

What causes differences in experience of employees with formal Work-Life Balance arrangements in an organizational context: A qualitative study



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Abstract

The nature of work, careers and work lives has changed in the twenty-first century, which has consequences for the structure and shape of the life of employees. The diverse workforce faces the difficulty of finding a balance between work and life. Most research in this field focuses only on the experience and benefits for organizations with WLB arrangements (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to contribute to the literature about WLB in organizations by examining whether there are differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements and what causes differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements. Theory-oriented research is performed in a qualitative way. The results from this study show that formal WLB arrangements are not always perceived as supportive by all employees. The reasons for differences in the experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements are the way in which employees act in accordance with the expectations of their organization and the preferences of employees in life, influenced by life events and life domains. There seems to be a tension between the expectations of organizations and the possibility for employees to use the WLB arrangements for the right purpose. WLB arrangements in organizations are still in their infancy and the design of an organization and the preferences in lives of employees influence differences in experience of employees with formal Work-Life Balance arrangements.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research context

The nature of work, careers and work lives has changed in the twenty-first century, which has consequences for the structure and shape of our life (Barley, Bechky & Milliken, 2017). The effect of globalization is likely to be one of the most important forces of change in the world. Globalization leads to feminization and dual-career families in the work environment and increased part-time, temporary and flexible employment (Schnall et al. 2018). These combined create a diverse workforce in which individuals face the difficulty of finding a balance between work and life needs (Darcy et al., 2012). In current literature, the concept Work-Life Balance (WLB) is associated with these concerns and involves workplace issues that relate to the boundary between work and non-work domains (Carlson, Grzywacs, & Zivenuska, 2009).

WLB can be defined as “the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life priorities” (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p.326). This definition can be viewed from the perspective of two different parties. From an employee point of view, WLB helps to improve the quality of their life by reducing the conflict between work and life, and as a result, the employee will be more motivated, committed and satisfied with their work (Cegarra-Leiva, Sanchez-Vidal, & Cegarra-Navarro, 2012). This is certainly also important from an organizational point of view because it results in better performance of individuals as well as the organization. A perceived WLB of employees can increase the results of an organization in performance, productivity, and turnover (Cegarra-Leiva, Sanchez-Vidal, & Cegarra-Navarro, 2012). In this research, WLB is considered from the viewpoint of the employee.

In response to the increased relevance of WLB in recent years, organizations are pressured to implement Work-Life Balance arrangements (WLB arrangements) (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). WLB arrangements support WLB practices of employees and translate demands from employees into actions (Gregory & Milner, 2009). The definition of WLB arrangements of Felstead et al. (2002) is “practices that enhance the autonomy of workers in the process of coordinating and integrating work and non-work aspects of their lives” (p. 56). The availability of WLB arrangements should stimulate an experience of a supportive organizational context which, in turn, increases commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995).

WLB arrangements can be divided into formal arrangements and informal arrangements (Daverth, Hyde & Cassell, 2016). Formal arrangements are WLB arrangements in the structural dimension of an organization such as policies (e.g. the possibility to work from home) and programs (e.g. wellbeing programs). Informal WLB arrangements are often developed in the cultural dimension of an organization and include support of colleagues and managers (Daverth, Hyde & Cassell, 2016). This study only examines formal WLB arrangements because these formal WLB arrangements are available in many organizations but the experiences of employees with WLB arrangements remain unclear and under-researched (McDonald et al., 2005). The reason for that is the approach of WLB in literature that focus on the benefits of WLB arrangements for organizations (Fleetwood, 2007).

1.2 Framing of the problem

Many firms have recognized the critical importance of WLB and developed WLB arrangements to support employees in fulfilling their major life responsibilities (Lazar, Osoian & Ratiu, 2010). Organizations view formal WLB arrangements as key strategies that can motivate and retain employees (Allen, 2001). However, the traditional approach of WLB in literature view the experience with WLB arrangements specifically from the perspective of organizations (Beauregard & Henry, 2009): by implementing WLB arrangements, benefits for the organization would be more satisfied and well-functioning employees (Clark, 2000) and therefore the work performance would improve (Kodz, Harper & Dench, 2002). Accordingly, the employee point of view of WLB arrangements is under-researched (McDonald et al., 2005). Some researchers (Fleetwood, 2007; Gregory & Milner; 2009) mention that arrangements are referred to as employer friendly; or even as employee unfriendly because these practices are often established by employers. Moreover, Gregory and Milner (2009) argue that WLB arrangements only disguises new challenges in WLB but do support employees only indirectly or not at all. The WLB arrangement preferences or needs of employees are not addressed enough by organizations (Fleetwood, 2007).

Although many researchers explain how organizations can support WLB, it is not clear how these WLB arrangements translate into practice (Healy, 2004). Findings in current literature do not consistently show employees' attitudes towards WLB arrangements (Kelly, 2008). Formal WLB arrangements should be employer friendly as well as employee friendly (Fleetwood, 2007). WLB arrangements provide support for employees when they serve the needs of employees' preferences and the desire for greater autonomy in coordinating and

integrating WLB practices (Fleetwood, 2007). Preferences of employees are shaped by individual values and influenced by different life domains and life events in each individual's life (Bielenski, Bosch & Wagner, 2002; Crooker, Smith & Tabak, 2002). These individual values of employees influence decisions in life domains differently and are also expected to have an impact on their WLB and way of conflict resolution (Crooker, Smith & Tabak, 2002). Consequently, each employee may experience formal WLB arrangements differently to others because of individual preferences and values. However, formal WLB arrangements in organizations are often based on a "one size fits all" approach (Darcy et al., 2012). Organizations do not seem to consider the causes of differences in experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements. WLB arrangements tend to focus on particular needs which is likely to result in a mismatch between employee preferences and WLB arrangements (Darcy et al., 2012). WLB arrangements indicate a potential gap between the positive support, discussed in the literature, that WLB arrangements may have on employees, versus what is experienced in practice (McDonald et al., 2005). This illustrates a need, both in the research literature and in practice, to expand the knowledge about whether there are differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements and what causes differences in experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements.

1.3 Research aim & research question

As outlined above, balancing work and life is an enduring challenge in contemporary times (Pradhan, Jena, Kumari, 2016). Many researchers have found that organizational support matters for employees in finding their balance between work and life (Cegarra-Leiva, Sanchez-Vidal, & Cegarra-Navarro, 2012; Darcy et al., 2012; Pradhan, Jena, Kumari, 2016). Most research in this field focuses only on the experience and benefits for organizations with WLB arrangements (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Simultaneously, the formal WLB arrangements are probably more intended to serve the employer and not compatible with the needs of the current diverse workforce (De Cieri et al., 2005). How employees experience formal WLB arrangements remain unclear (McDonald et al., 2005). The experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements are probably different for each employee depending on varying factors in employees' lives that may affect the needs of the employees (Crooker, Smith & Tabak, 2002). Organizations need to consider what causes differences in experience of employees with WLB arrangements if they want to support employees in fulfilling their WLB needs. Therefore, the aim of this research is to contribute to the literature

about WLB in organizations by examining whether there are differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements and what causes differences in experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements. Following the aim of this study, the research question of this study is defined as “*What causes differences in experience of employees with formal Work-Life Balance arrangements?*”

1.4 Approach

To provide an answer to the research questions, theory-oriented research is performed in a qualitative way. The qualitative approach of the study was informed by different theories of WLB (e.g. Kofodimos, 1993; Clark, 2000; Greenhaus, Allen, and Foley, 2006). A case study is conducted where the data is gathered at A.S. Watson Health & Beauty Benelux (A.S. Watson). In a case study, a particular social phenomenon is explored based on in-depth research of one or more cases to give the researcher an understanding of the problem in a particular context (Bleijenbergh, 2016). This particular case offers an interesting organizational context because of its highly skilled workers and the well-developed organizational context of support. A.S. Watson is the market leader in the health & beauty sector in the Netherlands and Belgium. Research has shown that A.S. Watson offers excellent working conditions and continues to develop and optimize its personnel support (Top Employers, 2019). This research has a deductive approach. This means that existing theories about a social phenomenon are used as a starting point to study this social phenomenon in practice (Bleijenbergh, 2016). Likewise, the analysis is guided with an a priori template of codes based on the research question and the theoretical background of the concepts of this study (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

1.5 Relevance

Due to the changing nature of work, careers and work lives, there is a need to expand the knowledge about the experience of the workforce with WLB arrangements. First, the experience with WLB arrangements is rarely viewed from the perspective of an employee (McDonald et al., 2005). How employees experience WLB arrangements remains unclear and insufficiently researched (McDonald et al., 2005). Therefore, this study tries to provide more insights into these employee experiences in the current workforce by identifying the stories of employees about their experience with formal WLB arrangements. Second, different domains of life (e.g. family, community, profession, and employer) and life events are also considered

because WLB arrangements seem to focus on the family domain, but other life events and life domains also might influence the preferences of employees for specific support of WLB arrangements (Crooker, Smith & Tabak, 2002). In summary, it is unclear whether these WLB arrangements are experienced by employees as supportive or obstructing. This study tries to fill the gap in the literature by identifying differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements and what causes and what causes differences in experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements.

This study also has a practical relevance. To attract and retain employees in an organizational context, it is essential to support a high quality of WLB (Pradhan, Jena, Kumari, 2016). A supportive organizational context increases the job satisfaction of employees and because employees are seen as a resource for competitive advantage, this will influence the performance of the organization as well. In the past two decades, human resource management (HRM) in particular has focused on policies to better manage work and family responsibilities (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). The informal WLB arrangements, like managerial support, are often not structurally implemented and are dependent on the freedom of the manager (Daverth, Hyde & Cassell, 2016). In this research, only formal WLB arrangements are taken into account to find out how employees experience these WLB arrangements. The use of WLB arrangements that enable employees to balance work and life can have major benefits for both organizations and employees. The findings of this study will provide more knowledge of how employees experience WLB arrangements that can help organizations to better adapt WLB arrangements to employees' needs, which also contributes to better performance of the organization.

Society has responsibilities for living standards and care of individuals (McDowell, 2004). If an organization is capable to create a supportive context for employees' WLB, the wellbeing (at work) will increase, which would offer an advantage for society as a result. A good WLB for individuals can increase happiness, lower stress levels and health care costs, as well as improve health in general (Hobson, Delunas & Kesic, 2001). Therefore, the attention for WLB is increasing at societal level, both nationally and internationally (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006).

1.6 Outline of the research

The paper is structured as follows. Chapter 2 will present a theoretical overview of the

theoretical background of this research. Chapter 3, the method section, will outline how the research is conducted. In chapter 4, the results of this research will be shown and analyzed. The final chapter, chapter 5, contains the conclusion and discussion of this research. The conclusion synthesizes the main lessons of the study and an answer will be provided to the main research question of this research. In the discussion section, the limitations and the theoretical and practical contributions of this study will be discussed and recommendations for future research will be identified.

Chapter 2 Theoretical background

The aim of this research is to contribute to the literature about WLB in organizations by examining differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements and what causes differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements. Therefore, this chapter will present relevant background literature with regard to the research topic. First, the concept of WLB will be explained, including the influence of different life domains and life events. Second, this study will focus on formal WLB arrangements that could influence the balance between work and life. Third, theory with regard to the experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements will be described. Last, based on the presented literature, the expectations regarding the problem of this research will be explained.

2.1 Work-Life Balance

The literature does not give one clear definition of WLB because in the past the concept was often taken as self-evident (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). This causes confusion in the literature (Grzywacz & Carlson 2007). Kofodimos (1993) was one of the first authors who wrote about balance as “a satisfying, healthy, and productive life that includes work, play, and love; that integrates a range of life activities with attention to self and to personal and spiritual development; and that expresses a person's unique wishes, interests, and values. It contrasts with the imbalance of a life dominated by work, focused on satisfying external requirements at the expense of inner development, and in conflict with a person's true desires” (p.13). This definition is quite broad and focuses on the desires of an individual. Clark (2000) gives a simpler definition: “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict” (p. 751). The definition of Clark (2000) focuses on the importance of employees’ satisfaction with multiple roles. The most cited author in the field is Greenhaus (2003) who asserts that WLB indicates the allocation of time and psychological energy in a balanced way in work and non-work life while deriving much satisfaction from both work and non-work life. This includes the need for balance between work and life for both an individual and an organization, which makes this definition also very broad. In other studies, Greenhaus, Allen, and Foley (2006) make Greenhaus’s definition more specific by adding the influence on WLB of life role priorities of individuals at a given point of time.

When searching for a deeper understanding of the concept WLB in literature, it is noticeable that the origin of this concept is associated with work-family balance (Barnett,

1998; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). On top of that, many researchers use these concepts simultaneously and interchangeably (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Kofodimos (1993) states that work-family balance is thought to be in the best interest of an individual to live a balanced life. However, the balance between family and work is not the same as the balance between life and work. Kofodimos (1993) ignores other activities in the life domains which may also create constraints to achieve or maintain balance (Adkins & Premeaux, 2019). Life events and influences of life domains cause individuals to reassess work and life priorities (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). Due to the diverse nature of today's workforce, other life aspects have become relevant in WLB and should be considered by organizations when dealing with WLB.

In line with this perspective on WLB, the definition of WLB of Kalliath and Brough (2008) is used in this research: “*Work-Life Balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities*” (p. 326). This definition focuses on the individual perception of WLB, includes work and non-work activities and focuses on current life priorities. This is important because life priorities can change the preferences in the balance between work and life (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). So, life priorities show preferences of an individual about the time spent in work and non-work activities when **life events** (e.g. birth of a baby and informal care) occur and lead to developments within **life domains** (e.g. family, community, profession, and employer) (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Life events and life domains are relevant factors that influence the balance between work and life of employees.

2.1.1 Life events

Holmes and Rahe (1967) describe life events as “events requiring change in ongoing life adjustment” (p. 213). In the literature, life events are mostly related to social stressors (Rabkin & Struening, 1976). The most stressful experience in life would be someone in the family with a serious illness, accident or injury, conflict at home (including divorce), relationship problems (break-up) and lack of money for basics (like food) (Arpawong et al., 2016). Certain events provide a stressful experience while other events are easy to handle in life (Hobson et al., 1998). In contrast to the stressful experiences, life events can also be valued positively like marriage or the birth of a baby. These events represent a variety of life events that are not directly related to work (Hobson, Delunas & Kesic, 2001). However, coping with (stressful) life events involves high physical and psychological demands (Bakker & Derks, 2018). Events in an employee's life might play a more important role than job-related concerns in

life (Lambert et al., 2006). Therefore, the focus of this study is on life events only and not on events in work. Life events in private life are associated with job burnouts (Hakanen & Bakker, 2017) and the experience of life pressures could reduce the level of job involvement of an employee (Bhagat, 1983). Life events require a readjustment in life and influence the wellbeing of an individual and interference with different life domains (Bakker & Derks, 2018).

2.1.2 Life domains

Voydanoff (2014) describes life domains as the environment that affects people at different levels of interaction. In other words, the way in which people interact with each other creates patterns of interaction between individuals and groups (Voydanoff, 2014). Life domains can be clustered into four groups: family, profession, community, and employer (Crooker, Smith, Tabak, 2002). All four domains provide resources and demands for individuals that contribute to the level of balance between work and life.

First, the *family domain* is usually associated with parent/child relations and the social support of partners (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). Families can provide feedback and guidance, provide a safe place for rest and understanding, and may provide financial resources beyond an individual's own income (Crooker, Smith, Tabak, 2002). However, engagement in family activities like caregiving provides coordination challenges and requires time management. Breevaart and Bakker (2011) argue that parents are often more confronted with tiredness and lower personal resources like less energy. Second, the *profession domain* may include influences in career decisions and professional development opportunities. In this domain, members make decisions about their career development and discuss issues (Crooker, Smith, Tabak, 2002). Third, when reference is made to the *domain of community*, it may be about religious positions, hobbies, social network activities and leisure life (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). All these activities require time and involvement of an individual. The fourth domain mentioned by Crooker, Smith, and Tabak (2002) is the employer domain, which is a relevant work factor that influence the balance between work and life. The *employer domain* is related to job requirements that influences the job characteristics (e.g. job position, job activities) of an employee. Job requirements are working hours, availability and workload for example and influence one's personal time (Crooker, Smith, Tabak, 2002). An employee's perception that an organization cares about its employees and considers their job valuable influences their experience of the employer domain (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p.698).

In certain situations, the boundaries between the domains are weaker in promoting balance, while in other situations the boundaries are stronger (Lambert et al., 2006). For example, when there are higher levels of flexibility and autonomy in the job, domains are more blended. Control over the employer domain can lead to reduced conflicts in other domains (Lambert et al., 2006). On the other hand, where employees' jobs are not flexible and very different from other domains, employees prefer stronger boundaries. These boundaries ensure that work cannot hinder wellbeing (Clark, 2000). So, the experience and skills of an individual in one life domain could advance performance in other life domains (Bakker & Derks, 2018). Although each individual experiences a variety of forces in different life domains, these forces always increase complexity in life and increase the potential for conflict between domains. The conflict between work and life activities demands personal resources in one domain and obstructs performance in another domain (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

2.2 Benefits of WLB

The benefits for employees who experience WLB include personal resources, mentioned in Kofodimos' (1993) definition, like a person's unique wishes, interests, and values that contribute to personal development. The employees' perspective reflects the level of commitment and satisfaction of an employee with their work (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003). Employees benefit from feeling better at work and outside work and having more time to focus on their priorities in life. However, employees could experience imbalance in life and work when high demands from one domain reduce the focus on another domain. Stressful experiences in life, for example, require readjustment and could obstruct functioning in other domains (Bakker & Derks, 2018). Imbalance in work and life, thus, influences employee's personal life and performance at work (Byrne, 2005). On the other hand, a perceived WLB of employees also has benefits for organizations. Organizations benefit from having a more motivated and productive workforce resulting in reduced absenteeism, increased productivity and reduced costs (Byrne, 2005). This illustrates the high interest for employees and employers to contribute to employees' WLB. Employees with improved WLB contribute to better performance for the organization (Cegarra-Leiva, Sanchez-Vidal, & Cegarra-Navarro, 2012). Therefore, organizations developed WLB arrangements to influence the WLB of their employees.

2.3 Formal WLB arrangements

Structurally embedded written policies, programs, and services in the organizational context of support that give employees the ability to balance work and life activities are called formal WLB arrangements (Daverth, Hyde, and Cassel, 2016). WLB arrangements are described by Daverth, Hyde, and Cassel (2016) as “a way for workers to maintain a healthy balance between the demands of paid work and their personal life outside” (p.1710). Felstead et al. (2002) describe WLB arrangements as “practices that enhance the autonomy of workers in the process of coordinating and integrating work and non-work aspects of their lives” (p. 56). Accordingly, WLB arrangements should enable employees to balance work and non-work commitments (Allen, 2001). The WLB arrangements should result in more resources for employees, which can be used to reduce the experienced imbalance in WLB (Crooker, Smith, Tabak, 2002).

Formal WLB arrangements that are structurally implemented in the context of the organization take the form of programs (short-time interventions) or policies (long-term rules) (Hobson et al., 1998). The formal WLB arrangements vary between organizations. Beauregard and Henry (2009) identify three broad groups of formal WLB arrangements that are currently most often offered by organizations, namely (1) care assistance, (2) flexible work arrangements and (3) leave arrangements. First, care assistance helps employees to provide care to dependents while they are working. Examples of care assistance are subsidized child or elder care, on-site daycare, and referral to childcare (Frone, 2003). Care assistance reduces WLB conflicts, reduces absenteeism of workers and increases productivity. Care arrangements can help employees to separate work and non-work activities (Poelmans & Sahibzada, 2004). Second, flexible work arrangements have been indicated as significant for employees to manage work and non-work activities. Flexible work arrangements are described as “work options that permit flexibility in terms of “where” work is completed (often referred to as telecommuting or flexplace) and/or “when” work is completed” (often referred to as flextime or scheduling flexibility) (Allen et al., 2013, p. 345). These arrangements are used often in organizations and are mostly part of the WLB strategy in organizations to motivate, attract and retain employees (Allen et al., 2013). Flexible work arrangements help to integrate work and non-work activities (Poelmans & Sahibzada, 2004). Third, leave arrangements include maternity and paternity leave, career breaks and leave to care for a sick dependant (Frone, 2003). These arrangements vary between countries and differ from paid leave to the offer of statutory leave (Den Dulk et al., 2010). Leave

arrangements contribute to decreasing tension between work and family responsibilities. However, leave arrangements can disrupt the career development of employees because of the extended absence at work (Kocourková, 2002). Frone (2003) also identifies general programs as formal WLB arrangements. General programs are mostly short-time services and seminars related to the most overwhelming challenges in employees' lives (Frone, 2003). Programs provide support and assistance to employees in coping with life's most overwhelming challenges (Hobson, Delunas & Kesic, 2001). General programs can help employees in coping with vulnerable situations around major life issues.

2.4 Experience with WLB arrangements

The experience of imbalance between work and life is less likely if an employee can mobilize a range of resources (Bakker & Derks, 2018). Resources from the organization could be WLB arrangements that should create greater autonomy and flexibility for employees and help them to be more productive in different life domains (Lazar, Osoian & Ratiu, 2010). The current understanding of how employees experience WLB arrangements is mostly based on perceptions in literature and may not be linked to what employees experience in practice (McDonald et al., 2005). Little previous resource based on WLB arrangements evaluation has empirically addressed and may not be linked to what employees experience in practice. These perceptions in the literature therefore suggest conflicting reasons why these WLB arrangements are experienced as supportive or obstructing.

First, due to the changing times, the demands of employees seem to have changed (Schnall et al. 2018). WLB arrangements are experienced as supportive if they fulfill something preferred and meet certain needs (Fleetwood, 2007). Employers' understanding and recognition of WLB demands, coupled with effective formal WLB arrangements, help employees to successfully cope with WLB challenges (Hobson, Delunas & Kesic, 2001). It is significant that most formal WLB arrangements in organizations particularly include family-oriented policies (childcare and parental leave arrangements). These family-supportive arrangements help to plan responsibilities in the family domain (Mills, 2014). Other life events (e.g. serious illness and divorce) that interact with different life domains (e.g. community and profession) that could increase the need for different formal WLB arrangements are not yet clearly identified based on employee experiences. Therefore, employees who have a partner (both married and unmarried) and have children are able to use formal WLB arrangements more often than employees who do not have a partner and children

(Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999). Consequently, formal WLB arrangements are sometimes seen as insufficiently supportive to cope with all the work and life responsibilities of the current workforce.

Second, when employees fail to utilize formal WLB arrangements, organizations will miss out on the benefits of formal WLB arrangements that are presented in the literature (Nord et al., 2002). Employees are often unaware of formal WLB arrangements offered by the organization (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Therefore, even when formal WLB arrangements are available in an organization, not all employees make use of them (Smith & Gardner, 2007). So, the introduction of WLB arrangements in organizations seems just as important as the availability of these WLB arrangements in organizations. WLB arrangements can only be experienced as support if employees are aware of this. Besides, even when employees are aware of the arrangements available in the organization, many do not use them (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Employees seem to believe that using formal WLB arrangements like leave arrangements will be perceived as a lack of commitment to the organization (Liff & Cameron, 1997). However, this would not be possible if the WLB arrangements are correctly explained and implemented. WLB arrangements could be experienced as supportive for employees but only if the employees use the arrangement without negative feelings about career prospects (Kodz, Harper & Dench, 2002). Therefore, besides a major focus in HRM on the development of formal WLB arrangements (Cegarra-Leiva, Sanchez-Vidal, & Cegarra-Navarro, 2012) organizations should clarify that the employees are able to use the formal WLB arrangements without negative consequences. Employees who use fewer arrangements experience greater conflicts between work and non-work responsibilities and are less committed to the organization (Smith & Gardner, 2007). Therefore, a good implementation of WLB arrangements in organizations seems important for both employees and the organization.

Third, studies are even concerned about the obstructing impact of flexible WLB arrangements, like working from home (White et al., 2003; Gregory & Milner, 2009). Employees who work from home regularly seem to experience higher levels of WLB conflicts. Beauregard & Henry (2009) argue that conflicts may arise when 'working from home' is used to encourage longer work hours and reduce the employee's availability at home. However, this means that working from home is used at non-office hours which is not the purpose of this WLB arrangement. In fact, when WLB arrangements are used for the wrong purpose it is even logical that there could be an obstructing impact. On the other hand, Gregory and Milner (2009) argue that working from home is experienced as supportive

because it improves productivity of employees. The use of flexible WLB arrangements requires a variety of work patterns (Fleetwood, 2007). Therefore, even though formal WLB arrangements could support employees (Nord et al., 2002), the expectation is that employees do not always experience the advantages of these formal WLB arrangements. Once more, correct implementation and explanation of WLB arrangements by organizations seems important for employees to experience support.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter addresses how this case study is conducted. First, the research strategy will be discussed, in which arguments are described why this strategy is most suitable for this research. The next paragraph will give a description of the research case. After this, the design of the study will be presented including the way of data collection and data analysis. Finally, the quality of the research will be discussed, and the research ethics will be considered.

3.1 Research strategy

In this study, a qualitative research approach has been used to examine how employees experience formal WLB arrangements. Qualitative research data is suitable for this research because it gives more in-depth information than quantitative research. Participants provide a more detailed description in interviews in contrast to a quantitative research method like surveys. In addition, qualitative research is appropriate because it includes opinions and experiences (Bleijenbergh, 2016). By conducting multiple interviews, information about shared opinions and values of participants about a social phenomenon becomes clear (Bleijenbergh, 2016). This research studied opinions that are necessary to understand how employees experience formal WLB arrangements. Interviews are a useful method for this research because the words that participants use and the way experiences are formulated provide an insight into the perception of the respondents (Bleijenbergh, 2016).

This study has a single case study approach because it enables the researcher to analyze the subject in-depth (Boeije, 2005). Moreover, a case study seems to be the right research approach for the exploration of the social phenomenon ‘Work-Life Balance’. This approach examines participants’ opinions and interpretation of behaviors, objects or events (Bleijenbergh, 2016). In a case study, factors like the social environment of the participant are also involved. In this study, the data has been collected in the work environment of the employees to gain insights into the contextual influences on the employees’ ethical consciousness. The data collection was conducted in one organization, which make the research a single case study.

Furthermore, this study has a theory-driven nature which means that the research approach of this study is deductive (Bleijenbergh, 2016). In this study, different theories are used to get insights about WLB to study this social phenomenon more in-depth in practice.

The deductive approach tests whether assumptions described in the literature about WLB and formal WLB arrangements also occur in practice (Bleijenbergh, 2016).

3.2 Case description

The data for this research is gathered at A.S. Watson at the head office in Renswoude, The Netherlands. The organization is the retail division of the Chinese organization Hutchison Whampoa. This company has been the world's largest health and beauty retailer since 2009. In the Netherlands, they own 1,500 stores of Kruidvat, Trekpleister, Prijismepper, ICI Paris, and PourVous. Besides the stores, the organization consists of a large supply chain center and a head office. The organization is divided into different hierarchical management levels that encourage the centralization of authority. The organization employs more than 21,000 shop assistants and professional support staff. About 1,000 employees work at head office in Renswoude. Regardless of the varied functions and tasks of the employees, the business policy of A.S. Watson applies to all parts of the organization, as well as the formal WLB arrangements (A.S. Watson, n.d.).

The head office of A.S. Watson was selected as the case for this research. Most of the employees working at head office are high-skilled workers (A.S. Watson, n.d.). The organization demands passion from employees. A slogan of the organization is: "In the fast-changing retail world, we want to keep winning" (A.S. Watson, n.d.). This indicates a very demanding organizational context (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The organization aspires to create a safer working environment to achieve the organizational objectives (A.S. Watson, n.d.). WLB is a hot topic in their current organizational strategy. Therefore, they have implemented different formal WLB arrangements (e.g. leave arrangements and working from home opportunities), which should improve the WLB of their employees. How employees experience these formal WLB arrangements is researched in this study.

The researcher of this study previously worked for this company at another location, which made the organization easier to access. Furthermore, the organization presents an interesting organizational context for different reasons. First, the organization consists of many different employees in different positions, which makes it possible to select participants who used different formal WLB arrangements and have different life priorities. It is important to obtain a variety of experiences from different employees on different formal WLB arrangements. This helps to identify the more varied employee experience of the current workforce. Second, the head office of A.S. Watson employs only highly skilled employees

and these employees often have more difficulty combining work and life (Kinman & Jones, 2008). Third, A.S. Watson offers excellent working conditions, continues to develop and optimize its personnel support and offers many career opportunities (Top Employer, 2019). The implementation of the formal WLB arrangements at A.S. Watson would also contribute to these excellent working conditions. Because the formal WLB arrangements at A.S. Watson were implemented a while ago, it is possible to examine the experiences of employees with these arrangements. Therefore, the employees at A.S. Watson's head office seemed a suitable group for this research.

3.3 Data collection

This research uses the narrative interview technique of data collection. This technique is used because storytelling plays an important role in shaping a social phenomenon (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Bauer and Gaskell (2000) say "by telling, people recall what has happened, put the experience into a sequence, find possible explanations for it, and play with the chain of events that shapes individual and social life. Storytelling involves intentional states that alleviate, or at least make familiar, events and feelings that confront ordinary everyday life" (p.57). The narrative technique gave the researcher the opportunity to obtain information about personal experience and focus on relevant factors such as life events and life domains, which interfere with the WLB of employees. At the same time, the researcher was able to obtain information about which formal arrangements were used during their working life and how these influence the WLB experience of the employee. The narrative interview technique made it possible to get an overall picture of what events occur in the working life, how these events affect the experienced WLB of employees and, at the same time, how formal WLB arrangements were experienced by employees. The narrative interview technique is further explained in section 3.3.1 'Interview guide'. To ensure that all different formal WLB arrangements offered by the organization were discussed during the interviews, additional questions were formulated and asked after the main narration. For example, an important question that needs to be answered is "What does A.S. Watson offer to support your WLB?" This contributed to answering the research question. At the same time, the narrative method provides a structure that made the interview process clear (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). The interviews were recorded on audiotape for verbatim transcription afterward to show the most reliable representation of reality. A verbatim transcription is a word-for-word replication in text of the words on an audio recorder (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). The interviews took

place at the head office of A.S. Watson at the workplace of the participant or in an arranged meeting room.

3.3.1 Interview guide

The interview guide (Appendix 2) is based on the structure of the narrative interview technique that consists of four phases, namely (1) initiation, (2) main narration, (3) questioning phase, (4) concluding talk (Bauer, 1996). In the first phase of the interview, several introductory questions were asked about the employee's personal characteristics and position. Furthermore, the researcher asked for permission to record the interview on audiotape. After that, the topic of narration, WLB, was introduced and the way of interviewing was explained. To support the explanation about the interview technique, a visual timeline about the course of employee's working life at A.S. Watson was used (Appendix 3). This timeline represented the beginning until the present of employee's working life at A.S. Watson. In the second phase, the participant was asked to segment the timeline with important events they had experienced in life that influenced their WLB. Moreover, they could indicate whether the event had the most impact on the work or life domain. The participants were asked to look back on their working life and relate what happened, which events shaped their life, and how much impact it had on their WLB. In between the questions, the researcher asked additional questions about which formal WLB arrangements were offered and used during their working life. The interview focuses on the experience of the employee with these programs. The researcher also helped the participant formulate their answers (Bauer, 1996). For example, sometimes the answers were summarized to check whether the answers were understood correctly.

The topics from the operationalization of this study (Appendix 4) were taken into account to check whether all topics were discussed in the main narration. If this was not the case, additional questions were asked about these topics. As the narrative came to an end, the interviewer went to the third phase. In this phase, new and additional material was collected about the concepts of this study, in addition to the 'storytelling'. The participants were asked to focus on specific formal WLB arrangements that were not already discussed in the main narration and how they experienced these arrangements. The third phase ensured that some important formal WLB arrangements that could provide important information were not forgotten in the narration. A number of questions and a document with the formal WLB

arrangements of A.S. Watson was used as support in this third phase (Additional Appendix 4). Finally, in the fourth phase, the researcher asked for comments and concluded the interview.

3.3.2 Sample selection

The data (interviews) was gathered from ten employees from different teams at the head office of A.S. Watson. Table 1 presents an overview of the participants. In order to show many different perspectives of employees on formal WLB arrangements, employees were strategically selected. One prerequisite was to select employees who used the same formal WLB arrangements but experienced different life events that interacted in different life domains. The contact person at A.S. Watson was able to provide this information. Criteria like gender, age, and job position were also taken into account (table 1). These criteria helped to identify a greater variety of employee experiences with formal WLB arrangements.

Because of the narrative interview technique, it was important that the respondents had been employed by the organization for a number of years. The researcher asked the contact person of the organization to keep these criteria in mind when inviting employees. The non-probability sample was needed to get the right information about the concepts of this study (Patton, 2002). The participants were therefore partly chosen through the researcher's judgment (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The interviews had an average duration of sixty minutes per interview.

| Respondent (n=10) | Gender | Age | Job position | Years in service |
|----------------------|--------|-----|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Female | 54 | Personal assistant | 25 |
| 2 | Male | 51 | Head of warehouse replenishment | 14 |
| 3 | Male | 39 | Project manager development | 2 |
| 4 | Male | 31 | Manager store replenishment | 5 |
| 5 | Female | 33 | HR advisor | 4 |
| 6 | Female | 48 | HR manager | 20 |
| 7 | Female | 38 | HR business partner | 3,5 |
| 8 | Female | 36 | HR business partner supply chain | 9,5 |
| 9 | Male | 49 | Replenisher | 18 |

| | | | | |
|----|--------|----|----------------------------------|----|
| 10 | Female | 39 | Research and development manager | 10 |
|----|--------|----|----------------------------------|----|

Table 1 Respondent characteristics

3.3.3 Operationalization

In this study, the concept WLB needed to be operationalized. In this research, the following theoretical definition of WLB is used: “*Work-Life Balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life priorities*” (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p. 326). Based on the definition of Kalliath and Brough (2008), the redefined definition of WLB in this study is the perception of an employee at A.S. Watson that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with the current life priorities the employee. The concept WLB has been operationalized in three dimensions, namely ‘work’, ‘life’, and ‘balance’. According to Crooker, Smith, Tabak (2002), the employer domain is a relevant work indicator of the concept WLB that influences the job characteristics of employees. Life events and life domains are indicators for the life part of WLB. Life events are theoretically described as: “*events requiring change in ongoing life adjustment*” (Holmes & Rahe, 1967, p.213). Events in an employee’s life that require ongoing life adjustments are divided into positive life events and stressful life events (Bakker & Derks, 2018). Life domains are described in the literature as “*the environment that affects people at different levels of interaction*”. (Voydanoff, 2014). This study describes this indicator as areas in which employees live and interact with others, which creates patterns of interaction between individuals and groups. The domains that cover the life part of WLB according to Crooker, Smith, Tabak (2002) are the family domain, community domain, and profession domain. Compatible work and non-work activities and growth possibilities are, according to Kalliath and Brough (2008), indicators for the balance dimension of the concept WLB.

Second, the concept formal WLB arrangements had to be operationalized. The theoretical definition of formal WLB arrangements used in this study is: “*practices that enhance the autonomy of workers in the process of coordinating and integrating work and non-work aspects of their lives*” (Felstead et al., 2002, p.56). In the case of A.S. Watson, the definition of WLB arrangements is redefined as: formal WLB arrangements are arrangements offered by A.S. Watson that enhance the autonomy of employees in the process of coordinating and integrating work and non-work aspects of their lives. The dimensions of

WLB arrangements are WLB programs and WLB policies. The indicators are based on the examples that Beauregard and Henry (2009) identified as WLB arrangements.

Appendix 4 shows the operationalization of the concepts. This operationalization does not contain interview questions because these questions are based on the structure of the narrative interview technique. For that reason, only a primary understanding of the main concepts, dimensions, and indicators are required (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). However, it is still important that the concepts are operationalized because all concepts need to be discussed during the interview. For that reason, the operationalization includes the main concepts (WLB, formal WLB arrangements) of this study. The dimensions (theoretically) cover the aspect of the concepts and the indicators are characteristics that make the dimensions more concrete (Bleijenbergh, 2016). The indicators are also used as topics in the interview. To understand the story, not only the main concepts and dimensions but especially the relationships and meanings that give the story its structure are important (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). Therefore, the interview questions are not added to the operationalization of the concepts. The researcher needed to focus on formulating further questions at the appropriate time during the interview.

3.4 Data analysis

The data of this study was gathered during April and May 2019. After conducting the interviews, the data was transcribed. Afterward, the data were analyzed. The analysis technique of this study is template analysis. This approach has a clear structure but is flexible in terms of style and format and does not suggest a set of coding levels. Template analysis encourages the researcher to develop more inclusive themes which contribute to more rich data relating to the aim of this research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The researcher used an a priori template of codes, which was based on the research question and the existing literature on the concepts of this study (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This matches the deductive approach of this qualitative study. This initial template is presented in Appendix 5. The template analysis started in a descriptive way. The researcher formulated descriptive codes that were related to the codes of the initial template but were deduced from the empirical data. Because of the narrative interview technique, the researcher was not able to define all the codes in advance. Template analysis allows only a limited number of codes to be defined beforehand. The researcher found a number of additional themes. The descriptive codes are presented in a code list (Appendix 7). Every time a new code was formulated, the researcher

checked whether important information about the code was already given in the previous transcriptions. In that case, the new code was also added to that piece of text. After the descriptive phase, the initial template helped to organize the data. The combination of descriptive codes and initial template codes made a comparison between the empirical data and literature possible, which resulted in certain themes. The researcher redefined and removed particular a priori themes of the initial template during the analysis process (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Only codes that were part of this study and match the research aim were presented in the final template of this study (Appendix 6).

3.5 Quality criteria

During the research, the methodological quality of the research was taken into account. The four assessment criteria by Guba and Lincoln (1989) can be used to evaluate qualitative research. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The ‘credibility’ criterion is about the fit between reality and interpretation (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This study tried to achieve this criterion through member checking and peer debriefing. Member checking means testing the data with the research participants. In this research, the participants were able to check the transcriptions of their interviews and were allowed to give comments. The researcher and the participants discussed these comments and agreed on them together. Comments have been used as additional material. Furthermore, peer debriefing has been applied by discussing ongoing research practices with another researcher.

‘Transferability’ means that the data is also applicable in another (similar) context (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This research provides a detailed case description that describes the context of the organization where the data is gathered. This enables the reader of this study to assess whether the results of this study may also be applicable in another context (Symon & Cassell, 2013). Typically, the analysis of narrative interviews is less comparable because all employees have their own narration and experience. This makes the formulation of a conclusion more difficult and less generalizable (Gorman & Clayton, 2005). The eventual transferability will be discussed in the last chapter of this study.

‘Dependability’ refers to changes during the research process (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Changes in the research process were, for example, particular codes that were redefined during the data analysis. A diary that made decisions in the research explicit is used throughout the research process (Additional Appendix 2). The discussion chapter of this research describes which choices have been made by the researcher in this study.

Finally, the criterion ‘confirmability’ is a description of how the data is gathered and analyzed (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The data in this research is collected using the narrative interview technique. The findings of this study are based on the narrations of the participants. The interviews were transcribed and coded. The section ‘data analysis’ of this chapter already elaborates on the analysis technique of this research. The result section of this study used sentences to present parts of the transcribed data and how the researcher interpreted this. A challenge for the criterion ‘confirmability’ is that participants could give socially desirable answers (Boeije, 2005). The participants could answer in a more positive way to avoid talking about negative factors that influence their WLB. People often find it difficult to elaborate on emotional difficult times and therefore do not talk about these topics (e.g. Symon & Cassell, 2012). This makes the narration of the participant biased. The researcher tried to prevent this by clarifying that the interviews were processed anonymously (Boeije, 2005). Moreover, the researcher tried to elicit the same story in different ways in order to verify the details. In this way, the researcher tried to discover if the respondent did not hide any facts in their story that were important to understand the narration.

3.6 Research ethics

Scientific ethics are important in each step of the research process including data collection, data analysis and reporting of findings. The researcher considered several ethical issues that arise in doing research. During the selection of participants, the researcher asked the contact person of A.S. Watson to select and invite employees to participate in an interview. The researcher wrote the invitation together with the contact person of the organization to approach the employees in the right way. In this invitation, the researcher introduced herself and explained the aim of the research. The researcher tried to be as clear as possible in explaining the purpose of this research. Therefore, participants would know what to expect with regard to their participation in this research (Resnik, 1998). The employees were informed that they were able to cancel their participation at any time (Smith, 2003).

Before the interviews started, the participants were asked for permission to record their narration and they received information about anonymity. The anonymity of the respondents was ensured during the research, which is important according to Pimple (2002). It was ensured by giving the respondents a number and not mentioning their names. Furthermore, the researcher did not share the recorded audio material with a third party. In this way, participants’ voices could not be traced and linked to the transcriptions.

After gathering the information, the researcher asked for permission to use the interview data. Moreover, the transcriptions were sent to the respondents. Bell and Bryman (2007) argue that the employees must always be able to give permission for the content of the interview. During the research process, the participants and the contact person of the organization could contact the researcher for additional questions by email. When the participant did not agree with the collected data, the researcher carefully considered their notes. After the study was completed, the researcher gave a presentation about the process and the result of the study at A.S. Watson. This contributed to the justification of the research.

Chapter 4 Results

In this chapter of the study, the results will be presented. In section 4.1, the head office of A.S. Watson as the research case will be discussed to explain the context of this study. Section 4.2 explains how employees of A.S. Watson strive for a WLB. After this, section 4.3 is about relevant factors that determine employees' priorities in life. Last, in section 4.4, the formal WLB arrangements of A.S. Watson will be discussed and whether these WLB arrangements are experienced by employees as supportive or obstructing.

4.1 The head office of A.S. Watson as the research case

A.S. Watson consists of several business units with a variety of employees spread over different locations. At the headquarters of A.S. Watson employees perform different functions, but they are all support staff for the stores and the logistic center. Most employees work daily at office hours from nine in the morning until half-past five in the afternoon. Employees are free to schedule their day and their tasks vary between computer work and meetings. Some employees are often on the road for meetings that take place in the different stores of A.S. Watson but their function is based at head office. Nevertheless, these employees work at head office as much as possible. The presence of employees at head office is appreciated by the organization. Therefore, A.S. Watson is characterized by the employees as a traditional organization in terms of the usual working hours and desired availability at the office.

“At A.S. Watson, you still have to be present between nine in the morning and four in the afternoon. I also think that the policy that there should always be one employee at the department is rather old-fashioned. We all have mobile phones which means that I am reachable and I will arrange it even though I am not at the office.” (Respondent 4, note 487)

So, technically it is possible for employees to work at different locations and schedule their own tasks. However, in practice, it is common for everyone to work at the office every day. It is experienced as an exception when employees deviate from this.

“People are surprised when you are not at the office. Sometimes even a manager calls and says: “are you working at home?” In a tone that does not disguise his despair. It is not yet normal.” (Respondent 7, note 526)

At A.S. Watson, people are used to working at the office during office hours, which has created certain expectations of the organization. Employees act according to these

organizational expectations which seem to limit freedom around planning work and non-work-related matters. Another expectation of A.S. Watson that employees seem to experience is a high demand in terms of workload.

“A.S. Watson is quite demanding... It is true that there is no way back for anyone. There is just too much work.” (Respondent 6, note 412)

“And now a lot of extra work is added that requires putting in some extra hours and these are not available. A lot is expected from the employees. I think there is an imbalance in workload now.” (Respondent 9, note 646)

Some employees work more than is requested by the organization. The reason for this seems to be that certain expectations have been created within the organization. Employees seem to find it difficult to break these patterns and therefore they act accordingly. In this case, employees do not all experience an imbalance between work and private life, but they all experience the pressure of the highly demanding organizational context of A.S. Watson. The expectations of the organization make sure that people are aware of their WLB. The organization is aware of the consequences of the traditional and highly demanding organizational context. The pressure of the organizational context of A.S. Watson seems to be the main reason why the organizations have WLB on their priority list.

4.2 Work-Life Balance

WLB arrangements are considered important by organizations that support WLB practices of employees (Daverth, Hyde, and Cassel, 2016). To understand how WLB arrangements are experienced by employees, it is first important to know how employees themselves strive for a WLB. There are three ways mentioned during the interviews in which employees of A.S. Watson strive for a WLB. Employees of A.S. Watson experience balance when they are able to develop themselves in work and life, they experience a clear separation of work and life and they are able to perform well in work and in life. A further elaboration of these three ways to strive for a WLB will be given below.

4.2.1 Development in work and life

Employees find it important to develop themselves in work and life. Development in both work and life at the same time seems to be impossible because takes both time and effort. Investment in development in work seems to come at the expense of development in life and the other way around.

First, in work, the employees seem to experience few opportunities to develop themselves without compromising their WLB. A.S. Watson stimulates growth by creating more challenges in the work of an employee. Employees are able to add tasks that fit with their interests or ambitions but at the same time, cannot remove less challenging tasks. Respondents 3, 4, and 8 tell that they would like to develop themselves in work. However, they have experienced that adding more challenging tasks in work or aspiring to a higher position at A.S. Watson means more work. Development in work, therefore, relates to a higher workload. Respondent 8 illustrates this experience:

“I really want to naturally develop myself. It is, of course, nice to be busy with things like that. But it just does not fit in my working hours and it is therefore almost always at the expense of my private life. At these moments, you are going to use private hours for work activities what is, of course, not stimulating people’s development.” (Respondent 8, note 564).

The growth possibility for employees of A.S. Watson is associated with less private time and seems difficult when employees do not want to spend extra hours at work. Kalliath and Brough (2008) describe growth possibility as one of the conditions for WLB. It is the individual’s perception that if work and non-work activities promote growth this would have a positive effect on an employees’ WLB (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). The growth possibilities at A.S. Watson do not seem to promote WLB because they include more work and less private time. This seems to create an imbalance between work and private time. The theory of Kalliath and Brough (2008) and the statements of the employees do not appear to correspond.

Second, employees also seem to strive for development in life. Employees in this case study have different development preferences. For example, Respondent 1 does volunteer work in disaster areas to generate more excitement in life, Respondent 3 considers it important to exercise at least three times a week to become fitter and Respondent 6 has lost 32 pounds in the last couple of years and focuses on her health. These kinds of challenges outside the work environment seem to serve the inner development and desire of a person. Accordingly, work could obstruct development in life when it does not serve a person’s desires and needs in life.

“But going to work out is hard every time. So, I must plan that very tightly. But how nice would it be if I could do that more often without the concerns of work. [...] I feel lots of

responsibilities and expectations at work and sometimes I think, I do not want this at all. I would prefer to be able to train more often.” (Respondent 6, note 454)

The responsibilities and expectations of A.S. Watson prevent this employee from fulfilling her needs in life. In line with the theory of Kofodimos (1993), this causes an imbalance when life is dominated by work and conflicts with a person’s desires in life, at the expense of inner development. Development in work and life seems only possible when work and life complement rather than obstruct each other. To sum up, employees of A.S. Watson who should experience WLB when they are able to strive for development in work and life seem to experience difficulties. The high demanding organizational context of A.S. Watson limits the possibility for employees to develop themselves in work and life. Employees who want to develop themselves can take on extra challenging tasks but these are seen as additional tasks because they do not replace less challenging tasks. Due to the high workload that the employees already experience without these extra challenging tasks, development in work is always at the expense of employees’ private time.

4.2.2 Clear separation of work and life

Employees also discuss WLB in terms of the separation between work activities and life activities. They argue that if there is no clear separation between these activities, they are less aware of their WLB and automatically start working more. Because of this experience, they prefer to keep these activities separate. Respondent 9 gives an example of his desire for separation between work and life activities:

“And for me, above all, the challenge is the strict separation between work and private life. I don't want to act in a gray area where I automatically work longer or take my laptop home or something. Flexibility is part of what we do and what we are but I also have to argue that our work package must fit with the number of hours available for work.”

(Respondent 9, note 638)

The employee argues that at A.S. Watson there is always more work than can be done on a given day, which would encourage working in private time. That is why the employee calls separation between work and private life a challenge. Negative consequences that are mentioned by employees who experience weaker boundaries between work and life are stress (Respondent 3), physical complaints (Respondent 4), and mental complaints (Respondent 9). The separation of work and life activities that are experienced as relevant to achieve WLB is consistent with the theory of Clark (2000), who says that employees prefer stronger

boundaries between work and life to ensure that work does not hinder wellbeing. Clark (2000) calls this the preference of a minimum of role conflict between functioning at work and at home. When employees experience a challenge separating work and life activities, it could negatively impact their WLB. The possibility of working from home and the high workload experienced by employees of A.S. Watson makes it more difficult for them to separate work and non-work activities. When employees act according to the expectations of A.S. Watson they are likely to start working more and therefore a clear separation between work and life seems difficult to achieve.

4.2.3 Ability to perform well in work and in life

From the stories of the employees, it can be concluded that employees feel a certain sense of responsibility and duty when working. Employees who have a high work ethic seem to experience WLB when being able to perform well in work and in life. Accordingly, conflicts in WLB appear to arise when an event occurs in the private life of an employee but, because of their high work ethic, work is considered more important. In these situations, work and non-work activities are harder to combine. The ability to perform well in work and life seems to become more difficult. Respondent 5 describes such a situation:

“Well because I have been quite sick in the past it is very clear to me when I cross my boundary. However, I have been struggling a bit with my health again lately but I just kept working.” [...] “And then I was so tired. I actually kept running the last few months but honestly, I just shouldn’t have done that. [...]. My work was too important to me. But then I need 2 days off because I noticed that my body really needs time to recover from the mess, in terms of medication.” (Respondent 5, note 342)

Although this employee says she knows where her limit is for a healthy balance between work and life, she does not seem to act like that. Her health situation demands actions in her private life domains, which ultimately meant that the employee was not able to perform well at work. The employee experienced that she was unable to perform well in work and life which seems to cause an imbalance between work and private life. Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) confirm that conflicts in WLB arise when demands in one domain obstruct performance in another domain. It depends on an employee’s priorities whether demands from certain domains obstruct performance in another domain. So, being able to perform well in work and in life depends on the priorities and preferences in an employees’ life. Conflicts may arise when demands from a certain domain conflict with the priorities of the employees in another

domain. Due to the high demands of A.S. Watson, it is likely that employees must give work a high priority to fulfill the needs of the organization. The highly demanding organizational context seems to obstruct the ability of the employees to strive for a WLB themselves.

4.3 Relevant factors that determine employees' priorities in life

The theory of Kalliath and Brough (2008) shows two main life factors that determine employees' priorities in life, and possibly influence the balance between work and life of the employees. These are life events that occur in the employee's life and life domains in which employees interact. This study shows that both factors impact the degree of balance between work and life of employees. Besides, life events and life domains seem to be the indicator of how much priority the life part of WLB requires.

4.3.1 Life events

When important life events occur, employees seem to give priority to certain life domains, which affects other domains. Consistent with what is mentioned by Bakker and Derks (2018), employees experience positive and negative life events that influence their WLB. Positive life events that are mentioned by the employees are the birth of a baby (Respondent 1, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10) and buying a new house (Respondent 3, 7 and 10). The most important stressful experiences in life that are mentioned are the death of a family member (Respondent 1, 8, 9) and someone in the family with a serious illness (Respondent 2 and 8). Respondents 5 and 6 have been seriously ill themselves. Other stressful experiences in life that are mentioned in the literature, such as conflicts at home or relationship problems (Arpawong et al., 2016), are not mentioned by the employees in this study. This may be because it is more difficult for employees to talk about life events like this. Both the positive and the stressful events seem to have an impact on the employees' life and seem to determine which life domain is given priority in employees' life.

“When I was pregnant with my son, my father-in-law died unexpectedly. The pregnancy was pretty tough, in that sense. So, then my private life got priority in the balance between work and life.” [...] “Then I tried to stabilize my work. I mostly went to my meetings but after that, I went back home.” (Respondent 8, note 543)

Life events like these are so important in an employee's life that it is impossible for these events not to influence the working life of employees, even when they are not directly related to work. Employees seem to consciously choose for a private life focus when something

important in their private life occurs, which makes work less important. As described in the literature of Bakker and Derks (2018), coping with certain life events involves high demands and even though they are not directly related to work, they could interfere with the work domain. Accordingly, life events can reduce the level of job involvement of an employee.

“There are a few moments when you would say: at this moment, private life is more important and my work should suffer. Then you just have to choose for your private life.”
(Respondent 2, Note 110)

Due to the demands in private life, this person experiences the performance at work as obstructed. The employee explains that, because of the priority given to the family domain, *“work would suffer”*. However, because the employees have a high work ethic, which is already mentioned before, the life event must be very important before the employee actually gives priority to their private life.

“The key issue is that because you feel so responsible for your work, you keep saying that being sick is not possible.” [...] *“The last time I had a hernia and called my supervisor about this I was completely upset that I could not move my legs but I was still thinking, I just have to work.”* (Respondent 6, note 428).

From the interviews, it follows that certain life events can have an impact on employees' work. Most employees give their work priority, which means that life events are related to work when it is necessary to give another domain priority. Employees of A.S. Watson have a high work ethic which is encouraged by the high expectations of the organization. When life events occur, it is possible that employees are unable to reach the high standards in work imposed on themselves, encouraged by the organization. This could obstruct the balance between work and life because work will suffer. Therefore, life events shape employees' preferences and influence their WLB.

4.3.2 Life domains

In literature, life domains are clustered into four groups, namely family, employer, community, and profession (Crooker, Smith, Tabak, 2002). The stories of the employees show that all these domains actually influence employees' WLB.

4.3.2.1 Family domain

In the second phase of the interviews, the employees were asked to segment a visual timeline with important life events. All life events that employees mentioned first were events related to the family domain. The influence of the family domain is mentioned immediately when

talking about WLB. Moreover, this domain was discussed most extensively. Therefore, the family domain seems to be the most important domain in the employee's life.

“And then I am talking about private and family life. These should have the biggest impact. If someone is comfortable with their own situation at home, you take that with you to your work and vice versa.” (Respondent 4, note 318)

The importance of the family domain on WLB corresponds with the origin of the concept of WLB that is associated with work-family balance (Barnett, 1998; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Employees expect themselves to function well in their work and in their family life. Both family and work are highly demanding domains and employees argue that family and work activities always adjust to one another. Therefore, both domains cannot be viewed separately, and the family domain seems to have a big influence on the work of employees. Influences from the family domain that are mentioned are coordination challenges in caregiving (Respondent 1, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10), expectation of the family (Respondent 1, 7 and 9), dual earners pressure (Respondent 3, 4 and 8), and financial resources (Respondent 6, 8 and 10). Life events in the family domain seem to increase demands from life in particular. The birth of a baby is seen as most important in the family domain. When a baby is born, this changes the lives of employees and how employees strive for WLB. Demands of the family domain such as caregiving and expectations of the family become stronger when a baby is born and require coordination changes. Other life events that require attention from the family domain, such as someone in the family with a serious illness, also challenges balancing work and life responsibilities which involves high physical and psychological demands. These influences from the family domain seem to contribute to challenges in WLB because employees feel a responsibility to respond to the demands of the family domain leading to challenges in balancing work and life responsibilities. As described by Breevaart and Bakker (2011), the influence of the family domain requires coordination challenges in work that can lead to conflicts in WLB.

4.3.2.2 Employer domain

When talking about life events during employees' working life, it is remarkable that life events are almost immediately linked to the influences of the employer domain. The most discussed influences of the employer domain are the high workload and the pressure of the highly demanding organizational context of A.S. Watson. These influences are consistent with the topics mentioned in literature by Crooker, Smith, and Tabak (2002). When the

employees were asked to indicate whether life events had the most impact on the work or life domain, it became clear that the employer domain always pressures the private lives of employees. All employees signal that they experience a high workload.

“I think that the organization should be arranged in such a way that the preferred number of working hours could be covered by the function of an employee. If it turns out that all my colleagues are working overtime, perhaps the organization must conclude that the number of working hours does not fit with the functions of the employees.” (Respondent 5, note 330).

It seems that many employees have more work than they can finish in the number of hours of their function. It has become a general expectation of the organization that employees work overtime. Furthermore, the high workload at A.S. Watson also could be caused by the ad-hoc way of working and solving problems.

“It always has to become more, everything has to be done right now, we always see opportunities and challenges and these simply have to be solved immediately. And all those sub-departments of the organization provide new work what should be assigned at another department.” (Respondent 6, note 437)

The feeling of pressure and many working hours seems to be affected by how employees deal with this. Employees seem to act according to these organizational expectations and are used to the high demands of A.S. Watson. Planning work and non-work activities is therefore experienced as one of the biggest challenges in work. Often, this ensures that employees do not perform all tasks of their function or they spend less time on certain tasks. This is at the expense of the quality of their work.

“It seems to be typical the culture of A.S. Watson that you always have to do more work than you can handle. It is primarily an art to know how not to do that. What you can exclude but also keep it up and running.” (Respondent 8, note 561)

The organization seem to be especially focused on their goals and expect their employees to do the same. The organization is expected to support the employees by creating realistic functions and tasks that fit within these functions. However, because of the culture of the organization, the high demands from the organization seem to dominate and employees start working more than preferred. Nevertheless, one of the employees argues that the organization does not encourage overtime at the same time.

“It is also very clearly stated that the organization does not want you to work overtime. That makes things easier just working the required hours of your function and going home when your working day is over. However, sometimes this is still difficult because there is always more work and many things have priority. Sometimes this makes things difficult.” (Respondent 9, note 672).

The organization formally does not encourage employees to work more hours than is written in their job description. However, the highly demanding organizational context of A.S. Watson appears to expect employees to work more at the expense of their private time. Consequently, some employees experience personal issues like feelings of guilt toward family or friends (Respondent 5, 7, 8, 9) and little time for hobbies (Respondent 3, 6, 7). When the employee does not derive satisfaction from work and experiences personal issues, an imbalance between work and life may occur. Multiple stories confirm that the organization does not acknowledge conflicts between work and non-work activities due to the high workload in employees' lives. Employees explained that requests for help in a conflicting situation between work and non-work activities are sometimes even ignored.

“I do care about A.S. Watson and I will always do. Therefore, running a bit harder is no problem but if there is always more and more work, it will be tricky. At that moment, when I request for help but only more working hours are preferred again, it is sometimes really hard to handle for me. And then, I get into a situation in which I take my work mentally to home and it gets me up at night.” (Respondent 9, note 657)

At present, WLB is high on the list of priorities at A.S. Watson but the company does not always seem to act according to this priority. They do not always seem to put the employees' interests first. Furthermore, when employees experience conflicts in work and non-work activities the organization does not always react. Therefore, employees are left to deal with WLB conflict themselves. Greenhaus (2003), indicates WLB as the allocation of time and psychical energy in a balanced way in work and non-work life, while deriving much satisfaction from both work and non-work life. The traditional organizational characteristics of A.S. Watson and highly demanding organizational context encourage employees to focus on the goals of the organization but do not consider the time and satisfaction of employees. The data from the interviews show another important factor from the employer domain, namely the high professional autonomy that employees experience in their work. Employees describe, “I am responsible for my own work” (Respondent 1, note 65), “We are only charged

on the goals” (Respondent 3, note 191), “I feel freedom and trust of my manager” (Respondent 4, note 298), “Of course I have a lot of freedom and decision-making power” (Respondent 6, note 404), “you don’t have to account for everything” (Respondent 7, note 479), “Of course we are very in charge of our own agenda” (Respondent 8, note 546). In contrast with what has been said before, autonomy in work should help the process of coordinating and integrating work and non-work activities (Felstead et al., 2002). In line with the theory of Lambert et al. (2006), more autonomy in the job will result in more blended domains. The high professional autonomy that employees experience in their work should make it easier for them to plan work and non-work activities. It also makes it possible for them to coordinate and integrate their work and non-work activities but the culture of the organization forces employees to start working more than preferred in certain situations. The organization trusts employees in handling their function and gives them the freedom to do so. It seems to be mainly due to the culture of the organization that employees start working more than preferred. The high demands of the organization create personal issues for some employees and they do not derive satisfaction from their work. Therefore, when employees act according to this culture and have other priorities this could, among other things, influence the balance between their work and life.

4.3.2.3 Profession domain

The most important influences of the profession domain on WLB seem to be career decisions (Respondent 3, 5, 7, 8 and 10) and job security (Respondent 1, 2 and 9). Most employees consider it important to make career moves and others prefer the job security offered by A.S. Watson. Throughout the interviews with the employees, it became clear that influences from the profession domain especially influence WLB when other domains do not obstruct performance in this domain. Mostly, other domains seem to be valued as more important and could obstruct influences from the profession domain. For example, Respondent 8 tells about the important demands of the family domain that obstruct influences from the profession domain:

“Well, now my husband and I have a good allocation of caregiving tasks. Now, we also talked about going all the way for my career or going all the way for his career. Now it's a bit 50/50. Therefore, private life really is an important part of the choices I could make in my own career.” (Respondent 8, note 587)

In this situation, the family domain and the profession domain influence each other and the boundary between these domains is weaker. The employees seem to adjust their career development (profession domain) to dual earners pressure (family domain). There seem to be weaker boundaries between the profession domain and other domains because influences from other domains seem to get priority and obstruct the demands from the profession domain. The demands from the different domains and the weaker boundaries could potentially increase conflicts between these domains. As mentioned before, an imbalance between work and life seems to occur when work does not stimulate an employee's desires in life. The demands from the profession domain seem to be mainly about these desires.

4.3.2.4 Community domain

Last, the community domain also has an influence on the WLB of employees. Examples of influences from the community domain that are mentioned by all employees are hobbies, social network, and vacation. The influences from this domain are considered important by the employees and the boundaries of this domain seem to be strong in relation to other domains.

“I also have other things next to work, hobbies, and friends at the weekend. And it is just important to make time for that.” (Respondent 1, note 53)

“Yes fine, but it stops right there. The moment when I am on vacation and I know that I hand over the work to another colleague, then it is finished and I will no longer interfere with work.” (Respondent 2, note 138)

The community domain is considered important when employees need rest and do not want to be busy with work. However, the strong boundary between domains ensures a clear separation between the work and community domain but the community domain seems to be especially important when employees need a rest from their work. The importance of the community domain is therefore mainly caused by influences from work.

“I had been to Amsterdam with a friend. I was totally exhausted from work and I was struggling with my health. After that day, my colleagues argued that I was finally looking great again. And I agreed because I was so tired before that day” (Respondent 5, note 341)

Employees seem to make time for activities in the community domain when they need to rest from influences from work. Moreover, employees also experience the community domain as a distraction (e.g. a day out, conversation with friends, and sport) when certain life events (e.g. serious illness of employees themselves and birth of a baby) occurs. Where employees

identified the community domain as most important, it seemed to depend on influences from the other domains. Therefore, during the interviews, it was not possible to discover fixed moments when employees considered the community domain as most important.

4.4 Formal WLB arrangements

WLB arrangements are described by Daverth, Hyde, and Cassel (2016) as “a way for workers to maintain a healthy balance between the demands of paid work and their personal life outside” (p.1710). There are different types of formal WLB arrangements that are structurally implemented at A.S. Watson. These arrangements fall into three categories and include (1) formal flexible work arrangements, (2) leave arrangements, and (3) psychological counseling (Additional Appendix 4). These arrangements generally seem to help employees strive for WLB but in practice, some arrangements seem to generate more work at the expense of private time. Beauregard and Henry (2009) also mention care assistance as a formal WLB arrangement but this is not offered by A.S. Watson.

4.4.1 Flexible work arrangements

Formal flexible work arrangements that are mentioned and used by the employees of A.S. Watson are working from home (all respondents) and the possibility to sell or purchase vacation hours (Respondent 2 and 8).

Within the theory of Allen et al. (2013) the work options that permit the possibility to work “where” you like is a form of a flexible work arrangement. Most employees work at their office at A.S. Watson daily from nine in the morning until half-past five in the afternoon. Employees confirm that at A.S. Watson it is possible to work from home or in a different place than your own office (e.g. at another A.S. Watson location or at an external location). This space flexibility is possible because of the technical availabilities of mobile devices like laptops and telephones. The WLB benefit of working from home, mentioned by the employees, is the ability to more easily coordinate work and non-work activities. For example, working from home could make it possible to take the kids to school (Respondent 3, 5, 7 and 10) or to receive a technician when something needs to be repaired at home (Respondent 1 and 6). Sometimes, employees are forced to work from home, for example when they are unable to reach the office due to illness (Respondent 5 and 6) or when someone in the family dies and the employee is needed at home (Respondent 1 and 8).

Officially, the employees of A.S. Watson have to submit a paper application when they would like to work from home during office hours. In practice, it appears that few applications are submitted because the possibility of working from home is mostly used only outside office hours. The technology that makes working from home possible was implemented in the organization not long ago. Therefore, the development of space flexibility seems not yet fully accepted by all organizational members.

“My colleague and I have had a lot of complaints about it. It was not done working at another office.” (Respondent 3, note 202)

“The organizations argue that you can work at home and your hours are flexible but it is also experienced as pretty annoying when someone is working from home while you are at the office. This has a negative charge. In that respect, we are a very traditional company, the possibility of working from home is actually more like an exception.” (Respondent 6, note 465)

On one hand, space flexibility is possible within the organization because of the technical solutions that appear to encourage working from another place. On the other hand, employees say working from home is not encouraged by the organization. It appears to take time to implement this development in a traditional organization like A.S. Watson. Therefore, working from home during office hours is not very common yet. As mentioned before, working from home is mostly used outside office hours, which does not seem to be the goal of a WLB arrangement. However, even when working from home is only used outside office hours, employees can perceive this WLB arrangement as supporting. Respondent 2 illustrates this experience:

“If I would like to start on Monday quietly and peaceful, I have to get rid of the mail on Saturday morning. Then I am completely prepared for Monday and I would face a much quieter kind of week. So, on Saturday I could make the decision to work from home if I have nothing else to do. Conversely, I have no problem leaving work at the weekends. It is possible that I do not unlock my phone at all which means no disruption of emails and apps or whatever.” (Respondent 2, note 134)

The possibility to work during non-office hours seems to reduce the work stress of employees because their workload will be reduced. Some employees do not experience this as a constraint.

“For me, it is not even the feeling that I could not finish my work in office hours but actually working from home is like a relaxation moment, you know, a cup of coffee, just sit down at the table, surf on the internet, and go through your email.” (Respondent 4, note 289)

Moreover, employees argue that working from home is effective and helps to organize working activities. This is what Gregory and Milner (2009) mean with improved productivity of employees when they work from home. All interviewed employees mention that working at non-office hours happens regularly. Nevertheless, others do express feelings of conflict between work and non-work activities when they work at non-office hours.

“This means that I will switch on my laptop in the evening. And then I work in the evening. The main reason for that is that I don’t keep thinking about my work anymore when I finish my work in the evening. And if I do not work in these evenings, I just keep thinking about it. This causes that I experience mental complaints. But in the end, working in the evenings is not what I prefer.” (Respondent 8, note 566)

In accordance with Beauregard and Henry (2009), who argued that conflicts may arise when WLB arrangements were used for the wrong purpose, employees experience conflicts because working from home encourages more working hours and reduces availability at home. The purpose of the WLB arrangement working from home at A.S. Watson is to contribute to a better WLB of employees (Additional Appendix 4) but currently, employees start working at non-office hours at the expense of their private time.

Another flexible WLB arrangement at A.S. Watson is the possibility to sell or purchase vacation hours. This WLB arrangement was implemented at the beginning of 2019.

Employees have the possibility to sell or purchase a maximum of 32 vacation hours per year (Additional Appendix 4). Respondent 2 states the following about this WLB arrangement:

“Formally, we also received the message that we can buy or purchase vacation hours. That got that message this year. I think that is an example of something new. I do think that A.S. Watson focuses more on what people need and how they could respond to that which seems very important to meet the needs of people.” (Respondent 2, note 150)

This employee seems to perceive this new flexible WLB arrangement as positive. The WLB arrangement was developed by the organization for employees who prefer more private time or extra income. This WLB arrangement allows an employee to choose individually what he or she prefers. However, Respondent 8 argues that most people sell their vacation hours

because employees experience always more work than they can finish in the number of hours of their function.

“From now on, you can sell or purchase hours but everyone has so much work to do that it is impossible to purchase vacation hours. That is typically A.S. Watson, that you should do more work than you could handle.” (Respondent 8, note 593)

Most people seem to use this WLB arrangement to sell hours. This WLB arrangement, therefore, does not seem to result in more private time, but rather more working time. As mentioned before, employees seem to act according to the high expectations of the organization. The possibility to buy vacation hours is rarely used to meet the requirements of the organization. In literature, Liff & Cameron, (1997) stated that the use of leave arrangements will be perceived as a lack of commitment to the organization. In this case, employees also seem to act in the interest of the organization and not what is preferred by the employee themselves.

4.4.2 Leave arrangements

Leave arrangements that are used and offered by A.S. Watson are maternity leave (Respondent 1, 8 and 10), parental leave (Respondent 7 and 9), and care leave (Respondent 2 and 8). At A.S. Watson, all leave arrangements are available on request. The HR department determines whether this request will be accepted. In general, the applications for leave arrangements are honored when they comply with the policies of the organization (Additional Appendix 4). However, a request for a leave arrangement can still be rejected if there are substantial problems in the employee’s work schedule (Additional Appendix 4). Respondent 9 experienced this:

“I applied for parental leave every year. The first year it was honored but the second year I received a rejection. I had to justify myself and I had to explain what they didn’t understand while it just should be a formality in my opinion.” (Respondent 9, note 739)

So, the availability of leave arrangements for employees depends on several conditions and employees should be able to justify their application. For example, the conditions for care leave are that the employee must take care of particular people, namely the spouse, registered partner or person with whom the employee lives together without being married, parent or (foster) child, brother or sister, grandparent or grandchild. These conditions respond to the demands from the family domain. It is not possible for employees to use care leave for other

people such as people from their social network. Furthermore, maternity leave and parental leave also focus on the family domain.

The application for maternity leave is always approved and is mandatory when someone is pregnant. Employees have a positive experience with this arrangement. As discussed by Kocourková (2002) in literature, the arrangements help to decrease tension between work and private life priorities.

“During my maternity leave? Then you are just 4 months away and I loved it. I could let go and I was completely in a cocoon with my child. But I also enjoyed going back to work afterward.” (Respondent 1, note 27)

The benefit of the maternity leave arrangements seems to be the ability to fully focus on the life event of the birth of a baby and dealing with influences from the family domain. The visual timelines that the employees used to represent the time in which they are working at A.S. Watson also show that the use of the maternity leave arrangement ensures that the focus is entirely on private life rather than work (Additional Appendix 3).

Kocourková (2002) argues that leave arrangements can disrupt development in the career of employees because of their absence at work. One of the employees confirms this statement with an example of an experience at A.S. Watson.

“But then I had my maternity leave because my daughter was born and when I came back, exactly that position became vacant and suddenly I was no longer in the picture. They argue that I was not visible enough anymore. Then I thought, I had my maternity leave for 5 months so it makes sense, but how is this possible?” (Respondent 10, note 703)

This example illustrated that maternity leave can obstruct performance in the profession domain. As mentioned earlier, the perception that work does not promote development in life and causes conflicts with a person’s desires, negatively affects the WLB of an employee (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). Leave arrangements are therefore not responsive to life domains other than the family domain and hence some life events are not supported by the arrangements. Leave arrangements, therefore, seem to be able to support employees only when the application of the leave arrangement is in accordance with the policies.

4.4.3 Psychological counseling

Third, Respondent 1 and 5 mention the possibility of the use of external psychological counseling when something has happened in your private life that could influence work.

Psychological counseling is offered by A.S. Watson as a formal WLB program. Psychological

counseling seems to offer help in dealing with stressful life events and help to deal with this event at work. Respondent 1 has lost her husband and used psychological counseling.

“A.S. Watson offered psychological counseling. Of course, that was very pleasant. Also, because it was someone external. [...] And no matter how crazy it sounds all the time. My work has always been a stable factor.” (Respondent 1, note 48)

Psychological counseling does not exclusively look at the problem but also looks at what an employee could do at work. This contribution is experienced positively because the stable factor of work could help balance work and non-work activities. Psychological counseling is used by employees of A.S. Watson for different life events that influence different life domains. This is in accordance with the statement of Hobson, Delunas, and Kesic (2001) that general programs support employees to cope with the most overwhelming challenges in their life.

4.5 Experience with Formal WLB arrangements

The experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements seem different for each employee. The difference in experience with formal WLB arrangements depends on the type of formal WLB arrangement and the preferences of each employee in life. The influence of life events and life domains seems to be the indicator of how much priority the life part of WLB requires. The differences in experiences seem to determine whether WLB arrangements are perceived as supportive or obstructing by employees.

4.4.4 Formal WLB arrangements experienced by employees as supportive

First, it seems that WLB arrangements are perceived as supportive by employees when these WLB arrangements contribute to the necessity to focus on a particular domain. Life events could affect employees' priorities for certain life domains. Leave arrangements could support this by offering paid or statutory leave. This makes it possible to fully focus on that particular life event without any pressure from work. Next, the possibility of working from home at office hours is sometimes perceived as support because this makes it easier to coordinate work and non-work activities. When work and non-work activities overlap, working from home is perceived as supportive in coping with the coordination between these activities. WLB arrangements are experienced as supporting when they encourage employees to perform their tasks more effectively. For example, working from home makes it possible to be less easily distracted from work than at the office. Obviously, when employees are able to perform their

tasks better and more focused they will spend less time on certain tasks. At the same time, this will make it easier to coordinate work and non-work activities. Last, general WLB programs like psychological counseling are perceived as supporting when these respond to the specific needs of employees. It depends on the needs and priorities of an employee when a WLB arrangement is experienced as supporting.

4.5.5 Formal WLB arrangements experienced by employees as obstructing

When WLB arrangements such as working from home and the possibility to buy or sell vacation hours are not fully accepted by an organization, it could prevent employees from using these or using these in the wrong way. The use of WLB arrangements could be perceived as a lack of commitment to the organization which pressures employees to act according to the high expectations of an organization. This could encourage employees to work more at the expense of their private time. In that case, employees act according to the interest of the organization and not to what they prefer. WLB arrangements like working from home or sell or purchase vacation hours are then used for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way and are therefore perceived as obstructing. Employees have experienced the easily accessible way of working from home, which contributes to fixed patterns of working during non-working hours. Furthermore, leave arrangements of A.S. Watson do not contribute to the support of life events that have a focus on demands from the profession domain (e.g. personal development) or the community domain (e.g. a friend with a serious illness). Therefore, employees seem to experience leave arrangements as obstructing when they could not be used for priorities other than the family domain.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and discussion

In this final chapter, the conclusion will first provide an answer to the research question. After that, the methodological quality of this study will be discussed and recommendations for future research and practice given.

5.1 Conclusion

The research question of this study is defined as “*What causes differences in experience of employees with formal Work-Life Balance arrangements?*”. This conclusion will focus on the differences in experience of employees of A.S. Watson with formal WLB arrangements and the several causes of differences in experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements. The formal WLB arrangements offered by A.S. Watson are subdivided into three categories and include formal flexible work arrangements, leave arrangements and psychological counseling should support employees to coordinate work and non-work activities. It has become clear that employees perceive WLB arrangements in different ways depending on the influence of life domains and life events. Employees seem to perceive WLB arrangements as supportive or obstructing. There are several causes of differences in experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements.

First of all, the results of this study show that the context of the organization influence employees’ experience with WLB arrangements. A.S. Watson is characterized as a traditional and highly demanding organization. The organization focuses on their goals and expects employees to act accordingly which creates certain expectations. Therefore, most employees have a high work ethic and start working more hours than is written in their job description. Currently, flexible work arrangements only encourage this. WLB arrangements like working from home make it more easily for employees to work at non-office hours and at the same time this encourage integration between work and life. Despite the fact that WLB arrangements enhance the autonomy for employees this is rather experienced as obstructing. Fixed patterns of working more hours than preferred seem to arise what is made possible by the use of working from home. Employees experience that working from home is effective but because of the experienced pressure of the highly demanding organizational context, this WLB arrangement is mostly used at non-office hours.

How employees experience WLB arrangements also depends on employees’ preferences in life influenced by life events and life domains. Life events, employees’

priorities and the need for rest seem to determine when demands from certain domains are considered as more important in the balance between work and life. The demands from these domains could obstruct performance in another domain. Leave arrangements are experienced as support by employees who have a focus on influences from the family domain because they help to cope with demands from that domain. The family domain seems to be the most influencing domain in employees' lives but the employer, profession and the community domain also influence the lives of employees. However, leave arrangements are not responsive to the influences of the community and profession domain such as hobbies and social network and the desire for career development.

What can be concluded is that formal WLB arrangements are not always perceived as supportive by all employees. The formal WLB arrangements of A.S. Watson are still in their infancy. The formal WLB arrangements do not yet seem to be used for the right purpose because there seems to be a field of tension between the expectations of the traditionally structured organization A.S. Watson and the needs in WLB arrangements of their workforce. WLB arrangements do not appear sufficiently developed in the organization which means that employee's perception of the organizational context influences their experience with WLB arrangements. Therefore, the organization is not yet designed in a way in which formal WLB arrangements automatically are experienced as support by employees.

5.2 Discussion

The discussion section includes a critical reflection of the limitations of this study, presents the theoretical contribution of this study, describes recommendations for further research, and presents practical contributions and practical recommendations.

5.2.1 Limitations

In section 3.5 'Quality criteria', it is already acknowledged that this study is not without limitations. However, the quality criteria were taken into account to reduce them and to expose limitations as opportunities for future research.

First, the narrative interview technique is used for data collection. In chapter 3 'Methodology' it is explained that this technique plays an important role in shaping the social phenomenon of WLB. However, this interview technique expects employees to recall what happened and in what sequence. The extent to which someone is able to recount something from the past relies on the memories of the employees. Most of the employees seem to

remember experiences in the past but it is not certain to what extent employees realised what influenced their WLB in the past. This could have influenced the match between reality and interpretation, which makes the narrative interview technique less credible (Symon & Cassell, 2012) and generalizable (Gorman & Clayton, 2005). However, the most important events seem to be remembered.

Second, this research was conducted in one organization. With regard to the quality criteria of this study, it can be said that this lowers the transferability (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Although in-depth information is important to answer the research question of this study, it is not without drawbacks. This research is conducted in a highly demanding organizational context where most employees are supposed to do more work than their hours allow. This makes the context of the organization specific but far from unique. Some results are related to the characteristics of the highly demanding organizational context. The researcher endeavors to give a lot of information about the case of A.S. Watson in the results section. The results that seem to be related to the specific environment of A.S. Watson will therefore be more easily recognized by the reader. In another context, the results could be different.

Third, the interviews potentially include socially desirable answers. Employees sometimes seem to find it difficult to elaborate on their WLB and private life priorities during their working lives. This is also the case because the researcher and the employee did not know each other, therefore a relationship of trust was not created immediately. Employees are not comfortable discussing topics like relationship problems or conflicts at home (Arpawong et al., 2016). This means that probably not all relevant life events that could have influenced the WLB of employees are mentioned, which makes the results that are derived from the stories of the employees biased. This seems especially the case when it is about stressful life events. Additionally, the extent to which the employees were able to discuss stressful life events differed between the employees. Therefore, the confirmability of this study is lower because the data gathering was dependent on the relationship between the researcher and employee (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

5.2.2 Theoretical contribution of the study

As mentioned in the first chapter of this research, the experience of employees with WLB arrangements is under-researched (McDonald et al., 2005). First and foremost, this research contributes to the theory by expanding knowledge about the experience of employees with

WLB arrangements. Based on the experiences of the employees with WLB arrangements, it cannot be confirmed that WLB arrangements are always experienced as supporting. The experience with WLB arrangements seems to depend on the organizational context and the design of the job. In a highly demanding organizational context such as A.S. Watson, employees seem to act according to the expectations of the organization and they are likely to use flexible WLB arrangements to start working more. Moreover, the highly experienced professional autonomy of employees of A.S. Watson also seems to force employees to start working more. Planning work and non-work activities, therefore, is mentioned as a challenge. WLB arrangements that should enhance the autonomy of employees are therefore not experienced as supporting because employees do not know how to deal with this autonomy. Therefore, the positive support of WLB arrangements discussed in the literature (Lazar, Osoian & Ratiu, 2010) is not automatically experienced in practice.

Furthermore, previous research mainly considered the 'life' part of WLB as a construct consisting of influences from the family domain (Mills, 2014). Therefore, most described formal WLB arrangements in literature are only applicable to married employees with children (Crooker, Smith, Tabak, 2002). However, in this study different life domains (family, profession and community) and life events are considered as relevant and influence the WLB of employees. The results of this study also indicated the family domain as the most important domain in an employee's life. In particular, the demands from the family domain seem to increase when life events occur. The focus on the family domain in the WLB literature is therefore reasonable. However, when employees are confronted with life events that increase demands from domains such as the community domain or the profession domain, the organization does not seem to respond to this. The demands from these domains are valued less by employees, but there always seems to be a relation between different life domains. As argued by Bakker and Derks (2018), life events require a readjustment in the life of employees and interfere with different life domains. Organizations only seem to focus on the family part of life and WLB arrangements are based on what Darcy et al. (2002) call a "one size fits all" approach. Demands from the community or profession domain are therefore not supported by the organization with formal WLB arrangements as flexible WLB arrangements and leave arrangements. The arrangements that focus on WLB as currently described in literature do not involve the influences of other domains (e.g. community and profession) that also seem to be important influences affecting the WLB of employees.

Therefore, the currently described formal WLB arrangements in literature do not serve the needs of all employees.

5.2.3 Recommendations for future research

This study aims to understand whether there are differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements and what causes differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements. The results of this study include WLB factors that are relevant from the perspective of an employee, such as life events and influences from different life domains that contribute to their WLB. The study does not aim to explore the organizational perspective of WLB, but the design and culture of the organization seem to play a major role in the use of formal WLB arrangements. In highly demanding organizations, it seems more difficult for employees to use WLB for the right purpose. Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to focus on the design of the job of the employees and in what way the culture of the organization contributes to the use of WLB, and therefore the WLB of employees. Accordingly, further research may give a better understanding of the role of the organizational context on the WLB of employees.

A second interesting topic to research is the role of informal WLB arrangements because they are often developed in the culture of the organization. Informal WLB arrangements are not structurally implemented and depend on the support of managers and colleagues (Daverth, Hyde & Cassell, 2016). The results of this study reveal that the role of the managers is important in dealing with work and non-work priorities. Further research could give more information about the role of informal arrangements on the experienced WLB of employees.

Lastly, the highly demanding organizational context of the case of this study seems to have an impact on the results of this study. The relevant work factors (workload, a high number of working hours) that are mentioned in this study that seem to have an impact on the WLB of employees appear to be typical for this case. Therefore, it could be interesting for future research to conduct the data in a low demanding organizational context to find out if organizational features of this case indeed impacted the results of this study.

5.2.4 Practical contribution of the study

First, this study reveals whether there are differences in experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements and what causes differences in experiences of employees with formal WLB arrangements. Formal WLB arrangements should help to manage work and life

responsibilities. Currently, organizations do not monitor and evaluate the experience of employees with formal WLB arrangements because they assume that formal WLB arrangements achieve their aims. Overall, this study indicates that the potential for formal WLB arrangements to reduce WLB conflicts may be limited. However, the stories of the employees of A.S. Watson prove that the feeling of pressure causes employees to use the formal WLB arrangements for the wrong purpose. Therefore, formal WLB arrangements at A.S. Watson seem to be used in the wrong way and this does not increase the job satisfaction of employees. The organization offers employees the opportunity to organize their work in a preferred way by offering flexible work arrangements and giving high autonomy in work. In that sense, the organization trusts employees in handling their tasks and giving them the freedom to do so. Not everyone at A.S. Watson seems to use the arrangements and therefore it is not yet common in the organization. However, when the organization advocates freedom in work, they have to make sure that managers and employees have sufficient knowledge about the available formal WLB arrangements and how to use these.

The family domain seems to have an important impact on the WLB of employees of A.S. Watson. However, the life part of WLB seems to be a combination of different life domains (family, profession, and community). When A.S. Watson gets a better understanding of how different life domains influence the WLB of employees, it could take these important aspects into account and try to design functions of employees, thereby contributing to a better experienced WLB of employees. Also, other formal WLB arrangements could be designed that support demands from domains other than the family domain. Development in work and life and the possibility to create a clear separation between work and employees' lives seem to be important factors that can be taken into account.

5.2.5 Recommendations for practice

The highly demanding organizational context of A.S. Watson seems to encourage employees to work more at the expense of their private time. Besides, the ad-hoc way of solving problems at A.S. Watson stimulates the high workload as well. A.S. Watson should respond to this by setting clear goals and train employees how to deal with this. The managers in the organization should mainly focus on the results and less on how they are achieved. Currently, the organization also focuses on their goals, but these goals are mainly long-term goals. Employees explain that there is always more work than can be done in a given day and planning work and non-work activities is experienced as one of the biggest challenges in

work. If employees knew their short-term goals, they could focus on these and distinguish priorities in work from side issues more easily. Managers and employees must be trained to know how to work in a result-oriented way.

At A.S. Watson WLB is high on their priority list because they know that WLB is very important for the organization because employees are seen as a competitive advantage. The purpose of WLB arrangements at A.S. Watson is to create more autonomy and flexibility for employees to be more productive in work and non-work activities. This goal cannot be achieved when the employees experience only the disadvantages of formal WLB arrangements. It is important that the highly demanding organizational context of A.S. Watson does not encourage employees to work more at the expense of their WLB. A.S. Watson should promote the WLB arrangements more and should explain how to use them. It has to become common for all employees to use the WLB arrangements, which makes it also possible to use them for the right purpose. The managers of A.S. Watson should lead the way by example. They should no longer email or call employees during their vacations or in the weekends. This creates the expectation that employees are busy with work all the time. Managers need to become aware of this.

When A.S. Watson wants to create opportunities for a better WLB of employees it is important that the organization knows which life events occur in employees' lives and how these affect the WLB of employees. The knowledge of different life events that can occur in employees' lives which influence different life domains could help A.S. Watson to support WLB in a more holistic way and could help to create the right WLB arrangements. A.S. Watson should create WLB arrangements in a more holistic way to be responsive to other life domains than the family domain only. Currently, A.S. Watson is offering only collective formal WLB arrangements. It seems that individual arrangements discussed between the employee and the manager could cater better for the needs of the individual. Examples could be leave arrangements to care for friends with a serious illness or the possibility for unpaid leave for study or travel. Managers should regularly facilitate discussions on these topics, depending on individual needs.

The above-mentioned recommendations could provide a better way for organizations to contribute to the WLB of employees.

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Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Inleiding (initiation phase)

- Stel jezelf voor en geef uitleg over het onderzoek
- Stel geïnterviewde op zijn of haar gemak
- Behandel onderwerpen gegevensgebruik en anonimiteit
- Vraag toestemming geluidsapparatuur
- Geef structuur van het interview aan

Inleidende vragen:

- Hoe oud ben je?
- Hoe lang werk je al bij A.S. Watson?
- Welke dagen werk je bij A.S. Watson?
- Wat is je functie binnen A.S. Watson?
- Hoe kan je jouw huidige functie omschrijven?

Geef uitleg over de manier van interviewen en gebruik daarbij een tijdlijn om de loop van het werkzame leven bij A.S. Watson van werknemers te schetsen. Wanneer was het vinden het balans het moeilijkst en wanneer kreeg de medewerker de juiste WLB-arrangementen aangereikt die bijdroegen aan de balans?

Het verhaal (main narration)

Doel: inzicht krijgen in de mate van ondersteuning van WLB-arrangementen die medewerkers ervaren op het gebied van WLB tijdens verschillende levensgebeurtenissen in het werkende leven bij A.S. Watson.

Vraag:

Welke gebeurtenissen zijn voor jou belangrijk geweest in je werkende leven en hebben invloed gehad op je werkende leven? Welke formele WLB-arrangementen zijn ingezet tijdens deze gebeurtenissen ingezet?

Uitleg:

je mag daarbij de hulp van de tijdlijn gebruiken om punten aan te geven die belangrijk zijn geweest in het werkende leven

Aanvullende voorbeeldvragen:

- Wat kan je hier nog meer over vertellen?
- Wat gebeurde er daarvoor/daarna/toen?
- Kan je dat uitleggen?
- Dus je bedoelt dat...?
- Welke impact had dit op de balans tussen je werk en privéleven?

Tip: Gebruik indicators uit operationaliseringsschema als topics.

Vragen m.b.t. WLB arrangementen (questioning phase)

Doel vragen m.b.t. formele WLB arrangementen: inzicht krijgen in de organisatorische arrangementen die van invloed zijn op WLB, welke nog niet aanbod zijn gekomen in de vorige fase.

Opmerking: het is belangrijk door te vragen naar specifieke voorbeelden en verdere uitleg wanneer de medewerker aangeeft dat een van de arrangementen van invloed is. De vragen met een '→' zijn voorbeelden van vragen die gesteld kunnen worden om door te vragen op het onderwerp.

- Wat doet A.S. Watson om je WLB te ondersteunen? (*policies and practices*)
- Wat zou A.S. Watson volgens jou moeten doen?
- Welke specifieke WLB arrangementen gebruik je of heb je gebruikt in je werkzame leven?
- Welke arrangementen mis je als ondersteuning voor een goede balans tussen je werk en privéleven?
- Wat is jouw ervaring met WLB arrangementen?

- In hoeverre krijg je de ruimte om WLB arrangementen te gebruiken?
- In hoeverre beïnvloeden WLB arrangementen jouw WLB?

Tip: Gebruik het document met WLB arrangementen van A.S. Watson als ondersteuning om mensen inzicht te geven in welke WLB arrangementen er allemaal zijn.

Afsluiting interview (concluding talk)

- Wil je nog iets toevoegen?
- Heb je zelf nog vragen?
- Bedanken voor de medewerking.

Appendix 2 - Interview guide translated in English

Preface (initiation phase)

- Introduce yourself and explain the research
- Make it comfortable for the interviewee
- Describe the topics of data use and anonymity
- Request permission for audio equipment
- Indicate the structure of the interview

Introductory questions:

- How old are you?
- How long have you been working at A.S. Watson?
- What are your working days at A.S. Watson?
- What is your function at A.S. Watson?
- Could you describe your current position at A.S. Watson?

Explain the method of interviewing and the use of a visual timeline about the course of employees' working life at A.S. Watson. When was it the most difficult to find balance between work and life and when do the employees experience support of WLB arrangements that contribute to the employees' WLB?

The story (main narration)

Goal: to gain insights into the degree of support of WLB arrangements experienced by employees during different life events, during the course of employees' working life at A.S. Watson.

Question:

Which life events have been important in your working life at A.S. Watson and influenced your working life? Which formal WLB arrangements were used during these events?

Explanation:

You may use the help of the timeline to indicate points that have been important in your working life.

Additional sample questions:

- What else can you tell about this?
- What happened before/after/then?
- Could you explain yourself?
- So, you mean...?
- What impact did this have on the balance between your work and private life?

Tip: Use the indicators from the operationalization as topics.

Questions regarding WLB arrangements (questioning phase)

Goal questions regarding formal WLB arrangements: to gain insights into the organizational arrangements that affect WLB, which have not been discussed in the previous phase.

Note: it is important to ask for specific examples and further explanation when the employee indicated that one of the arrangements influence their WLB. The questions with a '→' are examples of questions that can be asked to get further explanations.

- What offers A.S. Watson to support your WLB? (*policies and practices*)
→ What should A.S. Watson offer?
- Which specific WLB arrangements do you use or have you used in your working life?
→ Which kind of arrangements should be developed by the organization to contribute a good balance between your work and private life?
- What is your experience with WLB arrangements?

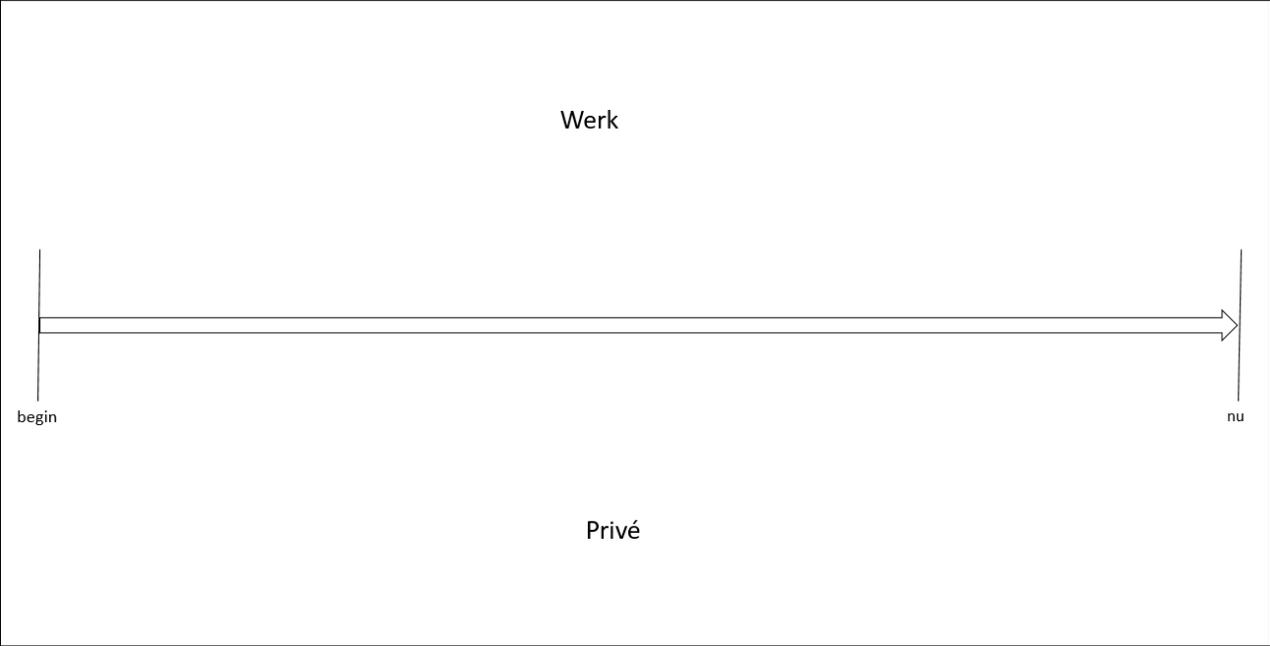
- Do you get the opportunity to use the WLB arrangements?
- To what extent do WLB arrangements influence your WLB?

Tip: Use the document with WLB arrangements of A.S. Watson as a support for employees to show which arrangements are available.

Closing interview (concluding talk)

- Do you want to add anything else?
- Do you have any questions?
- Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix 3 – Interview technique, a visual timeline



Appendix 4 – Operationalization

| Concept | Dimension | Indicator |
|---|------------------|--|
| <p>C1 Work-Life Balance</p> <p>Theoretical definition: <i>“Work-Life Balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life priorities”</i> (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p. 326).</p> | <p>C1.1 Work</p> | <p>Job characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job position • Job activities • Years in service <p>Employer domain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job requirements • Working hours • Availability • Workload |
| <p>Operationalized definition: <i>the perception of an employee at A.S. Watson that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with the current life priorities the employee.</i></p> | <p>C1.2 Life</p> | <p>C1.2.1 Life events</p> <p>Theoretical definition: <i>“events requiring change in ongoing life adjustment”</i> (Holmes & Rahe, 1967, p.213).</p> <p>Operationalized definition: events in employee’s life which require changes in ongoing life adjustment.</p> <p>Positive life events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone in the family with a serious illness, accident or injury |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict at home (including divorce) • Relationship problems (break-up) • Lack of money for basics <p>Stressful life events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone in the family with a serious illness, accident or injury • Conflict at home (including divorce) • Relationship problems (break-up) • Lack of money for basics <p>C1.2.2 Life domains</p> <p>Theoretical definition: “environment that affect people at different levels of interaction” (Voydanoff, 2014).</p> <p>Operationalized definition: areas in which employees live and interact with each other which creates patterns of interaction between individuals and groups.</p> |
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| | | <p>Family domain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback and guidance • Financial resources • Caregiving <p>Community domain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious position • Hobbies • Social network • Leisure life <p>Profession domain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career decisions • Development opportunities • Work conferences |
| | C1.3 Balance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compatible work and non-work activities • Growth possibility |
| <p>C2 Formal WLB arrangements</p> <p>Theoretical definition: <i>“Practices that enhance the autonomy of workers in the process of coordinating an integrating work and non-work aspects of their lives”</i> (Felstead et al., 2002, p.56).</p> <p>Operationalized definition:</p> | C2.1 WLB programs (Hobson, 1998) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care assistance • General programs |
| | C2.2 WLB policies (Hobson, 1998) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible work arrangements • Leave arrangements |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| arrangements that enhance the autonomy of employees in the process of coordinating an integrating work and non-work aspects of their lives. | | |
|---|--|--|

Appendix 5 – Initial template

C1 Work-Life Balance

C1.1 Work

C1.1.1 Job characteristics

C1.1.1.1 Job position

C1.1.1.2 Job activities

C1.1.1.3 Years in service

C1.1.2 Employer domain

C1.1.2.1 Job requirements

C1.1.2.2 Working hours

C1.1.2.3 Availability

C1.1.2.4 Workload

C1.2 Life

C1.2.1 Stressful life events

C1.2.1.1 Someone in the family with a serious illness, accident or injury

C1.2.1.2 Conflict at home (including divorce)

C1.2.1.3 Relationship problems (break-up)

C1.2.1.4 Lack of money for basics

C1.2.2 Positive life events

C1.2.2.1 Marriage

C1.2.2.2 Birth of a baby

C1.2.3 Family domain

C1.2.3.1 Feedback and guidance

C1.2.3.2 Financial resources

C1.2.3.3 Caregiving

C1.2.4 Community domain

C1.2.4.1 Religious position

C1.2.4.2 Hobbies

C1.2.4.3 Social network

C1.2.4.4 Leisure life

C1.2.5 Profession domain

C 1.2.5.1 Career decisions

C 1.2.5.2 Development opportunities

C 1.2.5.3 Work conferences

C1.3 Balance

C1.3.1 Compatible work and non-work activities

C1.3.2 Growth possibility

C2 Formal WLB arrangements

C2.1 WLB programs

C2.1.1 Care assistance

C2.1.2 General programs

C2.2 WLB policies

C2.2.1 Flexible work arrangements

C2.2.2 Leave arrangements

Appendix 6 – Final template

C1 WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work-Life Balance of employees

C1.1 Work

C1.1.1 Nature of job

C1.1.1.1 Years in service

C1.1.1.2 Job position

C1.1.1.3 Working days

C1.1.1.4 Job changes

C1.1.2 Professional autonomy

C1.1.2.1 Availability

C1.1.2.2 Plan own working days

C1.1.2.3 Flexibility in work

C1.1.3 Employer domain

C1.1.3.1 Culture of organization

C1.1.3.2 Job requirements

C1.1.3.3 Working hours

C1.2 Life

C1.2.1 Stressful life events

C1.2.1.1 Someone in the family died or with a serious illness

C1.2.1.2 Dealing with a disease

C1.2.2 Positive life events

C1.2.2.1 Pregnancy

C1.2.2.2 Birth of a baby

C1.2.2.3 Buying a new house

C1.2.3 Family domain

C1.2.3.1 Feedback and guidance

C1.2.3.2 Financial resources

C1.2.3.3 Caregiving

C1.2.3.4 Dual earners pressure

C1.2.4 Community domain

C1.2.4.1 Hobbies

C1.2.4.2 Social network

C1.2.4.3 Leisure life

C1.2.4.4 Vacation

C1.2.5 Profession domain

C1.2.5.1 Career decisions

C1.2.5.2 Development opportunities

C1.2.5.3 Appreciation of work

C1.2.5.4 Job security

C1.2.5.5 Intense event at work

C1.3 Balance

C1.3.1 Experience of satisfaction in work and life

C1.3.1 Growth possibility

C1.3.2 Challenge in life

C1.3.2 Clear separation of work and life

C1.3.3 Being able to perform well in work and in life

C2.1 WLB programs

C2.1.1 General programs

C2.1.1.1 Psychological counselling

C2.2 WLB policies

C2.2.1 Flexible work arrangements

C2.2.1.1 Space flexibility

C2.2.1.2 Time flexibility

C2.2.2 Leave arrangements

C2.2.2.1 Maternity leave

C2.2.2.2 Parental leave

C2.2.2.3 Care leave

C2.2.2.4 Sabbatical

C2 FORMAL WLB ARRANGEMENTS

WLB programs influencing WLB of employees

Appendix 7 – Code list

1. Accident
2. Acquisition of work during vacation
3. Availability
4. Autonomy in work
5. Be aware of your WLB
6. Benefits work in a different place
7. Benefits working from home
8. Care assistance
9. Caregiving
10. Caregiving priority
11. Caregiving, no longer needed
12. Career decisions
13. CEO died
14. CEO died and pregnant
15. Changes in work
16. Cohabitation
17. Combination of private life and work
18. Compatible work and non-work activities
19. Conflicting work and non-work activities
20. Dealing with a disease
21. Define clear boundaries
22. Development flexibility organization
23. Development flexible work arrangements
24. Development opportunities organization
25. Development support
26. Development WLB

27. Difficult combination of work and private life
28. Disadvantage flexible organization
29. Disadvantage working at the office
30. Disadvantage working from home
31. Dual earners pressure
32. Elderly policy
33. Exemplary role
34. Expectation and adjustment of private life
35. Expectation of family
36. Family priority
37. Family time
38. Father-in-law died
39. Feedback social network
40. Feedback wife
41. Financial resources
42. Flexibility in private life
43. Flexibility in work
44. Flexible work arrangement use during vacation
45. Flexible work arrangements
46. Flexible work arrangements experience
47. Flexible working hours
48. Formal arrangement opportunity
49. Friend died
50. Growth possibility
51. Growth possibility limited
52. Growth possibility not obvious
53. Guidance of manager
54. Hobbies
55. HR development
56. Husband became ill
57. Husband died

58. Importance Work-Life Balance
59. Importance development support of organization
60. Intense event at work
61. Job activities
62. Job enlargement
63. Job position
64. Job position changes
65. Job pressure
66. Job pressure improvement needed
67. Job security
68. Keep balance
69. Knowledge of changing life conditions of employees
70. Lack of challenge in work
71. Leave arrangements
72. Leisure life
73. Leisure time
74. Life priorities
75. Limited WLB arrangements available
76. Low private life priority
77. Maternity
78. Maternity leave
79. Maternity wish
80. More work when you have a higher position at work
81. Mother became ill
82. Need for challenge in work
83. Negative appreciation of manager
84. Overtime
85. Parental leave
86. Part-time work

87. Part-time work after childbirth
88. Part-time work not preferred
89. Part-time work preferred
90. Paternity
91. Perfect balance experience
92. Personal experience no balance
93. Physical complaints
94. Planning and autonomy in work
95. Planning after childbirth
96. Planning in private life
97. Planning in work
98. Planning work and non-work activities
99. Positive appreciation of manager
100. Positive appreciation of work
101. Preference combination of maternity and work
102. Preference combination of paternity and work
103. Pregnancy
104. Preventive actions absence
105. Preventive actions WLB
106. Private life priority
107. Psychological counselling
108. Renovation
109. Request for help
110. Request for help too late
111. Requirements from organization
112. Restlessness at work
113. Sabbatical
114. Sabbatical approval manager
115. Serious illness
116. Set priorities

- 117. Sick but still working
- 118. Social network
- 119. Someone in the family with a serious illness
- 120. Space in order to process
- 121. Support colleagues
- 122. Support of manager
- 123. Support of organization
- 124. Support of organization limited
- 125. Support partner
- 126. The old way of working culture
- 127. Too much work
- 128. Travel time
- 129. Turn off work
- 130. Unpaid leave option
- 131. Use of flexible work arrangements
- 132. Use of flexible work arrangements in private time
- 133. Vacation preparation work
- 134. Various agreements about flexible work arrangements
- 135. Visibility
- 136. Wife died
- 137. Wish in life
- 138. WLB complaints
- 139. Work after intense event in life
- 140. Work priority
- 141. Work priority when you start
- 142. Working atmosphere
- 143. Working days
- 144. Working from home
- 145. Working from home experience
- 146. Working from home policy
- 147. Working hours

148. Years in service