Chapter 5
Discussion

5.1. Work Antecedents

5.2. Life Antecedents

5.3. Gender Differences

5.3.1. Gender Differences in Work-life Balance
5.3.2. Gender Differences in Work Antecedents
5.3.3. Gender Differences in Life Antecedents
The present study was undertaken to develop a measure of work-life balance and explore the work and life domain antecedents of professional men and women in India. Unlike the work-life measures that assessed either negative or positive affiliation, work-life balance was examined both from the perspective of scarcity and expansion i.e. the nature of interaction (interference and enhancement). Work-life balance was also examined in terms of the direction of interaction between the domains (work to life and life to work). Results of the exploratory factor analysis provide evidence of bi-directional and multi-dimensional measure of work-life balance. A total of 19 items measuring work-life balance yielded a four-factor construct, namely work-life interference, work-life enhancement, life-work interference and life-work enhancement. Results of the study thus confirm that interference is not the opposite of enhancement and individuals experience both interference and enhancement simultaneously from both domains.

Apart from the bi-directionality and multi-dimensionality of the measure, the more inclusive wordings of the measure in terms of life rather than family contributed in enlarging the scope of measurement. Earlier research that largely measured family restricted the scope of individuals who were married or had children (Voydanoff, 2005). A more inclusive measure like this is likely to be more relevant to all employees irrespective of their family status. Furthermore, the few multi-dimensional and bi-directional work-life balance measures developed were mainly restricted to the western societies (Grywacz & Marks, 2000). The present study was carried out in the cultural context of Indian.

Another important objective of this study was to explore the work and life antecedent that significantly impact work-life balance of Indian professionals.
5.1. Work Antecedents

Work antecedents like Work Schedule, Work Load and Role Stress were found to have positive association with work-life interference and a negative association with work-life enhancement. The antecedent of Work Schedule examined how professionals viewed long working hours and the time strain experienced by them. The findings are in confirmation with the results of earlier research that long working hours left little time for other life activities and hence, it increased work-life interference and reduced work-life enhancement (Macky & Boxall, 2008; Aryee, 1992; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The antecedent of Work Load measured the perception about work overload and multiple task responsibilities. Allan et al. (2007) established that work overload escalated energy drain and was a significant source of work-family conflict. The antecedent of Role Stress that measured role conflict and ambiguity was found to increase interference and reduce enhancement. Role stress experienced at work leaves an individual with little energy and disposition to accomplish life roles resulting in work domain interfering with the life domain (Michel et al., 2011; Frone et al., 1992).

Contrary to these work antecedents, results showed that Reward System and Superior’s Support reduced work-life interference and increased work-life enhancement. The component of rewards was examined in terms of satisfaction with the material and non-material rewards received. The positive association between rewards and enhancement can be attributed to the fact that material resources procured from rewards facilitated in fulfilling life functions and reduced work-life conflict (Voydanoff, 2001).

Social Support includes both superior and colleague’s support received at work place. In the present study superior and colleague’s support is studied independently. Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1999) established that social support increased work-life enhancement and reduced work-life interference. The findings in the present study support this claim only partially. While both superior and colleague’s support increased work-life enhancement, work-life interference was reduced by superior’s support only. The positive affiliation between social support and enhancement is in line with earlier
studies that established that social support enhanced an individual’s self-worth and helped in coping with mental and emotional exhaustion (Janssen & Nijhuis, 2004; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999). Lack of association between colleague’s support and interference and strong association between superior’s support and interference seems to suggest that in a paternalistic culture like India, employees rely more on superiors than colleagues to resolve issues of work-life interference. It is established by Aycan (2006) that in a paternalistic culture superior provides guidance and advice even in personal non-work matters and often acts as intermediary in resolving personal life issues and hence, was found to be a greater source of support for an employee.

Commuting was also found to correlate with work-life interference but had no significant effect on enhancement. Commuting measured through time and energy strain experienced in travelling from work to home and back augmented work-life interference. In developing countries rapid urbanisation has increased commuting distances and traffic congestion resulting in increase in travelling time (Hein, 2005). Moreover, lack of a well-developed public transport system in India seems to add to commuting woes and increased work-life interference.

The antecedent of Development measured job advancement and skill enrichment opportunities at work. Previous research studies have recognised a positive affiliation of development with work-life enhancement and negative affiliation with work-life interference (Voydanoff, 2004; Parasuraman et al., 1996). In line with this, the present study has found that development has positive linkage with work-life enhancement. Skills and job advancement opportunities increase self-esteem, efficiency, augment reward and career prospects thereby enhancing work to life experiences. However, contrary to previous research, development was also found to have positive affiliation with interference. The possible reason for this can be attributed to cultural differences. While comparing Eastern and Western culture, Schein (1984) established that Eastern societies gave more importance to work and performance in comparison to Western societies. Indian society also values success and has high performance orientation. Job
advancement and the continuous pressure to stay on the top would add to time and energy drain there by amplifying work to life interference.

5.2. Life Antecedents

Household Responsibility has significant positive association with life-work interference and significant negative association with life-work enhancement. The results are contrary to the findings of a study conducted by Aryee (1992) wherein household tasks were not related to any form of interference. The contradictory findings may be because of the regions where the studies were carried out. The cited research was conducted in a developed country like Singapore while the present study was in the Indian context. In India, lack of availability of electrical appliances and power shortage are often cited as a source of stress in order to fulfill domestic chores resulting in life-work interference (Komaraju, 1997).

The results of Care Responsibility measured in terms of elder-care or child-care, increased life-work interference and reduced enhancement. Care responsibilities make additional demands on the time and energy of the care givers thereby interfering with work domain functioning. Increased instances of elder-care (Halpern, 2005) and child-care have amplified care responsibilities thereby increasing life-work interference (Kelly & Voydanoff, 1985). In a collective culture like India care responsibilities are further amplified. Here child-care responsibility is not restricted to certain age. The cultural norms demand a life-long emotional and financial commitment towards children at all stages of their life cycle. Similarly, care responsibility of elders when they are ill and in their old age is a life-long responsibility of the earning members of the family.

In an endeavor to fulfill household and care responsibilities, working Indians rely on paid domestic help and hence, the dimension of Domestic Help was found to have positive linkage with life-work enhancement. Outsourcing of mundane and time
consuming household tasks leaves an individual with time and energy to accomplish work demands. On similar lines, Families and Work Institute (1998) noted that substituting individual labour with domestic labour enhanced work-life balance. Paid domestic help is available and affordable in India on account of large working population and wide income disparity. Lately the dependence on domestic help seems to have become less dependable. On account of rising rural prosperity, increased literacy level and social stigma attached to this form of employment, domestic help support has become erratic and expensive creating extra strain (Sekaran, 1992). The present study however does not find any support for this argument and domestic help continues to be major source of support for employed urban individuals.

Apart from hired help support, working Indians seek support of extended family to balance their work-life responsibilities. Previous findings suggest that in collectivist cultures, extended family support would enrich life-work enhancement of working men and women (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1994). Contrary to expectations, extended family support was found have no significant impact on enhancement however, it was found to increase life-work interference. The reason for this may be that in the existing scenario, on account of rapid urbanisation and relocation for employment, extended family support was not easily available or was available at varied intervals. In case when support was available, sustaining harmonious relations with extended family especially live-in elders, on a regular basis would make demands on time and energy. In addition to this, though extended family support is usually available free of cost there is reciprocal expectation in the relationship which makes the available support less attractive. The reciprocal expectations are that support will be given to extended family members in their old age or when they are unwell or in their hour of need (Kagitcibasi, 1996).

Another constituent of social support system was the support received from partner/parent. In the present study, a high level of partner/parent support was found to be positively related to life-work enhancement and negatively related to life-work interference. Supportive partners/parents lend their time, listen, encourage and give
advice about issues related to work. According to O’Neil and Greenberger (1994), this helps individuals to overcome work stress and positively enhance life to work domain. The dimension of leisure activities measured through involvement in social interaction, hobbies and entertainment was found to have positive alliance with life-work enhancement and negative alliance with life-work interference. Leisure activities help individuals relax and unwind from work demands thereby compensating the work domain and enhancing the life domain. The positive association is not restricted to any one dimension but was demonstrated in multiple dimensions of leisure. Stubbe et al., (2007) found that individuals involved in physical exercise were found to be more contented and happy. Similarly, social interaction also created a collective feeling of support (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993).

5.3. Gender Differences

Viewing work-life balance through the gender lens has given significant results in this study. The gender differences are discussed in terms of differences in the measure of work-life balance and differences seen in identified work and life antecedents.

5.3.1. Gender Differences in Work-life Balance

Analysis of the emergent four-factor structure for the purpose of exploring gender differences conceded that men and women significantly differed on all four factors. In line with earlier research, women were found to experience more interference in reconciling work and life domains than men (Duxbury et al., 1994; Gutek et al., 1991). In the present study compared to men, professional women experienced stronger work to life as well as life to work interference. Apparently gendered roles seem to be the primary reason for this experience. Traditionally, social norms and values expect men to focus on their career and women to focus on caring for their family. Though over a period of time noteworthy changes have taken place in family structures and gender
roles, the traditional role expectation of man as the breadwinner and woman as carer has remained intact (Ransome, 2007). Consequently, women who assume dual burden of paid work along with major responsibilities of the household, experienced more conflict in comparison to men (Daly & Lewis, 2000).

Gendered differences found in this study are also supported by previous empirical research carried out in the Indian context. In a survey based on dual-career couples, Narayan and Bhardwaj (2005) established that though noticeable changes were seen in the attitude of the Indian husbands towards domestic responsibilities, it had not translated into actual participation. Similarly, Wesley et al. (2009) found that women have not foregone their familial role and undertake major domestic responsibility along with their work. The twin burden carried by Indian women has thus, led to experience of more interference than men.

On the dimension of enhancement too gender differences were evident. It was observed that professional women experienced stronger life-work enhancement while men experienced stronger of work to life enhancement. Grzywacz et al., (2002) had similar findings in his study on sample of American employees. Probable reasons for this difference between men and women seem to be on account of traditional role expectations. Men identify more with work role than life role. Work provides men with material and non-material rewards which results in enhancing the life domain. On the other hand, women identify more with their familial role and hence, resources gained in the family domain are used to enhance work domain (Ruderman et al., 2002). The findings have thus proved that though Indian women experience strong interference between the domains they also simultaneously experience strong life to work enhancement. The skills and abilities gained in life domain enhance their efficiency and experiences in the work domain.
5.3.2. Gender Differences in Work Antecedents

Considerable gender differences were also observed in the experiences of the work and life antecedents. Work-specific factors like development, reward system, superior and colleagues’ support were found to be more important for men than women. While women were strongly affected by workload, work schedule, role stress and commuting. In a patriarchal social system like India, men are viewed as the chief providers and hence, they identify more with their role of provider. It is therefore, likely that development and reward factors are found to be more important by men than women. In contrast to men, the income of women is considered secondary and hence women professionals were found to give less importance to rewards. Furthermore, previous studies have already proved that to fulfill life-responsibilities women do not aspire for career growth and follow a linear career graph. The same is true for Indian women. Budhwar et al. (2000) have found that Indian women deliberately enact barriers in career advancement, as advancement would entail increased work demand in terms of time and work overload which would not let them fulfill their commitment towards life responsibilities.

Related to this, social support at work place was found to be more important for men than women. Etzion (1984) has established that social support at work reduced work-life interference for men. Since, women identified more with their familial role it was found that they sought social support from the life domain rather than work domain. Viewing this from the Indian perspective, Indian organisations have work culture that adheres to male domination. Gupta et al., (1998) have established that the informal social support networks are also dominated by men and women are excluded from them. As work place social support is not easily available for Indian women; Buddhapriya (2009) found that they seek strong organisational support in form of work-life balance policies and programs.

In the present competitive world, though amplified workload and working hours are experienced by both men and women, in this study women were found to experience
more workload and work schedule issues in comparison to men. This finding is consistent with, Gutek et al. (1991) who had established that work schedule increased work-life conflict more for women than for men. The cause of this finding seems to stem from the logic that though women take up the role of employment nonetheless psychologically they are unable to let go of their domestic role instilled in them resulting in experience of role overload (Terborg, 1984).

In the context of role stress, previous research has shown that men experienced more pressure in ambiguous, ill-defined roles in comparison to women (Greenhaus et al., 1989). Contrary to this, the present study has found that women experience more role stress than men. The reason for this could be that earlier women were more adaptable but now with increased education and level of awareness women are no less demanding. They want role clarity and well-defined structure within which they are required to work. According to Terborg (1984), certain non-conventional professions require behaviour that is open to scrutiny, therefore women involved in these professions desire more role clarity when compared to men.

In the factor of commuting, women experienced more interference than men. It is generally seen that private transport is less accessible to women than men. Dependence on public transport creates time and energy strain for women which may not be there for men. In addition to this, using crowded public transport is found to be physically and socially unsafe for women (Peters, 1998). In India due to population explosion most forms of public transport are found to be crowded especially in large urban cities resulting in stress for the commuters.

5.3.3. Gender Differences in Life Antecedents

Strong gender differences are also seen in life domain antecedents. The life antecedent of household task and care responsibly were found to be more significant for women than men. It is found that over a period of time the load of household responsibilities for
men has increased and the amount of time spent on caring responsibility has also
increased (Galinsky et al., 2009). In spite of this it is still found to be less compared to
that of women. Previous research has established that women are still primary carers
and take up majority of the domestic responsibilities regardless of having full-time
equally demanding jobs (Metz, 2005). Ramu (1989) has found that men in the Indian
households have increased their participation in household tasks yet overall household
and care responsibility was that of the women.

Since women have the primary responsibility of household task they are found to derive
more support from domestic help than men. As discussed before when women are
unable to maintain the balance between the domains they make career tradeoffs by
taking up part-time work or withdrawing from the employment markets. Similarly, in
the life domain they thrive for balance by reducing or outsourcing of household tasks
(Oropesa, 1993). The decision about outsourcing is largely taken by women and hence
the results indicate that the factor of domestic help was more important for them than
men.

Previous research on partner/parent support has established that partner’s support is
more important for men than women (O’Neil & Greenberger, 1994). However, in the
context of cultural differences, this does not hold true. According to Rosenbaum and
Cohen (1999), in cultures with low gender equity, partner’s support is more important
for women than men. In India gender equity is found to be low and hence, the results of
this study expected women to seek this form of support more than men. Contrary to this
expectation the results proved that partner/parent’s support was more important for men
than women. The reason for this can be attributed to the socialisation process in India
wherein, since early age, women are taught to be submissive and support the men in the
household rather than seek support for themselves. According to Jost and Banaji’s
(1994), in cultures that have gendered role division, women were found to support
traditional gendered role and blamed themselves if they were unable to perform gender
prescribed roles. As a result of this, women in such cultures do not consciously seek
support from their partners or parents as men do.
The study has given evidence that work-life balance is a bi-directional and four-factor measure. Some of the work and life antecedents identified are unique in the Indian context. The antecedent of domestic help, partner’s support and the changing nature of extended family support are culture specific. Similarly, the work antecedent of superior support, development and importance of rewards are also found to be vital in Indian context. The relationship between work-life balance and work-life antecedents were unique to some extent in the Indian context and universal to some extent in world context. The work-life balance experiences of Indian professionals are similar to other professionals world-wide but at the same time are culture bound. Attempt at studying gender differences in work-life interface has also given significant results in the way work-life balance is perceived by men and women. In terms of antecedents also noteworthy gender differences were observed in almost all factors that have emerged barring extended family and leisure activities.