WORK LIFE BALANCE

IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

IN IRELAND

What are the drivers that impact on the employee and employer achieving a good work life balance/ work family balance?

Work Life Balance

Abstract

The challenge to sustain a balance between work life and personal life has grown over recent years significantly in society. For the employees, they face ever increasing time pressure, bigger workloads and mounting barriers to fulfilling both personal and job demands. In an employee's role the demand for efficiency leads to more responsibilities, and these have to be completed in a shorter period of time. High customer satisfaction and demands means that employees have to work increasing number of business hours, the results are longer terms of absence from their families.

This study will show that there are unpredictable demands of work life balance (WLB) in the automotive industry, and this is the biggest challenges for employees in the modern society. Research reveals that there are a growing percentage of employees who are overstrained from merging the work domain with the family domain, resulting in an increasing number of sick days which are due to psychological diseases (Frone et al., (1992). This absenteeism because of psychological illness is often prolonged and sustains sizeable costs for the employer. Employer's motivation will be to consider the balance between work and family life of their employees in order to reduce this cost.

Over the years, various research has been carried out to enable a better understanding of the effects of the imbalance between work and family domains and the possible outcomes as discussed by (Anderson et al., 2002; Higgins et al., 2000). What is more, the influencing factors and drivers that make up successful WLB for employees has seen far less research to verify the situation.

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material which I now submit for assessment of the Programme of study leading to the award of an MBA is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed_____

Dated_____29th August 2014_____

Student Number_____12115321_____

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1   Work Life Balance / Work Family Balance

1.1   Introduction

The objective of this paper is to discuss and explore various aspects of Work life Balance (WLB) from employers/employees in a senior management roles in the automotive industry. The areas covered will define where possible, what the drivers of WLB are for employees in this atypical work environment of the automobile sector. The research will seek to define what (WLB) is and what Work Family Balance (WFB) means to these employees. In doing so the research will seek to define the potential positive and negative aspects of WLB as perceived by the respondents. While much of the research on WLB has focused on traditional roles in typical 9-5 work environments this research will seek to understand if the concept of WLB is evident in an atypical work environment, and if so, what form it takes.

To provide some context Fleetwood (2007) has described "Work Life balance as about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work". Recent events in the economy have resulted in major changes within the automotive industry where downsizing has an effect working environment. Longer working hours, evenings, Saturday and Sunday shifts, greater travelling for those not office based, all this is an effort to accommodate the needs of customers. Major competition in the industry is summarised by overcapacity, high market saturation mainly in Europe, soaring labour and fixed costs. There a requirements for constant innovation and development of all the product line up. As the industry is consolidating with several mergers, very few global players control the automotive market, resulting in major barriers to entry for newcomers.

Due to a high need for vehicle transportation in Europe, demand is largely based on replacement. This has led to a considerably shortened product life cycle and to frequently differentiating brands and models. Lean margins force auto manufacturers to focus more attention on after sales services in an effort to improve their profitability.

So while there is evidence of the positive aspects of WLB in a traditional 9-5 type organisation little exists on atypical or non-standard workplace like the automotive industry. This research seeks to examine if it is desirable and secondly possible to incorporate elements of WLB into this type of environment.

Over the last two decades the challenges have grown significantly for employees to try maintaining a balance between work life and personal life. Stock et al. (2007) contend that with greater workload, increasing time pressure, employees have to overcome these issues in satisfying both job and personal demands. The importance of a WLB strategy in the workplace will be beneficial to both the employer and the employee alike according to the extent literature.

The transferability of the concept to atypical environments has yet to be fully tested and this research will fill that gap in the literature.

1.2 Definition

Work life Balance is a theory that deals with the capacity of an individual regardless of their age or gender to allow them deal with lives demands that of work and or work actions (Hughes and Bonzionelos 2007). It would appear there is general understanding of WLB in finding a satisfying relationship between the interviewee's career and their private life.

Work-family-balance means finding a satisfying relationship between the professional and the life outside work and this appears to be the common understanding. As well as the scholars the practitioners strongly link WLB to the outcome satisfaction. There are three elements of work family balance according to Greenhaus et al. (2003). Element one: time balance, (equal time spent on both roles), Element two: involvement balance, (spending equal time involved in work and family), and element three: satisfaction balance, (equal satisfaction with work and family). A definition of Work life balance (WLB) Greenhaus et al. (2003) is the level that a person is engaged in and is equally similarly satisfied with both with work responsibility and family roles.

The search for this balance of a high quality of life not only affects the individual, it has an impact on the employer. McMillan et al. (2010) argue that work life issues have a consequence on all concerned irrespective of their gender, race, job status, religion and where they are in the family unit. Everyone will be impacted in the goal to get the correct balance, therefore WLB is an important personal and organisational issue which requires research to inform both employers and employees of a good practice.

The literature points to a number of positive benefits of WLB for employees. Kalliath and Brough (2008) state that it is a person's sensitivity towards work and family life balance that gives their life style priorities. This enables growth and is beneficial to the person's lifestyle. Further observations by Greenblatt (2002) that the definition that WLB should bring satisfaction and performance both at home and in the work place, must be with a minimum of conflict, and characterises that "the absence of unacceptable levels of conflict between work and non-work demands', this is defined as harmony.

To discuss the employment side of WLB Armstrong (2006) argues that WLB employment traditions are focused on allowing the employee the scope and freedom to balance the family life and working roles. This enables the employee to resolve conflicting work or home issues and meet their own needs. By empowering the employees as described by Redmond et al., (2006) with the scope to balance their roles, this is then complemented by the employee's statutory entitlements under protective legislation, using the examples of part time or flexitime working and to a greater extent job sharing.

Over the years, broad research has been carried out to better understand and to determine possible outcomes and effects and disproportion between the domains of work and family (Anderson et al. 2002, Higgins et al. 2000), on the other hand, much less research has been carried out to define what influencing factors form a successful work family balance for the employee and employer alike.

Therefore this research will seek to define what the drivers of WLB are and how they interact between both domains; how employers can assist by striving to drive cultural change within their organisations to create environments that are more favourable to WLB and how companies may need to re-evaluate their existing performance management systems to take account of these changes.

1.3   What is Work Life

There are a wide variety of definitions for WLB. Clark (2000) defines WLB as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict". This definition will demonstrate where an individual who has a high work-family-balance feels a low work (role) family (role) conflict, and an individual who has considerable work family conflicts feels a low level of WLB.

This thesis likewise concurs with Clarks (2000) observations. Kirchmeyer (2000) explains work family-balance (WFB) as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains". In an attempt to include a positive and negative balance, Greenhaus et al (2003), define work family balance as "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with her or his work and family role". These authors consider work family balance as the equilibrium of the following three components: time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. This is confirmed by many of the interviewees in their responses.

1.4   Background to the Research

This research concerns work life balance in the automotive industry in Ireland. There has been a significant increase in the importance of the outcomes of WLB and this has drawn attention to the factors and drivers that assist or worsen this balance. The literature providing background for this research encompasses work life balance drivers that effect individual and businesses in both domains that of the professional and family life. So how do employees in the automotive industry sector achieve a WLB that will meet their expectations?

The research will therefore seek to define the key drivers that lead to a balance of the two domains between family and work. The aims and objectives of this thesis are to respond with answers. Work life balance is the theory relating to the challenge of balancing rival demands faced by individuals due to the multiple roles they fill. This has been a topic of interest of many researchers for decades (for example) Lewis, (2001) and (Towers et al, 2006). The origins of this topic happened because of the changing workforce predominantly when women entered the workforce during World War ll, Roberts (2007). Over two decades organisations acknowledged the need to provide an opportunity for WLB as the endeavoured to hang on to and recruit staff Lewis, (2003). Other WLB research has determined the changes of technology has on society, (Towers et al., 2006) and the way in which individuals view the role of work in their lives, Porter, (2004).

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a practical evaluation of WLB in the Irish Automotive industry. The intention of the interviews is to assess the understanding and the relevance of WLB for employees and employers in everyday practice. Secondly, depending on the employee's satisfaction with WLB, the practical consequences for the employees and for the company are listed while compared with outcomes proposed by theory. Third, the focus of research is on the interviewee's perceptions concerning the main drivers of WLB, and recognizes the differences and similarities compared to the research findings.

In an effort to control other variables, this study concludes with an assessment of the company culture within the industry and the relationship between it and work life balance. Conversely, as interviewee 5 argues, new communication technology, with the success of smart phones, leads you to a feeling of constant 24-hour availability, thereby violating the old bounders between work and private life. As a consequence he evaluates the new technology as a negative driver of work-family-balance (WFB).

Interviewee No.7 criticizes "digital technological as it has a negative impact, with the advent of working from home with Skype, e-mail etc, there is an expectation that *you* are available 24/7. It needs to be controlled by the person, sometimes it is easier to get work done at weekends as there are no distractions and I use weekends to catch up, not good really, is it?"

1.6 The Research Question and Research Issues

The purpose of this research is to explore the issue of WLB in the automotive industry in Ireland from the employee and the employer point of view. The research question is:

What are the drivers that impact on the employee and employer achieving a good work life balance/ work family balance?

Section 1 outlines the literature that has been reviewed to provide a basis of knowledge for the researcher. In particular, the comprehensive literature review supports and highlights the significance of the research topic, research question and the research issues. There are two types of the literature review: work life balance and work family balance literature.

1.7 Thesis Structure

This structure is based on an introduction to WLB, it goes on to provide a definition as discussed by various academics of their interpretation of what WLB is? The author provides a background to the paper and the research. Then this paper endeavours to define what are the drivers, both positive and negative of achieving a satisfactory WLB. The final aspect is to define the research question and research issues.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Many academics have written extensively on this and similar topics and there appears to be various views on what exactly WLB / WFB actually is? The definition of WLB by Clark (2000) states that WLB occurs when there is "Satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict." Clark (2000) further argues that a person who has high WFB feels lower conflict in their roles in the family and work, however the person who has increased levels of work family conflicts feels a lower WLB.

Kirchmeyer (2000) defines WFB as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains." While attempting to include both the positive and negative balance Greenhaus et al. (2003), describes WFB as "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with his or her work and family role." Having reviews these three definitions the theory Greenhaus et al. (2003) will form the basis of this paper. The elements in the description by Greenhaus et al. (2003) appear to the individual as they are achieving the most out of life.

Regarding changes in the industry Mathur et al, (2013) argue the response to shifts in the ever changing labour market and changes in the nature of working environments have altered the operations of many Governments and major businesses. While traditionally the focus was placed on enabling family friendly work places this is now recognised as more than WLB. It's about helping families with their working activities that will fit with their other responsibilities, lifestyles and as importantly, their work. In the struggle for employers to maintain a competitive advantage, many company's need to seek to engage with their workforce.

Gunnigle, Hearty & Morley (2002) debate that the tradition of relying on many industry best practices to gain the industry advantages is no longer available.

This results in employers tapping in to their human resources as a way of managing the changes in their business circumstances. As part of the recognition by employers that this WLB can lead ultimately to gains in efficiency via increased staff retention, this allows companies to respond to the needs of their customers in a positive way. It would appear from the research that social and employers support are drivers in achieving the required balance. Consideration should be given to WLB in a digital/mobile work arena, the fast pace and development of information technology, along with globalization, has changed today's workplace, however certain tasks of the roles will need an element of personal input (Burtless 1995). There are many drivers that can affect an individual's work life balance.

The main two are the working role and the non work role that will include family, community, and interests outside of work and family increasingly through hobbies and sports. Other drivers include many of the activities outside the work role, such as driving to and from work, dropping children to schools etc, these activities all eat into the personal time and sometimes place further stress on the individual (Baltes, Heydens, Gahir, 2003).

For almost every employee the issue of job satisfaction is usually high on their agenda. Aspirations for a better quality of life is one of the driving forces of a life of balance, so the time for work and time to spend on quality of life can be achieved. According to Burton (2004) balance means that nothing is absolutely static and unchanging routines cannot be rigid and unchangeable. They must be adaptable, which means you must have the flexibility to maintain a balance. We all need balance in our lives, the important issue is how to prioritise.

2.2   Potential Positive Aspects of Work Life Balance

The literature has identified a number of positive aspects to WLB. The key positive benefits are (1) The Company reaches its aims and objectives. (2) Employees are offered flexitime. (3) These are to the benefit of parental employees allowing them to work around the children's schooling etc. (4) Significant cost saving to the company with less absenteeism, and fewer illnesses. (5) Lower cost to the company with less overtime. (6) Supervisory support and encouragement to employees. When a company is in a good situation where the employees are loyal, satisfied and committed, resulting in a greater contribution to the overall company objectives with positive results for the company, with improved business performance and better results. (Perry-Smith/Blum, 2000).

The general health of a company's employees is vital as they are less open to diseases, from a physically and psychologically aspect. The prevention of employee illness/diseases decreases the absenteeism rate and is vital to the future growth of the company (Perry et al. 2000). Furthermore, one of the drivers of WLB is to which a supervisor/ managers offer encouragement to their employees and pay heed for both domains. Thomas and Ganster (1995) referred to "supervisor support" in their studies which demonstrated that implementing an improved WFB when the supervisor acts in an understanding manner is likely to be more successful.

2.3   Potential Negative Aspects of Work Life Balance

While many companies support employees with an offer of flexitime, this transfers the burden of trying to juggle the staff rosters to meet the work demand of a 24/7 business culture. Many managers are left to fill in the gaps and take up the slack all in an effort to provide the employee with the flexibility of have a work life balance (Drew et al. 2003). A 2002 study showed that managers did more than their fair share to keep everything going in the work place, this leads to another problem for the managers, that their subordinates take up work life balance options as a result of suiting the staff with flexitime, it then removes the balance for the managers, (Drew et al. 2003).

In contrast Perry et al. (2000) argues that those employees who have achieved their WLB demonstrate notably higher performance than those firms where employees are faced with regular work family conflicts. The long term effects result in higher costs for the company due to high employee turnover and the costs associated with retraining of new staff. There are other issues that affect the balance, including: commuting time to and from the persons place of employment, dropping children to school or to child minding services or crèche, (Baltes et al. 2003) argue that this is another considerable work demand as it absorbs time which otherwise could have been spent in personal life with family.

Sometimes there can be negative aspects of a poor WLB culture within a company which can restrict the company's ability to recruit new employees. Many gains can be achieved by implementing new supports and resources. Where a company implements a WLB policy this can only be effective if employees are willing to use it. "Every employee has his or her own threshold and thus WFB is a highly individualized concept where needs and beliefs differ significantly between people" (Kaiser et al. 2010).

On the other side Fisher (2000) has a view that all firms operating family-friendly working arrangements found them to be doing well, and they would be advocates of these types of flexible activities to other companies. Sometimes people have a perception that they experience a sense of having achieved a satisfactory resolution of work and family domains as argued by Higgins et al. (2000). Job security is a high priority and a vale threat that hangs over many employees who perceive their job is insecure. This results in higher rate of work family conflict, and a lack of well-being (Beham et al., 2011, & Edwards et al., 1999).

Spill-over is a common term use by many including, Adams et al. (1996), which defines where there are not enough resources available to satisfy both domain demands or if demands are excluding each other, this results in a conflict or spill over.

They, also propose that "work family conflict arises when demands of participation in one domain are incompatible with demands of participation in the other domain" (Adams al., 1996).

In an article from The Mental Health foundation the highest percentage of respondents equalling two thirds stated that they experienced a negative effect on their personal life by the lack of WLB "including lack of personal development, physical and mental health problems, and poor relationships and poor home life".

In summary all employers not only have a responsibility to ensure the well being of their staff, but a healthy and productive workforce is critical to the overall health and performance of an organisation.

Despite this fact, there are many barriers which continue to exist within organisations preventing WLB from becoming a reality for many. It must be recognised that this is an ongoing journey for all companies, however for those who persevere will see the benefits, by differentiating the company within the markets and creating healthy and engaged employees. This objective of this paper is to identify the many factors and drivers that affect the WLB of employees in the automotive industry and seek to identify a number of approaches to overcome these drivers.

How an individual perceives work and the attachment they place on it is likely to impact upon their ability to manage the balance between work and non-work domains. This is why employees can never be viewed as a homogenous group as each one have a unique set of values and views regarding work and life outside of work.

2.4 Individual Perceptions Influencing Work Life Balance

2.4.1 Individual Perceptions of What Work Means

As description by Porter (2004) that "the meaning of work has varied across time and culture, a curse, a calling, a social obligation, a natural activity, a means to a better life or simply what we do because we have to".

This definition can be inclusive and be broad because it identifies the diversity of work related conditions individuals come across in their life. However Lewis (2003) suggests that "work is often defined in terms of obligated time, whether paid or unpaid". This definition covers the many activities most people deemed to be work related. In this definition consideration must be given to many aspect of life outside work in particular travelling to and from work and household chores , this is considered some of life's activities or work although it is unpaid.

2.4.2 Individual Perceptions of Life Outside of Work

The definition of life according to Lewis (2003) was that the technological revolution was believed to increase the time for leisure, thus allowing individual the prospect of getting involved in other activities and gain variety in their life. However people are now working longer hours than pre revolution workers Evans, (2000). The weekend was time for break from work unless your employment involved shifts, this was time for individual to partake in family/leisure activities, and this is what (Towers et al., 2006) argues there is a clear division between life and work.

It could be said that people are working excessive hours and for some this is a source of concern, while many have the ability to find a balance in stretched timetables. This reinforces the idea that attitudes to WLB are down to the individual Porter (2004). This enables some individual to manage their duties while others feel absolutely challenged by the priorities.

2.4.3 Perceptions With Regards to Sense of Identity

Many people draw a sense of identity from their work, Ahmad (2003) debates that people previously has a sense of belonging, with attachment to family, friends, and their church, and now it's the workplace that provides that belonging. For some individuals work provides not only a meaningful place to go to but according to Lewis (2003) it can be a place where people feel less stressed and even happier. Pitonyak (2002) describes "A sense of belonging," appears to be a basic human need as basic as food and shelter. In fact, social support may be one of the critical elements distinguishing those who remain healthy from those who become ill." It would appear that the sense of belonging is very important to individuals, in the author's opinion most people have a need to feel that they belong to something.

2.4.4 Perceptions With Regard to the Importance of Equal Balance in Both Domains of Work and Non-Work

Kirchmeyer (2000) defines work family balance (WFB) as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains. For almost every employee the issue of job satisfaction is usually high on their agenda. Aspirations for a better quality of life is one of the driving forces of a life of balance, so the time for work and time to spend on quality of life can be achieved. Nevertheless we shouldn't underestimate the importance of time outside work, with the chance to recharge our batteries. It is in everyone's interest, managers, employees, and companies to take responsibility for using their holiday leave, to exploit these opportunities to the full. There are well established laws regarding the total maximum working hours annual leave in Ireland (See appendix 3). "Every employee has his or her own threshold" (Kaiser et al. 2010), and thus work family balance is a highly individualized concept where needs and beliefs differ significantly between people. It would appear from the interviews that because the balance in tipped towards the employer that the individual needs to take more control over the lives in order to achieve a satisfactory WLB.

2.5 Flexibility

Opportunities for flexible working arrangements, while some of the workers benefit from the positive effects of flexibility and good job quality, others are trapped in forms of employment where flexibility is required *of* them, rather than *for* them Girard (2010). As the positive effects of the flexibility benefit some employees others are trapped in situations where this flexibility is expected of them rather than for them.

While many companies support employees with an offer of flexitime, this transfers the burden of trying to juggle the staff rosters to meet the work demand of a 24/7 business culture. Many managers are left to fill in the gaps and take up the slack all in an effort to provide the employee with the flexibility to have a WLB, (Drew et al. 2003). This in turn can result in further stresses and strains on management.

On the whole admin staff have the luxury of leaving the office on time every night, however front line staff are required to see out the customer's requirements. This in turn reduces the managers own WLB according to Drew et al. (2003).   The transfer of the burden on managers to provide the staff with the flexibility removes the manager's ability to balance their own family and work domains.

As propose by Adams (1996) that "work family conflict arises when demands of participation in one domain are incompatible with demands of participation in the other domain". To facilitate the strong customer demands within the industry, there are many occasions where management are lumbered with the task to fill in the gaps for other staff members that finish up at the official office hours of business. This is irrespective of what is happening in the business. The balance is tilted towards management in three incidents.

2.6 Consciousness of Employees Work Life Balance

Over the last two decades the challenges have grown significantly for employees to try maintaining a balance between work life and personal life (Stock et al, 2007). They further contest that with greater workload, increasing time pressure, employees have to overcome these issues in satisfying both job and personal demands. The importance of a WLB strategy is beneficial to both the employer and the employee alike. It would appear from the literature that there are benefits to both employers and employees to strike the balance. Thomas and Ganster (1995) referred to "supervisor support" in their studies which demonstrated that implementing an improved work family balance when the supervisor acts in an understanding manner is likely to be more successful.

Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority stated that the "Irish workplace is increasingly diverse. (djei.ie 2004) there are more people with disabilities, carers, older people and ethnic minority people in the workplace. There are many more families where both parents are working". He further argues that diversity demands flexibility in how work is planned. It will also need the implementation of effective WLB working actions. Providing good WLB will ensure for easier recruitment, retention and greater productivity of employees. This is what business needs for those who currently experience inequality and exclusion".

2.7 Work Life Balance in a Digital/Mobile Work Arena

Consideration should be given to, the fast pace and development of information technology, along with globalization, has changed today's workplace, however certain tasks and roles will need an element of personal input (Burtless 1995). Digital technology is obviously here to stay. It would appear that acceptance of this technology and the changes that take place are inevitable. The individuals will be required to use this technology wisely and control its use in order to reduce the impact it will have on the personal lives.

2.8   Co-Workers Achieving Work Life Balance

There are mixed views regarding co-workers achieving WLB, many agree that there is a tilt towards the employer, with staff working extra hours for free. "Every employee has his or her own threshold and thus WFB is a highly individualized concept where needs and beliefs differ significantly between people" (Kaiser et al. 2010). Where a company implements a WLB measures, this can only be effective if employees are willing to use them.

The evidence suggests that many employees take it upon themselves to work longer hours, bypass lunch breaks, so why is this case? The main two issues are the working role and the non work role, these will include family, community, and interests outside of work and family, increasingly through hobbies and sports. Monitoring of the situation at all times are some of the key factors to achieving a WLB. Other drivers include many of the activities outside the work role, such as driving to and from work, dropping children to schools etc, these activities all eat into the personal time and sometimes place further stress on the individual. (Baltes, Heydens, Gahir, 2003). One additional outcome of a positive WLB is "one feels that you have accomplished something in life".

2.9   Main Drivers

There are many drivers that can affect an individual's WLB. The main two are the working role and the non work role that will include family, community, and interests outside of work and family increasingly through hobbies and sports. Flexibility on behalf of both parties involved where the employer and the employee agree flexible working arrangements, which results in the company achieving its aims and objectives and the company reaching a satisfactory WLB.

Management level for the individual within the company or position e.g. owner or employee will have direct impact on the individual and is seen as a driver of WLB. Family support is essential to allow the freedom in striving to achieve WLB, this will prevent was commonly termed as spill over, where one domain has an effect on the other.

2.10 Conclusion

Defining the drivers that affect the individuals achieving a satisfactory WLB is essential for both parties. The support of co –workers, supervisors and family are all positive drivers towards WLB achievement. The aim for both parties is to achieve an equal balance in both the work and family domains. Each individual has their own levels that they can cope with to achieve them aims and aspirations. Flexibility contributes towards a positive aspect of WLB, however this must come from both the employer and the employee for it to work properly. As many individual have a need to be and the feeling of being involved or a sense of purpose, on occasions work/ employment provides this to them.

With the advent of changes in technology it is in the individual's interest to control the use of this medium and not allow it to intrude into the family space. There is what is sometimes called the invisible barriers between home and work domains and these can be blurred by spill-over. This can occur when the necessary resources are available to cover both domains, this is where the individual needs to take control of the situation and define where the resource should be directed.

3 Research Questions

The importance of WLB and its outcomes has increased significantly for both employer and employees, similarly the factors that help or aggravate this popular balance move has generated a great deal of interest. So this research proposes the following research question: Are the potential positive consequences of WLB policies applicable to all industries and all sectors? While some of the workers benefit from the positive effects of flexibility and good job quality, others are trapped in forms of employment where flexibility is required of them, rather than For them Girard (2010).

This research seeks to explore the appropriateness of WLB policies within the work place, identify the many factors and drivers that affect the WLB of employees in the automotive industry sector, and seek to identify a number of approaches to overcome these drivers. Most work to date on WLB has been conducted in an office environment with employees working traditional 35 hours weeks in traditional hours namely 9-5.

The research points to WLB having many positive consequences for the employee and employer (Perry-Smith/Blum, 2000.), (Anderson et al. 2002, Thomas/Ganster, 1995), (Michel et al., 2011), (Latack, Foster, 1985). Although to what extent do those positive benefits extend in an industry, where irregular working hours environment such as the automotive industry sector?

4   Methodology

4.1   Introduction

Qualitative methodology proposed, using semi-structured questionnaires to understand the appropriateness of WLB policies for this particular section. The nature of the question is such that a questionnaire would not provide the richness of data or the level of insight required. Thus semi-structured interviews with 25 senior managers and 25 senior employees from a cross section e.g. Retail, Leasing Companies, Distributors with in the automotive sector.

Many managers in automotive dealerships end up providing cover in the retail environment due to downsizing of staff, Leasing /fleet management companies have similar issues to contend with. The rational for these interviews are as follow: To establish how the impact of the recent recession, reductions in staffing levels, absenteeism, high staff turnover, the cost of retraining. How the recession has affected the industry due to the lack of funding, to dealerships and customers of new vehicles, plus the pressure from the car manufacturers to generate consistent sales objectives.

Objective 1: To develop a conceptual framework of WLB relevant to the automobile sector.

Methodological approach: Literature review to inform thematic framework for data collection. Extrapolate, produce and summarise main themes emerging from literature.

Objective 2: To explore and evaluate the nature of work-life balance culture in the Irish automotive industry

Methodological approach: One to one qualitative interviews to evaluate the type of policies and practices in relation to work-life balance offered in various automotive businesses.

Objective 3: To assess the appropriateness of WLB for the automotive sector. Is it simply lip service or is there place for work life balance initiatives in an atypical work environment.

4.2   Sample

The author interviewed 10 senior management personnel within the automotive industry who worked in various sectors. In order to obtain a gender balance there was 3 female interviewees and 7 male interviewees. It should be noted there is male domination in the industry. All the participants had a minimum of over 8 years experience in the industry. So convenience sampling was adopted in this case with 10 people interviewed. They were selected because of their experience within the industry and the author has a professional working relationship with these individuals and would receive a positive response when seeking assistance with the interviews.

The criteria used to interview senior managers were those with the most experience and long service, these individuals had been exposed to various economic business cycles. This enabled the researcher to cover all sectors within the industry and get a good cross section of data. To examine these aspects there was a variety of both owner/employers and employees were interviewed. The sectors covered included were finance, motor manufacturers, vehicle distributors, car rental companies, leasing, fleet management, and many ancillary suppliers to the various sectors with the automotive industry. To facilitate a different view a cross section of age profiles also formed part of the criteria.

The average age of the interviewees is 41.5 years and the average commercial relationships are 21 years. A limited number of questions were developed for all the interviews Appendix 4. All of the questions were answered via face to face interviews. To achieve complete clarity all interviews were recorded, transcribed and returned to the interviewees for validation. Then the interviewees were afforded the opportunity to validate their answers and return same to the author.

4.3 Procedure for Recruitment of Participants

To cover a cross section of the industry managers from many areas of the business were contacted by phone and asked to engage in the interview process. As the author is employed in the automotive industry and would have a strong business relationship with many of the key players in the market. The interviewees were approached based on *their* wealth of experience in the industry. All interviewees were contacted by phone and asked to take part in the interview process, this was then followed by an e mail to confirm the appointment. As discussed earlier the author has a strong business relationship with many of the key personnel within the automotive industry and this opened many doors, this allowed for access to the key players within the industry.

All interviewees were provided with the background information to the thesis, the reason for the questioner, the process was explained as to how the interview would be conducted. The interviewees were informed that the interview would be recorded and transcribed as required. However some of the interviewees requested the questions in advance, on been asked by the author why they required the questions the reply was "I want to know what the questions are, as I'm going to be recorded I don't want to stutter or pause during the recording".

Some of those interviewed expressed concerns that if they were unaware of the content of the questions the example given was" if there is a question that could be commercially sensitive in the interview, these questions will not be answered. Some interviewees requested copies of the questions by e-mail in advance of the meeting. This request was granted by the author in a sufficient amount of time prior to the interview.

The process of arranging the interviews commenced in early March of 2014 where the interviewees were contacted firstly by phone and followed up by an e mail request. Most if not all responded with a positive reply. The next few weeks were spent confirming diary appointments plus the agreed venues. Within one month all appointments were confirmed.

Prior to all appointments each interviewee was asked to sign an authorisation form see appendix number 4. They were provided with the background to the dissertation along with the aims and objectives. The issue of confidentially was discussed and each person was advised that their identity and that of their company would not disclosed to any third parties.

At the end of the interview the last question asked of every interviewee was if they would like to add or make a contribution towards the questioner. The author offered to provide the interviewee with a transcribed copy of the interview to confirm their approval.

Each interviewee was afforded the opportunity to obtain a copy of the transcripts following the interview, this was for clarification purposes. All participants will be guaranteed anonymity, all data collected will not directly or indirectly identify them following any discloser or subsequent analysis. The participants will have the right to refuse the use of any recording equipment for the purpose of the interview.

On one occasion the author requested clarification to one of the answers, there was background noise on the recording and to clarify the situation the interviewee was contacted by phone to seek make clear what was said during the interview. This call was received warmly and clarification was obtained during the phone conversation.

4.1 Instrumentation

Following the literature review based around the research question a number of key themes were identified by the author, see Appendix number 2. Each question related to the appropriate literature theme. The first questions related to the interviewees time in the industry, their background and their experience. The second question asked about their role within the organisation. These introduction questions were to obtain background information and to ease the interviewee into the more important questions.

The author conducted a literature review on the topic of WLB. The aim was to conceptualize the literature around the topic. An approach was chosen to explore the experiences of people within the automotive industry who were participants in the interviews. Data were collected through individual interviews and observations with participants. The aims and objectives of the authors are to define the rivers that contribute to the individual achieving a satisfactory WLB.

4.1.1 Themes Derived

The themes were derived from the literature review and the questions were designed following the themes. 11 questions were composed from the literature, the remainder were opening question and the final question was left open to the interviewee to further enhance the interview. The objectives were to define the drivers of WLB and the effects on the individuals and the employers.

The second aspect was to define what policies were in place and whether these policies worked and was there engagement from all parties concerned. As described by Greenblatt (2002) the definition that WLB should bring satisfaction and performance both at home and in the work place, must be with a minimum of conflict.

4.2 Data Collection

The participants provided the researcher with information through verbal interaction and conversation and non-verbal actions. During the interviews the behaviours of the interviewees were noted by the researcher, these became part of the data. A variety of open ended questions were chosen to bring out the most information possible in the time available. Often, these interviews supply opportunities for the interviewer to probe the participant responses with open ended questions.

Prior to the interview there was an introduction by the author of the project to the respondent. The goals to be achieved in the interview were described to all participants, the duration time limit for each interview will be 15-20 minutes max.

The author asked the respondent for permission to make a recording of the interviews, each respondent was asked to sign the consent form, and it was explain to her/him why this was necessary.

All data was recorded to enable the author re listen to the interviews as required to enable clarification. Most interviews were conducted in the interviewees own office with the exception of 3 where this was not possible due to diary fixtures, these interviews were conducted in various hotel lobbies over coffee. The recordings were made via an I-phone and were later e-mailed to the authors e mail account, filed, saved and encrypted.

4.3   Data Analysis

The data was analysed adopting a themed approach. Each of the recordings was listened to a number of times to gain familiarity with the content and to begin the process of content analysis. Where participants raised issues related to any of the themes these were noted, including the time voiced on the recording. Once all relevant material had been identified, key quotes were extracted and noted in a table against teach of the themes for each of the participants. In this way an over-arching framework for analysis across themes was possible. Each of the themes had previously been related back to the literature so it was possible to analyse each grouped response against the existing literature.

4.1 Ethics

Research will be based on informed consent, the information given by the participants will be done freely on the basis that they know and understand the purpose of the research, who is undertaking it, the reasons for the research and if it is been sponsored. Any person invited to an interview reserves the "Right to withdraw from the research at any time".

4.1.1 Anonymity for Participants

All participants will be guaranteed anonymity, all data collected will not directly or indirectly identify them following any discloser or subsequent analysis, and participants will have the right to refuse the use of any recording equipment for the purpose of the interview.

4.2 Conclusion

The object was to interview the main players within the automotive industry and to define what was happening within this sector, with the empathises on their views of achieving a satisfactory WLB. Those that were interviewed were all highly experienced management with a long service record of a minimum of eight years in the industry, with some managers with over 30 years service. To gain a good insight into the sector a cross section of people were interviewed for all aspects of the automotive sector. The interviews conducted provided the author with a wealth of data as those interviewed were very open and honest with the answers provided.

Anonymity was guaranteed to all the participants and this resulted with much more clarity, this industry like many in Ireland is very small and most of the companies involved are acquainted professionally. So the importance of confidentially to the participants was paramount to achieving the truth about their companies.

5 Findings

5.1 Introduction and Key Findings

Following the formation of an academic approach, the study results start with an assessment concerning the importance of the issue WLB in the Irish automotive sector. This section displays the understanding and the definition of WLB by the interviewees, which is then followed by possible outcomes. In this section it highlights the drivers which are identified in practice, it then some of the measurements implemented by the companies. The factors are listed that do not have a direct or definite effect on WLB, which however may have a moderating impact. Throughout the entire presentation of the study results, similarities and differences between theory and practice are elaborated.

A definition of WLB (Greenhaus et al. 2003) is the level that a person is engaged in and is equally similarly satisfied with both with work responsibility and family roles. There are however, opposing opinions, interviewee 4 feels that the importance of WLB as "I am career oriented, and I need a 9-5 job to keep the mind going, there are financial reasons like everyone else", and Interviewee 5 argues his concerns, emphasizing that the success of a satisfying WLB still depends more strongly on the supervisor and on introduced company guidelines.

This interpretation emphasizes the win-win position for both employee and the employer. Interviewee 6 clarifies their view of WLB as "I don't think 50-50 balance is achievable in today's environment, we need to pay the bills and provide for the family". Many of those interviewed agreed that they would like to be able to leave their work behind them in work, and not think about it until they return to it the next day.

Interviewee 7 states that "it is up to every employee to find the right balance between their own duties at work and their personal limitations". This definition emphasizes the individualistic and subjective nature of WLB and is consistent with the idea of WLB delivered by Higgins et al, (2000).

With regard to the changes in the industry and the response to shifts in the ever changing labour market Mathur et al, (2013) argue changes in the nature of working environments have altered the operations of many Governments and major businesses.

While traditionally the focus was placed on enabling family friendly work places, this is now recognised as more than WLB, It's about helping families with their working activities that will fit with their other responsibilities, lifestyles and as importantly, their work. As discussed by the interviewees the financial situation has a major impact on the individual, and this is one of the main drivers affecting the individuals achieving a satisfactory WLB.

5.1   Relevance of the Topic "Work Life Balance" in the Automotive Industry

The issue of WLB is clearly a major priority within the industry as 75% of the interviewees estimate the relevance of WLB in the opinion is very high. Most of the interviewees view an increasing importance of the WLB issue over the past ten to fifteen years. While in the past, many companies have fixed mainly on physical stability of the employees, some interviewees suggest that currently psychological risks and diseases are not considered or taken into account. This perception of an increased relevance in practice is consistent with the vast body of research that has been conducted on this subject. Therefore companies should recognize the need to retain employees, and providing a satisfying WLB, this is a means to reach the company objectives.

5.2   Drivers of Positive Supports

In society today's workers have many competing responsibilities such as work, children, housework, hobbies, and family and in some cases elderly parent to care for! This puts additional stress on individuals and the families/communities where they live. Work life conflict is a serious predicament that impacts workers, their employers and in fact their communities. According to interviewee 5, "the manager has all means at his/her disposal to support employees' WLB positively or to destroy it". In addition, one of the drivers of WLB is the level to which a supervisor offers encouragement to their employees to pay attention for both domains. Thomas and Ganster (1995) referred to "supervisor support" in their studies which demonstrated that implementing an improved WFB when the supervisor acts in an understanding manner is likely to be more successful.

In the context of social support within a company, the level of trust and assistance that an employee experiences from their colleagues is a positive driver of WLB. When comparing academic reading with the practical results, both viewpoints bring to light the importance of social understanding and support, all derived from the supervisors and from their contemporaries. To complement the support offered by the supervisor Interviewee 3 was very strong in their discussions around family and home life support, basically stating that without it life would be very different.

The general health of a company's employees is vital as they are less open to diseases, from a physically and psychologically aspect. The prevention of employee illness/diseases decreases the absenteeism rate and is vital to the future growth of the company (Perry et al, 2000). Therefore to have employees in good health is a positive important driver.

5.3   Drivers of Work Family Balance in the Industry

To describe the drivers of WLB that are revealed by the interviewees and determine their WLB, the following drivers can be divided into those deriving from the work environment and those stem deriving from their personal environment. Interviewees discuss additional drivers in their work related roles than in the personal role aspect.

Most interviewees agree the work environment provides the influencing factors that seem to play the principal role. For this reason the principal role is the influencing factors arising from the work environment. This could be due to the work domain, being filter through their personal area. From a positive aspect Interviewee 9 states that "I have the best of both worlds because I work part time!" another interviewee argues "We work in the service industry, "no. I spend too much time at work and my home life suffers" according to Interviewee 1. Following these comments both side of the argument are shared.

The second most often cited driver is the overall working time, 69% of the interviewees mention this factor as a main negative driver. Interviewee 4, who has been working in the automotive industry for many years, observes an increase in working hours over the last decade, which implies there are growing demands in the work environment. Other interviewee's share this view as for example Interviewee 1 explains that one of the big issues are the customer demands. Today different demands are expected in a shorter timeframe, which leads to higher demands for all employees. Many interviewees' confirms that with the same resources and with a steady number of employees, all company's try to generate more profit every year. Generally this means greater time demands for the employees and more pressure. As a result, if the resources are not improved or the demands reduced, this causes significant deterioration of WLB for employees.

There are some difficulties when addressing the WLB topic, is that there is no 'one size fits all' solution, and no one policy to suit every organisation. To some extent, what is balance for one individual may be very different for another, and additionally an individual's needs over time in relation to balance are liable to change.

WLB is consequently about implementing functioning arrangements to enable everyone irrespective of gender, age, race will achieve a balance that enables them easily combine work with their other responsibilities and desires. The intention of a WLB policy is to propose a broad range of options so that people can have more control. This offers the freedom to choose what they believe is best for them, within the limitations of the business.

Changes in an organisation that would include higher targets, company restructuring, technological changes have added pressure to employees. This is in terms of adjusting to the change itself and coping with its resulting effects. There is a requirement with higher workloads and cultural changes for employees to develop new skills, this all adds extra pressure on staff. The combination of a competitive business environment and the modern labour market will cause major challenges for employers and employees equally.

With all the recent changes, organisations will have to recognise their employees as people with responsibilities that require time and energy beyond working time.

In order to attract and retain the best talent organisations will be required to motivate their workforce, this will in time increase the company's productivity. Organisations have a requirement to actively demonstrate respect an individual's right to a satisfying life outside of work. Over the last few years the business case for addressing WLB has become increasingly obvious and critical.

It is in the best interest of the company to develop and implement their own WLB policies that are best for the employee's needs. This study has outlined the importance of WLB in today's society and established in detail some of the drivers in the work and some personal linked element. From one perspective certain drivers identified by established research have been confirmed in everyday practice; and on another perspective new drivers influencing WLB have been identified.

The crucial resistance of companies to consider WLB is due to the need to invest financially in the short term, and don't take credit for this investment until the long future. But as soon as the magnitude of positive company outcomes as staff retention and employer branding increases, likewise the willingness of companies to provide a satisfying WLB for their employees will become evident. Therefore, also the levers of WLB, which were in the focus of this study, will edge ever closer to the mainstream.

5.4   Resources

Resource Drain, refers to the relocation of the scarce available resources (e.g., time and effort) from one domain to the other, as a result, the availability of the same resources are ultimately reduced. Grandey (1999), proposes that as resources become scarce, that individuals will try to change their situations to protect themselves. This demonstrates the need for individual self protection, by decreasing their effort within their work and/or family roles, people will conserve their resources to utilise in other domains, that otherwise may be lost.

Interviewee 4. "I would be a typical type of senior manager, however I have a good network of friends and co-workers that remind me about working too hard, having said that quitting a job would remove the stress of that role". As one might expect, work role stress has been linked to decreased job performance and increased absenteeism and turnover (Grandey, Cropanzano, 1999), so the question is back to getting the balance right. Interviewee 6 stresses her definition as "None, definitively no, everything leans towards work not home, we are a fleet management company and the customer come first, and this is the game", the big issue is that the staffs are office based, someone has to be there, and we are at the customer's beck and call, so there is no room for balance". This provides proof that without the resources there is a drain on the family balance.

Spill-over refers to the shared similar effects of family and work situations (e.g., skills, behaviours and family values). These experiences of work and family occurrence can often be identical and can be either positive or negative, (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). When describing spill over Interviewee 7 "Work dominates my life at present I start at 7.30am and maybe finish at 7 pm, by the time you get home have dinner my spare time is gone, it is very unbalanced at the present time, work is definitely spilling over in one's personal life".

This is also defined by Adams et al, (1996), which defines where there are not enough resources available to satisfy both domain demands or if demands are excluding each other, this result in conflict or spill over. Interviewee 8 who has long job tenure in the industry, reports that as far back as twenty years ago in the industry, employees had great flexibility and independency, "thing were very different then". Accordingly Interviewee 10, states that values have changed dramatically with an increasing consideration of both domains work and family. Consequently, while research accounts for the environmental changes of an employee as a main reason for the increasing issue importance, some interviewees name the changing values and priorities as a cause or driver.

Thereby interviewee 8 displays the strong interrelation between both domains, highlights that participation in one domain should not constrain participation in the other domain. This interpretation is what (Greenhaus/Beutell, 1983), define as a low work family conflict. As a result, the assumption of the author is that a high level of WLB is equal to a low level of work family conflict and family work conflict is confirmed, if one follows the explanations of Interviewee 10 and Greenhaus/ Beutell. For Interviewee 9, opinion of work life balance is "Be able to get you work done and that you have quality time at home".

This interpretation emphasizes the win-win situation for both employee and company. This would be comparable to the definitions of scholars presented in literature, while both Interviewee 4 and Interviewee 2 highlight in their definitions possible outcomes of a satisfying work life balance like for example overall well being or contentment.

Several authors argue that inter role conflict is commonly incompatible concerning work and family. In their opinion this is due to strain based, time based, and behaviour based sources, (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). This confirms that resources are a major driver of WLB where there are insufficient resources available to cover both areas.

5.5   Outcomes for the Employees & Employers

The main outcome for most employees is engagement in the process. Both Employees and employers who are content with WLB enjoy their work and are committed to the company. Their endeavours and objectives are to achieve the company goals. Most respondents appear loyal, motivated and more inspired. This affords for improved performance within the company, as direct positive employee outcomes provide an indirect positive outcomes for the company. In this circumstance it's a win/win situation for both parties. Interviewee 1 makes a clear distinction between satisfaction and engagement. Many of those interviewed appear to be satisfied when they feel they have certain job security and they receive their remuneration packages.

When employees are working because they want to work and to be part of the business, then they are seen to be fully engaged in the process. Thus the main difference lies in the degree of involvement of the individual. An observation by the author following the interviews is that none of the interviewees mention the health status as a main outcome for the employee, it would appear there is a degree of satisfaction with WLB, this implies an improved fitness, physically but also psychologically state. Some companies embark on initiatives to improve employees' healthy eating habits. Others offer stress management programs which include stretching, yoga, counselling via Employee assistance programmes (EAP).

While interviewee 5 see an imbalance "Because of my position in the company and my duty of care to the business, I am putting in 75% work and 25% outside, no, the balance is skewed," Work and home life are both essential, however these should offer fulfilment and satisfaction to the individual.

To achieve both balance but also peace in life, the individual must get to know themselves, take action, and retain as much control over both domains as possible. Self management is important, the individual must control their own behaviour and outlook regarding work life balance. The third most frequently listed outcome, given a negative perception of WLB, is stress. The employees who are regularly experiencing stress are more likely to observe feelings of burn out. Similarly, those employees who are satisfied with their WLB appear to be able to manage stressful tasks and situations in a more objective and calm manner. Following the question of "In your opinion do your fellow workers feel they have a good balance in both their work and family life? Interviewee 7 argues that, it depends on the individual, some do and some don't, it's how people handle it?"

5.6   Blanket Work Life Balance Policies

It must also be recognised that no one policy will suit all employees or situation and this is where a flexible working environment will assist everyone involved reach their personal goals. As discussed by Darcy et al, (2013) how companies and organisations must implement a more bespoke attitude to WLB programmes, and move away from the *one size fits all* approach. In this article they form the view that employers must consider a different approach to the complexities of modern day living. A tailor made solution needs to be implemented to certain groups with the aim of achieving satisfactory work life balance.

5.7 Summary of Key Findings

The following diagrams illustrate the key findings of the interviews in relation to the drivers of WLB found within the working environment.

5.7.1   Working Environment Drivers Effecting Work Life Balance
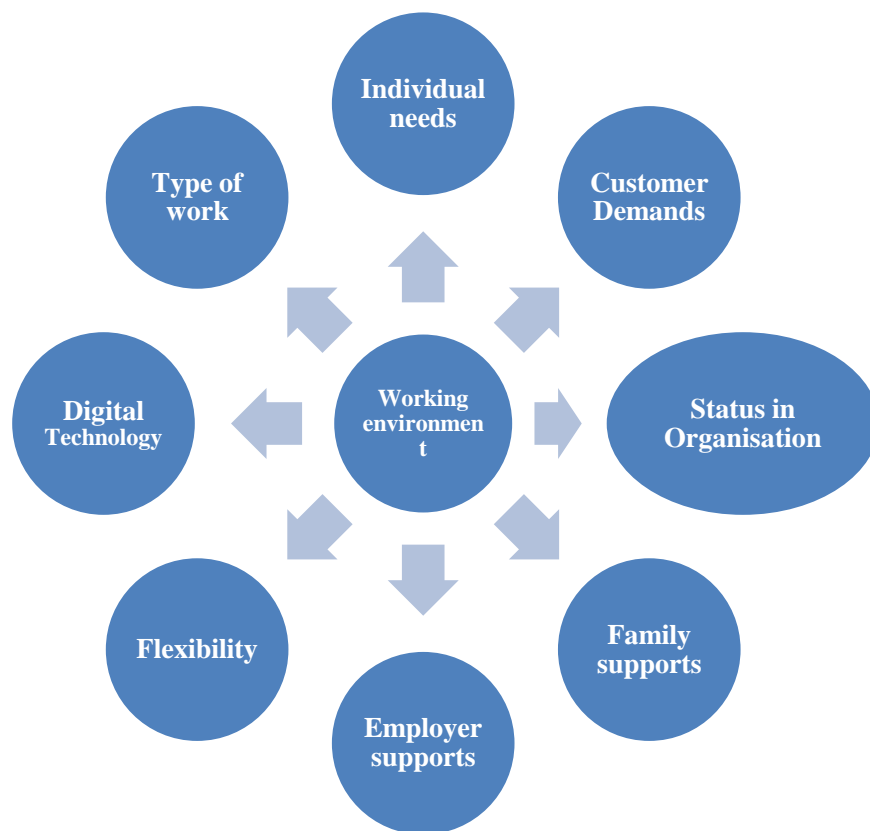
The second diagram represents the key findings from the research in relation to the home environment factors identified as impacting on WLB.

5.7.2 Home Environment Drivers Effecting Work Life Balance
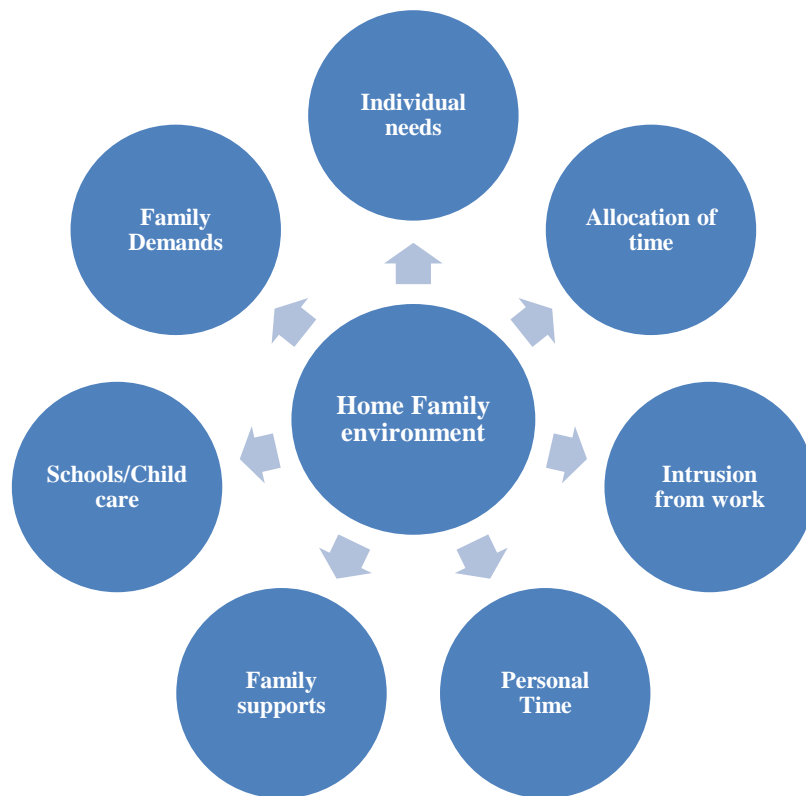
5.8   Conclusion

There are many interpretations of WLB and all those interviewed concurred with the description within the literature.   Areas discussed are supervisor support and a positive aspect towards achieving WLB.   It was the common theme that work was the dominant role requiring the most resources.   It was debated by many that a *one size fits all* policy would not work, each company has its own culture and individuals have their individual needs.

The issues of engaged employees was raised as a positive driver of WLB and there is a need for companies to invest in getting employee engaged, however these results will take time to provide financial rewards to the company.   It appeared that the employee needs to take control of the situation where possible to achieve a satisfactory WLB.

6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Work life balance is defined as a person who is engaged in and is equally similarly satisfied with both with work responsibility and family roles Greenhaus et al. (2003). This definition concurs with those interviewed, however to obtain this balance takes a major amount of effort to achieve. Several drivers are highlighted with both academics and those interviewed for this paper.

6.2 Supervisor Supports

To begin with supports, alongside the support from the employee's supervisor, the culture within an organization can become a catalyst of work life balance, this is where the individual needs to have the right approach to achieving a balance. This is achievable provided the company respects the personal life as well as work, but can in a negative sense aggravate work life conflict. As argued by Thomas and Ganster (1995) that implementing an improved WFB when the supervisor acts in an understanding manner is likely to be more successful.

Certain employers need to demonstrate some recognition of seeing the human being behind that of the employee, this was discussed by interviewee 1 " Its management role to see beyond the job role and think of the person, that way there is more benefit to the company in the long run". It appears that awareness is paramount on both parties' behalf with the aim of achieving a satisfactory WLB.

6.3 Digital Arena

This area of the business is one that requires constant attention with the ever evolving pace of technology. The advance of digital technological such as smart-phones, laptops can be a risk to achieving a WLB. Many large companies have rules in place to control the use of smart phones, like the working week. There are needs for implementation of a policy limiting the amount of work related emails to staff members outside normal work hours, as this will relieve some of the pressure on the employees.

Interviewee 1 describes the digital arena as "There are a lot more interruptions in everyday life, however that said it can sometimes help to answer the call or e mail, this can prevent the problem escalating, but it runs with the job to answer the call or mail".

As seen throughout the interview process many interviewees explained how their companies have policies in place to protect the employee and the company. These existing policies and measures must be communicated in an open manner and in some circumstances should be enforced to protect both parties. Again the employees must take the appropriate actions in protecting themselves.

6.4. Training Recommendations

It is vital for all companies to keep up to date with all available training, some recommendations to improve existing measures and their implementation in practice and maybe propose new ideas to enhance employees' with a satisfactory WLB. The implementation of supervisor training will assist many managers develop and respect their fellow team member's personal life and to see the individual behind the employee, therefore improving employees' WLB. A recommendation that employees seek training in time management for all involved will assist the employee. Essentially there is a two way street approach to this very important issue of WLB, and that is both parties need to take control of their respective domains.

However the onus is on the employer by law to provide a safe working environment and conversely the onus is on the employee to engage with the policies that the employer has implemented and protect themselves. As the business environment changes rapidly employers must keep up with events within their industry, make the necessary changes. As well as the individual has to adapt so does the employer have this requirement of making changes to suit the situation.

6.2 Flexibility

While most interviewees state that flexibility is not available to them, the flexibility is expected of them and it would appear this forms one of the drivers of stress in their lives. To achieve this, there needs to be some form of flexibility on both the employer and the employee. To have an adaptable approach on both parties' behalf as discussed by Burton (2004) is essential to achieve the required balance.

6.3 Family Supports

For many the support of family is vital to achieving the required balance between both domains, as discussed by interviewee 3 "I have very good support from the home side, a supporting wife, plus the understanding of the situation at times". Other drivers include many of the activities outside the work role, such as driving to and from work, dropping children to schools etc. These activities all eat into the personal time and sometimes place further stress on the individual. (Baltes, Heydens, Gahir, 2003).

6.4 One size Fits all Policy

It is important to remember that no one policy fits all situations. There are many considerations with regard to the type of policies companies implement, as discussed by Darcy et al, (2013) there is no _one size fits all_ scenario, each policy needs to fit with the company culture, employee and the management style that is in place. These policies evolve over the life time of a company with the changes in the business environment.

6.5   Resource Drain

Resource Drain, refers to the relocation of the scarce resources available to the individuals.   When these resources become scarce, that individuals will try to change their situations to protect themselves Grandey (1999).   This demonstrates the need for individual self protection, by decreasing their effort within their work and/or family roles, it is up to the individual to conserve their resources to utilise in other domains, that otherwise may be lost.

6.6   Non-Paid Work Role

There are many drivers that can affect an individual's WLB. The main two are the working role and the non work role that will include family, community, and interests outside of work and family increasingly through hobbies and sports. Other drivers include many of the activities outside the work role, such as driving to and from work, dropping children to schools etc, these activities all eat into the personal time and sometimes place further stress on the individual.   (Baltes, Heydens, Gahir, 2003).

6.7   Limitations of Study

The 10 interviews conducted by the author yielded extensive insights on the practical view of WLB and its drivers within the automotive industry. However, the generalization of these findings is limited due to the small sample interviewed. Qualitative interviews are always to some extent biased by the author's personal experiences. Therefore the objective of the study changed to a more investigative aspect, however not only some of the common drivers were confirmed, but also new drivers were identified. This paper examines WLB through the lens of the employee only.

6.8   Implications for Practice

The findings of this paper show clear implications for companies who want to develop a tradition that values WLB. In particular, employers will need to pay closer attention to the needs of employees by re thinking their policies with regard to WLB. Where organisations aspire to maximise the potential positives impact of WLB initiatives for their employees, they need a bespoke plan in order to gain the benefits of a satisfactory WLB.

6.1   Future Research Directions

Future research should centre on the impact of individual WLB measures on employees' WFB. There are no accurate works that try to measure the effectiveness of a separate measure on WFB.

6.2   Conclusion

Both parties must work collectively to achieve a happy medium with the aim of reaching a satisfactory WLB, all the while accomplishing the company goals and objectives. While companies invest in this they will ultimately realise their financial targets with a loyal and content employees.

7   Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the differential effects of drivers on the WLB of employees within the different sectors of the automotive industry. This study has outlined the importance of WLB in today's society and establishes in detail some of the drivers in the work and some personal linked element. From one perspective certain drivers identified by established research have been confirmed in everyday practice, and on another perspective new drivers influencing WLB have been identified. Where employees gain access to jobs facilitating higher control how when and where they do their jobs and the amount of workload will some form of balance is achieved.

Following the research in this paper via interviews, it appears that some employees in higher managerial jobs usually higher paid are likely to experience high work conflict resulting in a lower balance due to overwork. However as discussed (Kaiser et al, 2010) where a company implements a WLB measures, this can only be effective if employees are willing to use them. While many of those interviewed expressed their concerns that the balance is tilted towards the employer ultimately the responsibility lays with the individual to take control of this situation.

The crucial opposition of companies to consider WLB is due to the need to invest financially in the short-term and don't take credit for this investment until the long into the future. When business organisations design and provide greater employee supports to enable dual performance in both the work and family domains, ultimately our society will achieve WLB. When the positive outcomes become evident to the company regarding staff retention and improved recruitment branding increases many companies will provide a satisfactory WLB for their employees. Research on work life balance will increase among organizations due to the importance of return on investment with their staff, this may well result in a win-win situation for both parties.

7.1   Policy Implementation

There are many considerations with regard to the type of policies companies implement, as discussed by (Darcy et al, 2013) there is no _one size fits all_ scenario, each policy needs to fit with the company culture, employee and the management style in place. To discuss culture, interviewee 5 debates that "yes, this is the ethos of the company, from the top down, the CEO my father has practiced this for 20 years plus", his view is that this pays dividends, by having happy staff there are big improvements in moral in the company". From a positive aspect Interviewee 9 states that "I have the best of both worlds because I work part time!" These policies must encompass all employees such as the example of the part time worker.

7.2   Resources Available

Account must be taken of the available resources available to the individual, this stems back to the individual taking control of their situations where possible. Grandey (1999) proposes that as resources become scarce, that individuals will try to change their situations to protect themselves. Each individual has different thresholds and it is up to the individual to prioritise what is satisfactory to them in achieving a WLB in both domains. This demonstrates the need for individual self protection, by decreasing their effort within their work and/or family roles. Confirmation by many of the interviewees and (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Edwards and Rothbard, 2000), that resources are a major driver of WLB where there are insufficient resources available to cover both areas. This confirms that resources are a major driver of WLB where there are insufficient resources available to cover both areas. Another interviewee argues "We work in the service industry, "no. I spend too much time at work and my home life suffers" according to Interviewee 1, confirming that lack of resources effect the individuals WLB.

7.3 Is Work Life Balance Achievable

Interviewees reflect that 70% agree there is a major imbalance in their lives stacked towards the work side. It would appear from the interviews they are at variances because interviewee 8 has a very different opinion "Not at the moment, I have to travel to and from our offices in Europe, and this take me away from home for 3-4 days in a row, I also travel around the 26 counties of Ireland, and this involves overnight trips. So, no I don't have a good balance, it is weighted towards work approx 65%".

7.4 Financial Aspects

 As discussed by the interviewees the financial situation has a major impact on the individual, and this is one of the main drivers affecting the individuals achieving a satisfactory WLB. Job security was raised during interviews and it appears this forms some high stress levels among employees. Interviewee 4."It depends on your circumstances, we all like the goodies, the nice house, and the money to educate the children, and however I could not work a boring job just to earn money".

7.5 Leadership Issues

Leadership and supervisor support can greatly enhance the situation of employees as discussed in the interview "I feel leadership has an influencing factor, it should be lead by example and by being supportive to others" Interviewee 9, "There is no empathy from management regarding staff concerns or issues, re- personal issues, e.g. taking time to mind a sick child would be frowned upon by management". This demonstrates the need for support and empathy, while interviewee 6 is of the opinion that influencing factors are leadership "This is Leadership, not just words, it's actions, and leading by example".

7.6　Family Support

To prevent spill-over additional supports are required, as discussed by Interviewee 3 opinion is that "I have very good support from the home side, a supporting wife, and the understanding of the situation at times".

7.7　Digital Arena

Interviewee 7 debates that "Digital technology has a negative impact, with the advent of working from home and Skype, e mail etc, there is an expectation that you are available 24/7." It needs to be controlled by the person, sometimes it is easier to get work done at weekends as there are no distractions, I use weekends to catch up, not go really is it"? Conversely Interviewee 9 states "no effect at all, when I leave the office I am not contactable for work issues, and I don't have a company mobile phone".

7.8　Employee Levels of Expectation of Work Life Balance

Separation of both domains has come to light following comments from Interviewee 9 defines WLB as "Be able to get you work done and that you have quality time at home". This also concurs with Interviewee 3 assessment "Be able to go home at night and not think of work constantly, and not be thinking of home life when in work". To achieve a level of satisfaction the individual has to establish boundaries between both domains. Interviewee 4 has the view that "It gives a feeling of self fulfilment in both home and work domains". Following the interviews the majority of respondents share the same WLB values, separation of both domains.

While many interviewees agree the work environment provides the influencing factors that seem to play the principal role. It would appear again this demonstrates that employee control is required. Communication is vital, and a firm understanding of views from both employer and employee.

Finally one major support system that of the family must be recognised and without this life would be very different for many, and there would be a bigger struggle obtaining a work live balance in both domains. Consequently, the drivers of WLB, which were the centre of attention in this paper where the employee takes control of their situation where possible, will edge towards realignment.

"Most people struggle with life balance simply because they haven't decided what is really important to them". - Stephen Covey

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9 Appendix

9.1 Interview Profile

Interviewee No.	Gender	Approx age	Years in the industry	Sector of industry
1	Male	50+	26	Truck leasing/ Rental
2	Male	35	15	Van Rentals
3	Male	58	35	Vehicle Finance
4	Male	57	32	Franchise Quality
5	Male	35	16	Vehicle Auctioneer
6	Female	42	14	Fleet Management
7	Female	48	19	Car Rental
8	Male	39	17	Retail Sales
9	Female	50	12	Finance
10	Male	51	24	Fleet Leasing
Total		415	210	
Average		41.5	21	

9.2 List of interview questions

	QUESTION
1	Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your area of responsibility in your company?
2	How long are you working in the industry/ what areas within the industry
3	What is your definition of WLB?
4	Do you feel your role has been affected during the recent recession? If so how?
5	Do you feel that you have a good WLB (equal time spent in both domains?)
6	In your experience, how do you feel that WLB affects your life?
7	Are there opportunities for flexible working arrangements within your company?
8	Are the company conscious of employees WLB?
9	Has your company a WLB policy in place at this time?
10	Is there a balance at all employment levels e.g. supervisors, managers & employees?
11	What are staffing levels like, do you have enough staff to cover all aspects of the business?
12	Employer supports, Have you any experience where your employer offers support?
13	In your opinion do your fellow workers feel they have a good balance in both their work and family life? Casual conversations with co workers.
14	In your opinion, and when thinking of your daily work, what is the effect that the digital technology has on WLB, mobile, e mail etc. (interruptions at home outside office hours)
15	In your personal opinion what are the influencing factors or Drivers that affect work life balance?
16	Is there anything else you would like to say or add before we end the interview?

9.3 Interview guidelines.

In preparation for interview the author followed the procedures below:

- Offered to meet the participants at a place of their choice. Normally at their offices. Alternatives were offered, local hotels.

- Selected a setting with little distraction. Ensure interviewee is comfortable.

- Explain the purpose of the interview prior to the appointment.

- Address terms of confidentiality. Note any terms of confidentiality. The Author explained to the interviewee who will get access to their answers and how their answers will be analyzed. If their comments are to be used as quotes, written permission was received to do so.

- Explained the format of the interview. Explain the type of interview to be conducting and its nature.

- Indicate how long the interview would take.

- Advised the interviewee how to contact the author later if they want to.

- Confirmed with the interviewee if they have any questions before we both get started with the interview.

- Ask for permission to record the interview or take notes.

- Confirmed that the notes would be available to inspect should the interviewee wished to clarify ant point.

- Thanks the participants for their time and their contributions.

9.4 Copies of authorisations form:

Authorisation Form

"I [...] hereby give my permission for [Seán O'Neill] to interview me and quote my responses in a scholarly research paper. I understand that this research paper will be submitted to a professor at the National College of Ireland. I understand that I waive any claim to copyright to this material should the student ever publish it in a scholarly journal or in electronic format online. I understand that the author [will / ~~will not~~] maintain my anonymity as a part of this interview. I hereby give my permission in the form of my signature below."

Signature_____ Dated_____

9.5 Organisation of Working Time Act 1997

Number 20 *of* 1997

ORGANISATION OF WORKING TIME ACT, 1997

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

PART I

PRELIMINARY AND GENERAL

Section

PART II

MINIMUM REST PERIODS AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO WORKING TIME

9.6 Interview questions linked with the relavent literature:

No.	QUESTION	LITERATURE
1	Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your area of responsibility in your company?	
2	How long are you working in the industry/ what areas within the industry	
3	What is your definition of WLB?	A definition of Work life balance (WLB) (Greenhaus et al. 2003) is the level that a person is engaged in and is equally similarly satisfied with both with work responsibility and family roles.
4	Do you feel your role has been affected during the recent recession? If so how?	
5	Do you feel that you have a good WLB (equal time spent in both domains?)	Kirchmeyer (2000) defines work family balance (WFB) as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains."
6	In your experience, how do you feel that WLB affects your life?	
7	Are there opportunities for flexible working arrangements within your company?	While some of the workers benefit from the positive effects of flexibility and good job quality, others are trapped in forms of employment where flexibility is required *of* them, rather than *for* them. Girard (2010)
8	Are the company conscious of employees WLB?	Challenges have grown significantly for employees to try maintain a balance between work life and personal life Stock et al,(2007) they further contest that with greater workload, increasing time pressure
9	Has your company a WLB policy in place at this time?	The literature points to a number of positive benefits of WLB for employees. Kalliath and Brough (2008) state that it is a person's sensitivity towards work and family life balance that gives their life style priorities.
10	Is there a balance at all employment levels e.g. supervisors, managers & employees?	While many companies support employees with an offer of flexitime, this transfers the burden of trying to juggle the staff rosters to meet the work demand of a 24/7 business culture. Many managers are left to fill in the gaps and take up the slack all in an effort to provide the employee with the flexibility of have a work life balance, (Drew et al. 2003).
11	What are staffing levels like, do you have enough staff to cover all aspects of the business?	According to Burton (2004) balance means that nothing is absolutely static and unchanging routines cannot be rigid and unchangeable. They must be adaptable, which means you must have the flexibility to maintain a balance. We all need balance in our lives, the important issue is how to prioritise.
12	Employer supports, Have you any experience where your employer offers support?	Thomas and Ganster (1995) referred to "supervisor support" in their studies which demonstrated that implementing an improved work family balance when the supervisor acts in an understanding manner is likely to be more successful.
13	In your opinion do your fellow workers feel they have a good balance in both their work and family life? Casual conversations with co workers.	Where a company implements a work life balance measures, this can only be effective if employees are willing to use them. "Every employee has his or her own threshold and thus work family balance is a highly individualized concept where needs and beliefs differ significantly between people" (Kaiser et al. 2010).
14	In your opinion, and when thinking of your daily work, what is the effect that the digital technology has on WLB, mobile, e mail etc. (interruptions at home outside office hours)	Consideration should be given to WLB in a digital/mobile work arena, the fast pace and development of information technology, along with globalization, has changed today's workplace, however certain tasks of the roles will need an element of personal input (Burtless 1995).
15	In your personal opinion what are the influencing factors or Drivers that affect work life balance?	There are many drivers that can affect an individual's work life balance. The main two are the working role and the non work role that will include family, community, and interests outside of work and family increasingly through hobbies and sports. Other drivers include many of the activities outside the work role, such as driving to and from work, dropping children to schools etc, these activities all eat into the personal time and sometimes place further stress on the individual. (Baltes, Heydens, Gahir, 2003).
16	Is there anything else you would like to say or add before we end the interview?	