Work-Life Balance: In Search Of Effective Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the current paper is to discover effective work-life balance management strategies. This paper shares initial findings from a study of lawyers practicing in Queensland, Australia. Using a qualitative methodology, seven main themes were identified – boundary management, technology, leisure activities, support, flexibility, cognitive strategies and behavioural strategies. The study highlights the limitations of previous research. Further, this paper proposes that the successful management of work-life balance is more likely to occur when there is active, joint contribution from both employers and employees. The results lend support to established work-life balance research, introduce the concept of proactive coping and offer directions for future research.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance; Conflict; Stress; Coping Strategies
In 1993, renowned pioneer researcher Lotte Bailyn concluded that although there is no blue-print for work-life balance, there is a need to assist employers and employees jointly in finding ways to accommodate the needs and personal concerns of the individual worker, in a manner consistent with their particular circumstances. It would appear that this need has not diminished as more than a decade later Halpern (2005) has claimed that work-life balance is one of the primary social challenges of our era.

While we know more about the challenges and the effects of lack of work-life balance, too little is known about how to improve it (Bailyn 1993; Kossek & Lambert 2001; Baltes & Heydens-Gahir 2003; Jones, Burke & Westman 2006). This uneven research focus has resulted in gaps in our knowledge with regard to men's and women's perceptions of work-life balance and the factors that contribute to successful balance (Wiersma 1994; Milkie & Peltola 1999; Valcour 2007). The purpose of the current paper is to contribute to reducing gaps in the literature by presenting the findings of an exploratory study which uses a discovery-oriented, qualitative methodology (Haddock, Ziemba, Zimmerman & Current 2001) to put forth the voices of individuals answering the research question: What are the strategies that have been successful in helping Australian men and women working in the legal profession to manage the demands of their work and home life? Further, this paper proposes that the successful management of work-life balance is likely to be dependent upon the active, joint contribution of both employers and employees.

**BACKGROUND**

In the following sections we discuss how the limitations of previous research have contributed to the current situation and introduce the emergence of a new body of research which focuses on effective work-life balance management strategies (Aspinwall & Taylor 1997; Moen & Yu 2000; Baltes & Heydens-Gahir 2003; Lapierre & Allen 2006; Jennings & McDougald 2007).

**The Conflict Perspective**

The current paper suggests that the main limitation of previous research lies in the fact that the challenges associated with managing work and family roles have been studied under the rubric of
work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985; Lapierre & Allen 2006). The ‘conflict perspective’ has dominated the research on work-family dynamics for the past thirty years (Greenhaus & Parasuraman 1999; Greenhaus & Powell 2006). It is obviously beneficial to reduce conflict given research provides consistent evidence that work-family conflict is associated with various negative work-related (e.g., job satisfaction and performance), non-work-related (e.g., life satisfaction) and stress-related (e.g., well-being) outcomes (Kossek & Ozeki 1998; Allen et al. 2000; Noor 2002; Frone 2003; O’Driscoll, Brough & Kalliath 2006). Further, Frone (2002) stated that lower levels of conflict are likely to be associated with perceptions of work-life balance. However, much of the work-family literature has portrayed employees as being victims of their work-family conflicts (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton 2000; Beutell & Greenhaus 1982; Carlson & Perrewe 1999; Frone 2002; Frone 2003; Wallace 1999). As a result, the research has been criticised for viewing work and family largely as conflicting role responsibilities (Werber & Walter 2002).

Investigators have undertaken research into coping with the hope that the concept might help explain why some individuals fare better than others do when encountering conflict and stress in their lives (Folkman & Moskowitz 2004). While there is a large body of research on coping in the stress literature (Edwards, Caplan & Harrison 1998; French, Caplan & Harrison 1982; Thompson, Poelmans, Allen & Andreassi 2007), research that examines coping in the context of work and family is “limited and fragmented” (Thompson et al. 2007: 74). In line with researchers’ preoccupation with work-family conflict, a sub-set of the stress-and-coping literature has focused specifically on the strategies used by individuals in response to conflict in order to facilitate their management of work and family roles (Haar 2006; Lapierre & Allen 2006; Neal & Hammer 2007). Research has shown that even if conflict is a likely consequence of engaging in work and family roles, it is how people cope with conflict that determines their personal outcomes (Beutell & Greenhaus 1982; Hertz 1999). Nevertheless, Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux & Brinley’s (2005) comprehensive overview of work and family research in the field of industrial organisational and organisational behaviour found that less than one percent of research actually examined coping as a predictor of work-family conflict.
In this paper we suggest that future work-life balance research should take a more direct approach, focusing on the discovery of specific strategies that have been found to lead to successful work-life balance, rather than assuming that strategies aimed at reducing conflict are the same as those that improve work-life balance.

A Shift In Perspective

A shift away from the conflict perspective is beginning to emerge in the work-life balance literature. Galinsky (1999) found that most parents with children under the age of eighteen reported being at least somewhat successful in managing work and family life. Wallace (2004) reported that despite the long hours and conflicting role demands lawyers face, the majority of respondents in her study “felt they had pretty balanced lives” (2004: 67). In Australia, Australia @ Work: The Benchmark Study (2007) revealed that, except for perceptions of high work intensity and workload, Australian workers are generally ‘a happy bunch’ (Managing Work/Life Balance International 2007). In addition, The Australian Work and Life Index (2007) results indicated that, despite high levels of spill-over from work to life, three quarters of the participants reported being satisfied with their work-life balance (Centre for Work + Life 2007). While these are encouraging findings, it is still not clear what factors contribute to such positive results.

A body of work has begun to focus on understanding the use of effective work-life balance strategies (Aspinwall & Taylor 1997; Moen & Yu 2000; Baltes & Heydens-Gahir 2003; Lapierre & Allen 2006; Jennings & McDougald 2007). Researchers have found that employees (and their families) engage in strategies and tactics so that they can be effective and satisfied at home and at work (Haddock et al. 2001; Moen & Wethington 1992; Pitts-Catsouphes et al. 2007).

The importance of the joint contribution of both employers and employees to the successful management of work-life balance is also being recognised. According to person-environment fit theory (Edwards et al. 1998; Edwards & Rothbard 1999; French et al. 1982), an employee's level of work-family stress is affected by three sets of connected factors – firstly, the extent and intensity of work and family demands; secondly, the accessibility of resources and thirdly, the use of adaptive
strategies (Pitt-Catsouphes et al. 2007). As noted by Pitt-Catsouphes et al. (2007) “workplace-based policies, practices, and programs that respond to an understanding of demands and resources as well as the strategies and tactics employees use may be more effective than those that focus on the manifestations of stress alone” (2007: 540). However, the onus is not just upon the organisation. Quick, Henley and Quick (2004) have suggested that employees need to take an active role in managing their own work responsibilities, family obligations and self-imposed expectations by understanding the source of the demands that lead to conflict, making appropriate choices and using a range of strategies.

The current paper is based upon the assumption that solving the problem, such as the difficulty in successfully balancing work and home life, is best accomplished by learning about those circumstances in which the problem is less present, rather than by continuing to explore the problem itself (Haddock et al. 2001; Gottman 1999; Wallerstein & Blakeslee 1995). Thus, the current study moves the research focus away from conflict to learning more about the effective strategies used by a sample of lawyers to improve their perception of work-life balance. The intention is for these insights to be of benefit to the broader professional and business community.

The Legal Profession

The legal profession consists of a body of working men and women who, because of the demands of their occupation, find achieving a satisfactory relationship between their work and personal lives to be very challenging which has consequences for their health and well-being (Wallace 1999; Wallace 2004). The literature on the legal profession strongly indicates that work demands are major sources of stress for members of the legal profession which often lead to work interfering with their non-work life (Abramson & Franklin 1986; Brainbridge 1989; Brockman 1992; Dart 1988; Kaye 1988; Wallace 1999). The Annual Professions Study is the largest independent research project in Australia, made possible through collaboration between a range of industry groups associations, professional service firms and a research consultancy (Beaton Consulting 2007). The 2007 study examined issues of health and well-being for people in the professional and business community. The survey found that professionals and students experience more depressive symptoms than the general population. When
comparisons between the professions were made, lawyers were found to experience the highest incidence of depressive symptoms, followed by attorneys. It was also found that respondents from law firms were the most likely to use alcohol or other drugs as coping strategies (Beaton Consulting 2007). As a result, the issue of work-life balance, coping strategies and health and well-being is on the Australian legal profession’s business agenda and we believe that a study of the legal profession will provide the opportunity to tap into the positive aspects of managing the work-life interface.

METHOD

Sample and Procedures
Data was collected from 324 lawyers practising law in the State of Queensland, Australia who completed an on-line questionnaire in late 2008. Members of the Queensland Law Society were invited to participate in the survey on work-life balance through the Law Society’s weekly e-newsletter which has a potential target audience of approximately 6,000 lawyers. While it appears that the response rate was low, it was not possible to confirm this fact with any accuracy because the number of members who access and read the e-newsletter is unknown. As an incentive, respondents were entitled to credit towards their ongoing professional development requirements if they participated in the research, requested an individualised report outlining their results and actioned the feedback contained in the report.

The sample consisted of 208 (64.2%) females and 116 (35.8%) males. In terms of age at the time of survey, 6% of participants were younger than 25 years; 45% aged between 25 and 34 years; 25% aged between 35 and 44 years; 17% aged between 45 and 54 years and 7% aged 55 years or more. The majority of respondents reported working full-time (89%); 11% reported working part-time. Most respondents indicated that they were employed on a permanent basis (87%), 1% reported being casually employed, with the remaining 12% engaged in self-employment. The number of years practicing law ranged from less than a year to 39 years, with an average of 9 years. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of participants reported having a partner (married/de facto), with the remainder of respondents’ family status reported as being single, divorced/separated or widowed. 51% of
respondents’ partners (where applicable) worked full-time and 11% worked part-time. 42% of the sample reported having dependents living at home (children, parents or others).

Data Analysis
All respondents’ answers to the research question were analysed using thematic analysis to identify meaningful themes and patterns of living and behaviour (Van Manen 1990). The raw data was entered into the computer software program NVivo 8 (QSR International 2007). NVivo is a program used for qualitative data analysis which allows for importing and coding large amounts of textual data (Richards 1999). A convergence methodology was used to systematically analyse the raw data and all efforts were made to promote completeness, reduce bias in the data collection and analysis process. Themes were identified using regularly recurring responses and isolated or uncommon comments were not included in the final analysis. Two rounds of coding were used by the researchers. The first round of coding used ‘free nodes’, which are considered ‘containers for ideas’ and are created to store ideas or text about related concepts together. The content of all responses was coded broadly in the first round. In the second round of coding, ‘tree nodes’ were used to take the broad concepts and break them down into sub-categories (Braun & Clarke 2006; Beekhuyzen 2007). In the description of findings that follows, quotes have been selected from the data to illustrate the themes and to depict the intended meaning of the study participants.

RESULTS
The following summarises the key findings from the current study and reflects the attitudes and perceptions of participants with regard to effective work-life balance management strategies.

Boundary Management
The main theme identified in this study relates to how participants manage the boundary between home and work, lending support to the established research perspective focusing on integration versus segmentation as strategies for coping with work and family roles (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate 2000; Rothbard, Phillips & Dumas 2005; Bulger, Matthews & Hoffman 2007). Segmentation is a strategy used by employees to separate work and non-work time and activities, whereas integration is a
strategy whereby the person overlaps these role experiences (Nippert-Eng, 1995). Many participants reported making conscious decisions not to take work home or to work over weekends, “so that there is a separation”, while others made sure they focused on work during work hours and did not think about it when they went home – these are examples of segmentation strategies. The following responses from two respondents who work from home reflect the fact that people vary in their preference for segmentation or integration as a work-life balance strategy (Rothbard et al. 2005; Woodward 2007):

“I work completely from home and I have learned to turn off the computer at night and not to check work emails on the weekend. I have also learned that if possible, work should stop by 7.00 pm or I have trouble sleeping.” - Respondent 23, female insurance lawyer.

“I work from home and move from work jobs to home jobs multiple times per day - I hang out the washing at morning tea and often have kids working on the computer in the background while I am answering phone calls or emails.” - Respondent 40, female conveyancer.

It is important for employees to find a 'fit' between their preferred boundary management strategy and workplace policies and practices and for employers to understand that employees have preferences, as research evidence suggests that when there is incongruence, employees experience lower job satisfaction and commitment (Rothbard et al. 2005).

Technology
Despite extensive speculation on the effects of technology on work-life balance, there appears to be very little research on the extent to which these effects are considered (Valcour & Hunter 2005). The current study lends support to the view that the use of technology increases people's autonomy and work functioning and enables the successful integration of multiple life roles (Jackson 2002):

“Ordering groceries on-line and getting them delivered has significantly reduced the amount of time I spend on the (precious) weekend doing chores and weeknights cooking dinner/making lunches for the next day.” - Respondent 78, female corporate lawyer.

Technology is also being used for relaxation purposes, such as participating in social networking activities:

“I use the internet/ Facebook at the end of the day and at home to relax from the office work routine.” - Respondent 51, male lawyer in private practice.
Given the dearth of research, it would appear that this is an area worthy of further investigation by work-life balance researchers.

**Leisure Activities**

The current study supports a growing body of published literature theorising that leisure can be an effective coping strategy helping to maintain employee health and wellness (Haworth & Lewis 2005). A large number of study participants reported the importance of the planned participation in leisure activities as a strategy for successful work-life integration. Leisure included passive activities (e.g., watching television); active activities (e.g., playing sport, exercising) or taking time out (e.g., holidays, days off) (Joudrey & Wallace 2009):

“I have negotiated so that I am able to take the Christmas school holidays off - this prolonged break last year gave me a great restorative boost to my sanity and has made this year easier to cope with knowing that it will occur again.” - Respondent 66, female body corporate lawyer.

“Playing sport / exercise helps provide a division between work and home.” - Respondent 49, female lawyer in general practice.

“Try to take some time out for myself. I like to have a massage and watch something really dumb on TV when I get home from work.” - Respondent 40, female commercial lawyer.

Leisure activities offer opportunities for recovery, rejuvenation and greater resilience in coping with stress (Iwasaki 2003; Iwasaki 2006). Joudrey and Wallace (2009) concluded that “organisations that encourage and support their employees taking vacations, participating in social activities and taking time for leisure may find they have happier employees and a healthier work environment” (2009: 213).

**Support**

Results of the current study provide telling evidence emphasising the importance of a work environment that is supportive of the need for work-life balance, particularly the impact of having a supportive supervisor and workplace culture. These results reiterate a recurrent theme in the work-life literature (Clark 2001; Frye & Breaugh 2004; Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson & Kacmar 2007; Haar & Roche 2008):
"Finding a great boss who is very understanding of the need for work/life balance. My previous employer did not understand this, so I made it an unspoken condition for my future place of employment.” - Respondent 31, male lawyer in general practice.

“In my current job I do have much better work-life balance than other jobs I have had. I probably could be earning more elsewhere but I have continued in my current job because it is a family-friendly environment.” - Respondent 9, female family lawyer.

“In my first place of employment as a lawyer, I suffered quite severe depression to the point where I started taking sleeping pills and was constantly on edge, particularly with my wife. The turning point came when I had a panic attack one night and my wife thought that she might need to call the ambulance. The following day, I called the Queensland Law Society free counselling service and spoke to someone. I left my job and found my current job where I have been for one and a half years. The difference between my bosses is unbelievable. This has without a doubt been the biggest factor in my enjoyment of my legal career as a junior solicitor. I am treated with respect and am given a lot of responsibility, but only so much that I can handle without it becoming too burdensome. I know a lot of people who have struggled with their careers as junior lawyers and I believe that the number one factor is the employer, particularly the partner that the person works under.” - Respondent 45, male commercial lawyer.

Research has shown that support from others is an effective coping strategy (Carlson & Perrewe 1999; Wallace 2004). In particular, employees who report that their spouses provide support experience less difficulty in balancing the work and home domains (Beautell & Greenhouse 1982; Quick et al. 2004; Halbesleben & Rotondo 2007). Quick et al.(2004) emphasise the need for individuals to actively understand themselves, their personal needs and to communicate effectively as communication plays a key role in fostering support. The current study lends support to this view:

“I communicate with my spouse that I am the primary breadwinner and potential baby-maker, so I need him to contribute e.g., cooking dinners and doing washing, and talk about him staying home with any potential baby. Communication has worked in terms of weekday home chores but not so much on the weekends. Also communication with my employer that I need help, when it gets too much.” - Respondent 79, female commercial property lawyer.

"My wife and I work together (not that getting married was an integration strategy!), but coordinating work and home life together assists each of us in managing both spheres of life.” - Respondent 22, male insolvency lawyer.

**Flexibility**

Findings from the current study lend support to the importance of flexibility as a factor in the achievement of work-life balance, which is another common theme in work-life research (Clark 2001; Frye & Breauugh 2004; Grzywacz, Carlson & Shulkin 2008; Hill, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin & Pitt-Catsouphes 2008). In particular, respondents reported the perceived value of flexible work arrangements and the negotiation of same, for example:
"I work from home at least one day a week which enables me to care for an infant." - Respondent 32, female commercial lawyer.

“My hours have been negotiated so that I am able to drop my children to school each morning and collect them each afternoon.” - Respondent 65, female commercial lawyer.

"The main one [strategy] was moving out of private practice, which offered no flexibility whatsoever, into the community sector, which provides me with much more flexibility, albeit at a much reduced salary, but I see that as the price I have had to pay to achieve this goal. I would never have been able to do this in private practice.” - Respondent 61, male lawyer in a community legal centre.

Cognitive Strategies

A theme identified in the current research supports the conceptual and empirical research found in the coping literature, focusing on cognitive coping strategies (Wiersma 1994; Steptoe 1991). A number of study participants identified positive cognitive restructuring strategies such as acceptance, humour and positive reappraisal (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub 1989; Folkman & Moskowitz 2004) as contributing to their successful work-life balance, for example:

"My work tends to be either a flood or a drought. Over the years I have learnt to accept that's the way family law is. When it's really busy I have to put in long hours. When it's quiet I try to spend more time with the family.” - Respondent 21, male family lawyer.

"I do not take myself too seriously.” - Respondent 62, male lawyer in general practice.

"Facing the reality that some things just can't be achieved or engaged in helps reduce stress.” - Respondent 70, female litigation and insolvency lawyer.

In particular, the following participants’ responses provide insights into how cognitive re-appraisal involved a reinterpretation of their situation in line with their values and beliefs (Folkman 1997), leading to actively revising their expectations and scaling back within the work domain (Jennings & McDougald 2007):

"I left the sixty hours /week inner city 'successful' legal life two and a half years ago after my best friend died a horrible death and my twenty year old child was diagnosed with a horrible cancer. I also left all the rhetoric about what you needed to do and be to succeed in law. Guess what, you can be a very competent and successful lawyer and have a good life outside of work.” - Respondent 60, female commercial lawyer.

"Change to a less stressful job. Deliberately avoid working long hours. Accept slightly lower pay as a trade off. Stop the obsession with money and position.” - Respondent 18, male precedents lawyer.

“After several years as a lawyer I made a conscious decision to change roles to achieve better job satisfaction and a better work-life balance. The legal profession, in my view revolves around stress, deadlines, constant client demands, time recording, money money money, and longer than average working hours. It seems that you are simply a conveyor belt for files; a machine whose purpose is to pump out billable hours. There isn't much scope for
actual enjoyment of the law and I often went home stressed and dissatisfied. While staying in the profession, I decided to change roles to move away from direct client work and fee earning. This has substantially improved my lifestyle.” - Respondent 5, male company lawyer.

The above comments emphasise the point that employees now expect employers to be responsive to their need to balance work and life commitments (Kossek, Dass & DeMarr 1994) and organisations that do not meet their employees' work-life balance needs will find it hard to retain their staff (De Cieri, Holmes, Abbott and Pettit 2005; Pitt-Catsouches, Matz-Costa & MacDermid 2007; Thompson & Aspinwall 2008). The results also highlight the challenges of achieving work-life balance in the legal profession (Abramson & Franklin 1986; Brainbridge 1989; Brockman 1992; Dart 1988; Kaye 1988; Wallace 1999; Beaton Consulting 2007).

**Behavioural Strategies**

The current study supports previous research reporting the use of behavioural strategies to manage the work-life interface (Carver et al. 1989; Baltes & Heydens-Gahir 2003; Lapierre & Allen 2006; Neal & Hammer 2007). Fifty percent of participants reported using planning and organising strategies. Other strategies mentioned were time management, prioritising and goal-setting:

“Set time limits to come home early to spend time with the family instead of staying in the office after hours.” - Respondent 41, male criminal and family lawyer.

"I try and organise my day so that I work from 8.00 am to 5.00 pm during the week and so I do not need to work on weekends. I am fortunate that there is not a lot of pressure where I work to bill a certain amount per month. Having said that, I do the best I can and am always improving my work practices to increase my efficiency.” - Respondent 44, male litigation lawyer.

"Sorting out priorities, and reminding myself that I need to look after my marriage as that is the most important thing." - Respondent 76, female local government lawyer.

"Set quantifiable and realistic goals and consciously and firmly allocate time to specific activities regarding the four sectors of self, family, work and community involvement." - Respondent 37, male energy and resources lawyer.

"Decide what is important and then revolve around those 'immovable' aspects. Once I realised that I cannot please everyone and focused on pleasing/focusing on what is most important, then as long as I was meeting those commitments, I diminished the feeling of failure in respect to 'everything' as was only 'failing' at things which I designated as 'not as important'." - Respondent 16, female litigation and insolvency lawyer.

The above results indicate that individuals engage in specific behavioural strategies aimed at achieving work-life balance, which has important implications for employers. Grzywacz and Carlson
(2007) suggest that practitioners responsible for promoting work-family balance should implement multi-level interventions which involve creating co-ordinated activities at the individual and organisational level that support each other. The example they use focuses on enabling workers to allocate their time effectively, thereby fostering levels of control and work-family balance by implementing flexible work arrangements at the organisational level and introducing time management practices at the individual level. The benefit of this approach lies in its recognition that the responsibility for achieving work-life balance is shared by both the organisation and the individual.

**DISCUSSION**

It should be noted that the current study has a range of methodological limitations, which reduce the generalisability of the findings reported. Qualitative research has been criticised for lacking scientific rigour as it cannot use the criteria of validity and reliability (Morse 1994). However, this study does not make a claim that the outcomes can be transferred to other populations as the sample size is too small. In addition, bias could be attributed to the fact that the greater proportion of participants were female, participants came from a single occupation and the sample is geographically restricted. Rather, the purpose of the research was to shed light on the personal strategies that contribute to work-life balance by reporting the perceptions of those who believe they have made inroads into successfully achieving work-life balance. The current study did include individuals who were not partnered and couples with no dependants, whereas much of the previous research into work-life balance strategies has focused on dual-career couples with dependants (e.g., Neal & Hammer 2007) or women (e.g., Woodward 2007).

While there is still much to be learnt, the findings of this study are interesting in that they concur with themes found in established work-life research such as the importance of flexibility and support (Grzywacz, Carlson & Shulkin 2008); theoretical models such as boundary management (Bulger, Matthews & Hoffman 2007) and the use of behavioural strategies (Carver et al. 1989; Folkman & Moskowitz 2004). In addition credence has been given to emerging themes such as the relevance of leisure (Joudrey & Wallace 2009) and technology (Valcour & Hunter 2005) to work-life balance and
further insights gained into cognitive coping strategies (Carver et al. 1989; Folkman & Moskowitz 2004).

We suggest that strategies such as engagement in leisure activities and planning also support a new direction in coping research – proactive coping (Aspinwall & Taylor 1997). Proactive coping has to do with the ways people cope in advance to prevent or mute the impact of events that are potential stressors (Folkman & Moskowitz 2004). On the other hand, coping in the literature has to do with mastering, tolerating or reducing a fully developed stressful event (Aspinwall & Taylor 1997). Proactive coping may go unrecognised because it is difficult to detect - when potential stressors are minimised or averted, little happens and as noted by Aspinwall and Taylor (1997) “Nonevents are rarely selected for scientific investigation” (1997: 418). We put forward the notion that this may be one of the reasons why conflict is over-studied and successful work-life balance is under-studied in the literature. We recommend that this research imbalance be addressed in the future so that we can more fully understand the dynamics of the work-life interaction.

Work-life balance is considered to be a complex, multi-dimensional concept, however research has usually taken place at one level of analysis, either at the individual, family, organisational or societal level. Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002) noted that there has been a disproportional emphasis on environmental and situational characteristics and a relative neglect of the individual characteristics that contribute to work-life balance, suggesting the need to incorporate individual and environmental variables within a single study in order to broaden our understanding of the work-life balance phenomenon. Concurring with this view, participants in the current study showed themselves to be active agents in creating successful work-life balance but their responses also revealed that success is often dependent upon contextual factors and responsive workplaces (Haddock et al. 2001; Quick et al. 2004), supporting the proposition that the successful management of work-life balance is more likely to occur when there is active, joint contribution from both employers and employees.
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