A Study Investigating the Impact of Work-Life Balance on Job Satisfaction and Levels of Perceived Stress in Full-time Employees

by

Amanda Daly

MA in Human Resource Management

National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland August 2019

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my parents for providing me the opportunity to go back to college and complete my masters. Without your unconditional support and encouragement I would not have been able to achieve this goal. I would also like to extend my thanks to my friends who supported and encouraged me throughout the process, and also my classmates.

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Introduction

Work-life balance, job satisfaction and perceived stress are constructs that separately and linked together have been widely investigated in the literature, especially when focusing on organisations and their employees. The term work-life balance entered the workplace in the Nineteen Seventies and Greenbalt (2002) described it as the "acceptable levels of conflict between work and non-work demands". Job satisfaction is a challenging concept to define and measure however, it is widely researched as it can provid many benefits to organisations and their workers. Multiple definitions have been proposed and the majority of them focus on job satisfaction as an employees attitude towards their job and how they evaluate it. Perceived stress is another construct which often appears in research and it represents how an individual identifies with a stressful situation involving them. Although this is a widely investigated topic it has rarely been linked to any literature involving work-life balance and job satisfaction.

This research study aims to investigate if work-life balance can predict levels of job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress in individuals who are working full-time jobs in Ireland across a wide variety of job sectors. This is a cross-sectional, questionnaire based study with a sample of 75 participants. Descriptive statistics, a correlation analysis and a regression analysis were carried out to test the main research question and the 3 research hypotheses which are predicting a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction, a significant negative relationship between work-life balance and levels of perceived stress, and a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress.

Results from the correlation analysis run indicated a significant, negative relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction, a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and perceived stress and, a significant negative

relationship between job satisfaction and perceived stress. Results from the regression

analysis run indicated that work-life balance was a predictor of job satisfaction and

perceived stress among individuals who are working full time in Ireland. Overall these

findings did not supported the first two research hypotheses however, did support the third

research hypothesis and did support the research question asked.

Literature Review

Work-life Balance

According to Lewis and Beauregard (2018) there is no one right definition, explanation or understanding of the concept that is work-life balance, it has multiple overlapping definitions that differ across organisations and research studies. The authors suggest that "the term was initially understood by researchers as satisfying low levels of conflict between work and non work demands". Meenalshi, Subrahmanyam and Ravichardran (2013) state that work-life balance is the balance of satisfaction between a persons family life and their work life. Lazar, Osoian and Ratiu (2010) suggest that work-life balance refers to the way employees manage their work and non work activities. Many research studies and organisations have defined the concept, however as previously mentioned there is no one right way to define, explain or understand work-life balance.

Many research studies have shown that the idea of a work-life balance started in the Nineteen Seventies and it represents the balance an individual has between their work-life and the demands of their personal life (Abdirahman at al, 2018). The concept emerged when women first entered the workplace and began experiencing difficulties in managing the demands of work and the demands of their personal life (Dizaho, Sallen and Abdullah, 2017). In the workplace employers began to deal with these work-life balance issues by providing extra benefits such as maternity leave and childcare (Emsile and Hunt, 2009). However, now-a-days majority of employees in the workplace, regardless of gender, are beginning to value and appreciate a successful work-life balance more, and feel their employers play an important role in ensuring this balance is achieved. Brid (2006) points out that multiple research studies have shown that individuals across different generations and genders are now considering work-life balance and the culture of an organisation before accepting a job opportunity.

A successful work-life balance is not only becoming an important factor for employees, it is also becoming a priority for employers as when achieved can have many benefits including enhancing employee performance, productivity and the overall success of an organisation. Bird (2006) suggests that work-life balance is the most important topic being discussed in boardrooms and that its predicted to be one of the most important issues organisations human resource (HR) departments will have to manage. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2019) recently conducted a survey in the United Kingdom with over 5000 people which highlighted work-life balance as a specific problem with people reporting that their job caused disruption at home, stress and made it hard for them to switch off. The CIPD (2019) are recommending that employers introduce a greater range of flexible working practices to address these concerns and also to benefit their business in the future. Dizaho, Sallen and Abdullah (2017) advised that introducing flexibility into the workplace is essential if employers and HR departments want to ensure their employees are achieving a successful work-life balance. The CIPD (2019) describes workplace flexibility as "giving employees flexibility on where, when and the hours they work", and suggest some of the most common flexible working practices are flexitime, job sharing, part-time working and home-working. The types of practices offered to employees will depend on their organisations and their roles.

Meenakshi, Subrahmanyam and Ravichandran (2013) discuss numerous reasons why a work-life balance is important including how it has a noticeable effect on an individuals ability to do their job and their performance. The authors suggest that from an organisational point of view management can take many steps and implement different polices, practices and procedures to help encourage employees achieve a healthy work-life balance. As previously mentioned organisations could introduce flexibility, focus on

outcomes rather the the amount of time spent at work, ask employees how they can support them and much more (Meenakshi et al., 2013).

Mazerolle and Goodman (2013) conducted a research study to explore the factors that influence work-life balance. Three factors which stood out from their data collection and analysis were (1) having a family orientated and supportive work environment, (2) having non work outlets to engage in and (3) individualistic strategies such as good communication and setting boundaries. Mazerolle and Goodman (2013) also found that work-life balance was one of the foundations for having a successful organisational environment and participants reported this as being heavily influenced by the management style they were experiencing. This emphasis the important role that all organisations have to promote and encourage a work life balance among all their employees.

Brough, Holt, Bauld, Biggs and Ryan (2008) discuss some of the many benefits that can be seen when employees in a workforce have a healthy work-life balance. These including having lower levels of staff turnover, greater levels of job satisfaction, more commitment and productivity, and a decrease in the number of physical and emotional issues reported at work. These benefits mentioned highlight yet again the importance off organisations and employers promoting and encouraging work-life balance.

Work-life Balance and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be challenging to measure as numerous researchers have proposed multiple definitions for the concept. O'Reilly (1991) described job satisfaction as an employees attitude, feelings and perceptions towards their job. Yang (2016) defined the concept as the extent to which an employee positively evaluates their job. More recently, Abdirahman, Najeemdeen, Abidemi and Ahmad (2018) suggested job satisfaction is reflect by an individuals attitude towards their job, their ability to do their job, the workplace environment and how they are treated by management. Spector (1997) described job satisfaction as the way which individuals feel about their job and the different aspects of their job, with particular focus on the emotions that affect behaviour, performance and organisational success.

Sila and Sirok (2018) discuss the importance of organisations measuring and promoting job satisfaction among their employees. The authors point out that when employees experience greater levels of job satisfaction they preform better, are more committed, more efficient and have lower levels of absences. Spector (1997) and Levi (2006) both point out that when organisations fail to make a conscious effort to promote job satisfaction it can lead to deviant behaviour, high absenteeism rates, high turnover and also counterproductive behaviour which could result in organisational reputational damage.

There are many steps which organisations can take to increase job satisfaction levels among their employees. Keng et al., (2005) suggests practices such as training, employee relations, teamwork, rewards, recognition, and empowerment all have an effect on a persons level of job satisfaction. In a study carried out by Kabak et al., (2014) it was highlighted that carrying out these types of activities alone is not good enough, employees

want to also be able to voice their opinions more in relation to important organisational decisions.

Job satisfaction has been linked to many factors in the workplace including work-life balance in a wide range of research studies. Omar and Zakaria (2016) conducted a quantitative, questionnaire based research study investigating the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction. The researchers gathered a large sample of 681 employees working for a private healthcare company in Malaysia. The majority of the participants who completed the questionnaire were female (83.9%). A correlation and multiple regression analysis were carried out on the data gathered and results suggested that work-life balance is positively, significantly associated with job satisfaction and it also has an impact on an employees levels of job satisfaction. Therefore, from these findings it can be said that among Malaysian healthcare workers, work-life balance does positively affect job satisfaction. Future researchers could conduct similar studies across different work sectors and countries to see if these results can be generalised.

Padma and Reddy (2014) gathered a sample of school teachers to investigate the impact work-life balance has on their levels of job satisfaction. As well as looking at the impact of job satisfaction the authors also accounted for the demographic variables age, experience and qualifications. A questionnaire based research design was used and findings from multiple statistical analysis tests indicated that teachers who reported having achieved the right work-life balance were more satisfied in their job. Similar to the previous study the sample is made up of school teachers only so it gives the opportunity for future researchers to replicate the study among other job sectors or multiple job sectors. This study also has a very small sample size of only 54 participants for a quantitative research design making the results less reliable.

Devi and Nagini (2014) pointed out that an organisations most valuable resources and sources of competitive advantage are the employees, and for employees to be effective they need to be satisfied in their job. The researchers gathered a sample of 103 employees working in the private banking sector and had them each complete a questionnaire. The aim of the study was to investigate if work-life balance and burnout can predict employee job satisfaction. Findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction, and a negative relationship between burnout and job satisfaction. A regression analysis established that job satisfaction can be predicted from work-life balance and burnout. These findings show that employees who are achieving a successful work-life balance are more satisfied in their job. In line with similar research studies in the area this study only focuses on one job sector, private banking therefore, would need to be replicated among other sectors to determine if results can be generalised.

"Employees should establish a healthy work-life balance in order to be successful and productive in their working life and happy in their family life" (Karakose, Kocabas and Yesilyurt, 2014, p.1231). Karakose, Kocabas and Yesilyurt (2014) carried out a study examining the relationship between a school administrator's work-life balance and job satisfaction. The authors gathered a random sample of 139 school administrators who each had to complete one questionnaire. From the results if could be suggested that administrators who have achieved a more successful work-life balance are experiencing more job satisfaction in their role. However, as the authors only carried out a correlation analysis it can not be inferred from this study that work-life balance can predict or impact job satisfaction. This is something that could be looked into in a future study.

Wen, Muthuveloo and Ping (2018) conducted a study among millennials working in Malaysian multinational companies. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of employee development, employee reward and employee work-life balance on

job satisfaction. The researchers choose to focus on millennials in the companies due to the global demographic shift which sees workforces today made up mostly by millennials. Smith (2010) pointed out that millennials want to have a successful work-life balance and view it as one of the most essential and attractive aspects of a job. Through their survey and data analysis Wen, Muthuveloo and Ping (2018) can conclude that the 3 independent variables being measured have a meaningful positive relationship with job satisfaction. Therefore, this suggests that millennials working in these multinational companies who have a successful work-life balance, receive rewards and development opportunities will be experiencing higher levels of job satisfaction.

Haar, Russo, Sune and Malaterre (2014) conducted an investigation looking at the outcomes of work-life balance on several factors including job satisfaction. The authors discuss how work-life balance is one of the most popular, everyday concerns that's discussed yet there is very little research surrounding the concept. Haar et al., (2014) believed that "individuals who experience WLB may be more satisfied in their job and life because they are participating in role activities that are salient to them". Their research study included over 1000 people across 7 different populations and highlighted that high levels of work-life balance were positively associated with job satisfaction. The sample size in this study is very large and also looked at multiple populations therefore, it is more generalizable than the previous studies mentioned that focus on a specific job sector.

Kanwar, Singh and Kodwani (2009) also conducted a research study investigating if work-life balance is a predictor of job satisfaction among employees in the information technology and enabled services industries. Their findings showed that the 2 concepts were positively related with one another which has also been highlighted in previous research studies discussed. The findings also indicated that work-life balance made a significant contribution to job satisfaction however, similarly to previous studies the

authors focused on only 2 job sectors therefore limiting the results to these areas but giving future researchers an opportunity to explore other areas.

Arif and Farooqi (2014) suggest that human resource departments in organisations today have identified that there is a meaningful connection between employee job satisfaction and the overall organisational success therefore are making more of an effort to focus on practices and policies including work-life balance as research has previously linked this with high levels of job satisfaction. The authors looked at the impact work-life balance has on job satisfaction among 171 university teachers. A correlation analysis supported their hypothesis highlighting a positive relationship between the 2 concepts. These results correspond with Padma and Reddy's (2014) research also indicating that teachers who have achieved a successful work-life balance have higher levels of job satisfaction.

Anuradha and Mrinalini (2016) carried out a research investigation looking at female doctors working in private hospitals and the impact their work-life balance has on their job satisfaction levels. The authors suggest that in such a competitive environment women face a lot of pressure when trying to stand out and evolve in their careers which can pose a problem to their work-life balance. Anuradha and Mrinalini (2016) completed a regression analysis and ANOVA test which supported their theory that work-life balance has an impact on job satisfaction. The authors recommend that achieving a work-life balance is possible and can also be permanently achieved when effective management strategies are put in place.

As seen in the studies discussed the majority of research that is examining the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction focuses on only one job sector or role at a time. Therefore, findings and results are not generalizable to other job sectors, leaving a gap in the research for these sectors to be explored. A large portion of the

research also focuses on correlation analysis only to test the relationship between the

variables however, it is important to note that correlation does not infer causation. This

leaves a gap for future researchers to complete further tests to examine if work-life balance

is having an impact or if it can predict job satisfaction.

Work-life Balance and Perceived Stress

Kazmi and Singh (2015) pointed out that many research studies have linked work-life balance to job satisfaction and stress. Cooper and Palmer (2000) define stress as something that "occurs when pressure exceeds your perceived ability to cope". According to Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein (1983) perceived stress represents how a person identifies with a stressful event that they are involved in and not the actual feelings and symptoms of stress which they may experience. Job worries, job loss, death, family problems, money problems and relationships are common stressors which individuals encounter on a daily basis. Stress in the workplace is often related to tasks an employee has to carry out and tasks that will be used to judge their performance (Christiana and Rajun, 2014).

Stress can have many negative consequences and implications for an individuals personal life and also for an organisation. Stress can be damaging and effect a persons health in numerous ways including causing headaches, increasing risk of stroke, causing individuals to burnout and increasing the likelihood of depression. According to Stamper and Johlke (2003) to gain a competitive advantage employers will often give their employees more responsibilities which can lead to an increase in the pressure felt and levels of stress. Organisations will then often see implications for the business when their workforce becomes stressed. These implications may be high turnover rates, low productivity, high numbers of absences and sometimes this can often lead to reputational damage among competitors and the public.

Matuska, Bass and Schmitt (2013) carried out a study to investigate if work-life balance was a predictor of perceived stress. The researchers believed that a relationship would exist between the 2 variables as they are both related to satisfactorily managing life events. A large sample size of 1048 participants was gathered from a secondary source, The Life Balance Inventory data base. The researchers also focused on the demographic

variables age, education, employment, ethnicity, income and location. A regression analysis was conducted showing individuals who had achieved a successful work-life balance had lower levels of perceived stress indicating that work-life balance can predict perceived stress. This research study has a significantly large sample size with people from various backgrounds and employment fields making results more generalizable and reliable.

Christiana and Rajun (2014) point out that employees in the workplace today are expected to have a successful work-life balance which will then lead to job satisfaction and lower stress levels. The researchers carried out a study to examine the impact of work-life balance and stress on job satisfaction with a sample of 313 employees with backgrounds in the information technology (IT) sector and in the executive cadre private sector. A correlation analysis was run on the data gathered and showed a meaningful negative correlation between work-life balance and stress. This implies that those achieving a work-life balance experience lower levels of stress. Similar to the majority of the research investigating these concepts a correlation analysis has been run to describe the relationship between variables however, this does not provide any evidence towards the impact of one variable on the other, or if one can predict the other.

The concepts of work-life balance and perceived stress have been widely researched in previous studies however, majority of the research is focusing on the impact the 2 concepts grouped together have in predicting a separate dependent variable. As seen in the research carried out by Christiana and Rajun (2014) when a correlation analysis is carried out a significant relationship between work-life balance and stress is reported. There is a noticeable gap in the research and literature to investigate if work-life balance can impact and predict levels of perceived stress.

Job Satisfaction and Perceived Stress

The concepts of job satisfaction and perceived stress are often explored alongside one another in the research and are also investigated in terms of their relationship with one another. As previously mentioned job satisfaction refers to the attitudes, feelings and emotions people feel about their jobs. Perceived stress is concerned with how a person identifies with a stressful event they are experiencing (Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein, 1983).

According to Hosseinabadi et al., (2018) job satisfaction is "a positive and pleasant emotional state and is a result of individuals assessment on his/her job or job experience" and job stress is a response to job related factors or changes in the work environment. The authors carried out a research study with 406 female nurses exploring the relationship between these 2 concepts. The findings showed a significant relationship between job satisfaction and job stress which would indicate that the levels of stress a nurse is experiencing, is having an impact on their levels of job satisfaction. This result would be expected however, the study only focused on nurses therefore would need to be replicate among other job sectors.

Similarly to the above study Mateescu and Chraif (2015) conducted a research study investigating the relationship between job satisfaction, job stress and coping mechanisms in two different job fields, an educational organisation and a technical organisation. The authors predicted that there would be a significant correlation between job satisfaction and levels of self-perceived stress, and this was supported by the findings among those in the technical organisation. This opens a window for future researchers to replicate this study to explore the reliability of the results and look further in the educational organisations. It is always important in these studies to remember that

correlation is not causation, therefore researchers are just looking at the relationship and nothing can be implied.

Brewer and Landers (2003) explored the relationship between job satisfaction and job stress in teachers with the aim of gaining more knowledge around the relationship to help employers design and implement beneficial policies and strategies. Correlational analysis indicated a strong significant relationship between the 2 concepts and also found that job stress was related to lack of organisational support. This type of study and findings can provide great insight and benefits to employers and organisations in helping to reduce stress levels among their workforces.

The research studies mentioned are just some of the many that explore the relationship between job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress. In organisations today it is vital that managers and employers understand these concepts and how they can have an impact on each another. By gaining more knowledge in this area and by being proactive it could decrease the negative implications associated with high levels of stress and low levels of job satisfaction.

Current Study

The aim of this current research study is to investigate the relationships between work-life balance, job satisfaction and perceived stress among employees working full-time in Ireland, and also to investigate if work-life balance is a predictor of levels of job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress in the same group of participants.

Previous research has studied the above concepts in great detail however, they are not always linked together. When the relationships have been previously investigated the majority of the research has support the hypotheses and research question being explored in this current study. Previous research carried out also tends to focus on one job sector at at time rather than including multiple job sectors in their study therefore, results and findings are hard to generalise.

Research Questions

This current research study will aim to investigate 3 hypotheses and a research questions. All are outlined below.

Hypothesis 1: Work-life balance will have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Work-life balance will have a significant negative relationship with levels of perceived stress

Hypothesis 3: Job satisfaction will have a significant negative relationship with levels of perceived stress

Research Question: Can work-life balance predict levels of job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress in employees working full-time?

Methodology

Research philosophy and approach

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015) "the term research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge" and majority of the time individuals conducting a research project or trying to answer a specific question can be unaware of this. Burrell and Morgan (1979) point out that regardless of if you are aware of these beliefs and assumptions or not an individual who is conducting the research project will make numerous different types of assumptions including epistemological assumptions (about human knowledge), ontological assumptions (about realities encountered during the research process) and axiological assumptions (about how personal values influence the research).

These beliefs and assumptions influence ones understanding of the question being asked, the methodology and the findings, therefore the more logical and rational these are, the more likely an individual is to design a consistent and rational research study (Saunders et al., 2015).

Rationale for current research approach

Although there is a sufficient amount of literature surrounding work-life balance, job satisfaction and perceived stress which is discussed in the literature review there is still a gap for the proposed research study. The majority of the literature available only focuses on one job sector at a time and the studies mentioned often only complete correlation analysis to describe the relationship between the variables. This current research study investigated individuals who work full-time in Ireland regardless of their job sector and also completed a regression analysis to determine if work-life balance is a predict of job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress.

Participants

For the purpose of this research study a mix of convenience and snowball sampling methods were used. Participants were approached through the social media channels Facebook and Linked In and were made aware that any responses given were anonymous. To ensure reliable and valid results a large sample size of participants was required as the study is questionnaire based and a large sample gives a more accurate representation of the population. There were a total of 75 participants in this research study, both male and female between the ages of 21 to 60, currently in full-time employment in Ireland. This research study focused on multiple job sectors, once participants were employed full-time they could take part regardless of the area or organisation they worked in.

Measures

A questionnaire was developed by the researcher containing an information section, consent section, demographic questions, a scale measuring work-life balance, a scale measuring job satisfaction, a scale measuring levels of perceived stress and a debriefing section. The questionnaire contained a mixture of questions and statements, and was delivered through the online programme, google forms.

The information section, consent section and demographic questions (see appendix 1) were designed by the researcher. The information section included the reason behind the study, the variables being measured and what the data collected would be used for. The consent section required participants to give voluntary consent for the researcher to use their responses for the purpose of the study. Demographic questions were in relation to age, gender, employment status and what job sector participants worked in.

The work-life balance scale (Brough et al, 2014) (see appendix 2) measured work-life balance by asking participants to reflect on work and non-work related activities. This

measure contained 4 statements measured on a likert scale from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree. Receiving a high score on this scale would indicate that an individual is achieving a good work-life balance. This scale has a cronbach's alpha of .87, which indicates high reliability.

Macdonald and MacIntyre's (1977) (see appendix 3) generic job satisfaction scale was also used. This scale is made up of 10 statements measured on a likert scale from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree. High scores ranging between 39-50 on this scale would indicate high levels of job satisfaction. Low scores between 10-31 would indicate an individual is experiencing low levels of job satisfaction. This scale has a cronbach's alpha of .84, which indicates high internal reliability.

The perceived stress scale (Cohen et al, 1983) (see appendix 4), a widely used tool to measure stress was also included. This consists of 10 questions measured on a likert scale from 0 being never to 4 being very often. This scale measured levels of perceived stress experienced in the last month. High scores reported would indicated that the participant is experiencing high levels of perceived stress, low scores would indicate the opposite. This scale has a cronbach's alpha of .90, which indicates excellent internal reliability.

The debriefing section (see section 5) thanks the participants once again for taking part in the study and reminds participants that once responses are submitted they can no longer withdraw from the study as it is completely anonymous. This section also includes a number for two helpline and support services in case any participants were affected by questions asked.

Design

The design for the current research study is quantitative, cross-sectional. This study measured work-life balance, job satisfaction and perceived stress at one point in time through a questionnaire.

Procedure

Pilot study: A pilot study was conducted with 3 participants, 2 female and 1 male, using google forms. Participants were timed to determine how long it will take to respond and after completion were asked to feedback any problems or issues to the researcher in case anything needed to be adjusted.

Procedure adopted: Once the pilot study participants confirmed they understood the questions and the information provided was clear the final version of the questionnaire was then uploaded onto the researchers social media profiles Facebook and Linked In looking for participants and asking individuals to share the link with their family, friends and colleagues. Throughout the completion of the questionnaire participants could withdraw at any stage and had to confirm at the end if the wanted to submit their responses.

Data analysis

Data collected was analysed using SPSS. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were run to describe the characteristics of the sample gathered. A correlation analysis was conducted to measure the relationships between the variables being measured. Two linear regression analyses were then conducted to examine if work-life balance can predict job satisfaction and perceived levels of stress.

Limitations

A cross sectional research design is a quick way to obtain large amounts of information however, it does not establish causation, just correlation between variables.

A large sample size is also required to ensure results are reliable and valid. Using convenience and snowball sampling methods is unpredictable and does not guarantee this large sample size.

Using an online questionnaire meant the researcher could not control when participants were completing the questionnaire meaning they could be in a distracting environment, discussing it with others or not applying their full concentration.

The researcher was also unable to control for any outside factors which may have affected the responses of participants. Participants may have had a hard or stressful day at work or at home which could have influenced their responses at the time they completed the questionnaire.

Results

Frequencies for the current sample of participants on each demographic variable (N = 75) are represented in the table 1. The majority of participants taking part in the study were female and all were employed at the time they completed the questionnaire. Out of the 7 possible job sectors the most popular were medical, wellbeing and sport, and business, sales and tourism with 45.4% of the sample in these two categories. Agriculture, animals and food was the least popular job sector with only 2 participants choosing this option.

Table 1:

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender		
Male	16	21.3
Female	59	78.7
Currently employed		
Yes	75	100
No	0	0
Job sector		
Agriculture, animals and food	2	2.7
Science, engineering and construction	12	16.0

Medical, wellbeing and sport	17	22.7
Creative arts, fashion and media	4	5.3
Government, law and education	11	14.7
Accounting, finance and insurance	12	16.0
Business, sales and tourism	17	22.7

Descriptive statistics for age, contracted hours of work, average hours worked, work-life balance, job satisfaction and perceived stress are presented in table 2. Skewness and kurtosis were examined for each variable to test for normality.

The mean score for work-life balance (m = 12.45, SD = 4.24) indicates that the majority of participants were scoring scoring themselves moderate on the work-life balance scale. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality indicated that the data was not normally distributed (p = .002). For work-life balance the data was negatively skewed and mesokurtic in formation.

The mean score for job satisfaction (m = 33.44, SD = 7.45) indicates that the majority of participants were scoring scoring themselves moderate on the job satisfaction scale. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality indicated that the data was normally distributed (p = .20). For job satisfaction the data was slightly negatively skewed and slightly mesokurtic in formation.

The mean score for perceived stress (m = 20.57, SD = 8.10) indicates that the majority of participants were scoring scoring themselves moderate on the perceived stress

scale. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality indicated that the data was normally distributed (p = .09). For perceived stress the data was negatively skewed and mesokurtic in formation.

Table 2:

Descriptive statistics of all continuous variables

	Mean (95% Confidence Intervals)	Std. Error Mean	Median	SD	Range
Age	31.41 (29.25-33.58)	1.09	28	9.42	21-60
Contracted hours of work	38.56 (37.80-39.32)	.38	39	3.32	30-50
Average hours worked	41.72 (40.37-43.08)	.68	41	5.90	25-55
Work-life balance	12.45 (11.47-13.43)	.49	13	4.24	4-20
Job Satisfaction	33.44 (31.73-35.15)	.86	32	7.45	15-48
Perceived Stress	20.57 (18.71-22.44)	.94	22	8.10	1-36

Correlation:

Hypothesis 1

The relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to

ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a significantly small, negative correlation between the two variables, r = -.25 n = 75, p = .03. This indicates that high levels of work-life balance have a negative impact on job satisfaction. The two variables shared 6% of variance in common.

Hypothesis 2

The relationship between work-life balance and perceived stress was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a significant large, positive correlation between the two variables, r = .51, n = 75, p < .001. This indicates that participants who are experiencing higher levels of work-life balance experience higher levels of perceived stress. These two variables shared 26% of variance in common.

Hypothesis 3

The relationship between job satisfaction and perceived stress was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a significant medium, negative correlation between the two variables, r = -.39, n = 75, p = .001. This indicates that participants who are experiencing higher levels of job satisfaction experience lower levels of perceived stress. These two variables shared 15% of variance in common.

The relationship between average hours worked and work-life balance was also investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses

were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a significant medium, positive correlation between the two variables, r = .44, n = 75, p < .001. This indicates that participants who work more hours experience higher levels of a work-life balance. These two variables shared 19% of variance in common.

The relationship between average hours worked and perceived stress was also investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a significant small, positive correlation between the two variables, r = .29, n = 75, p = .01. This indicates that participants who work more hours experience higher levels of a perceived stress. These two variables shared 8% of variance in common.

Table 3:

Correlations between all continuous variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	1					
2. Contracted hours of work	.11	1				
3. Average hours worked	.18	.50***	1			
4. Work-life balance	.13	.20	.44***	1		
5. Job satisfaction	-.10	-.04	-.05	-.25*	1	
6. Perceived stress	.11	.15	.29*	.51***	-.39**	1

Note. Statistical significance: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Regression:

Two simple linear regressions were performed to investigate the ability of work-life balance to predict job satisfaction and perceived stress among employees who work full-time in Ireland. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity.

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict job satisfaction based on work-life balance. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 73) = 5.02$, $p = .028$), R^2 of .06. The independent variable explained 6% of variance in job satisfaction. This indicates that participants job satisfaction significantly decreased based on level of work-life balance ($\beta = -.25$, $p = .028$). These results indicate that work-life balance can predict job satisfaction.

A simple linear regression was also calculated to predict perceived stress based on work-life balance. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 73) = 25.06$, $p < .001$), R2 of .256. The independent variable explained 26% of variance in perceived stress. This indicates that participants perceived stress significantly increased based on level of work-life balance ($\beta = .97$, $p < .001$). These results indicate that work-life balance can predict perceived stress.

Table 4:

Simple linear regression model predicting job satisfaction and perceived stress

	Job satisfaction			*Perceived stress*		
Variable	*β*	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*B*	*SE*
Work-life balance	-.25	-.45	.20	.51	.97	.19
R²		.06			.26	
F		5.02*			25.06***	

Note. N = 75; Statistical significance: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Discussion

The primary aim of this current research study was to investigate if work-life balance was a predictor of the concepts job satisfaction and perceived stress among employees who were working full-time in Ireland. The study also examined the relationship between the variables being measures and predicted a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction, a significant negative relationship between work-life balance and levels of perceived stress, and a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress.

Hypothesis one stated that work-life balance would have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction. Previous research carried out did support this hypothesis. Results from this current study research study did not support this hypothesis. Findings fron the correlation analysis run indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction. This would suggest that individuals who are experiencing low levels of work-life balance are also experiencing low levels of job satisfaction.

This would not be in agreement with previous research carried out in the area and previously discussed. Work-life balance and job satisfaction have regularly been linked together in research studies and as reported by Omar and Zakaria (2016) there was a significant positive relationship between the two concepts. These results were also previously replicated by Devi and Nagini (2014).

Hypothesis two stated that work-life balance would have a significant negative relationship with levels of perceived stress. Previous research carried out did support this hypothesis. Results from this current study did not support hypothesis two. Findings from the correlation analysis run showed a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and levels of perceived stress. This would indicate that employees who are

experiencing high levels of work-life balance are also experience high levels of perceived stress.

Work-life balance and perceived stress are also concepts have also been linked in past research as discussed above however, this research is scarce in comparison to those exploring the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction. Matuska, Bass and Schmitt (2013) and, Christiana and Rajun (2014) both found a significant negative relationship between work-life balance and perceived stress.

Hypothesis three stated that job satisfaction would have a significant negative relationship with levels of perceived stress. Previous research carried out did support this hypothesis and it was also supported by the findings of this current research study. This would suggest that individuals who have high levels of job satisfaction, have low levels of perceived stress.

These findings would be in agreement with previous research in the area that has been previously discussed in the literature review. Mateescu and Chraif (2015), and Brewer and Landers (2003) all found significant relationships between these concepts. These findings provide great insight not only to future researchers, but also to organisations and employers.

The main research question was investigating if work-life balance can predict levels of job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress in employees working full-time in Ireland. Previous research carried out would have suggested that work-life balance was a predictor of the two dependent variables in the question. Results from this study would also suggest this. The linear regression analyses run indicated that participants job satisfaction significantly decreased based on levels of work-life balance and that participants perceived stress significantly increased based on levels of work-life balance.

As previously pointed out there is a gap in the research regarding if work-life balance is a predictor of job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress. Majority of the research focuses on the relationship between the concepts rather than if one can predict another. Anuradha and Mirnalini (2016) and Kanwar, Singh and Kodwani conducted some of the few studies suggesting work-life balance is a predictor of job satisfaction. Little research has been conducted exploring work-life balance as a predictor of perceived stress. Matuska, Bass and Schmitt (2013) were the only researchers discussed in this study who reported work-life balance as a predictor of perceives stress.

This current research study is not without its limitations. The sample size was very small for a cross-sectional, questionnaire based study which has an effect on the reliability of results generated and can also leave research vulnerable to different biases. As mentioned in the method section the use of an online questionnaire is also a limitation as the researcher has no control over outside factors that could be effecting or distracting participants at the time which they complete the questionnaire.

However, irrespective to the above disadvantages this current research study also had its strengths. A pilot study was done to ensure that participants could access, understand and complete the questionnaire without any difficulties. The use of an online questionnaire is also a strength as neither the researcher or participants had to be at a specific location at a specific time. The questionnaire was available online for 5 weeks giving participants loads of time to complete it without being under pressure. Cronbach's alpha for all questionnaires was above .8 indicating high and excellent reliability of the work-life balance measure, job satisfaction measure and perceived stress measure used in the questionnaire.

Conclusion and Recommendations

If this research was to be replicated in the future it would be firstly important to gather a larger sample size to ensure more reliable results, and also having a more equal balance between genders is important to avoid any biases. Future replication of this study and of any past research study is important to ensure the reliability of any findings reported. As we can see from this research not all findings were in agreement with previous studies in the area.

A lot of past researchers only went as far as completing a correlation analysis with their data. Correlation is not causation, therefore it is only highlighting the significance, strength and direction of the relationship between variables. As previously mentioned research is scarce with regards to exploring work-life balance as a predictor variable so future researchers could zone in more on this and complete a more detailed analysis on any data gathered.

If this research was to be replicated in the future, it would also be beneficial to limit the timeframe given for people to take part in the study and to have participants complete the study in larger groups at assigned sessions. This will allow the researcher to control the environment and eliminate any possible distractions, and it also may help increase the number of participants if groups can be gathered to complete it all together at one specific time.

It could also be recommended to focus in on a smaller range of job sectors at a time. This study did intend to not just focus on one like similar studies but may have looked at too many. Results from the job sectors could be compared against one another if there was a somewhat even number in each. Findings then could be sent to organisations in these fields of work to give insight and also help improve policies and procedures. There is defiantly a need for future research to investigate these concepts in more detail.

Overall to conclude this current study has provided empirical research regarding work-life balance, job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress among individuals who are working full-time in Ireland. Although 2 of the research hypotheses were not supported by the researchers the findings, the study still gives insight into the types of relationships shared between the variables.

These findings are important and beneficial to organisations, employers and also employees. As mentioned if not successfully monitored and promoted work-life balance, jobs satisfaction and levels of perceived stress can have negative implications for the mentioned groups at home and at work. If organisations and employers understand how to achieve this they will see many great benefits overtime, helping their overall success.

Previous research has discussed the importance of work-life balance, job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress from an individual perspective and also from an organisational perspective. The current study found that work-life balance has a significant negative relationship with job satisfaction, and a significant positive relationship with levels of perceived stress. The findings also showed a significant negative relationship between the two dependent variables, job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress, and that work-life balance is a predictor of these dependent variables.

To conclude findings from the current research study will assist future researchers exploring this area and provided them with an open window for more empirical research to be carried out regarding work-life balance, job satisfaction and levels of perceived stress.

Personal Learning Statement

Overall I found the experience of completing my dissertation for my Masters in Human Recourse Management an enjoyable and learning one however, it was also a challenging one. When completing my dissertation for my masters degree in comparison to my undergrad degree in psychology I felt I faced many more challenges. I found the proposal process went well as I was in college most of the time, living on campus, and had a lot of supports around me. I was able to communicate more easily with classmates, lecturers and utilise the supports that the college had in place for students. I was also not working during the first 2 semesters as I was in college full-time and was focusing solely on this. However, throughout the dissertation process I had moved back home which was 2 hours away from the college campus and was working full-time, therefore I struggled to find the time and motivation to encourage myself.

The process of completing a dissertation has not only thought me a lot about work-life balance, stress and job satisfaction, the areas which I researched, but also about the type of environment I would like to work in going forward and the importance of a HR department in and any organisation when it comes to implementing different polices, procedures and practices to support their employees. I was also given the opportunity to improve some of these areas while working which helped me gain a better understanding as I got to experience different situations unfold in reality. This also showed me that I learn better by doing rather than listening or being shown, something that will benefit me going forward in my future career.

If I was to change anything throughout my journey of completing my dissertation I think I would take on less hours and responsibilities in my work life until I had it completed. I found it difficult to settle down and focus on my thesis after a 40 hour work

week was completed and also found it difficult to find time to communicate with my supervisor which would have benefited me more.

Completing a masters is defiantly one of my biggest achievements and after much deliberation I am delighted I went back and choose the field of Human Resource Management. This is an area that I can see myself excelling in and I look forward to all the opportunities that come my way and also the opportunity to utilise the knowledge I learned throughout my course and through the completion of my dissertation project.

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Appendix

Appendix 1:

Information section

I would like to invite you to take part in this research study. Please read the following information first and if anything is unclear or you need more information you can contact me, Amanda Daly, at x14413498@student.ncirl.ie or my supervisor, Matthew Hudson, at matthew.hudson@ncirl.ie.

I am completing my Masters in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland and I am conducting a research study for my final year dissertation.

The aim of my study is to investigate if work-life balance can impact levels of job satisfaction and perceived stress in individuals who work full-time in Ireland.

To be involved you will be required to fill out this short questionnaire which will take 5-10 minutes.

No personal information will be gathered and responses will be anonymous. The researcher will not be able to trace responses back to anyone.

Any data or information gathered will be analysed only for the purpose of this dissertation and will be not be used elsewhere.

To keep in line with the college requirements data will be kept for 5 years by the researcher and stored securely.

Once you have submitted the questionnaire answers cannot be changed or withdrawn.

Thank you for your time, it's really appreciated.

Consent section

Please tick the box below to confirm that you voluntarily consent to participate in this research study and you clearly understand the purpose of this study.

N.B All responses are anonymous and cannot be traced back to you.

Demographic questions

1. Please select your gender

    a. Male

    b. Female

    c. Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?

    _____

3. Are you currently employed?

    a. Yes

    b. No

4. Describe your current employment contract:

    a. Full-time

    b. Part-time

    c. Other

5. How many hours are you contracted to work a week?

    _____

6. On average, how many hours do you actually work a week?

    _____

7. Which work sector in Ireland would your job best fit in to?

    a. Agriculture, animals and food

    b. Science, engineering and construction

    c. Medical wellbeing and sport

    d. Creative arts, fashion and media

e. Government, law and education

f. Accounting, finance and insurance

g. Business, sales and tourism

Appendix 2:

Work-life balance measure (Brough et al, 2014):

When I reflect over my work and non-work activities (family, friends, sports, study, etc.) over the past month I conclude that:

1. I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

2. I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

3. I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

4. Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

Appendix 3:

Job Satisfaction measure (Macdonald and MacIntyre, 1977):

For each statement circle the number to indicate your agreement.

1. I receive recognition for a job well done

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

2. I feel close to the people at work

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

3. I feel good about working at this company

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

4. I feel secure about my job

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

5. I believe management is concerned about me

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

6. On the whole, I believe work is good for my physical health

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

7. My wages are good

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

8. All my talents and skills are used at work

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

9. I get along with my supervisors

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

10. I feel good about my job

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

Appendix 4:

Perceived stress scale (Cohen et al, 1983):

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

   Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?

   Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

   Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

   Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?

   Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

   Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

   Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?

   Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

    Never   0   1   2   3   4   Very often

Appendix 5:

Debriefing section:

I would like to thank you once again for taking part in my research study.

As previously mentioned all information gathered is anonymous and once you click submit responses cannot be traced back to you.

If you have any questions after you have submitted, you can contact me, Amanda Daly, at x14413498@student.ncirl.ie or my supervisor, Matthew Hudson, at matthew.hudson@ncirl.ie.

If you have been affected by any of the questions asked throughout this questionnaire please contact the following helpline or online support service:

Aware at 1800 80 48 48

Reachout.com

Thank you for your time and please remember to click submit**.**

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland

Student name: Amanda Daly   Student number: 14413498

School: Business   Course: MA Human Resource Management

Degree to be awarded: MA Human Resource Management

Title of Thesis: A Study Investigating the Impact of Work-Life Balance on Job Satisfaction and Levels of

Perceived Stress in Full-time Employees.

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (http://trap.ncirl.ie/), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access.
I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate:

For completion by the School:
The aforementioned thesis was received by_____ Date: _____

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school