

**WORK-LIFE INTERACTION AMONG SETSWANA-  
SPEAKING EDUCATORS IN THE NORTH WEST  
PROVINCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

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## COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The editorial style as well as the references referred to in this mini-dissertation follow the format prescribed by the Publication Manual (5<sup>th</sup> edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Potchefstroom) to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The editorial style specified by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (which agrees largely with the APA style) is used, but the APA guidelines were followed in constructing tables.

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Lizelle Wentzel, hereby declare that “Work-life interaction among Setswana speaking educators in the North West Province: A phenomenological study” is my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this work are those of the author and relevant literature references as shown in the references.

I further declare that the content of this research will not be handed in for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.

**LIZELLE WENTZEL**

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## ABSTRACT

**Title:** Work-life interaction among Setswana speaking educators in the North West Province: A phenomenological study.

**Keywords:** Work-personal life interaction, experiences, domains in life, antecedents, consequences, strategies, Setswana-speaking secondary school educators

In an ever-changing world, work and personal life are the main areas in which most employed adults spend their time. Today the essence of the relationship between work- and personal life is that these two domains overlap and interact. Consequently, an increasing number of employed adults are confronted with bigger demands in both their work and personal lives, and many of their daily hassles stem from job responsibilities that are incompatible with responsibilities in their personal lives. Educators' work has also become more intricate and demanding and may be one of the professions in which individuals find it difficult to combine their work and personal lives.

The objective of this study was to determine how Setswana-speaking educators experienced their work-personal life interaction (WPLI), and more specifically to determine the significant domains, antecedents, consequences and strategies associated with WPLI for the participants. A non-probability purposive voluntary sample ( $N = 10$ ) was taken of Setswana-speaking secondary school educators from the Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp areas in the North West Province. Data collection was done through a phenomenological method of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Data was analysed by the use of content analysis

The results indicated that educators experienced factors in both their work and personal lives to be demanding. In addition, work demands led to various time constraints and strain. However, factors were identified that made the demands less overwhelming and it was also found that educators valued certain things (family, friends, leisure time, church and personal time) in their personal lives. Educators nevertheless employed certain strategies to cope with this interaction, which in turn led to numerous positive outcomes. Lastly, an interesting finding relating to this study was that educators felt a responsibility towards the children.

Recommendations were made for the organisation and for future practice.

## OPSOMMING

**Titel:** Werk-lewe interaksie onder Setswanasprekende onderwysers in die Noordwes Provinsie: 'n Fenomenologiese studie.

**Sleuteltermes:** Werk-persoonlike lewe interaksie, ondervindinge, domeine in lewe, oorsake, gevolge, strategieë, beperkinge van gebalanseerde lewe, Setswanasprekende sekondêre skoolonderwysers.

In 'n veranderende wêreld is werk- en persoonlike lewe die hoof areas waarin werkende volwassenes hul tyd spandeer. Tans kan die verhouding tussen werk- en persoonlike lewe gesien word as betekenisvol omdat die twee domeine in wisselwerking is en oorvleuel. Gevolglik word werkende volwassenes toenemend met hoër eise in beide hul werk- en persoonlike lewe gekonfronteer en sodoende word baie van hul daaglikse probleme veroorsaak deur verantwoordelikhede in beide die werk- en persoonlike lewe wat onversoenbaar is. Die integrering sedert 1994 veroorsaak dat onderwysers se werk meer kompleks en veeleisend geword het. Hieruit kan afgelei word dat die onderwys moontlik 'n beroep is waarin individue dit moeilik vind om hulle werk- en persoonlike lewe met mekaar te versoen.

Die doelwit van hierdie navorsing was om te ondersoek hoe Setswanasprekende onderwysers werk-persoonlike lewe interaksie (WPLI) ervaar, en meer spesifiek om die betekenisvolle domeine, oorsake, gevolge en strategieë geassosieer met WPLI te bepaal. 'n Doelgerigte vrywillige niawaarskynlikheid-steekproef ( $N = 10$ ) is geneem van Setswanasprekende sekondêre skoolonderwysers van die Potchefstroom- en Klerksdorpareas in die Noordwes Provinsie. Datainsameling op grond van 'n fenomenologiese metode van semi-gestruktureerde in diepte onderhoude is gedoen. Inhoud-analise is gebruik om data te analiseer.

Die resultate het aangedui dat sekere aspekte in beide die werk- en persoonlike lewe as veeleisend ervaar is. Boonop is gevind dat werkseise aanleiding gee tot verskeie tydsbeperkinge en spanning. Nogtans is faktore wat die werkseise minder oorweldigend maak geïdentifiseer en is gevind dat onderwysers waarde heg aan verskeie faktore (familie, vriende, ontspanning, kerk

en persoonlike tyd) in hulle persoonlike lewens. Nietemin, maak onderwysers van sekere strategieë gebruik om hierdie interaksie te hanteer wat aanleiding gee tot verskeie positiewe uitkomst. 'n Interessante bevinding rakende hierdie studie is dat onderwysers 'n gevoel van verantwoordelikheid teenoor die kinders ervaar het.

Aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing en praktyke is aan die hand gedoen.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This mini-dissertation focuses on how Setswana-speaking secondary school educators in the North West Province experience work-personal life interaction (WPLI). This chapter contains the problem statement and a discussion of the research objectives, in which the general objective and specific objectives are set out. The research method is explained and a division of chapters is given.

### **1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

According to Van Deventer (2005), education is the key to the future and development and improvement, good health, liberty, security, economic well-being and involvement in social and political activities all depend on education. Education is also high on the agenda of national priorities almost everywhere in the world. In South Africa, acts ranging from protest marches to court cases stress the importance of education for the government, parents and students (Rothmann, Gerber, Lubbe, Sieberhagen, & Rothmann, 1998). Educators in South Africa are expected to show foundational, practical and reflective competence in multiple roles ranging from leader, administrator and manager through learning mediator and scholar, to researcher and lifelong learner (RSA, 2000). Furthermore, educators in South Africa are required to be systematic in their development of children's cognitive abilities and they are expected to engage with children in a manner that will help children understand the complexities of life problems so that, in time, they can learn skills to address problems actively and independently (Human-Vogel & Bouwer, 2005).

In a recent study, Hall, Altman, Nkomo, Peltzer, and Zuma (2005) found that a relatively large number of educators experience the teaching profession negatively, have low morale and experience little job satisfaction, with the result that they seriously consider leaving the profession. The main causes of educator dissatisfaction and low morale include remuneration, poor relations with the education department, a lack of respect for the profession from the community, as well as educators being directly affected by the HIV virus or indirectly affected because colleagues, learners and family members are living with HIV/AIDS (Horn,

2006). Chrisholm, Hoadley, and Wa Kivilu (2005) concluded that increased stress levels due to increased workloads caused the very low morale among educators. Reasons given for the increased workloads included bigger class sizes, several departmental requirements, the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), the new curriculum and its continuous assessment requirements, as well as a larger number of learning areas for which there were no resources or educators (Horn, 2006).

Many of these dissatisfied educators remain in the profession because of limited alternative job opportunities and the fact that their present education jobs provide them with a regular income as well as other financial benefits such as a retirement fund, medical aid and housing subsidy. This situation is detrimental to both the learners and the teaching profession, as it is doubtful that these educators will motivate and assist their learners to gain the necessary knowledge of job market requirements, and thereby improve their learners' chances of becoming employable. Negative educators with low morale and high stress levels may do only the minimum required of them to complete the syllabus, rather than actively preparing their learners for a career (Horn, 2006).

Smith and Bourke (1992) indicate stress as an unavoidable aspect of teaching. While educators are under stress, they are intolerant, impatient, less caring and not fully involved in their work. These negative behavioural characteristics are often caused by illness of varying degrees, for example headaches, backache, nervous tension, anxiety attacks, burnout, depression and in severe cases, heart attacks (Naicker, 2003). Potential stressors that exist in the individual educators' life, outside of the workplace, that affect the individual's behaviour at work must also be considered when assessing the sources and impact of work stress. Potential stressors include stressful life events, pressure resulting from conflict between organisational and family demands, financial complications and conflicts between organisational and personal beliefs. However, events occurring in the home domain may be both a source of stress and a source of support, and may also mitigate or exacerbate the effects of stressors experienced in the work environment (Van Wyk, 2004). Stress affects educators' personal and work lives to a greater or lesser degree and they are burdened with having to make numerous modifications in their personal and work lives (Jackson & Rothmann, 2006). Therefore, it is of great importance to look at not only the work lives of educators, but also at their personal lives and the interaction between the two domains.

Interest in the relationship between employees' work and home lives has grown substantially since the mid-eighties (Neal, Chapman, Ingersoll-Dayton, & Emlen, 1993). Traditionally, work and home have been considered separate domains. More recently, however, the interdependence between both domains has increasingly been recognised and has captured the attention of many researchers (Geurts, Rutte, & Peeters, 1999). This is a result of several socio demographic and economic trends in our society. Firstly, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of women joining the work force (Paoli, 1997). Associated with this development is an increase in the occurrence of employed adults who are part of dual-career families (Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Frone, Russel, & Cooper, 1992; Zedeck & Mosier, 1990). Secondly, the nature of work has changed, particularly demanding more mental and emotional effort (rather than physical effort). Thirdly, due to, amongst others, the growing international competition (globalisation of the economy), the flexibility of work time schedules (e.g., 24-hour economy) and advances in technology (e-mail, mobile phones and lap top computers), a bigger appeal is made to employees' ability to work irregular hours and during 'unsocial' hours (i.e., in the evenings, nights, weekends and overtime) (Burke, 2004; Geurts et al., 1999). This may cause the boundaries between work and personal life to become blurred (O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath, 2004).

Today many employees have difficulty combining work and domestic obligations (Van Hooff et al., 2005). Some people who have work and family roles, experience no conflict between them, whereas others experience a high degree of conflict. Work-family conflict is the term often used to characterise the conflict between the work and family domains (Carnicer, Sánchez, & Pérez, 2004). Work-family conflict was defined by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p. 77) as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. Therefore, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role". This definition suggests that interference between the two domains can occur in both directions, that is, work-to family interference (WFI) and family-to-work interference (FWI) (O'Driscoll et al., 2004).

There has been a general consensus that work and family influence each other in a negative way where time, tasks, attitudes, stress, emotions and behaviour spill over between work and family (Carnicer et al., 2004). However, recent research suggests that work and family can also interact in a positive way (Geurts et al., 2005). Furthermore, recent empirical evidence

suggests that demanding aspects in the work or family domain (or both) are mainly related to negative spill over, but resources such as control and support are related to positive spill over (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

The latest organisational view of work and personal life indicates that these two domains are interdependent, and that this interdependence has a significant impact on individual behaviour in an organisational and private setting, and ultimately on organisational functioning itself (Greenhaus, 1988; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999). Poor interaction between work and personal life is associated with less job satisfaction and greater intention to quit, with lower levels of family satisfaction, and with higher levels of emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). As a result, work and personal life issues emerge as a major concern for individuals, families and organisations (Burke, 2004). Writing that is more recent has emphasised WPLI as a more useful statement of the problem.

As mentioned earlier, many employees have difficulty combining work and domestic obligations (Van Hooff et al., 2005). Individuals aspire to integrate their work and family (all aspects of their experience) in a more satisfying way. Individuals will also differ in the nature of this integration and may have different integrations at different life and career stages. Despite the organisational consequences of work-home interdependence, employers have not been quick to recognise the severity of the situation or to respond in a productive manner (Hall & Richter, 1988).

In a review of the literature on WPLI, Poelmans (2001) indicates the lack of empirical studies on this phenomenon from countries with cultures in which the family as an institution is very strong and female labour participation is on the rise. Unfortunately, South Africa is one of these countries where research on WPLI is limited. Although the understanding of WPLI has received much attention in the international arena, various limitations prevent us from applying this knowledge in South Africa. Firstly, measuring instruments are being used for South African employees that were developed in other countries. These instruments are not necessarily valid, reliable, unbiased and equivalent for all language groups in South Africa, considering that we have eleven different languages. Secondly, research in South Africa is characterised by several limitations, such as poorly designed and controlled studies, a lack of sophisticated statistical analysis and a lack to include all cultural groups in WPLI studies



(Mostert, 2006). Finally, little is known about the experience of WPLI in different demographic, occupational and cultural groups in South Africa. This makes it a difficult task to develop strategies and intervention programmes that will help employees to integrate their work lives and personal lives better.

It therefore seems plausible to reason that South African employees can experience WPLI different from other countries, attach different meanings to it, experience different antecedents and consequences and use different strategies to deal with WPLI issues. It seems necessary to investigate from a phenomenological framework how secondary school educators experience WPLI because little research has been done in South Africa regarding WPLI (specifically among school educators). Furthermore, affirmative action is a reality in South Africa and people from previously disadvantaged groups (such as Setswana-speaking individuals) are increasingly becoming part of the labour force (Mostert, 2006). Setswana is also one of the most prominent language groups in the North West Province, therefore, the focus of this research will be on the experience of WPLI among Setswana-speaking secondary school educators.

The following research questions can be formulated based on the above-mentioned description of the research problem:

- What is WPLI according to the literature?
- How do Setswana-speaking educators in the North West Province experience WPLI?
- What are the domains in Setswana-speaking educators' lives that can interact with one another?
- What are the main antecedents and consequences of WPLI for Setswana-speaking educators?
- Which strategies do Setswana-speaking educators use to deal with WPLI issues?
- Which recommendations can be made regarding WPLI for future research and practice?

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives are divided into a general objective and specific objectives.

### **1.2.1 General objective**

The general objective of this research is to investigate critically how Setswana-speaking secondary school educators experience WPLI.

### **1.2.2 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To determine what WPLI is according to the literature.
- To examine how Setswana-speaking educators experience WPLI.
- To determine the significant domains in educators' lives that can interact with each other.
- To determine the main antecedents and consequences of WPLI for Setswana-speaking educators.
- To determine which strategies Setswana-speaking educators use to deal with WPLI issues.
- To make recommendations regarding WPLI for future research and practice.

## **1.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method for the purpose of this mini-dissertation consists of a literature review and an empirical study. The results obtained are presented in the form of a research article.

### **1.3.1 Literature review**

The literature review focuses on WPLI in broad. The focus is on a brief history of WPLI, why it is important to investigate this phenomenon and major limitations in the field, specifically in the South African context. The reader must note that a brief literature review is compiled for the purpose of the article.

### **1.3.2 Empirical study**

The empirical study consists of the research design, participants and procedure, data collection, data analysis and ethical aspects that must be considered.

#### **1.3.2.1 Research design**

For the purposes of this research, a qualitative design from a phenomenological approach is used. In this approach, the researcher is interested in the meaning a person attributes to his or her experiences of reality, his or her world and his or her relationships. The person's cognitive experience must be understood and defined because it is only through this that the true essence of the person's experience can be realised.

Qualitative research makes it possible to determine the subjective experiences of Setswana-speaking educators in the North West Province. Qualitative research is defined as the study of people in their natural environments as they go about their daily lives (Bailey, 1994). Furthermore, Woods and Catanzaro (1988) indicated that the validity of qualitative research is one of its biggest advantages. It also enables the researcher to understand and represent personal points of view, which are often concealed or neglected (Hammersley, 1998).

#### **1.3.2.2 Participants**

A non-probability purposive voluntary sample ( $N = 10$ ) was used to reach the objective of this study. The population included Setswana-speaking secondary school educators from Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp in the North West Province. Data was collected until data saturation was reached within each sample (Burns & Grove, 1987).

The following selection criteria were used to determine which participants were included in the sample:

- Educators working in the selected towns in the North West Province (Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp).
- Educators who are Setswana speaking.

- Employed educators with at least two years' working experience.
- Educators willing to participate in the research (and who had given written informed consent) after having been informed about the purpose and procedures of the research.
- Educators who were prepared to have a tape-recorded interview with the researcher.

### **1.3.2.3 Data collection**

The measuring instrument used in this research was a semi-structured interview, based on the phenomenological paradigm. Therefore, the researcher tried to understand the data from the perspective of the participant. Although a Setswana-speaking individual conducted the interviews in Setswana, the researcher was present during all the interviews with the participants and also attended a workshop regarding interviewing skills and techniques, which aided her in the identifying and extracting of themes. During this workshop, questions that were not clear were refined and adjusted with the help of the expert.

The interview took place where it best suited the participant. In order to ensure a relaxed environment, attention was given to the climate/atmosphere of the room. A 'do not disturb' sign was put outside the door to ensure that the interview was not interrupted. The researcher introduced herself in a friendly and warm manner in order to put the participant at ease. The researcher then explained the context of the interview, and with the permission of the participant, tape-recorders were used. The participants were informed that the tapes would be erased after the research had been completed and that they would remain anonymous. It was emphasised that the participant could withdraw from the study at any time.

All participants were asked three standard questions:

- “You have a work life and a personal life. Can you please tell me how you experience the interaction between your work, and all facets of your personal life?”
- “What are the causes and consequences of the interaction between your work and personal life?”
- “What strategies do you use to deal with the interaction between your work and personal life?”

During the whole interview, the researcher faced the participant squarely in a relaxed way, had an open body posture and leant slightly forward to ensure that the participant was comfortable. The researcher also kept eye contact with the participant at all times. Non-directive dialogue techniques like minimal verbal responses (e.g., “mm-mm, yes, I see”), paraphrasing (stating the participant’s words in another form with the same meaning), clarification (e.g., “Can you tell me more about...” “You seem to be saying...”), reflection (e.g., “So, you believe that...”), reflective summary (“so what you’re saying...”) and silence were used to assist the participants to share their experiences.

After the interview, the participant was asked to complete a short biographical questionnaire that included gender, age, race, language, qualification, marital and parental status, as well as years of experience.

#### **1.3.2.3.1 Pilot study**

A pilot study is a prerequisite for the successful execution and completion of a research project. It allows a researcher to acquire thorough background knowledge about a specific problem that the researcher intends to investigate. The purpose of the pilot study is to improve the success and effectiveness of the investigation (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel, & Schurink, 1998). In this study, the researcher used a preliminary pilot to identify the possible unforeseen problems, which might have emerged during the main investigation. The pilot consisted of three Setswana-speaking secondary school educators from Potchefstroom. The pilot study was a valuable means to gain practical knowledge of and insight into the problem. A pilot study assisted the researcher in making necessary modifications of the data gathering instruments. Before the main investigation proceeded, an expert evaluated the interview schedule for appropriateness.

#### **1.3.2.3.2 Field notes**

Immediately after each interview, the field notes regarding that interview were transcribed. Field notes are a written account of the things the researcher hears, sees experiences and thinks in the course of the interview. The field notes included both the empirical observation and interpretations. The researcher wrote down her emotions, preconceptions, expectations and prejudices so that they could be developed in the final product.

### **1.3.2.3.3 Trustworthiness**

Guba's model for qualitative research (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was applied in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Attention was given to the principles of credibility (checking the truth value of the findings), by means of field notes, triangulation, peer examination and independent coding; transferability (ensuring applicability of the findings), through comparison of sufficient descriptive data, as well as dense description of the data; dependability (ensuring consistency of the findings), by means of an audit, keeping of the raw material, giving a full description of the research method, applying the same procedure throughout, triangulation, peer examination and the code-recode procedure; conformability (which was accomplished by using the criterion of neutrality or freedom from bias), by keeping an appropriate distance in order not to influence the research, as well as triangulation and the code-recode procedure.

### **1.3.2.4 Data analysis**

An important aspect of understanding the meaning that people attach to WPLI is the understanding of the data from the perspective of the participants' work and personal lives. In this study, the results of the interviews were analysed by the use of content analysis. The content analysis consisted of the following steps (Giorgi, 1985; Kerlinger, 1986):

- The first step in content analysis was to universalise the context that needed to be analysed (for example the entire set of verbal answers of the participants), to be defined and to be categorised.
- The second step was to determine the sub-units of the analysis, namely words and themes. The researcher read the responded notes in order to form an overall picture. Afterwards, the researcher once again read it in order to determine the themes. The words that were used by the participant were the smallest analysis that could be made. A sub-theme is usually a sentence and is more difficult but also more useful to analyse. Sub-themes could be combined in order to determine the themes. The analysis of the information was continued until repeated themes were identified.
- The third step was to free the data from unnecessary information and to determine the meaning of the rest of the subunits by linking it to the whole picture.

- The fourth step consisted of the conversion of the concrete language of the participants, into scientific language and concepts. The precise words of the participants were used in support, based on gained insights, integration and synthesis was then done.

The number of objects per category was counted and placed in order of preference. The trustworthiness of the content analysis was promoted by the coding that was done by the researcher and an Industrial Psychologist with a thorough background based on content analysis. A literature-control was done to investigate relevant research in order to determine the comparativeness and uniqueness of the current research (Krefting, 1991). The literature-control was done before the data collection phase, therefore, the researcher had some precognition from literature, however, the researcher tried to park these expectations as far as possible for the phase of data collection.

The researcher strove to promote the validity by spending enough time with the participant in order to establish a report. Social-desirable responses were minimised by making use of dialogue techniques. Rephrasing and repetition of questions were used in order to gain credibility of information. The researcher made use of a diary to highlight the ideas and feelings of the respondents during the research process. These notes consisted of information about the problems and frustrations that were experienced (Krefting, 1991).

#### **1.3.2.5 Ethical aspects**

Conducting research is an ethical enterprise. Research ethics provide researchers with a code of moral guidelines on how to conduct research in a morally acceptable way. The following were applicable at all times to retain an ethical climate (Struwig & Stead, 2001):

- The researcher was honest, fair and respectful towards the participants and did not attempt to mislead or deceive the research participants.
- The researcher respected the rights and dignity of others. This included respecting the privacy, confidentiality and autonomy of the research participants. The researcher was also mindful to cultural and individual differences among people, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, language and socio-economic status. The researcher did not knowingly discriminate against people based on such factors.

- The welfare of others was of major concern. The researcher avoided or minimised any harm befalling the research participants because of interaction with them.

## **1.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

Consent to conduct the research was received from the Department of Education and participating schools. The headmasters of the respective schools acted as the mediators and provided the researcher the names and contact details of educators willing to participate. Participants were then contacted and invited to take part in an informal one-to-one interview regarding their experience of WPLI. Interviews were scheduled on dates that best suited each of the respective participants. The interviews took place in a venue with enough ventilation, lighting and comfortable chairs. Tape-recorders were used with the permission of the participants to ensure that no information got lost (Omery, 1983). The candidates were put at ease before the start of the interviews. The researcher introduced herself at the beginning of each interview and also explained the context of the interview. It was emphasised that participants could withdraw from the study at any time. All participants were asked the standard questions. Non-directive dialogue techniques like attentive body language, reflection, clarification, minimal encouragement and silence were used to assist the participants in sharing their experiences (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1994). The researcher then transcribed the tape-recorded interviews verbatim in order to analyse the information.

## **1.5 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

In Chapter 2, the work-personal life experiences of Setswana-speaking secondary school educators are discussed in the form of a research article. Chapter 3 deals with the conclusion, limitations and recommendations of this research.

## **1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on the problem statement and research objectives of this study, as well as the research method that was used and the research procedure that was followed. This was followed by a brief layout of the chapters that follow.



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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# **WORK-LIFE INTERACTION AMONG SETSWANA-SPEAKING EDUCATORS IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY.**

## **ABSTRACT**

The general objective of this study was to investigate how Setswana-speaking secondary school educators experienced WPLI. A non-probability purposive voluntary sample ( $N = 10$ ) was taken of Setswana-speaking secondary school educators from the Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp areas in the North West Province of South Africa. Data collection was done through a phenomenological method of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Data was analysed by the use of content analysis. The results indicated that educators experienced factors in both their work and personal lives to be demanding. In addition, work demands led to various time constraints and strain. However, factors were identified that made the demands less overwhelming and it was also found that educators valued certain things (family, friends, leisure time, church and personal time) in their personal lives. Furthermore, it was found that educators differed regarding their experience of interaction between their work and personal lives. Educators nevertheless employed certain strategies to cope with this interaction, which in turn led to numerous positive outcomes. Lastly, an interesting finding relating to this study was that educators felt a responsibility towards the children.

## **OPSOMMING**

Die algemene doelstelling van hierdie studie was om te ondersoek hoe Setswanasprekende sekondêre skoolonderwysers WPLI ervaar. 'n Doelgerigte vrywillige niewaarskynlikheid-steekproef ( $N = 10$ ) is geneem van Setswanasprekende sekondêre skoolonderwysers in die Potchefstroom- en Klerksdorpareas in die Noordwes Provinsie van Suid-Afrika. Data insameling is gedoen op grond van 'n fenomenologiese metode van semi-gestruktureerde in diepte onderhoude. Inhoud-analise is gebruik om data te analiseer. Die resultate het aangedui dat sekere aspekte in beide die werk- en persoonlike lewe as veeleisend ervaar is. Boonop is gevind dat werkseise aanleiding gee tot verskeie tydbeperkinge asook spanning. Nogtans is faktore wat die werkseise minder oorweldigend maak geïdentifiseer en is daar gevind dat onderwysers waarde heg aan sekere faktore (familie, vriende, ontspanning, kerk en persoonlike tyd) in hul persoonlike lewens. Onderwysers maak van sekere strategieë gebruik om hierdie interaksie te hanteer wat aanleiding gee tot verskeie positiewe uitkomst. 'n Interessante bevinding rakende hierdie studie is dat onderwysers 'n gevoel van verantwoordelikheid teenoor die kinders ervaar het.

Education plays a fundamental role in South Africa, where a high premium is set on accomplishing a range of critical objectives such as social transformation, technological innovation and individual empowerment. Subsequently, increasing pressure is placed on education to contribute its share towards meeting the social demands originating from the pursuit of those objectives (Marais & Meier, 2004). In addition, education provides a learner with new skills and knowledge that must enable him or her to function in a modern society. Furthermore, education has been considered as an instrument for illuminating the structures of oppression and providing the learners with the tools to amend those oppressive structures in society (Vandeyar, 2003). Recently, the idea of educators experiencing excessive stress has received deserved attention. Stress and burnout among educators have also become a much talked about phenomenon and have increasingly been acknowledged as a widespread problem and global concern (Jackson & Rothmann, 2006; Montgomery, Mostert, & Jackson, 2005). In addition, the stress that they experience can have serious implications for the physical and mental health of educators. Today, many educators complain about low morale, illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, ulcers and heart attacks, whereas others plan to leave the profession and go on early retirement (Olivier & Venter, 2003).

The new political dispensation that has been taking place in South Africa since the first democratic elections in 1994, gave cause for the socio-cultural and socio-economic transformation taking place today (Horn, 2006). As a result of this transformation, education structures within the South African context are influenced and increased demands are being placed on educators (Montgomery, Mostert et al., 2005). Educators have to cope with demands such as increased specialisation, the growing scope of syllabuses, lack of discipline in schools, abolishment of corporal punishment, unmotivated learners, redeployment, retrenchments (right-sizing) and retirement packages for teachers, large pupil-teacher ratios and a new curriculum approach (Niehaus, Myburgh, & Kok, 1996; Olivier & Venter, 2003). Moreover, the new Outcomes-based Education (OBE) approach, the management style of principals, new governing bodies for schools, the high crime rate in the country, coping with current political change and corruption in state departments are all contributing to the increased demands that are being placed on educators (Marais, 1992).

These problems manifest in various forms of destructive behaviour such as alcohol abuse, absenteeism, difficulties in setting priorities in their work and personal lives and destructive relations between educators and learners, educators and colleagues and educators and their

families (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2002; Van Wyk, 2004). This ultimately results in poor quality of life (Van Wyk, 2004). Therefore, it seems important and relevant to investigate not only the work lives of educators, but also their personal lives and the interaction between these two domains.

The relationship between work life and personal life is an issue that now commands growing attention in both the public and private sectors. All things considered, work and family (personal) life are the two domains of human activity in which employed individuals spend about two-thirds of their time (one-third in each). The essence of the relationship between work life and family life today is that the two domains overlap and interact (Nollen, 1986). The interactions are increasing due to changes in family structures (e.g., single parents, dual-career couples and fathers heavily involved in parenting), increased participation by women in the labour force and technological changes (e.g., mobile phones and portable computers) that enable job tasks to be performed in a variety of locations (Carnicer, Sánchez, & Pérez, 2004; Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998). In addition, psychological and physical boundaries between work and personal life have become more blurred as organisations become increasingly virtual and more people work at or from home for all or part of the week using information and communication technologies (Montgomery, Panagopoulou, Peeters, & Schaufeli, 2005).

Consequently, work and family roles have gradually become more intertwined and men and women are increasingly concerned about managing the conflict experienced in fulfilling the dual demands and responsibilities of work and family roles (Montgomery, Panagopoulou, et al., 2005; O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath, 2004). For many workers, this has created the potential for interference or conflict to occur between their work and family lives (Hill et al. 1998). Previous research indicates that in some instances work interferes with family life (work-to-family conflict), and in other situations family responsibilities interfere with life at work (family-to-work conflict) (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinleya, 2005).

Furthermore, work-family conflict has been shown to have an unfavourable relation with a variety of variables associated with employee work life, home life, and general health and well-being. Greater health risks for working parents, lowered performance in the parental role, lowered productivity at work, less life satisfaction, anxiety and work stress are all variables that can be associated with the unfavourable experience of work-family conflict



(Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kelly & Voydanoff, 1985; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Small & Riley, 1990). It would therefore seem reasonable that the conflict between the work and family domains is of increasing concern in today's organisational environment (Howard, Donofrio, & Boles, 2004).

Based on this discussion, the objectives of this study were 1) to determine what WPLI is according to the literature; 2) to examine how Setswana-speaking educators experienced work-personal life interaction; 3) to determine the significant domains in Setswana-speaking educators' lives that could interact with each other; 4) to determine the main antecedents and consequences of WPLI for Setswana-speaking educators; 5) to determine which strategies Setswana-speaking educators used to deal with WPLI issues and 6) to make recommendations regarding WPLI for future research and practice.

### **Theoretical background**

Over the past 25 years, researchers, social commentators, organisational managers, and people in general have expressed considerable concern about work-family issues (O'Driscoll et al., 2004). In most studies, work and family are regarded as two conflicting domains – work conflicts with family and family conflicts with work (Mostert, 2006). As a result, the most widely referred to definition of work-family conflict is that of Greenhaus and Beutell, (1985, p. 77) that states that work-family conflict is “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role”. This definition implies a bidirectional dimension in that work can interfere with home (work-home interference; WHI) and home can interfere with work (home-work interference, HWI) (Frone, 2003). Furthermore, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) outlined three distinct forms of work-family conflict, including time-based conflict (i.e., incompatible time demands between work and family), strain-based conflict (e.g., affective spill over from one domain to the other), and behaviour-based conflict (e.g., where in-role behaviour in one domain is incompatible with role behaviour in the other domain).

The first attempts to address levels of work-family conflict emphasised balance; that individuals should strive for work-family balance (Rapaport, Bailyn, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2002).

However, certain complications existed with the notion of balance (Burke, 2004). This conception ignored the possibility that both domains might also influence each other in a positive way through transference of positive attributes. Also, according to Frone (2003), there is no precise definition of the phrase “work-family balance” or a clarification of what it really constitutes. Furthermore, work-family balance represents an unclear notion that work-family balance is a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles. It also suggests a similar solution for everyone – a 50/50 investment (Burke, 2004). Moreover, the word "balance" suggests that work is not a part of one's life but something separate. The balance notion also leads to a quick-fix solution to work-family conflict (Lewis & Cooper, 2005).

Recent research have emphasised work-family integration, or more appropriately work-life integration, as a more useful definition of the problem (Burke 2004). Individuals aspire to integrate their work and family (all aspects of their experience) in a more satisfying way. Furthermore, some employees can integrate or harmonise their work and family by choosing to keep them quite separate (Lewis & Cooper, 2005). Other related terms that are being used in literature are "work-home interference" or "work-home interaction". However, for the sake of simplicity, the term "work-personal life interaction" will be used in this article. Accordingly, work-personal life interaction (WPLI) is defined as an interactive process in which an employee's functioning in one domain (e.g., home) is influenced by (negative or positive) load effects that have built up in the other domain (e.g., work) (Demerouti, Geurts, & Kompier, 2004).

In addition to the aforementioned, common antecedents of WPLI include gender, family status, work involvement and work demands. Women, individuals with children, more highly job involved individuals and employees experiencing greater job demands typically report more negative interaction between their work and personal lives (Burke, 2004). According to Demerouti, Geurts et al. (2004), research findings consistently support that work characteristics are mainly antecedents of negative influence from work, and that home characteristics are the major antecedents of negative influence from the personal life domain. On the other hand, consequences of WPLI can be grouped into two categories: those dealing with attitudes regarding job and family life (e.g., satisfaction) and those, which signify some aspect of well-being (such as psychological strain or physical health). Research evidence is consistent and overwhelming – a perception that work and family life interfere with each

other is associated with dissatisfaction with both the job and personal life, along with reduced feelings of well-being (or, conversely, heightened psychological and physical strain) (O'Driscoll et al., 2004).

To conclude, the organisational initiatives being promoted to help employees balance work and personal life tend to be discussed under the general rubric of family-friendly organisational policies or reimbursement (Frone, 2003). Except for organisational initiatives, personal strategies can also be employed to deal with WPLI. However, there are few studies that empirically address the question of which organisational strategies may be effective. The same is true for the question of which personal strategies are being used and are most effective in dealing with work-personal interface.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

For the purposes of this research, a qualitative design from a phenomenological approach was used. Qualitative research made it possible to determine the subjective experiences of Setswana-speaking educators in the North West Province. Qualitative research is defined as the study of people in their natural environments as they go about their daily lives (Bailey, 1994). Furthermore, Woods and Catanzaro (1988) indicated that the validity of qualitative research is one of its biggest advantages. It also enables the researcher to understand and represent personal points of view, which are often concealed or neglected in other research designs (Hammersley, 1998).

### **Participants and procedure**

A non-probability purposive voluntary sample was used to reach the objective of this study. The population included Setswana-speaking secondary school educators from the North West Province (in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp). The sample size was governed by data saturation reached after 10 interviews and was determined by the number of participants willing and accessible to participate (Burns & Grove, 1987). The following selection criteria were used to determine which participants were included in the sample: 1) Educators working in the selected towns in the North West Province (Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp); 2)

Educators who were Setswana-speaking; 3) Employed educators with at least two years' working experience; 4) Educators willing to participate in the research (and who had given written informed consent) after having been informed about the purpose and procedures of the research; and 5) Educators who were prepared to have a tape-recorded interview with the researcher.

Consent to conduct the research was received from the Department of Education and participating schools. The headmasters of the respective schools acted as mediators and provided names and contact details of educators willing to participate. Interviews were scheduled on dates that best suited each of the respective participants. The interviews took place in a comfortable venue and tape-recorders were used. When conducting the interviews, non-directive dialogue techniques like attentive body language, reflection, clarification, minimal encouragement and silence were used to assist the participant in sharing their experiences (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1994). The interviews were transcribed verbatim in order to analyse the information. Descriptive information of the sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of the Participants*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	3	30
	Female	7	70
Age	20 – 29 years	1	10
	30 – 39 years	8	80
	40 – 49 years	1	10
Marital status	Married	5	50
	Not married	5	50
Parental status	No children	2	20
	One child	3	30
	Two children	3	30
	Three children	3	30
	Four children	1	10
Educational level	Technicon Diploma	2	20
	Technical College	2	20
	University Degree	4	40
	Postgraduate Degree	1	10
	Other	1	10
Years of experience	2 – 9 years	4	40
	10 – 19 years	6	60

The sample consisted of mainly Setswana-speaking females (70%) and educators aged between 30 and 39 years (80%). Regarding marital status, half of the participants (50%) were married, while 6 (60%) had 10 to 19 years of teaching experience. Most of the participants (60%) had either two or three children. Almost half (40%) of the participants had obtained a university degree.

### **Data collection**

The data collection for this research consisted of a pilot study, qualitative interviews and field notes. The trustworthiness of the research and data was also an important aspect to consider.

### *Pilot study*

A pilot study is a prerequisite for the successful execution and completion of a research project. It allows a researcher to acquire thorough background knowledge about a specific problem that the researcher intends to investigate and to improve the success and effectiveness of the investigation (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel, & Schurink, 1998). In this study, a preliminary pilot study was conducted to identify the possible unforeseen problems, which might have emerged during the main investigation. Therefore, three interviews were conducted with Setswana-speaking secondary school educators from Potchefstroom. After these interviews, an expert evaluated the interview schedule for appropriateness. The questions that were asked during the interviews were refined and adjusted, and problems experienced were clarified.

### *Interviews*

The measuring instrument used in this research was a semi-structured interview, based on the phenomenological paradigm. Therefore, the researcher tried to understand the data from the perspective of the participant. Although a Setswana-speaking individual conducted the interviews in Setswana, the researcher was present during all the interviews with the participants and also attended a workshop regarding interviewing skills and techniques, which aided her in the identifying and extracting of themes. After the interviews had been transcribed in Setswana an accredited language editor translated the interviews to English. The interview took place where it best suited the participant. In order to ensure a relaxed environment, attention was given to the climate/atmosphere of the room. A 'do not disturb' sign was put outside the door to ensure that the interview was not interrupted. In order to ensure the participant was at ease, the researcher introduced herself in a friendly and warm manner and then explained the context of the interview. With the permission of the participant, tape-recorders were used. The participants were informed that the tapes would be erased after the research had been completed and that their identity would remain anonymous. It was emphasised that the participant could withdraw from the study at any time. All participants were asked three standard questions: 1) "You have a work life and a personal life. Can you please tell me how you experience the interaction between your work, and all facets of your personal life?", 2) What are the causes and consequences of the

interaction between your work and personal life?"; and 3) "What strategies do you use to deal with the interaction between your work and personal life?"

To ensure that the participant was comfortable during the whole interview, the researcher faced the participant squarely in a relaxed way, had an open body posture and leant slightly forward. The researcher also kept eye contact with the participant at all times. Non-directive dialogue techniques like minimal verbal responses (e.g., "mm-mm, yes, I see"), paraphrasing (stating the participant's words in another form with the same meaning), clarification (e.g., "Can you tell me more about..." "You seem to be saying..."), reflection (e.g., "So, you believe that..."), reflective summary ("so what you're saying...") and silence were used to assist the participants to share their experiences.

### *Field notes*

Immediately after each interview, the field notes regarding that interview were written down. Field notes are a written account of the things a researcher hears, sees experiences and thinks in the course of the interviewing. The field notes included both the empirical observation and interpretations. The researcher wrote down her emotions, preconceptions, expectations and prejudices so that they could be developed in the final product.

### *Trustworthiness*

Guba's model for qualitative research (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was applied in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Attention was given to the principles of credibility (checking the truth value of the findings), by means of field notes, triangulation, peer examination and independent coding; transferability (ensuring applicability of the findings), through comparison of sufficient descriptive data, as well as dense description of the data; dependability (ensuring consistency of the findings), by means of an audit, keeping of the raw material, giving a full description of the research method, applying the same procedure throughout, triangulation, peer examination and the code-recode procedure; conformability (which was accomplished by using the criterion of neutrality or freedom from bias), by keeping an appropriate distance in order not to influence the research, as well as triangulation and the code-recode procedure.

## **Data analysis**

An important aspect of understanding the meaning that people attached to WPLI was the understanding of the data from the perspective of the participants' work and personal lives. In this study, the results of the interviews were analysed by using content analysis. The content analysis consisted of four steps (Giorgi, 1985; Kerlinger, 1986). The first step was to universalise the context that needed to be analysed (for example the entire set of verbal answers of the participants), to be defined and to be categorised. Secondly, the sub-units of the analysis, namely words and themes were determined, where the researcher read the responded notes in order to form an overall picture. Afterwards, the researcher once again read it in order to determine the themes. The words that were used by the participant were the smallest analysis that could be made. A sub-theme is usually a sentence and is more difficult but also more useful to analyse. Sub-themes could be combined in order to determine the themes. The analysis of the information was continued until repeated themes were identified. The third step was to free the data from unnecessary information and to determine the meaning of the rest of the subunits by linking it to the whole picture. Finally, the concrete language of the participants was converted into scientific language and concepts. The precise words of the participants were used in support, based on gained insights, integration and synthesis.

The number of objects per category was counted and placed in order of preference. The trustworthiness of the content analysis was promoted by the coding that was done by the researcher and an independent Industrial Psychologist with a thorough background in content analysis. A literature-control was done to investigate relevant research in order to determine the comparativeness and uniqueness of the current research (Krefting, 1991). The literature-control was done before the data collection phase, therefore, the researcher had some precognition from literature, however, the researcher tried to park these expectations as far as possible for the phase of data collection. Validity was promoted by spending enough time with the participant in order to establish a report. Social-desirable responses were minimised by making use of dialogue techniques. Rephrasing and repetition of questions were used in order to gain credibility of information. The researcher made use of a diary to highlight the ideas and feelings of the respondents during the research process. These notes consisted of information about the problems and frustrations that were experienced (Krefting, 1991).



## **Ethical aspects**

Conducting research is an ethical enterprise. Research ethics provide researchers with a code of moral guidelines on how to conduct research in a morally acceptable way. The researcher was honest, fair and respectful towards the participants and did not attempt to mislead or deceive the research participants. The researcher also respected the rights and dignity of others. This included respecting the privacy, confidentiality and autonomy of the research participants. The researcher was also mindful to cultural and individual differences among people, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, language and socio-economic status. The researcher did not knowingly discriminate against people based on such factors. The welfare of others was of major concern and the researcher avoided or minimised any harm befalling the research participants as a result of interaction with them. The afore-mentioned were applicable at all times in order to retain an ethical climate (Struwig & Stead, 2001).

## **RESULTS**

The findings of this study were organised into five major themes and various sub-themes. Below, each theme and relevant sub-themes will be discussed. The respective tables show the sub-themes and the frequency of the responses for male and female participants, as well as the frequency of the sub-theme for the total group.

### **Experiences in the working environment (Theme 1)**

It was clear from the research findings that educators experienced their working environment as extremely demanding and that various aspects contributed to the demanding work environment. However, factors that alleviated the effects of the demanding work environment also existed and were reported by the majority of participants. Sub-themes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Theme 1 – Experiences in the Work Environment*

Sub-themes	Description of sub-themes	Males	Females	Total
Sub-theme 1	High work demands			
	a) Undisciplined children and abolition of corporal punishment	3	3	6
	b) Large classes and shortage of staff	1	3	4
	c) Departmental changes	2	2	4
	d) Increased workload	1	3	4
	e) Inadequate salaries	1	2	3
	f) Expanding role of educator	1	2	3
	g) Language difficulties	0	2	2
	h) Poor working conditions	1	1	2
	i) Lack of parent involvement	1	1	2
	j) Educators held accountable for children	2	0	2
	k) Other obligations	1	1	2
Sub-theme 2	Factors that make the demanding work environment less overwhelming	2	6	8

***High work demands***

Setswana-speaking secondary school educators perceived their work to be extremely stressful. The reason for this was that educators had to cope with a number of high demands imposed on them in their working environment. Following is a brief discussion of each of the respective demands that educators experienced as stressful.

***a) Undisciplined children and abolition of corporal punishment***

Many of the respondents strongly expressed their disapproval of the children's behaviour. Educators perceived the children of today as being undisciplined and different from children of the past. Educators were faced with an array of problems regarding the children's poor

behaviour. These problems included pupils not attending classes, pupils not doing their work, bad attitudes of pupils such as rudeness and fighting, uncooperative pupils, pupils showing little interest in education and who were slow learners and pupils who were unmotivated and undedicated. Many of these problems were due to the circumstances that pupils were living in such as poverty or a lack of resources at home. Participants mentioned that: “... *the children of today have changed. The majority of the children at school are rude and aggressive, but I realise that most of this is because of their problems, their situations...*”; “... *that is the thing that stresses me most about my work is the children’s attitude. The children’s attitudes are bad, for example, they fight while you are teaching in the classroom...*”; “... *and another thing is that these children are no longer doing their work like previously, like when we were growing up. We did work when we were given work, you must struggle to get this work...*”; “...*these children don’t push themselves, these children, they don’t know anything...*”; and “... *at other times they skip classes...*”.

Some of the participants mentioned that due to the abolition of corporal punishment, they were forced to resort to different means of disciplining the children. This could be deduced in the following statement: “... *the mechanisms that are implemented are failing. You look at alternatives to corporal punishment. I am not saying we should bring back corporal punishment, but the alternatives that are offered are the ones that the children enjoy, like exclusion from classroom activity. They don’t want to do anything. The child sleeps when you tell him to put his head on the desk. When the child gets detention he just sleeps...*”.

Literature confirms these findings. In 1996, the South African Schools Act 84 banned the use of corporal punishment in all South African Schools. In addition, in 1998, Outcomes-based Education (OBE) was introduced in South African classrooms. Many educators argue that the introduction of extensive group work, which plays a significant role in OBE, has worsened the discipline problem. The combination of these factors has led to a situation where it is felt that discipline has collapsed in many South African schools (Pienaar, 2003). Furthermore, according to Ngidi and Sibaya (2002) there may be no other effective disciplinary measures to counteract the problems experienced and this may perpetuate learners’ misbehaviours in schools.

*b) Large classes and shortage of staff*

It was evident from the interviews that educators had to cope with large classes, some of which came to forty-nine pupils per class. This not only increased the workload on educators, but since time was limited educators also found it difficult to attend to all the children. As a result, the strain on educators became even greater than before. The following quotation proved this: *“... tomorrow it's like ... Mam I don't understand, you explain to five, another five doesn't understand and you have to sit with those five until they understand. There is no time, so you'll be under pressure and become stressed and tired”*.

Besides classes being big, some of the schools had a shortage of staff and consequently it prevented pupils from receiving quality schooling. The following statement supported this finding: *“... because our school has 1480 children and it's a lot of kids. More teachers must be employed so that the children can be taught. If they want effective teaching every child will receive effective teaching”*.

Research conducted by Olivier and Venter, (2003) among secondary school educators in the George area, found that the introduction of rationalisation (right sizing) and the new learner educator ratios resulted in educators having to deal with extremely large classes. Additionally, it was found that this situation lead to more disciplinary problems and educators had to tolerate a high noise level and general disorderliness in the class. This could also lead to feelings of frustration and powerlessness.

*c) Departmental changes*

It could be seen from the findings that educators were unhappy with the changes brought about by the education department and all that it entailed. These changes included among others, a new curriculum and new policies and systems. The following statements supported this finding: *“It's like paper work, now you have to record everything you did in class. They want continuous assessment from January until December and reports every quarter. Every quarter has its own work that you should have done, and it's assessed and it is also checked how you are doing your job. They have added to education”*; and *“... I am talking about the changes at work that are brought on by the department. When you are still doing something in a certain way you are informed that it is no longer done like that but another way and*

*there are workshops. Now our work as educators is too much, and it's demanding and it needs attention".*

Moreover, one of the participants expressed her frustration towards the education department for not taking educators into consideration when such policies were made, seeing that the educators were the ones physically educating the children and not the department. The following quotation proved this frustration: "*... if the government can make these policies they should consider people who are working with children. Then maybe they can get their views across. They should let us make the policies. They just make policies and announce it without consulting the people on ground level. I think that is the basic thing that we have to deal with, that we work with children and experience more problems than the people at the top who don't work with children".*

Subsequently, educators had to deal with a number of new demands. As educators were never trained to implement these changes, they were required to attend workshops during the holidays. In the opinion of one of the educators, matters were made worse because there was no support from the department and the persons presenting the workshops were unavailable when needed. Furthermore, no follow-ups were being done to ensure that educators correctly implemented these changes. Marais and Meier (2004) mention that teaching in South Africa has undergone momentous changes during the past two decades. The introduction of desegregated education and a new national curriculum in the middle of rapidly increasing social and moral decay places a heavy burden of responsibility on educators to cope with these changes. According to Ngidi and Sibaya (2002), these responsibilities are, for example, continuous assessment of learners' progress without the emphasis on passing or failing them. In terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), educators have to teach learners of any age, at any level of education despite their circumstances (Bhengu, 1997). The latter point entails that educators have to teach the learner even if he or she needs special education.

The major problems facing educators are the increase in responsibilities that have not sufficiently been accompanied by appropriate changes in facilities and training in order to equip educators to deal with these new demands. Consequently, educators may feel threatened by the new demands, thus becoming stressed (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002). Findings of a research project undertaken by Smit (2001) reporting on the experiences of primary educators regarding policy change, suggested that despite the fact that education authorities

offered workshops and courses, there were various problems in this regard. Educators talked about how information arrived late at the schools and how trainers were ill-equipped to conduct these training workshops. Workshops and training courses presented only once without any follow-up courses were not sufficient as the information became distorted. Furthermore, structural changes in education, as well as reviews in the composition of curricula, would not have the desired effect if they were not supplemented with integrated policies intended to empower the role of educators.

*d) Increased workload*

The departmental changes experienced by educators called for more paperwork, administration and time on the part of the educator, thus increasing the workload of educators. The following proved this perception: “... *it's not only the memorandums and tests, it's administration as well. Teaching and administration, you have to link them and make them one and in the end you find that you are always stressed*”.

Consequently, the job of the educator was becoming more perplexed and stressful. One of the participants mentioned that these changes were sometimes perceived as extremely intimidating and could even lead to educators leaving the profession. Consistent with this, findings of a research project undertaken by Swanepoel and Booyse (2003) reporting on the experiences of educational change imposed by a heterogeneous group of educators, suggest that educators are experiencing a heavier workload due to desegregation. In another education related study, researchers Chrisholm, Hoadley, and Wa Kivilu (2005) concluded that increased stress levels due to increased workloads caused the morale among educators to be extremely low. Explanations given for the increased workloads included bigger class sizes, various departmental requirements, the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), the new curriculum and its continuous assessment requirements, as well as a larger number of learning areas for which there were no resources or educators. Many of these dissatisfied educators remained in the profession because of limited alternative job opportunities and the fact that their current education jobs provided them with a regular income as well as other financial incentives such as a retirement fund, medical aid and housing subsidy (Horn, 2006).

#### *e) Inadequate salaries*

It became evident during the interviews that educators were not satisfied with their salaries. Various reasons for their dissatisfaction existed. These included very low remuneration that was barely enough to survive on. Seeing that teaching was a stressful job, educators felt that they should be paid accordingly. Educators were not paid for doing extra work and activities and were paid according to experience and not qualification. The following comments supported these results: “... *if you are a person who will be looking at the money, you won't stay in teaching because of the salary.*”; “*It is a big frustration to see that someone who is working in the private sector gets more money than you. Maybe he only does filing, and at the end of the month he gets something like R10 000. My work is strenuous, I get stressed and I have too much work*”.

A study conducted by Olivier and Venter (2003) found that because of insufficient salaries, educators experienced a great deal of stress, especially when taking into account the after-hours effort their jobs demanded from them and how negatively their salaries compared with people in the private sector and other government departments. That was perhaps the reason why some educators took on second jobs, mostly to the detriment of the school and the learners. Others looked for other propositions and changed to entirely new jobs for the sake of better incomes.

#### *f) Expanding role of educator*

The educator of today is expected to fulfil a variety of roles such as educator, police officer, counsellor, aid etc. It can only be expected that this increases the pressure on educators and contributes to an even more demanding and stressful work environment. Three different participants had this to say: “... *and sometimes we write letters to parents to come to school. When they come, they cry. They have given up and they expect you to fix their children*”; “... *we deal with children's problems, at schools we counsel these children, we support these children, food, materials, they come here, we see to it that the children get good lives, their health is good. On the other side we see to it that they are educated...*”; “... *sometimes a child comes and you have to look after this child...*”.

#### *g) Language difficulties*

Two of the participants mentioned that it was problematic and time consuming to teach in a multilingual classroom. They also reported that they sometimes found it difficult to teach in Afrikaans, seeing that they were not familiar with all the correct terms because their second language was English and not Afrikaans: *“The problem is that one can’t explain correctly to the Afrikaans learners. Those are the things that kill you. You can’t be teaching a class in Afrikaans and English in one period”*.

In the last decade, educators in public schools have faced increasingly diverse classrooms so that children from different cultural backgrounds who speak different home languages are now found in the same classroom (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993; Winkler, 1999). Research by Hooijer, (2004) suggests that educators find teaching in multilingual classrooms both challenging and difficult. The inability to communicate with second language learners or learners who speak other official languages was mentioned as contributing to the challenge. Lemmer and Squelch (1993) acknowledge that teaching in multicultural and multilingual classrooms is both challenging and demanding. Furthermore, the different cultural mix and native languages of the learners and their different levels of proficiency is contributing to the intricate nature of many classrooms of today (Hooijer, 2004). A different position is taken by Mittler (2000) who states that such teaching is not as complicated as it appears, since educators actually already have the abilities and knowledge for success in these environments, but lack confidence in their own capabilities.

#### *h) Poor working conditions*

Results indicated that poor working conditions, such as dirty classrooms and a lack of resources were another factor that added to the demanding work environment. With regards to dirty classrooms, one of the educators expressed her unhappiness towards the messy children and their reluctance to clean her classroom, seeing that she did the cleaning at home and felt that it was not her responsibility to clean her classroom too. Lack of resources that the educators had to deal with included shortages of textbooks, inadequate chalkboards and broken photocopiers. This in turn not only lead to educators feeling frustrated, but it also prohibited them from properly educating pupils. This was reflected in the following



statement: “... so teaching in other words is frustrating because you don't have resources to help these children progress. The new system has changed and it needs resources”.

Ngidi and Sibaya (2002) is of the opinion that the conditions under which black educators work in schools are demoralising, as the black educator has to cope with poor physical conditions such as inadequate equipment and a lack of adequate facilities. According to Ngidi and Sibaya (2002), this is a result of inconsistencies in financial provisions during the apartheid era in South Africa. Poor working conditions may therefore be a major cause of stress among educators.

#### *i) Lack of parent involvement*

The results also showed that educators were troubled by the lack of involvement on the part of the pupils' parents, as stated by one respondent: “... so it's the parents that sometimes make it difficult. Sometimes you ask the child to buy a book that the government or the school couldn't supply, but the parent doesn't help the child to buy stationery. That isn't right, they are hindering our progress and you can't continue teaching the other children when the one is left behind...”. Parents were unsupportive, uncooperative and showed little interest in the education of their children. It sometimes happened that parents neglected to do minor things such as collecting their child's report from school. In some cases the parents were unable to be involved due to financial constraints at home and could therefore not afford to buy necessities for their children such as books and writing materials. Unfortunately it also happened that the parents put their own needs before those of their children. One of the educators mentioned a disturbing event. After being instructed in class to purchase a writing book, one of the girls in class returned the following day and explained to the educator that her mother had R50, but if she used it to buy a book then she would not have enough money to buy herself something to drink. Whatever the reason for the parent's lack of involvement, ultimately the child was affected by that.

Van Wyk (in press) found that the situation in township schools was worse as many parents were jobless and were struggling with urgent problems of survival, leaving little time or energy for school involvement. Educators also tended to blame families, particularly those in poor socio-economic environments, for any lack of involvement. This is to be expected as educators in South Africa get little help in developing their skills and knowledge of joining

forces with families and the community. Widespread support for family involvement in education is sufficient evidence that family involvement has a positive effect on learners' academic achievement (Pienaar, 2003). Pienaar also found that by becoming involved with their children, parents were likely to guarantee that the values, direction and the character of the community were recognised and maintained at school.

*j) Educators held accountable for children*

Two of the educators felt that they were held responsible for the children. They had to see to it that the children performed and progressed and when that failed to happen, they were the ones that had to give explanations. Relevant literature that directly referred to these findings could not be found. The following two quotes supported this finding: “...*other times you have to report why this child is performing the way he is, and you, the teacher are asked what you did to contribute*”; “*You must see that this child has done his work and it’s your fault when this child didn’t do his work. It is your responsibility to see to it that the child has done his work*”.

*k) Other obligations*

Besides the demands already discussed, it seemed that educators also had other obligations at work such as serving on committees and contributing to the bigger community. This could be seen from the following two quotations: “*I am on the LCM committee. LCM is the Learners' Christian Movement and we meet after school. I am on the Assembly committee as well and sometimes it is held by me and sometimes I have to find an outside person and invite them. I am also on the Condolence's committee and when someone passes away at school I'll be preaching. I am on the Feeding Scheme committee too*”; “... *and then on top of that, we contribute at our work because we work with society. We work with children and you are contributing to moral activities*”.

***Factors that make the demanding work environment less overwhelming***

Many of the educators interviewed reported factors that helped them to not become overwhelmed by these demands in the working environment. It was the belief of one of the participants that if you loved the work you did, you strived to work hard no matter what

challenges arose. Another educator felt that the things she had accomplished were inspirational such as helping the children and her family, that you were in control of your own life and happiness, and that self-motivation played a big role and helped you to overcome the problems you experienced at work. She also felt that nothing in life was easy and that you just had to be strong and deal with your problems, which, in time, would pass. One other educator shared the sentiment by saying: “... *and there is no work that doesn't have any problems. Our challenge is to fight these problems in life*”. Also, it was believed that your life was shaped according to the work you did and that you could decide how you wanted to respond to the problems that you were experiencing. The recognition you received from others also contributed to make teaching worthwhile.

The following quotation was said by one of the educators: “*My work is very important to me because it puts food on the table*”; “*My work is important to me because I can raise my children properly and give them the life they want*”. She also viewed her work as very important and it motivated her to get up every morning because she knew that with the money she earned it was possible for her to provide herself and her children with a good life. Another educator was of opinion that despite the salary being low, she enjoyed teaching and felt that it was still possible to buy the things that she liked: “... *we live by the salary that we get even if it is low. When you get a lot then it is easy to buy the things you like, like fancy cars*”. Furthermore, it was also believed that commitment was all they needed: “*but I think that all you need is commitment, commitment to your work, commitment to your family, commitment to your friends and colleagues...*”.

## **Personal life (Theme 2)**

During the research, it became apparent that educators not only experienced their work environment to be demanding, but their personal life as well. The work demands that they experienced in turn influenced their personal lives. Nonetheless, there were certain things in the educators' personal lives, which they valued. Following is a discussion of the various aspects mentioned. Sub-themes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Theme 2 – Personal Life*

Sub-themes	Description of sub-themes	Males	Females	Total
Sub-theme 1	Demands from the personal life	3	6	9
Sub-theme 2	Work demands lead to personal time being limited	1	2	3
Sub-theme 3	Work demands cause strain on individuals	1	2	3
Sub-theme 4	Things that educators value in their personal lives			
	a) Family and friends	1	5	6
	b) Leisure time	0	3	3
	c) Church	0	3	3
	d) Personal time	0	2	2

*Demands from the personal life*

Not only do educators experience their work environment as demanding, but there are also demands in educators' personal lives that need attention. Almost all of the respondents reported that they experienced their personal lives as demanding. Demands that educators had to deal with included among others, that educators were responsible for cooking and cleaning, bathing the children and helping the children with their homework. Other reasons that were mentioned were that educators were responsible for a variety of family members such as brothers and sisters. Educators had to put aside money to build a home, the educator was the only breadwinner in the family and the educator was responsible for sorting out problems that arose between the various family members. The following citations illustrated the demands that educators experienced in their personal lives: *"I am not married and I am a breadwinner. I look after my sister's daughter who goes to school and my brother stays with me as well"*; *"You are a mother and you have to wash, you have to cook and you have to clean"*; *"... because at home it's my mother, my aunts and my cousins..."*.

Nollen (1986) contend that the most prominent change is that the typical nuclear family of Dick and Jane is a vanishing species. Over half of all families have dual-income earners;

nearly ten percent are single parents with dependent children. Family “work” (cooking, cleaning, childcare, property maintenance, financial management) still has to be done.

### ***Work demands lead to personal time being limited***

It was identified during the research that educators felt pressured to complete their work within a given period, since they did not want to fall behind. Needless to say, that when educators were not able to finish their work at school they were obliged to take work home. This in turn disrupted their personal lives and limited their personal time. Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that long working hours are associated with interference between work and family life, in terms of role conflicts or fatigue, worrying and irritability (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Moreover, educators had to attend workshops during the holidays, which also led to their personal time being limited. In other words, the time pressures from work made it difficult for educators to meet the demands from their personal lives. Educators reported various ways in which their work influenced their personal lives: “... you have to socialise and meet the guys and it creates a problem if there is work to be done...”; “...there is conflict when my fiancée wants to go to the match and I have marking that needs to be done...”; “... especially when you teach Grade 12 you have to attend workshops during the holidays and you don’t get to enjoy the holiday like other people...”; “... I am active at church, but now I don’t have time to be actively involved in church...”; “...but now we are going to do them during school holidays and my time to socialise is limited, my time to look after my children is limited...”; “... I no longer get the benefit of my holidays and I used to spend a lot of time with my family, but it has been reduced now...”; “... you have to do paper work to prepare. We know that there is no way that you can come to class without preparing. The time that you have to relax you have to use to do the work...”.

It is evident from the above citations that educators' time spent with loved ones such as their family, kids and friends are limited. Also, time spent at church was limited and educators did not have time to relax during schooldays and holidays since there was always work to be done and workshops to attend. According to Nollen (1986), the overlap between work and family domains means that conflicts often arise. One of the conflicts concerns time, the only completely fixed resource. Workers and family members cannot be in both domains at once. More than one-third of all workers who have children or a spouse say that their job and their family life interfere with each other (Nollen, 1986). Glezer and Wolcott (1999) have

suggested that time appears to be the major juggernaut of those who are merging paid work with family responsibilities – time for children, time with partners, time for elderly parents, and time for domestic chores, personal leisure, and meeting demands of work. Similarly, Duxbury and Higgins (1994) concluded that work and family conflicts and pressure occurred as a result of role overload or role interference when there was not enough time or energy to meet the obligations of multiple roles and demands.

### ***Work demands cause strain on individuals***

It was also found that work not only had an influence on educators' personal time, but it caused strain on the individual as well. In other words, strain was caused when demands from the personal life could not be met due to the demands from work. Literature confirms this finding regarding strain-based conflict, in particular Carnicer et al., (2004) who suggest that strain experienced in one role intruded into and interfered with participation in another role: “... then I can't perform at home because I am exhausted and tired. My work has changed a lot and I have to adjust to my work...”; “... when I arrive I am tired. I give my work more attention and it brings trouble in the house ...”; “... I get confused and I will start shouting. There is a lot of work and it's work at home, it's work and it's children. I start shouting and then I feel like crying”.

It is obvious from the above quotations that educators experienced strain such as fatigue and irritability (“I start shouting and then I will feel like crying”) due to their demands from work. Consequently, educators found it difficult to participate actively in activities at home (“... then I can't perform at home ...”). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) research indicates that work demands could produce strain symptoms such as tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy and irritability. Strain-based conflict exists when strain in one role affects one's performance in another role. Therefore, the roles are incompatible in the sense that strain created by one makes it difficult to meet the demands of another.

### ***Things that educators value in their personal lives***

It became evident during the study that there were a variety of things in educators' personal lives that they viewed as very important. In this regard, it was established that educators valued the time they spent with their family and friends: “... sometimes I go outside of Potch

*and visit my friends that I used to go to school with... ”; “I enjoy being with the children at home”. Educators also reported that they took pleasure in going to the gym and relaxing at home: “I have to go to the gym”; “I do my work at school and I am satisfied and when I get home I tell myself that it's my after hours I want to relax... ”. Moreover, a few of the educators mentioned that they benefited from going to church: “I am used to going to church. When it's Sunday and I don't go to church, I feel that there is something that I didn't do”. Lastly, two of the educators declared that they valued their personal time and liked spending their time at home: “I am a very, very private person and I am not the social life of the party... ”.*

### **Interaction between work and personal life (Theme 3)**

It was clear from the accounts of participants that half of them did find their work and personal lives to interact, whereas only a few participants experienced no interaction between their work and personal lives.

Table 4

*Theme 3 - Interaction between Work and Personal Life*

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Description of sub-themes</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
Sub-theme 1	Interaction do exist	0	5	5
Sub-theme 2	No interaction exists	2	1	3

#### ***Interaction do exist***

Many of the educators reported that they did experience interaction between their work lives and personal lives. However, they did report the interaction to be positive. This could clearly be seen from the following remarks: “... at home I have a husband. I give the relationship with my family a 100% so that I can stay happy there and here... ”; “... when I get here I give the same love to these children. That warmth at the house you also give, that warmth to the kids. That is how I mix my life at the house and at work”; “I don't see it as a problem, because I enjoy what I am doing and because I am teaching social science I give extra classes at home... ”. There had been a general consensus that work and personal life

influenced each other in a negative way where time, tasks, attitudes, stress, emotions and behaviour spilled over between work and personal life (Carnicer et al., 2004). However, it was suggested by recent research that work and personal life could also interact in a positive way (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003).

#### ***No interaction exists***

On the other hand, some of the participants revealed that there was no interaction between their work and personal lives. In other words, work and personal life were viewed as two separate spheres. Therefore, no problems existed between these two spheres: *“Yes, they don’t interact because when I have problems at home I will never bring them to work... ”*; *“... when I leave work I leave the ones at work and I concentrate on the ones at home because if I cluster them together they are going to frustrate and confuse me”*. According to Lewis and Cooper (2005), some employees can integrate or harmonise their work and personal lives by deciding to keep them fairly separate.

#### **Coping strategies and the consequences thereof (Theme 4)**

It was obvious from the research that educators employed a range of coping strategies to manage the demanding aspects in both their work and personal lives. The participants mentioned numerous positive outcomes relating to the use of these coping strategies.



Table 5

*Theme 4 - Coping Strategies and the Consequences Thereof*

Sub-themes	Description of sub-themes	Males	Females	Total
Sub-theme 1	Coping strategies			
	a) Communication	1	2	3
	b) Religion or prayer	0	3	3
	c) Supportive spouse	0	2	2
	d) Going to gym and staying active	0	2	2
	e) Planning ahead	0	1	1
	f) Doing the work that is expected of you	0	1	1
Sub-theme 2	Consequences of coping strategies	0	4	4

***Coping strategies***

***a) Communication***

It was also found that educators believed that communication was very important. It helped to talk to someone when you experienced problems. People that educators talked to included a spouse or partner, principal and pastor: “... *I know where to go. We have the principal and the deputies. If there is something that is not going well I go to them and at home it’s my husband. I even taught the children to talk because if you keep quiet you are not solving anything ...*”

***b) Religion or prayer***

It also became evident during the research that educators relied on their religion to help them with the problems that they were experiencing. When times were tough, they prayed and believed that everything would get better. Statements that reflected this finding: “*Praying ... I pray to God, that’s my only tool. I pray and God helps me to believe that I am a Christian and I am born again...*”; “*So when I have problems with the children at school I pray for them and I believe that God can hear us and that He answers. It’s important to go to church,*

to believe that God is there". A study by Beehr, Johnson, Nieva, and Hurrell (1995) studied the use of coping strategies and found that police officers used religion as a coping strategy to deal with both work and non-work strain.

*c) Supportive spouse*

Educators viewed their spouses as supportive. Other authors have found that social support from the supervisor and the partner is of great importance in reducing work-family conflict due to work stress and involvement (Carnicer et al., 2004). Reasons why educators viewed their spouse as supportive included that the spouses knew what responsibilities teaching entailed and helped with duties at home such as cooking and caring for kids: *"Fortunately my husband knows how to cook ... I become relaxed now ... even when I had the babies he helped me feed the child and I had his support..."*

*d) Going to gym and staying active*

One of the educators mentioned that she enjoyed going to gym after school and that this relieved her of her stress: *"When I come home from school with a lot of stress, I go to the gym and when I come back I am fine"*. Another educator reported that it helped staying active and keeping busy: *"I love to keep busy and I don't like just sitting down. I am active and it helps me because I am active..."*

*e) Planning ahead*

One of the participants perceived planning ahead to be tremendously important: *"... to separate your time. You have to plan, planning its very important..."*

*f) Doing the work that is expected of you*

One participant was of opinion that finishing the work that you were expected to do helped a lot: *"... if you experience a heavy workload it is better to start doing the work. When I am not overloaded with work, I don't have stress. When I have a lot of work in front of me, I feel stressed, but if I finish the work the stress decreases"*. According to Frone (2003), there are a number of things that individual employees may do to reduce the interaction that they

experience between their work and personal lives. They can search for and develop appropriate social support at work or at home, reduce or reorganise the time dedicated to work or family demands, reduce the psychological importance of work or family roles, and find ways to decrease or better cope with stressors and distress at work and in their personal lives. Many of these suggestions support recommendations of past researchers who have looked at how employees manage the interaction between their work and personal lives.

### ***Consequences of coping strategies***

Educators reported that when they employed the above-mentioned coping strategies it lead them to feel better, less stressed, more motivated and more relaxed: *“Fortunately my husband knows how to cook ... I become relaxed now ... ”*; *“I undress and then I go to the gym. I will come back better... ”*.

### **Educators feel responsible for helping children (Theme 5)**

A finding unique to this study was that educators felt a responsibility towards the children at school. Six of the participants mentioned statements relating to this finding. It seemed that educators cared a great deal about the children and their future. Several of the children came from a poor background and experienced problems at home. Educators expressed a big concern for and a desire to assist these children, but unfortunately their own circumstances did not permit them to always do so. Subsequently, educators became frustrated and stressed as were proved by: *“They will tell you that they have certain problems and then you can help them where you can. You know children have many problems at home, you will see them performing weak not know what is going on. Other times you call them asking them why their performance is so weak, then they will start explaining to you why they perform so poorly”*; *“Ag shame, these become reserved and when a child is reserved she will never be able to grasp anything in the classroom, so you have to make sure that the child listens to you. You should also try by all means that that child eats”*; *“... the problem is that there are children that are not eating at school and there are children that are struggling and then we have to take money from our pockets... ”*; *“... I become frustrated because I can't help the child at school because I have to help the ones at home... ”*.

## DISCUSSION

The general objective of this research was to investigate how Setswana-speaking secondary school educators experienced the interaction between their work and personal lives. In this regard, it was found that Setswana secondary school educators experienced their working environment as tremendously demanding. The demands from work posed a challenge for them and made their jobs as educators very difficult. Montgomery, Mostert et al., (2005) and Niehaus et al., (1996) confirm that, due to current political and social changes and the influence of these changes on education structures in South Africa, educators are faced with a multitude of challenges that place unprecedented demands on them. Apart from the pressures of a changing country, teaching is in itself an incredibly demanding occupation. Various characteristics of the teaching profession place increasing stress on educators. These demands that were reported by the educators included undisciplined children and abolition of corporal punishment, large classes and shortage of staff, departmental changes, increased workload, inadequate salaries, an expanding role of the educator, language difficulties, poor working conditions, lack of parent involvement, and educators being held accountable for children. Such demands eventually take their toll and it is inevitably the teacher-child relationship that suffers (Niehaus et al., 1996). However, many of the respondents mentioned that due to intrinsic motivational factors such as commitment, they viewed their work demands as less overwhelming.

Besides the experience of demands in the work domain, educators also experienced their personal lives as demanding. These demands that the educators' personal lives comprised of, included; housekeeping and child-care responsibilities, family responsibilities such as being the wage earner in the family and having to act as mediator in family problems and housing responsibilities. According to Montgomery, Panagopoulou et al., (2005), changes in family structures and the obligatory nature of work during the past two decades have heightened interest in understanding the work-personal life interface. As a consequence, an increasing number of individuals are confronted with significant demands both at work and in their personal lives (Carnicer et al., 2004).

Furthermore, educators reported that the work demands they experienced had an influence on their personal lives. Due to time constraints at work it happened, more often than not, that educators had to take unfinished work back home. Consequently, this left less time for loved

ones, church, leisure activities and personal time. Literature confirms these results. Nowadays many employees have difficulty combining work and domestic obligations and empirical research has consistently shown that work demands interfere with personal life. Furthermore, time-based work-home interference develops when the time devoted to work obligations makes it physically impossible to meet obligations in the personal life, for instance when long work hours interfere with participation in family activities (Van Hooff et al., 2005). Apart from time-based work-home interference, educators also experienced strain-based interference from work to their personal lives. Educators reported that due to their demands from work, they were tired and irritable when they arrived home. Strain-based work-home interference refers to the process in which tension developed at work is transferred to the home domain, for instance when people have difficulty relaxing at home after a stressful workday. Moreover, previous research has shown that especially time and strain-based work-home interference is negatively associated with employee health (Van Hooff et al., 2005).

In addition to the above-mentioned, it became evident during the study that educators valued their loved ones, personal time, going to church and spending time at home. According to Demerouti, Bakker, and Bulters (2004) strive to obtain the things they value. These are called resources and include objects, conditions, personal characteristics and energies. Furthermore, the results of a study by Karakas, Lee, and MacDermid (2004) on the meaning of family well-being among part-time professionals, revealed that the participants valued having enough free time for relaxation and desired activities because having enough time for family, household, leisure and personal activities overlapped with their general life goals and dreams. They also maintained that feeling successful in their lives meant being able to dedicate time and energy to the important things in their lives other than work, whether family or other personal pursuits.

In addition to the aforementioned, it was also clearly indicated that some educators did experience interaction between their work and personal lives. However, there were also educators that did not experience any interaction between their work and personal lives, and who were able to keep the two domains apart. Relevant literature that directly refers to these findings could not be found, although Nippert-Eng (1996) has explored the way that people negotiate between their work and home boundaries, and suggested that people fall on a continuum between 'integration' and 'segregation' of work and home domains. An integration-style person is conceptualised as a person who makes little or no distinction

between what belongs to home and what belongs to work, while a segregation-style person is someone who arranges his/her life so that home and work are two distinct domains (Nippert-Eng, 1996).

In addition, it was identified during the research that educators made use of certain strategies to cope with the interaction between work and personal life. Strategies that were reported by die educators included communication, religion or prayer, a supportive spouse, exercise and staying active, planning and doing the work that was expected of them. These coping strategies may also be referred to as resources that educators make use of to better cope with the demands that they experience in both their work and personal lives. Consequently, this leads to educators feeling better, less stressed, more motivated and more relaxed. Recent empirical evidence suggests that demanding aspects in the work or family domain (or both) are mainly related to conflict, but resources such as control and support are related to positive spill over (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). These resources enhance the employee's well-being and help him or her to manage both work and personal life demands. On the one hand, these resources may eradicate the impact of demanding working conditions, and help employees to avoid unnecessary strain. On the other hand, they may improve an employee's motivation and performance (Demerouti, Bakker et al., 2004).

To conclude, an interesting finding relating to this research was that educators felt a real need and responsibility to help the children deal with their problems. However, due to some of the educators own situation at home, they were not always able to help the children and this in turn led to frustration. Relevant literature to support these findings could not be found, however, in South Africa a notion such as individualism vs. collectivism has become a significant issue as the organisational culture is cast in a Eurocentric mould (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk, & Shenk, 2000), revealing an individualistic characteristic if the group is primarily white. In contrast to individualism, black people largely reveal an afro centric approach, a communalistic orientation, believing that every person is very much part of the social fabric and that each person needs to find his or her own place in the social structure, becoming subordinate to the social needs of the group as a whole (Koopman, 1994). Essential to this afro centric management is the term, *Ubuntu*, which means, "I am because we are". Collectivism is in contrast to individualism and intensive competitiveness, and places great prominence on concern for people and working for the common good (Williams & Green, 1994).

A model regarding the experiences of WPLI among Setswana-speaking educators was constructed to summarise the results obtained in this study.

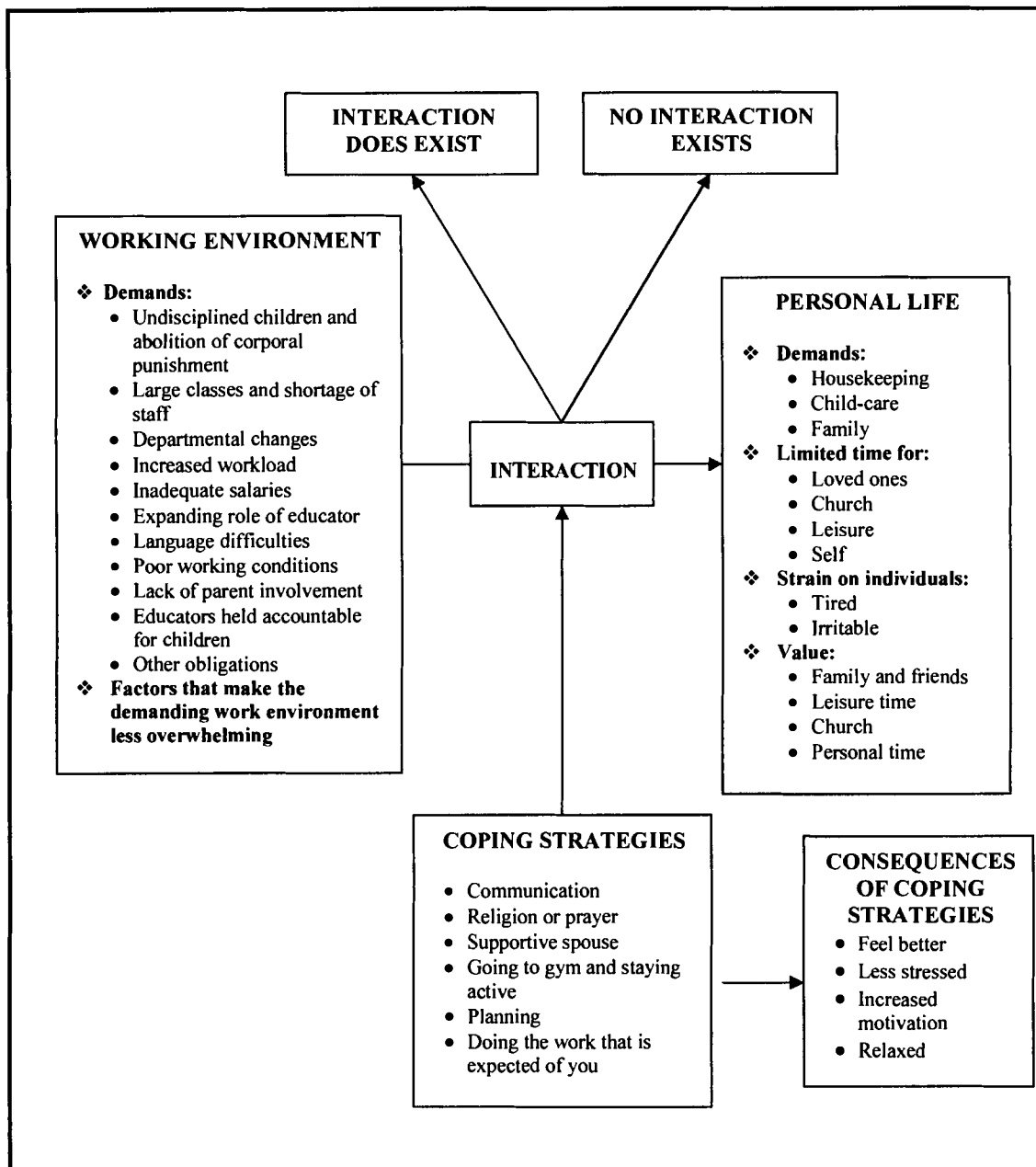


Figure 1. A model indicating the experience of work-personal life interaction among Setswana-speaking educators.

## LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main limitation of this study is that it was based on a single occupation, that of educators. The use of Setswana, as the only language used for the interviews represents a further limitation. Future studies can benefit greatly by utilising a sample with proportionate inclusion of all the official language groups of South Africa. The fact that the majority of the sample was female, and that comparisons between males and females would not have been meaningful was another limitation. In addition, the current study only considered educators in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp. It is suggested that the study be expanded to the other districts in the North West Province as well as in other provinces of South Africa. In addition to the aforementioned, there was a possibility that some of the participants were concerned about the confidentiality of the interview and the use of tape-recorders. However, the researcher did inform the participants that the interview would be recorded and that their identity would remain anonymous. This might have influenced the outcome of the results.

Jackson and Rothmann (2006), propose that primary interventions are essential to prevent or diminish the stress that educators experience. The purpose of primary interventions is to improve the fit between the employee and the workplace, to teach employees to deal with experienced stress more efficiently and to adjust their assessment of a stressful situation, so that the situation will seem less threatening (Kompier & Kristensen, 2001). In addition to primary interventions, Jackson and Rothmann (2006) suggest that secondary interventions can also be implemented to prevent employees who are already showing signs of stress from getting sick, and to increase their coping capability. In this regard, it is recommended that the educator must develop his or her own personal plan to fight stress, for example, delegation of responsibilities, setting of realistic goals, better time-management and realistic self-assessment (Olivier & Venter, 2003). Moreover, Jackson and Rothmann (2006) mention that tertiary interventions can also be employed to focus on the rehabilitation of individuals who have suffered ill health or reduced well-being as a result of strain in the workplace.

Organisations will require extremely dedicated and resourceful employees to permit them to survive and prosper in turbulent and highly competitive markets and in order to support such energy and dedication, employers must express concern with both the working lives as well as the personal lives of employees (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005). In light of the above-mentioned, it is suggested that to accommodate employees who strive to



balance the demands of both work and personal life, organisations must provide facilities that enable employees to better align both life spheres, for instance, flexibility regarding work tasks, methods, and time, but also on-site child care, special care for sick children and leave facilities (Demerouti, Geurts et al., 2004; Schreuder & Theron, 2002; Van Hooff et al., 2005). In addition, organisations must create a company culture in which employees who experience WPLI problems feel entitled to use the facilities that are available (Van Hooff et al., 2005). To conclude, the value of these recommendations for future research lies in their ability to provide guidelines for the design of effective strategies for improving the integration of work and personal life. This organisational strategy can be expected to have a positive effect on people's functioning within and outside the workplace, which in turn is beneficial to employees, their families, organisations and society (Geurts & Dijkers, 2002)

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter, conclusions regarding the results of the empirical study of the research article are given according to the general and specific objectives. The limitations of this research are discussed, followed by recommendations for the organisation and for future research.

#### **3.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The first objective of this study was to determine what work-personal life interaction (WPLI) is according to literature. In this regard, readers are referred to the theoretical background as set out in Chapter 2. The second objective was to investigate how Setswana-speaking secondary school educators experienced WPLI. In view of this, it was clearly indicated that some educators did experience interaction between their work and personal lives. However, there were also educators that did not experience any interaction between their work and personal lives, and who were able to keep the two domains apart. Relevant literature that directly refers to these findings could not be found, although Nippert-Eng (1996) has explored the way that people negotiate between their work and home boundaries. He suggested that people fall on a continuum between 'integration' and 'segregation' of work and home domains. An integration-style person is conceptualised as a person who makes little or no distinction between what belongs to home and what belongs to work, while a segregation-style person is someone who arranges his/her life so that home and work are two distinct domains (Nippert-Eng, 1996).

The third objective was to determine the significant domains in Setswana-speaking educators' lives that could interact with one another. Concerning this, it was found that educators viewed their entire work lives and all that it constituted to be a main dimension. Furthermore, it was found that educators experienced their work lives to be tremendously demanding. The demands from work posed a challenge for them and made their jobs as educators very difficult. Montgomery, Mostert, and Jackson (2005) and Niehaus, Myburgh, and Kok (1996) confirm that, due to current political and social changes and the influence of these changes on education structures in South Africa, educators are faced with a multitude of challenges that

place unprecedented demands on them. Apart from the pressures of a changing country, teaching is in itself an incredibly demanding occupation. Various characteristics of the teaching profession place increasing stress on educators. These demands that were reported by the educators included undisciplined children and abolition of corporal punishment, large classes and shortage of staff, departmental changes, increased workload, inadequate salaries, an expanding role of the educator, language difficulties, poor working conditions, lack of parent involvement, and educators being held accountable for children. These demands eventually take their toll and inevitably, the teacher-child relationship suffers (Niehaus et al., 1996). However, many of the respondents mentioned that due to intrinsic motivational factors such as commitment, they viewed their work demands as less overwhelming.

It also became evident during the study that the personal lives of educators could be regarded as another dimension. It was also found that within the personal life dimension, educators valued their loved ones, personal time, going to church and spending time at home. According to Demerouti, Bakker, and Bulters (2004) individuals strive to obtain the things they value. These are called resources and include objects, conditions, personal characteristics and energies. Furthermore, the results of a study by Karakas, Lee, and MacDermid (2004) on the meaning of family well-being among part-time professionals, revealed that the participants valued having enough free time for relaxation and desired activities because having enough time for family, household duties, leisure and personal activities overlapped with their general life goals and dreams. They also maintained that feeling successful in their lives meant being able to dedicate time and energy to the important things in their lives other than work, whether that being family or other personal pursuits.

In addition to the above-mentioned, it seemed that apart from experiencing demands in the work domain, educators also experienced their personal lives as demanding. These demands that the educators' personal lives comprised of, included housekeeping and child-care responsibilities, family responsibilities such as being the wage earner in the family and having to act as mediator in family problems and housing responsibilities. According to Montgomery, Panagopoulou, Peeters, and Schaufeli (2005), changes in family structures and the obligatory nature of work during the past two decades have heightened interest in understanding the work-personal life interface. Consequently, an increasing number of individuals are confronted with significant demands both at work and in their personal lives (Carnicer, Sánchez, & Pérez, 2004).



With respect to the fourth objective of the study, it was found that the work demands that educators experienced could be perceived as an antecedent of their WPLI, seeing that their work demands had an influence on their personal lives. Due to time constraints at work it happened, more often than not, that educators had to take unfinished work home. Consequently, this left less time for loved ones, church, leisure activities and personal time (consequence of WPLI). It was also interesting to note that educators' personal lives did not only consist of home and family, but also other activities such as leisure and church.

Nowadays many employees have difficulty combining work and domestic obligations and empirical research has consistently shown that work demands interfere with personal life. Furthermore, time-based work-home interference develops when the time devoted to work obligations makes it physically impossible to meet obligations in the personal life, for instance when long work hours interfere with participation in family activities (Van Hooff et al., 2005). Apart from time-based work-home interference, educators also experienced strain-based interference from work in their personal lives, which could also be seen as a consequence of WPLI. Educators reported that due to their demands from work, they were tired and irritable when they arrived home. Strain-based work-home interference refers to the process in which tension developed at work is transferred to the home domain, for instance when people have difficulty relaxing at home after a stressful workday. Moreover, previous research has shown that especially time and strain-based work-home interference is negatively associated with employee health (Van Hooff et al., 2005).

Lastly, regarding the fifth objective of this study, it was found during the research that educators made use of certain strategies to cope with the interaction between work and personal life. Strategies that were reported by die educators included communication, religion or prayer, a supportive spouse, exercise and staying active, planning and doing the work that was expected of them. These coping strategies may also be referred to as resources that educators make use of to better cope with the demands that they experience in both their work and personal lives. This led to educators feeling better, less stressed, more motivated and more relaxed. Recent empirical evidence suggests that demanding aspects in the work or family domain (or both) are mainly related to conflict, but resources such as control and support are related to positive spill over (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). These resources enhance the employee's well-being and help him or her to manage both work and personal life demands. On the one hand, these resources may eradicate the

impact of demanding working conditions, and help employees to avoid unnecessary strain and on the other hand, they may improve an employee's motivation and performance (Demerouti, Bakker et al., 2004).

Another interesting finding relating to this research was that educators felt a real need and responsibility to help the children deal with their problems. However, due to some of the educators' own situation at home, they were not always able to help the children and this in turn led to frustration. Relevant literature to support these findings could not be found, however, in South Africa a notion such as individualism vs. collectivism has become a significant issue as the organisational culture is cast in a Eurocentric mould (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk, & Shenk, 2000), revealing an individualistic characteristic if the group is primarily white. In contrast to individualism, black people largely reveal an afro centric approach, a communalistic orientation, believing that every person is very much part of the social fabric and that each person needs to find his or her own place in the social structure, becoming subordinate to the social needs of the group as a whole (Koopman, 1994). Essential to this afro centric management is the term, *Ubuntu*, which means, "I am because we are". Collectivism is in contrast to individualism and intensive competitiveness, and places great prominence on concern for people and working for the common good (Williams & Green, 1994).

To summarise, considering the results obtained in this study, a model regarding the experiences of WPLI among Setswana-speaking educators was constructed. The results indicated that educators experienced factors in both their work and personal lives to be demanding. In addition, work demands led to various time constraints and strain. However, factors were identified that made the demands less overwhelming and it was also found that educators valued certain things in their personal lives. Furthermore, it was found that educators differed regarding their experience of interaction between their work and personal lives. Nevertheless, educators employed certain strategies to cope with this interaction, which in turn led to numerous positive outcomes.

### **3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

The main limitation of this study is that it was based on a single occupation, that of educators.

The fact that the study did not investigate any specific sub-groups of the respondents represents another limitation. It is possible that different sub-groups have specific needs that could influence their degree of both work-personal integration and the criterion measures (O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath, 2004). For example, specific population groups such as dual-earners, parents and single parents could have unique demands in both their work and personal lives that could influence the interaction between the two domains. Obtaining adequate numbers of respondents with these specific demographic characteristics must be a consideration for future investigations of work-personal life integration.

Furthermore, the researcher only had the opportunity to interview employees within the work environment. It is possible that interviews conducted outside of the work environment might have produced different stories in terms of thinking about work and personal life. The use of Setswana, as the only language used for the interviews represents a further limitation. Future studies can benefit greatly by utilising a sample with proportionate inclusion of all the official language groups of South Africa. The fact that the majority of the sample was female, and that comparisons between males and females would not have been meaningful was another limitation. In addition, the current study only considered educators in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp. It is suggested that the study be expanded to the other districts in the North West Province as well as in other provinces of South Africa. In addition to the aforementioned, there was a possibility that some of the participants were concerned about the confidentiality of the interview and the use of tape-recorders. However, the researcher did inform the participants that the interview would be recorded and that their identity would remain anonymous. This might have influenced the outcome of the results.

### **3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite these limitations, the following recommendations are made for the organisation as well as for future research.

#### **3.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation**

Jackson and Rothmann, (2006) propose that primary interventions are essential to prevent or diminish the stress that educators experience. The purpose of primary interventions is to improve the fit between the employee and the workplace, to teach employees to deal with

experienced stress more efficiently and to adjust their assessment of a stressful situation, so that the situation will seem less threatening (Kompier & Kristensen, 2001). In addition to primary interventions, Jackson and Rothmann (2006) suggest that secondary interventions can also be implemented to prevent employees who are already showing signs of stress from getting sick, and to increase their coping capability. In this regard, it is recommended that the educator must develop his or her own personal plan to fight stress, for example, delegation of responsibilities, setting of realistic goals, better time-management and realistic self-assessment (Olivier & Venter, 2003). Moreover, Jackson and Rothmann (2006) mention that tertiary interventions can also be employed to focus on the rehabilitation of individuals who have suffered ill health or reduced well-being as a result of strain in the workplace.

Organisations will require extremely dedicated and resourceful employees to permit them to survive and prosper in turbulent and highly competitive markets and in order to support such energy and dedication, employers must express concern with both the working lives as well as the personal lives of employees (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005). In light of the above-mentioned, it is suggested that to accommodate employees who strive to balance the demands of both work and personal life, organisations must provide facilities that enable employees to better align both life spheres, for instance, flexibility regarding work tasks, methods, and time, but also on-site child care, special care for sick children and leave facilities (Demerouti, Bakker et al., 2004; Schreuder & Theron, 2002; Van Hooff et al., 2005). In addition, organisations must create a company culture in which employees who experience WPLI problems feel entitled to use the facilities that are available (Van Hooff et al., 2005).

To conclude, the value of these recommendations for future research lies in their ability to provide guidelines for the design of effective strategies for improving the integration of work and personal life. This organisational strategy can be expected to have a positive effect on people's functioning within and outside the workplace, which in turn is beneficial to employees, their families, organisations and society (Geurts & Dijkers, 2002)

### **3.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

In order to overcome the limitations in future research, certain recommendations can be made for future studies. Investigation of various occupations and various family situations,

including persons with different individual characteristics is necessary. If working conditions that are *not* unique for a specific occupational group are indeed related to the work/non-work interface, then these conditions are potentially relevant for every occupation. Thus, the investigation of heterogeneous populations concerning work situation, the family situation and/or individual characteristics is important for reasons of generalisation (Geurts & Dikkers, 2002).

During the interviews, it was found that work not only influenced home and family life, but also other dimensions such as religion, leisure and personal time. It is therefore, recommended that future studies, when studying the non-work interface, include dimension such as religion and leisure and not only home and family.

Moreover, better methodological and research design approaches must be employed, where instead of asking only employees about their experiences, it is important to have several sources of information from both domains, for instance, from the partner and adolescent child(ren), supervisors or observers (Geurts & Dikkers, 2002).

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