7. CONCLUSION

This chapter sought to extend the Western model of the work-family interface by theoretically examining contextual influences on the dynamics of the work-family interface in Indian Financial Sector. It was argued that the processes through which stressors in the work and family domains culminate in work-family and family-work conflict and their resulting outcomes in terms of individual and organizational well-being may generalize across cultural contexts. However, differences in socio cultural and economic contexts suggest that sources of stress in the work and family domains may differ not only across socio cultural contexts but also across levels of economic development. For example, pertaining to the level of economic development, it was noted that changes in the financial sector has new challenges which results in frequent interruptions, increase time devoted to performing house hold cares and demands at work. Further and because of the stress model that informs research on the dynamics of the work-family interface, social support is considered a critical resource in mitigating the experience of and the negative consequences of work-family and family-work conflict. It was argued that although the role of social support in the dynamics of the work-family interface may generalize across sociocultural contexts, the sources of support may differ across contexts.

As Watanabe et al. (1997) observed, gender inequality constitutes a universal feature of the work-family interface. As elsewhere, employed mothers in urban sub-Saharan Africa are primarily responsible for household and child-care responsibilities and therefore, "suffer from the double day that afflicts most working women in the West" (Parpart, 1990, 173-174). In a study of urban Yoruba mothers, Di Domenico, de Cola, and Leishman (1987) reported women’s suggestions for change and improvement centered on child-care arrangements and flexibility. Specifically, they indicated shorter working hours, part-time jobs, some form of financial assistance for improved care, and provision of nursery schools. The findings of Di Domenico et al.’s (1987) study suggest an organizational and even societal role in assisting employed parents to combine their work and family roles. The rationale for the adoption of such policies has been based on
the negative implications of work and family imbalance for work attitudes and behaviors such as low levels of commitment, lateness, absenteeism, turnover, and low productivity (Glass & Finley, 2002; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Given the expense involved in implementing employer-supported child care, organizations should experiment with formal family-responsive policies such as parental leave (e.g., leave for emergency child care, illness) and flexible work arrangements (e.g., flextime) in addition to informal policies such as supervisor support. In a study of employed parents in Ghana, Aryee, Tan, & Debrah (2004) reported that informal policies such as supervisory support and work schedule flexibility influenced the work outcomes of job satisfaction and psychological withdrawal behavior through perceived organizational support. In effect, the increasingly tenuous nature of the family-based social support system suggests an organizational role in assisting employed parents in urban sub-Saharan Africa integrate their work and family responsibilities.

Social support may be obtained from work and family domains. However, the conspicuous absence of formal workplace social support suggests that in India, social support is obtained primarily from the family domain. In spite of the relative weakening of the extended family system, elderly parents and female relatives constitute a social support system. As previously noted, the relationship between adult children and their elderly parents is a symbiotic arrangement that on one hand is a source of stress and on the other, a source of social support. Given the pace of urbanization and modernization, it remains to be seen how long employed parents in India can continue to depend on female relatives as a support system. Oppong (1997) pointed to a possible future scenario when she noted that “Increasing social and spatial mobility is having insidious effects upon kin solidarity, which in a former era ensured survival in time of crisis and disaster.”

This study produced observed verification from the model of work life balance by theoretically explaining relationship constructs of work-family interface in financial
sector. Studying process unfolds the logic after every analysis is challenging because it is easy to make errors in logic. Researcher’s draws conclusion about individuals based on data gathered from people working in financial sector.

The model tries to clarify the relationship of work to family obstruction and family to work impedance with work life clashes for a person in the association. However two things turn out to be clear in the wake of checking on the writing on work life equalization hones. One, that there is some relationship between work area variables and family space variables on WFI and FWI. Additionally, the impact of directing variables can likewise be found in the structure. Two, paying little mind to consequences for work life strife, work life equalization practices are regularly connected with enhanced hierarchical results and individual results. The model relates to the idea of work life struggle and results both at individual level and hierarchical level.

However, differences in social cultural and economic contexts suggest that wellsprings of anxiety in the work and family areas may contrast not just across socio cultural contexts but also across levels of economic development. For example, pertaining to the level of economic development, it was noted that gender disparity, more female employment, changing demographics of work place, dual earner couples, increase the time devoted to performing household chores and the demands on energetic resources. Further and on account of the anxiety display that Informs research on the flow of the work-family Interface, social support is considered a critical resource in mitigating the experience of and the negative consequences of work to family and family to work conflict.

The differentiation of W- F versus F- W interface provided an opportunity to examine how relative role commitments, role overload, demands from both family and work demands as embodied in cultural norms, may influence the conflict origin and consequences. The positive relationship found between employee collectivism and work interference with family (W-+F) challenged some traditional assumptions that
Collectivism leads to role integration, which in turn reduces role conflict. Research suggests instead that, in China, collectivists are exposed to more intrusion of work into the home/family life domain. The reverse relationship (F-W) and W-F however may not obtain. In a sense, this is not surprising; individual as a value system entails some personal sacrifice for the benefit of the group. Collectivism expects an individual not only to be more aware of group needs but also to be more willing to subjugate personal life to group interests. Home/family is part of a person's private life or a smaller collective, whereas a workplace or an organization to which an individual belongs is a larger public collective. In regard to the work-family interface, one's identification with a larger collective, such as a work group or an organization, may require one to sacrifice.

The difference found in levels of W-F interference among respondents can be attributed partially to the relative role priorities set by different moderating variables as support from organizations, WLB practices in the company and gender are partially to their differ ing value congruence between work and family. Individualism, by definition, emphasizes privacy and personal responsibility for one's immediate family. The cultural norms of individualism in India illustrate legitimacy and primacy of family over other collectives; a good family person should not allow work to interfere with family. Collectivism, in contrast, emphasizes group interests over personal interests, and privacy is reduced because of heightened interdependence among group members. The cardinal value of reciprocity entails that assuming extra work responsibilities and assignments is for the long-term benefit of the family even if that may disrupt family life temporarily. These speculations of course call for further empirical testing.

Conflict between work and family also has been a very popular topic in the corporate world. Employers design ‘family-friendly’ programs and policies with the goal of reducing the degree to which conflicts emanating from the family can negatively impact work (Lambert, 1993), even though research evidence to date suggests that work-to-family conflict should be of far greater concern (at least in the short term). The underlying presumption is that workers who experience less conflict will be more productive. Unfortunately, there is very little evidence, experimental or otherwise, testing this claim with anything other than self-reports well-established and well-accepted. In the not
generally considered to provide a "true" picture of organizational characteristics, the practice of asking an HR representative to characterize the organization is both well-established and well-accepted. In the future, better use could probably be made of organizations' internal administrative data. Multi-level methods of data collection and analysis also offer hope for achieving greater precision in understanding the relationships between organizational- and individual-level phenomena.

Regression analysis showed that work demand had a much stronger main effect on W-F conflict than did family demand, whereas family demand had a much stronger main effect on F-W conflict than did work demand across various financial institutions. These results provide empirical evidence of conflict for people working in Indian Private Financial sector context. However, there still are questions to be explained and global work family conflict still merits research attention.

The distinction between two direction-specific measures of work-family conflict (W-F vs. F-W) in this study made it possible to compare antecedents and outcomes from two domain perspective i.e. work and family domains respectively. Overall, both Work to family and Family to work conflict measures revealed much stronger and broader relationships with personal and organizational outcomes in the Indian Private financial sector.

Work-life balance is based on the assumption of the separation of work and private life, and that ‘balance’ is achieved when there is equal division between the two. The distinction of work and life is a recent construction and different from the integrated work and life common until the beginning of the 20th century, where families all worked together. The distinction came with the industrial age and development of factories where workers needed to be in a physical place for certain times.

But today we are on the verge of radical changes where traditional corporate world is breaking down and giving way to new types of organizations – like Facebook and Mozilla – organized in radically different ways. These organizations have flat structures and open communication to promote creativity and innovation. They focus on
interdependence, building networks, and encouraging relations between workers, customers, and vendors. And as a result, they are breaking down barriers and once again integrating work and life. This is driven forward by technology: people are able to work when at home, outdoors or indoors, or in a different part of the world. They are not bound to a specific work schedule but can work whenever they choose to.

The need for agility (the global nature of work) and technology advances are shaping the future of work and the way we work. More than ever we can be flexible with our working hours, logging on from home, completing work remotely. Interesting new research suggests that the term work-life “integration” rather than the word “balance” may better describe this new flexibility in working patterns. The business case for work-life balance practices relies on their ability to enhance recruitment and retention, and reduce work life conflict among employees. It makes intuitive sense that offering work-life balance practices would attract individuals to an organization, and that using these practices would result in improved employee attitudes and behaviors within the organization.

Barnett and Hyde (2001) argue, however, that the demographic landscape from which notions of specialization and separateness emerged has largely disappeared. Many businesses now seek to limit specialization, instead emphasizing "cross-functional teams" and "cross-training." Working for pay today is much less likely to involve a fixed place and a fixed schedule than it once was. Technology has made it easier for workers to do work anytime and anywhere. Globalization has stretched the boundaries of work, with competition around the world requiring more and more workplaces to run 24 hours per day. White collar workers must be ready to meet promptly the demands of clients in time zones all over the world.
Presumably, more organizations would be interested in offering work-life practices were they aware that benefits may accrue to them regardless of whether or not their employees made use of the practices. This is of particular relevance to contexts not characterized by heavy regulation. Getting the business case 'right' is particularly important in nations where public policy is not a key driver for organizational work-life balance practices. For instance, UK employment legislation decrees that employees with care giving responsibilities for young or disabled children, or for elderly dependents, have the right to request a flexible work schedule, and that their employers have a duty to consider that request seriously (DTI, 2007). Across the rest of Europe and in Japan, public policy encourages flexible work hours, paid parental leave, and shorter weekly working hours in an effort to increase women's participation in the labour force (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2006). In comparison, countries such as the USA, Australia, and Canada rely to a greater extent on the initiative of individual firms to implement work-life practices. In these instances, the business case is the primary incentive for most organizations to do so.

There is an argument to be made that restating the business case and disseminating more widely the alternative routes by which work-life practices influence organizational performance may have the unwelcome effect of directing organizations' attention to the fact that work-life practices may deliver cost savings and improved reputation, both internally and externally, regardless of employee use or net effect on work-life balance. This could potentially serve to dampen organizations' interest in addressing issues of eligibility for work-life practices and the work-life culture surrounding the use of those practices, actions essential to support their employees' work-life balance. Without necessary changes being made, users of work-life practices will continue to be predominantly women, men will continue to anticipate negative repercussions arising from practice use, and career-oriented individuals of both sexes will continue to think twice before availing themselves of the practices on offer. This would be a considerable step backwards for all concerned, and lessen the benefits to organizations derived from improved employee perceptions of current or anticipated organizational support.
However, it can be argued just as strongly that the paucity of research evaluating the business case for work-life practices jeopardizes the effective implementation and use of those practices. If it remains unknown whether or not employees’ use of work-life practices actually reduces their work-life conflict, then there are no means of ensuring that practices are designed and implemented in such a way as to derive the greatest possible benefits from them for both organizations and employees. Without drawing attention to some of the potentially negative aspects of work-life practices, there is no basis from which to work for greater effectiveness in practice implementation and greater responsiveness from organizations and their representatives.

However, two things become clear after reviewing the literature on work-life balance practices and organizational performance. One, such practices do not necessarily reduce levels of employee work-life conflict. Employee take-up may be low due to concerns that using work-life practices will result in reduced advancement opportunities or perceptions of the employee as being less committed to the organization. Employees who do make use of these practices may or may not find they experience less work-life conflict. The presence of supportive managers and organizational climates may be at least as if not more important in decreasing conflict (e.g., Behson, 2005; Premeaux et al., 2007). Two, regardless of effects on work-life conflict, work-life balance practices are often associated with improved organizational performance. Making practices available to employees appears to give organizations a competitive advantage in terms of recruitment, by enhancing perceptions of anticipated organizational support among job seekers (Casper & Buffardi, 2004), particularly those who might require that support due to care giving responsibilities (Frone & Yardley, 1996). The availability of practices may also increase positive job-related attitudes, work effort and contextual behaviors by enhancing social exchange processes; as symbols of organizational concern for employees, work-life practices promote employee interest in and obligation to the organization (Pfeffer, 1981). Providing work-life practices can allow organizations to
offer lower wages in exchange (Baughman et al., 2003), and attract investors by signaling the organization's legitimacy (Arthur, 2003).

Having employees who make use of available work-life practices may also incur cost savings for organizations via longer work hours and enhanced productivity. Employees may work longer hours because flexible arrangements increase their availability for work and reduce their commuting time, or because they are exchanging leisure time for flexibility (Golden, 2001; Meyer et al., 2001). They may choose to work during their peak hours in terms of personal productivity (Shepard et al., 1996), or work extra hours during the organization’s peak times in exchange for flexibility at other times (McDonald et al., 2005). They may also increase their work effort to avoid losing a job that offers them the flexibility they desire (Shepard et al., 1996).

Caveats to many of these conclusions exist. Until longitudinal research is conducted, we cannot discount the possibility that successful organizations are more likely to offer work-life practices, and that the practices themselves are not exerting a favorable effect on organizational performance. Equally, it may simply be that organizations offering work-life practices are more likely to engage in high quality management practices overall, generating positive effects on employee and performance outcomes. The present review has also identified a number of moderators of the link between practice provision and outcomes, meaning that organizations may only reap the benefits of work-life practices given particular characteristics of the employee, the organization, and the national context.

Still, in the absence of research conclusively demonstrating otherwise, if we assume even a minimal positive association between work-life practices and organizational performance, the implications of the findings outlined in this paper are not insignificant. Relying on the business case as traditionally stated to justify the implementation or promotion of work-life balance practices may limit their potential appeal. Much of the evidence for return on investment in work-life balance practices is derived from case studies, which are not necessarily representative and therefore cannot be generalized.
to all organizations. However, it is generally agreed that many work-life balance practices, such as flexible hours, tele work, and informational assistance with dependent care services, have low financial costs that are associated primarily with program administration and do not require an extensive initial outlay of resources.

The theoretical ancestry of conflict between work and family is rooted in the earliest days of social science, but its history as an explicit focus of scientific research is relatively short. Formal social science disciplines emerged a little over a hundred years ago, as the industrial revolution was separating economic work from the family home. The creation of assembly lines in factories institutionalized the idea that efficiency and smooth functioning would be achieved best by worker specialization—each worker performing a single task. World War II revitalized the economy following the Depression, largely through the manufacturing boom created by the need for bullets, guns, planes, and jeeps. Immediately following the war, thousands of women who had recently entered the labor force were persuaded through various means to return home, in part to make room for returning soldiers to reenter the labor force. As life returned to "normal," the birthrate boomed, the divorce rate dropped, and many families experienced a steady rise in real income (Doherty, Boss, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 1993).

Despite some inconsistency in the literature, particularly in research on adolescents, much previous research and results of the current study suggest that both sex and maternal employment have a meaningful influence on the work and family plans and expectations of young adults, with results of the current study indicating moderate to large effects. Consistent with previous findings indicating that young men are likely to express more traditional attitudes toward family and marriage than women (Helms-Erikson et al., 2000; Thornton, 1989), the current results indicated that young men rated marriage before childbearing and children being raised by married parents as
significantly more important than did young women. Furthermore, young men expected
to spend significantly fewer hours with their children each week and a greater
preference for a nonworking spouse than women, consistent with more traditional views
of family. Although they expect to work at a younger age than men and express less
traditional attitudes toward marriage, young women in the current study expressed
greater concern about work-family balance, rating job flexibility in terms of family issues
as more important than did men, and expressing an interest in working fewer hours per
day and spending more time with their children than men. These results are consistent
with previous research indicating that young women's future plans include both a focus
on career and motherhood (Murrell et al., 1991; Schroeder et al., 1992).

The current study also indicated several meaningful effects of maternal employment on
the work and family plans of young adults. First, consistent with previous research
indicating that offspring of working mothers tend to express egalitarian, liberal attitudes
toward marriage and parenting (Castellino et al., 1998; Trent & South, 1992; Tuck et al.,
1994), young men and women with working mothers expressed more liberal attitudes
toward family life than those whose mothers did not engage in paid work. Specifically,
children of working mothers expressed more positive attitudes toward having children
outside of marriage, raising children with only one parent, and having someone other
than a parent at home caring for children. Second, young adults with employed mothers
planned to have fewer children and to have them at an older age than young adults with
non employed mothers, suggesting that young adults who grew up with a working
mother realize that parents in larger families are likely to experience greater work-family
conflict, especially when parents have children at a younger age (Duxbury & Higgins,
2001).

Interestingly, the current results also indicated that although women with employed
mothers planned to spend less time per week with their spouse and children compared
to women with non employed mothers, men with employed mothers planned to spend
more time per week with their spouse and children compared to men with non employed
mothers, again suggesting that young men (as well as women) with working mothers
develop more nontraditional, egalitarian attitudes toward parenting than offspring with non employed mothers. Men with employed mothers also expressed more nontraditional, role-sharing attitudes concerning housework and child care, as well as greater acceptance of wives’ working and earning money, than men and women with non employed mothers. In contrast, men with non employed mothers, compared to all other groups, reported an older expected age at the time of first full-time job, perhaps suggesting that these young men are more comfortable relying on parents and less urgent in obtaining full-time work, as their mothers remain available to them for caretaking.

Research on maternal employment and its effects on young adult offspring will undoubtedly continue, given the growing number of mothers who are employed (particularly during children’s infancy and preschool years) and the increasingly common finding that maternal employment is associated with more nontraditional, liberal sex role and work-family attitudes. Future research may pay particular attention to several issues. First, although societal attitudes toward working women have changed considerably (Dambrot, Papp, & Whitmore, 1984), research suggests that there are several negative stereotypes commonly held about women who work, especially women who work when their children are very young. Employed mothers are frequently viewed as less dedicated to families, less sensitive to the needs of others, more selfish, and less affectionate than mothers who stayed at home with their children (Etaugh & Nekolny, 1990). The work performance of working mothers is also viewed more negatively, as children are often expected to adversely affect job performance (Etaugh & Poertner, 1989). Perhaps as general evaluations of working mothers become more positive, and as the sex-role ideologies of young men and women continue [Q converge (Moen, 1999; Oppenheimer, 1997), the family and work attitudes of young adult offspring of working mothers may also change.

The first study I was able to locate about role conflict was a 1949 Oscar Lewis article about interpersonal conflict between husbands and wives over the women's role, documented in Psychology with this bluntly worded abstract: "Al-though wives are
expected to be submissive and husbands authoritarian, in practice these roles have been altered. Women now eschew child-bearing, isolation in the home, and economic dependence. Men have been unable to curb these activities, so that suspiciousness of unfaithfulness often results in spying and wife-beating” (accession number 1950-02513-001). The earliest study I found of intrapersonal role conflict was published in 1955 by Elise Boulding, who described how participation in cooperative nursery school programs could help women relieve their internal emotional conflict about having jobs by sharing in the care of their children.

The pressure generated by strong economic growth has meant, however, that many workers are finding it increasingly stressful to reconcile the conflicting demands that exist inside and outside the workplace. Inside the workplace, the pressure to work longer hours, the need to cope with new work practices, and higher customer expectations, have placed increased stress on many workers. Outside the workplace, many people are finding it difficult: to provide care for children and other dependents; to commute to work because of rising traffic congestion and inadequate investment in the public transport infrastructure; and to find enough time to develop their personal lives. These dual pressures are increasingly creating a desire for workplace arrangements which help workers to achieve a more satisfactory "work-life balance".

Some employers have begun to pay more attention to policies to manage the work-life balance, particularly where they are experiencing problems with recruitment and retention. An important consequence of the substantial increases in employment and reductions in unemployment - as well as the structurally embedded nature of residual "core" long-term unemployment, the declining birth rate, and a levelling-off of the increase in labour force participation by women - is that the demand for workers is exceeding supply. The labour market has tightened considerably, and there is increased evidence of labour and skill shortages across many sectors of the Irish economy. As a result, some companies have been concerned with devising new methods to attract and retain workers. Thus, the pressures emanating from economic growth are acting as the driving force behind the introduction of "work-life balance" initiatives.

7.1 Work-Life Balance Initiatives
Work-life balance initiatives have been defined in a recent report from US Equality Agency as "the range of work arrangements, both formal and informal, that exceed the statutory minimum and which assist employees to combine employment with their caring responsibilities and personal life outside work". This definition is broader than the more common focus on the balance between work and family/caring responsibilities. This, according to the report, is because it potentially encompasses all employees who want to achieve a better balance between their work and outside interests, regardless of whether they have a family to look after or caring duties.

Work-life balance initiatives may encompass a whole range of initiatives, including:

- **special leave and career breaks.** Some employers may provide various forms of special leave and career breaks for workers. This may include educational leave, career breaks, maternity leave, parental leave and bereavement leave;

- **part-time working.** Part-time hours of work may be arranged to suit both the employer and employee;

- **Flexi-time.** This enables workers to adjust or personalise their working time;

- **Compressed working week.** The employee works the full number of hours on a reduced number of days a week - for instance, 38 hours over a four-day week;

- **Job sharing.** This enables two or more workers to share one full-time position;

- **Home working or Teleworking.** This enables workers to balance their work and home commitments and cuts out the difficulties associated with commuting;

- **Childcare support.** The provision of childcare centres is crucial for working parents;

- **Term-time working.** This is potentially very useful for parents who cannot find adequate childcare during school holidays; and

- **Annualized hours schemes.** Such schemes set out the average hours employees are expected to work at normal rates of pay over the period of a year. The number of hours per day, week etc may vary within stated upper and lower limits, so that working time
arrangements are responsive to peaks and troughs in demand. Annualised hours schemes often facilitate reductions in working time through lower overtime levels. They allow extra work to be accommodated in return for extra time off in lieu when demand contracts.

Many of these initiatives are recommended in the current national agreement, the program of prosperity and fairness (PPF). A "national framework for family-friendly policies" has been established under the PPF to "support and facilitate the development of family-friendly policies at the level of the enterprise". It is stressed in the PPF that "policies to support childcare and family life are a cornerstone of future social and economic progress." It is suggested that the challenge is to "find ways of developing approaches that reflect the reality of the workplace. Identifying different options that have the potential to meet the many diverse needs of different employers and their employees is especially problematic. In order to be effective, such options must meet the following objectives: enhance the opportunity to reconcile work and family life; and contribute to the effective and efficient operation of the enterprise."

Specific objectives contained in the PPF include: increasing childcare places in both the private and community sectors; increasing out-of-school-hours childcare services provided by community groups and school management; and further national fiscal and social policy measures to reconcile work and family life. This last objective involves the promotion of family-friendly policies at enterprise level, such as job sharing, parental leave, flexi-time, homeworking, and term-time working.

At this juncture, although there has undoubtedly been an increase in the adoption of many of these work-life balance initiatives, they are still relatively uncommon, being largely confined to the public sector and large private sector organizations. For instance, career break and job-sharing schemes are primarily found in public sector organisations such as the civil service, while annualized hours schemes are primarily found in large manufacturing organisations. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may not be able or willing to provide the same range of policies as larger organisations because of more limited resources. More often than not, few SMEs go beyond the minimum statutory requirements, although there are signs of increased activity in the SME sector
in response to the tightening labour market. The recent Equality Agency report referred to above includes the findings of a survey of work-life balance initiatives amongst 133 SMEs. The main conclusion of the survey is that 53% of respondents stated that they provided one or more family-friendly policies. The most common initiatives were emergency and special leave, part-time working, flexible hours and flexi-time. These initiatives were more common in medium-sized enterprises (50-249 workers) than in small enterprises (1-49 workers).

Employees working on field reported significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion (burnout) than did employees based in a regional or head office. This is important because burnout is associated with diminished organisational performance, absenteeism and turnover. A closer examination of some of the known correlates of burnout indicated that site-based employees experience conflict between their work and non-work-life, reporting significantly higher levels of negative spillover from work to non-work-life than employees who worked in the head or regional office. Site-based employees worked longer hours than those in the regional and head office and were significantly less satisfied with their pay. Qualitative comments provided by some respondents may explain this dissatisfaction. These comments revealed that site-based employees feel “out of touch” with the regional or head office and that their considerable efforts are not being recognised. This suggests that these employees feel a sense of isolation and unfairness. It is interesting to note that a sense of unfairness or a perceived lack of equity is a strong predictor of burnout in much previous research. Site-based employees may feel that the only way in which their value can be demonstrated by the organisation is through increased remuneration. However, increasing pay is unlikely to resolve some of the other work-life difficulties experienced by site-based employees. A more effective strategy might be to enhance communication between project-based employees and the head or regional office environment in which much corporate decision-making takes place. This should facilitate better recognition of the contribution of project-based employees and an acknowledgement of the demanding nature of their job. It is worth noting that, of respondents’ preferred work-life balance initiatives, many related to better recognition of the individuals’ contribution. The provision of support, by the organisation, to assist site-based employees in achieving
both their work and non-work expectations is also an issue of great importance and ways of providing appropriate support should be explored.

The results of the study suggest that gender is not a very important determinant of work-life experiences. However, the extent to which men’s and women’s experiences differ cannot be stated with any certainty due to the fact that women made up only a very small proportion of our sample. Furthermore, most of the women in the sample were secretarial or administrative employees and very few worked in site-based jobs. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that women either do not enter these jobs and/or leave them before then end of their career. This may suggest that there is a case for affirmative action to improve the gender balance in site-based jobs. It is a well-documented fact that, although female participation in paid employment has increased dramatically, women also still bear a larger share of dependant care and household responsibilities than their male partners. It is therefore possible that long and rigid work schedule typical of site-based construction jobs is a reason for women’s under-representation in site-based jobs. Job schedule flexibility and employer provided family care support may help to attract females into site-based jobs and enable them to perform these jobs while still fulfilling their non-work responsibilities.

Given the small number of women in our sample, the results do suggest that work-life issues are important to men as well as women. Often initiatives that are supportive of employees’ non-work lives are thought of as being of benefit to female employees only. However, our results suggest that men also experience a negative spillover from work to non-work-life and that their expectations of achieving a balance between the domains of work and non-work-life need to be met. The perceived negative spillover differed according to family characteristics and age. Younger, single men were concerned about the degree to which work interfered with leisure activities, such as playing regular team sport, while older men with children felt that work demands limited the time available to spend with their children. The indication is that, whatever their life stage, employees’ needs outside of work should be recognised. When work interferes to such a degree that employees’ perceived quality of their non-work-life is poor, this is likely to be manifested in employee burnout, which is known to have negative consequences for
both the individual and the organisation. Therefore, it is important that construction organisations recognise that work-life balance initiatives are not only valued by female employees but that, even in male-dominated environments, such initiatives are likely to benefit both individual employees and the organisation.

The regression analysis results indicate that work-life balance initiatives positively impact upon employees’ job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Employees who have demanding work schedules are less likely to have lower levels of job satisfaction or organisational commitment when they perceive that the organisation is supportive of their work-life balance and that this is manifest in the provision of work-life balance initiatives. In this respect, work-life balance initiatives can moderate the negative effects of the demanding construction industry environment. The predominantly male sample indicates that this effect is applicable to men, as much as it could be expected to occur among a predominantly female workforce. Construction industry organisations aiming to foster high levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment (both of which are consistently related to aspects of organisational effectiveness) may better achieve this through the implementation of work-life balance initiatives.

Finally, the results strongly suggest that the demographic profile of the workforce will determine employees’ work-life experiences and the kinds of initiatives they value. There were differences according to parental status and age. Thus, initiatives associated with caring for dependent pre-school children are considered to be a high priority for a significant minority of employees. It is highly likely that these are employees with children in the 0 to 5 age range. Other single, childless respondents valued greater schedule flexibility to enable them to regularly participate in sport or social activities. It is most important that work-life balance initiatives be tailored to the needs of employees. It is likely that, in a diverse workforce, constituent employee groups will have differing expectations and lifestyles, thus it is highly unlikely that a single “quick-fix” solution will be found. Rather, it is more likely that a flexible approach and multiple initiatives will be needed. It is very important that initiatives are not implemented without evaluation. This is particularly the case since employees without
family responsibilities should not feel disadvantaged in favour of those who benefit from organisations’ work-life balance initiatives. The effectiveness, in terms of individual and organisational outcomes of initiatives must be carefully evaluated so as not to waste valuable resources on ineffective or inefficient initiatives. Similarly, any negative unforeseen consequences must be identified and managed.

7.2 Managerial Implications

There is little dissent and much consensus in the research evidence reviewed in the present report. The volume and scheduling of hours of work impact on the well-being and work-life balance of workers and their families. Working long hours has a key negative effect, as does’ regular involvement in non-standard schedules. Autonomy and control offer some mitigating effects. The implications are that policy efforts to regulate and reduce long working hours remain aspertinent today as in earlier periods. The excessive requirement of non-standard working also needs to be addressed, for example by regulatory limits on nightwork and the improved design of shift rotas. Efforts are also needed to enhance the autonomy and control of workers over their working hours and to improve the quality of part-time work options. Finally, family leave policies, measures to promote a more equal sharing of unpaid care and household work between men and women, and the quality of the social infrastructure – child-care and eldercare services, transport systems – are also important in enhancing work-life balance. Social dialogue among the key actors – the state, employers’ associations, unions and community associations – is vital to develop an integrated set of measures that promote the ability of men and women to secure their desired work-life balance. It is also important to extend the indicators used to monitor this dimension of the Decent Work Agenda (Ankoret al., 2002) so as to capture work schedules and autonomy, as well as the volume of hours worked, which will require additional questions in surveys in many countries.

What is clear from the literature is that there is a consistent and increasing demand for change in the workplace through the adoption of work-life balance as a guiding policy.
As Drew et al. comment:
Flexible working arrangements are not a ‘women’s issue’, they are a ‘people issue’. All employees, irrespective of their family situation or personal responsibilities, need and want to have greater balance between their lives inside and outside work (2003: 28).

If work-life balance is promoted, and flexible working arrangements are already part of their working lives, an unplanned pregnancy may not be perceived as a crisis for their job or career plans. Changes in the workplace will be experienced as difficult or easy to achieve to varying degrees according to the type of enterprise. Some organisations have already successfully met this challenge, managing to adopt working practices that suit both the employer and the employee, which is the ideal outcome of work-life balance initiatives.

Resistance to change has also been experienced, although it must be noted that many employers are now requesting help in order to create change, as well as more information on how to achieve best practice as an employer and in business. There are clear business arguments for adopting work-life balance initiatives, including improved recruitment, increased retention of skilled staff, and increased employee morale, all of which will impact on performance and production.

Work-life balance is based on the assumption of the separation of work and private life, and that ‘balance’ is achieved when there is equal division between the two. The distinction of work and life is a recent construction and different from the integrated work and life common until the beginning of the 20th century, where families all worked together. The distinction came with the industrial age and development of factories where workers needed to be in a physical place for certain times. But today we are on the verge of radical changes where traditional corporate world is breaking down and giving way to new types of organizations – like Facebook and Mozilla – organized in radically different ways. These organizations have flat structures and open communication to promote creativity and innovation. They focus on interdependence,
building networks, and encouraging relations between workers, customers, and vendors. And as a result, they are breaking down barriers and once again integrating work and life. This is driven forward by technology: people are able to work when at home, outdoors or indoors, or in a different part of the world. They are not bound to a specific work schedule but can work whenever they choose to.