
- Market leader

Section B:

Identify which of the following work-life balance policies are available in your organisation. If the policy is similar to the one described, please indicate the similarities as well as the differences. Please also consider that your organisation might have one arrangement available per section that also qualifies as a work-life balance policy.

Child and Dependant Care Benefits

- Company provides day child care centre
- Arrangements for elderly care
- Programmes for emergency care of ill dependant or child
- Summer and weekend programmes for dependants
- Alternative arrangements for employees with children under the age of 13

Flexible Working Conditions

- Flexitime
- Job sharing
- Part-time work
- Compressed work week
- Shorter weeks for parents
- Work from home
- Home telecommunicating

Time off

- Maternity leave
- Paternity leave
- Leave for family emergencies

Virtual Offices

- Availability of the option
- Not available

Employee Assistance Programmes

- Counselling assistance
- Relocation assistance
- Fitness or wellness centres
- Career assistance
- Other arrangements: Describe

Section C: Structured Interview

This section will cover specific details regarding your organisation. The concept driving this section is that of an interview-style questionnaire. The outcome is to provide the researcher with comprehensive information regarding the organisation in order to determine what aspects contribute towards the implementation of work-life balance arrangements identified above in the form of official organisational policies.

You are again reminded that all questions asked are done with the assurance of anonymity.

Please listen to each question and provide a detailed answer.

Question 1: Would you say that the nature of the work at the company consists of straight-line work, mass production or repetitive work? Please provide more detail regarding the nature of the work done within the organisation.

Question 2: When you describe the organisation, would you say rapid growth fits the description? Flexible production? Rapid resource development?

Question 3: Please describe the company's business strategy as comprehensively as possible.

Question 4: Is it essential that the human resource policies and procedures are developed in such a manner that they clearly align with the organisational business strategy? Would the strategy be compromised if the policies do not directly support this strategy? Would you say that policies within the organisation are vital for the strategy's success?

Question 5: Please provide a general description of the role that the company's CEO/MD plays. Would you describe the CEO/MD of the company as being involved and visible in the general company processes, or merely at a strategical level?

Question 6: According to your knowledge, would you agree that the general procedures of the company that involve all employees are communicated effectively and in an understandable manner? Are you comfortable to confirm that this communication takes place to the extent that each employee is aware of all organisational policies and procedures?

Question 7: When changes are made in any company policy, regardless of who is affected by the change, are these changes clearly communicated across the company to all employees in order to ensure transparency?

Question 8: Based on feedback by official as well as non-official procedures, and according to your knowledge, would you state that the company's manager and supervisor are supportive when it comes to the careers of the team they lead? The team's family? How about general well-being? Is there any substantial evidence that you can provide to support your statement?

Question 9: To what extent do the managers support the work-life balance policies that are available and encourage their team members to utilise these policies? Is there any visible resistance from the managers regarding these policies?

Question 10: In your own words, please describe the organisation's culture as comprehensively as possible.

Question 11: Do you consider the company as one that values high-performing individuals by placing a major emphasis on reaching targets and performance ratings? Do you have a performance management system? If so, who is responsible for the ratings of the employees? Who supervises whether developmental plans are implemented in order to ensure an increase in performance from one review period to the next?

Question 12: Does the organisation value individual contributions?

Question 13: Do the top managerial team (EXCO level) understand that the employees have various role demands?

Question 14: Would you state that the leaders within the organisation are understanding and supportive towards their subordinates' personal circumstances?

Question 15: Can you say with confidence that all employees are familiar with all the human resource policies in the company, and further that all managers implement and support these policies to the extent they were intended for?

Question 16: How often do the supervisors/managers expect employees to work overtime? What is the company's average overtime?

Question 17: Does the company reward employees when they accomplish more than what is expected from them and, if so, how are the employees rewarded?

Question 18: Does the company attempt to ensure that employees do not take on more than they are able to handle? And should the company become aware that an employee is constantly under severe stress, what actions does the organisation take?

Question 19: Please describe your employee brand that you are attempting to portray in as much detail as possible. Do you believe that you are aiming to attract highly talented employees? How competitive is the market for the type of employees you attempt to attract?

Question 20: Would you say that the strategy of the company includes attracting more Generation Y (currently 18- to 27-year-old) employees within the next five years?

Question 21: Is the organisation flexible (not very dependent on the specific workforce) in terms of its workforce?

Question 22: In general, does the company value economically active females and perceive them as hard to replace? How many key positions are assigned to female employees?

Question 23: How often do you research the needs and values of your current workforce? What usually serves as a driver for doing so when you do aim to determine the needs?

Question 24: When the information gathered during such research indicates that the organisation is misreading its employees, does the company utilise this information to adjust the employee approach and incorporate this into their strategic plan?

Question 25: How big a role did the economy play before deciding to implement the current work-life balance policies? And would you anticipate a change in these policies should the economic climate change drastically?

Question 26: Are some of the policies available within the organisation limited to a specific group of employees?

Question 27: Please describe the process you followed during the following phases:

Firstly, what led to the organisation considering to implement work-life balance policies?

Secondly, how did you come to decide what policies specifically to implement?

Thirdly, what was the process followed to develop the policies? Who were involved during this process? From those individuals, who were the key role players involved during development? Were any of these individuals from key positions within the organisation?

Fourthly, please explain the process you followed when implementing the policies throughout the company.

Fifthly, how successful would you describe the implementation of the policies?