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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

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**COPING MECHANISMS OF SOUTH AFRICAN  
WOMEN BALANCING MANAGERIAL AND  
MOTHERHOOD ROLES**

**By**

**Carolyn Easton**

**A research report submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science,  
University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Business Administration**

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## **Abstract**

This research study focuses on women in the South African workplace balancing managerial and motherhood roles. The purpose of the study is to explore both domestic and work coping mechanisms that these women employ or wish to employ.

Exploratory or qualitative research methodology was used based on semi-structured interviews on a non-probability sample of 14 respondents as mothers employed in middle management positions within a large banking organisation. Content analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts.

On the domestic side, working mothers appear to rely heavily on maids in the household and in terms of child-care, extended family and formal child-care facilities with much less reliance on the spouse or partner. This implies a necessary attitude change in South Africa in terms of the traditional gender roles of men and women no longer being suitable in today's age. On the work side women appear not to perceive the organisation as a whole to be supportive of work-family life balance. The research study offers insights into the ideal role of organisations in South Africa in embracing work-family life balance as an holistic quality strategy for the retention of talented women in their leadership pipeline.



## Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

.....

**Date:** .....

**Carolyn Easton**



## Dedication

To:

My loving parents, for the reduced time I was able to spend with them,

My darling husband Ian, whose support will always be treasured,

My beautiful daughter, Caitlin Rose, who is forever close to my heart, and

To our unborn child, who was conceived as a gift for completing this journey.



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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

## 1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Work-family life balance is an important consideration for employees in the workplace who strive to reduce the conflict that the demands of work and family place on the individual. The challenge of balancing work and home life and being successful at both is not easy. The phenomenon of 'multiple role conflict' arises when the competing demands of work, marriage, and children affect a person's career (Aaron-Corbin, 1999). For women employed in the workplace, this notion of multiple role conflict is experienced as being greater due to the traditional gender role model of women still being adopted in society which gender role embraces the role of women as mothers with child-care and domestic household duties. This is in contrast to the new modern role of women being that of employees in the workplace as breadwinners and in the pursuit of successful careers.

This multiple role conflict, more strongly associated with working women, may lead to voluntary turnover in the workplace with the decision to leave based on burnout, or the desire to prevent burnout, or a renewed focus on family life. The retention of employed women in the South African labour force is essential for compliance with employment equity and the need for diversity in the workplace. In retaining talented managerial women, organisations need to accept the notion of multiple role conflict associated with women and thereby provide the needed supportive work environment to assist these women with balancing work-family life.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

The participation of women in the labour force, globally, has grown significantly over the past several decades (Kroska, 2004). In South Africa an important post-apartheid outcome is the attempt to create a just and equitable society in order to redress the past injustices (Fisher, Miller, Katz, and Thatcher, 2003). Changes in employee, consumer, and legislative expectations have required a more diverse and representative workforce in organisations (Fisher *et al.* 2003). South Africa has implemented various policies and programmes to ensure equal and fair access to the labour market for women (Department: Labour, Republic of South Africa, Labour Market Review Report, 2006). According to Thomas and Jain (2004, p. 50) “.... one of the foremost challenges that South Africa faces is that of ensuring that the new workforce, demographically changed through the implementation of employment equity legislation, contributes towards the achievement of the global competitiveness of the country”.

According to the Grant Thornton International Business Owners Survey, which research was published in 2005 and carried out in over 26 countries around the world, South Africa was third tie with USA and Mexico, in terms of 75% of their companies having women holding senior management positions (Hayward, 2005). Russia was the leader with 89%, followed by the Philippines with 85%. However Hayward (2005) adds that when it comes to the actual physical numbers of women holding down these jobs compared with the numbers of men, the percentage of a

country's senior management jobs held by women was much lower. Russia was the only country coming close to a near fifty-fifty representation at 42%.

South African legislation to advance employment equity, in particular the Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998), may increase career uncertainty for some, but at the same time assists others to further their career advancement involving expanded responsibilities, which in turn can lead to role overload and other unwanted stressors (Fisher, Miller, Katz, and Thatcher, 2003). Research has shown that failure to adequately address work-family life conflict by the individual and the organisation can lead to increased turnover rates of affected employees.

### **1.2.1 Employment of women in South Africa**

The role of the Commission on Gender Equality, one of six state institutions set up in terms of the Constitution to promote democracy and a culture of human rights in South Africa, is to advance gender equality in all spheres of society and make recommendations on any legislation affecting the status of women. The commission chairperson, Piliso-Seroke, says that South Africa still has a long way to go in becoming gender-sensitive and believes that "gender equality starts at home" (International Marketing Council of SA, South Africa info, 2006).

According to the World Economic Forum's latest Global Gender Gap Report released in November 2006 which measures progress made in narrowing the inequality gap between men and women, South Africa ranks 18th out of 115 countries surveyed. The report measures the size of the gender gap in four areas of inequality between men and women, namely economic participation and

opportunity, educational attainment, political empowerment, and health and survival. However, according to the survey, when it came to labour force participation, only 46% of SA women were found to be employed compared to 79% of men, and earned on average less than half that of their male counterparts. While 47% of professional and technical workers in the country were women, only 19% of senior official and managers were women (International Marketing Council of SA, South Africa info, 2007).

According to the 2006 Labour Market Review by the Department: Labour, Republic of South Africa, there is clear evidence of the increased feminisation of the South African labour force between 1995 and 2005. Females accounted for almost 58% of the growth in the labour force, whilst males accounted for 42.3% of the change. However males continue to overtake females in the labour force as reflected in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Labour force participation rates**

	<b>1995</b> %	<b>2005</b> %
<b>Male</b>	65.8	71.9
<b>Female</b>	48.5	63.8
<b>Male 15-24 years</b>	30.9	42.5
<b>Female 15-24 years</b>	27.9	43.0
<b>Male 25-34 years</b>	87.0	93.6
<b>Female 25-34 years</b>	68.6	86.4
<b>Male 35-44 years</b>	91.6	92.2
<b>Female 35-44 years</b>	67.3	81.1
<b>Male 45-54 years</b>	85.9	84.8
<b>Female 45-54 years</b>	55.0	69.5
<b>Male 55-65 years</b>	52.7	58.2
<b>Female 55-65 years</b>	21.8	31.1

**Source: Department: Labour, Republic of SA, Labour Market Review (2006, p. 9)**

According to The Business Women Association's (BWA) report titled "South African Women in Corporate Leadership Census 2007" there has been an improvement in particular areas of representivity of women leaders in corporate South Africa, but less of an improvement in others. According to this survey, "women corporate leaders are a minority in a minority" (p. 16). Also, "while women make up 51% of the adult population in South Africa, and only 42.9% of the working South African population, they constitute only 19.2% of all executive managers and only 13.1% of all directors in the country" (p. 16).

### Figure 1: Census Pyramid

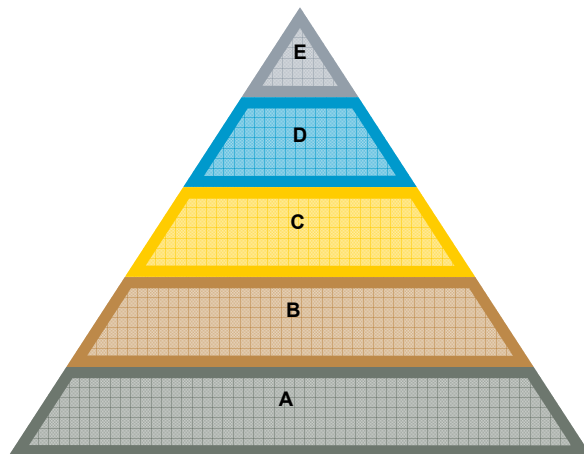
A = 51% women as % of total South African population

B = 42.9% women as % of employed population

C = 19.2% women executive managers

D = 13.1% women directors

E = 6.6% Women CEOs and Board Chairs



**Source: The BWA "South African Women in Corporate Leadership Census"**

**(2007, p. 16)**

The BWA survey also found that women's representivity on boards of JSE-listed companies has remained constant from 2006 to 2007. At the current rate of change, it will take women 73 years to reach parity with men in the boardrooms of Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst, 2007).

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research study is to explore both domestic and work coping mechanisms for South African women in balancing managerial and motherhood roles.

In doing the research the intention is to explore how these managerial women currently experience work-family balance as well as look at the role of the organisation in providing the ideal work environment to support these women with work-family life balance. This in turn is expected to assist with the retention of talented women for the leadership pipeline of the organisation.

#### **1.3.1 Research Scope**

This research is limited to managerial women in the South African workplace who are also single or cohabiting/married mothers.

The research scope limitation is further defined as:

- ❖ Women employed in middle management in a large banking institution; and

- ❖ Who are also single or cohabiting/married mothers responsible for the upbringing of one or more dependants (children up to the ages of 18 years of age)

Typically, middle management has been regarded as part of the organisation's control system (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1994). Middle management translates strategies that are defined at higher (top management) levels into actions at operating levels so that in the language of strategic management, their role is defined as 'implementation' (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1994).

In defining middle management within the banking industry and within the particular banking institution, cognisance is taken of the fact that job roles of employees in financial services institutions are now being guided by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) codes of good practice based on the Financial Sector Charter. There are no longer going to be salary bands that distinguish between various managerial levels, instead, occupational levels as per the Employment Equity Act (1998) based on job content will apply.

Within the particular banking institution, four level designations apply, namely:

- Top management (reporting to the CEO and Group Exco); and
- Senior management; and
- Middle management; and
- Junior management (team leaders or supervisors).

(3 Sixty, 2007).



The scope is limited to middle management women because these women are seen to be larger in numbers as can be seen in Figure 1 above in terms of women in leadership roles. These women in all probability do not work 'eight to five' jobs and are perceived as having to juggle work and motherhood roles in their career climb to reach senior and executive positions within the organisation.

### **1.3.2 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the research are twofold as follows:

- To explore how managerial women in the South African workplace that are mothers experience work-family life balance; and
- To determine the role of the organisation as employer of these women in assisting with work-family life balance.

The research study is intended to explore the phenomenon of work-family life balance with women in the South African workplace juggling both managerial and motherhood roles. In doing so, cognisance needs to be taken of the traditional gender roles of working mothers in terms of these women still being responsible for child-care and household duties. Work-family life conflict or multiple role conflict is known to be one of the reasons for voluntary turnover of working mothers. This follows that the research study in exploring coping mechanisms on both the domestic and work fronts for work-family balance would have relevance for South African organisations in terms of retaining talented women for their leadership pipeline.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The theory base to the research study encompasses a journey of understanding the importance of women in the workplace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through to an analysis of how working mothers cope with balancing the two divided spheres of their lives, namely family and work. There are three inter-related themes presented beginning with women and diversity in the workplace, followed by a focus on the phenomenon of work-family life balance and role conflict, and concluding with a look at coping mechanisms derived from both domestic and work initiatives.

### **2.2 WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there has been remarkable progress made by women which would have been unimaginable even half a century ago in terms of holding seats on corporate boards, running companies and featuring on the covers of business magazines as prominent leaders (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000). “An increased participation of women in higher education and the labour market are often presented as evidence of considerable changes in the women’s role in western societies” (Fernandes and Cabral-Cardoso, 2006, p. 99). Couple households are also arising where the female is the major earner, referred to as female breadwinner households (Drago, Black, and Wooden, 2005).

### **2.2.1 Value of women in the workplace**

When we look to women in leadership roles in the workplace, there appears to be an increased demand by organisations for these roles to be filled by women on the basis that “the traits we associate with women have become increasingly more valuable, things like communication and team building and the ability to negotiate” (Hayward, 2005, p. 59). Hayward (2005, p. 60) writes that “the traits that we traditionally associate with masculinity are less in demand in the modern workplace”. Hakim (2006) writes that female managers do not differ from male managers in the way they do their jobs, but rather in their personal characteristics and family lives.

Zinn (2007) talks about the notion of emotional intelligence (EQ) as being regarded as one of the changing skills requirements today for managers and leaders in business due to its positive impact on productivity and profitability. An improvement in one’s EQ means that we become more highly evolved or self-actualized. According to Zinn (2007), studies have shown that employees who measure highest on EQ tend to rise further and faster within their organisations. Women are better able to get in touch with their EQ as they are more likely than men to acknowledge the power of emotions.

Eagly and Carli (2007) found that according to research, men and women have different leadership styles and that women’s approaches are more generally effective. According to Eagly and Carli (2007), this may be due to women being associated with communal qualities such as being affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, sympathetic, sensitive, gentle, and soft-spoken. These qualities convey a

concern for the compassionate treatment of others. Men on the other hand are associated with agentic qualities conveying assertion and control and include being aggressive, ambitious, dominant, self-confident, forceful, self-reliant, and individualistic (Eagly and Carli 2007).

In a study by Nemanashi (2007) on femininity in the workplace, four professional women were asked about unique qualities that women bring to the workplace. The feedback received was that women are good team players as they bring character, understanding, and good social skills. Women bring EQ as well as a different perspective to the workplace. Because women have dual roles both at home and work they have the ability to multi-task effectively and be organised. Women should not be afraid to nurture and show compassion as this can make the workplace a positive environment to live in. In summary, women are more people-centred, intuitive and holistic in their thinking whilst men are more object-centred, rational and analytical in their thinking. Men prefer logical problem solving whilst women will focus on people and feelings more.

### **2.3 WORK-FAMILY LIFE BALANCE**

Work-family life balance is also referred to in the literature as ‘work-life balance’, ‘work-family conflict’, and ‘work-family life conflict’.

Lilly and Duffy (2006, p. 662) writes “work-family conflict occurs for men and women in the sense that anyone with a job and a family may need to cope simultaneously with the demands of both”. Job spill over, in the case of work and

family, refers to the impact of work roles on family and vice versa (Delgado and Canabal, 2006). It has been recognised that the long-hour work culture in many organisations does not support appropriate parenting (Wood and Newton, 2006).

Fritz (1999, p. 6) talks about the 'labour-leisure model' which "correlates the income an individual receives from working additional hours in the market with the value he or she places on time spent at leisure as compared to earning additional income and thus being able to consume more goods". According to Clutterbuck (2004, p. 18) "the dilemma of work-life balance is one of complexity management". This is because our lives are becoming increasingly complex in that we have more choices, opportunities, and demands placed upon us. Clutterbuck (2004, p. 19), writes that "most of the impact of work-life balance activity is on intermediary or indirect factors such as retention, corporate reputation, productivity, quality, creativity, and customer service".

Employers are concerned about employees having to "walk the tightrope between work and family" (Ben-Ari, 2000, p. 472). This is because work-family conflict can affect employee well-being and job satisfaction leading to job performance and employee turnover. Turnover and its associated costs is a problem for South African organisations in an environment of skill shortages. Thus careful attention to work-life balance by employers may be one way to promote organisational as well as individual well being (Smith and Gardner, 2007).

## 2.4 MULTIPLE ROLE CONFLICT

“A role is an expected pattern or set of behaviours”, (Lilly and Duffy, 2006, p. 665). According to O’Laughlin and Bischoff (2005, p. 80) there are three types of role conflict relevant to work-family life conflict. “Time-based conflict occurs when the time-pressures from one role makes it impossible to fulfil expectations of another role. Strain-based conflict occurs when the stress of one role impacts one’s performance in another role. Behaviour-based conflict occurs when behaviours expected in one role are incompatible with behaviours expected in another role”.

Major changes have occurred within couple households with couples today far less likely to rely solely on the male as the source of earned income (Drago, Black, and Wooden, 2005). Gordon and Whelan-Berry (2005) suggest that equal career precedence is more common than either the husband’s or the wife’s career having precedence. The climate for working mothers has changed in recent decades so that it is now more common for mothers with children to work than for them not to work (Elvin-Nowak, 1999).

There are both push (organisation) and pull (home) factors that lead to women leaving their workplace. Push factors are derived from the work side as they refer to factors such as long hours and unsatisfying work, while pull factors or pulls on time refer to the home side such as children to raise and elderly parents to care for (Hewlett and Luce, 2005). In this research study the background to women leaving their workplace is on the pull factors where “family overload and the traditional division of labour place unmanageable demands on a working woman” (Hewlett and Luce, 2005, p. 20).

Fritz (1999) writes that the labour-leisure model ignores the household responsibilities of women whose alternative to market work is not simply leisure time but household work. The cultural pressure placed on women to take responsibility for family and household matters would indicate that women experience work-family conflict to a greater extent than men (Lilly and Duffy, 2006).

#### **2.4.1 Traditional gender roles**

It is possible to accept that as more and more women have entered the workforce, there is no longer a solid family-support at home (Schwartz, 1992). “Women have increased their participation in paid employment considerably during the past 30 years, but men have not increased their participation in housework to the same extent” (Evertsson and Nermo, 2004, p. 1285). Women still perform the majority of care giving and juggling of work in the family. Gender is seen as a significant determinant of negative job spill over because employed women are expected to carry out the responsibility for family services (Delgado and Canabal, 2006).

Although husbands have taken on more domestic work than they did in earlier generations, this gain for women has been offset by “escalating pressures for intensive parenting and the increasing time demands of most high-level careers” (Eagly and Carli, 2007, p. 68). Women can either act as so-called superwomen in order to cope with these competing demands or find other ways of handling the overload at work or home (Gordon and Whelan-Berry, 2005).

Women who feel overburdened by all of the pressures they must shoulder, run the risk of burnout and a possible end to their corporate aspirations (Gallagher and Golant, 2000). Macdonald, Phipps, and Lethbridge (2005), using recent Canadian data on prime-age women and men (25-54), found that women's greater hours of unpaid work contribute to women experiencing more stress than men. Success in the workplace as super mom in terms of balancing work and family may come at a high cost in terms of stress (MacDonald *et al.* 2005).

#### **2.4.2 Guilt of working mothers**

Added to this is the phenomenon of guilt experienced by women containing a general feeling of responsibility especially towards their own children which sense of failure of responsibility arises when they lack control over the demands made on them from different spheres of life (Elvin-Nowak, 1999). According to Elvin-Nowak (1999, p. 81), this guilt phenomenon is closely linked to external demands from various directions including the "constant collisions between work and care for her children". This guilt phenomenon provides us with a greater chance of understanding women's strategies for combining work and motherhood.

There is the idea that those women who remain at home with their children "do not think that anyone but themselves can provide the type and quality of care they want for their child" (Marks and Houston, 2002, p. 533). Motherhood is regarded as the "most gender-oriented female activity" (Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson, 2001, p. 425). According to Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001, p. 425), a woman that works is "exposed to the constant risk of her position as a mother and woman

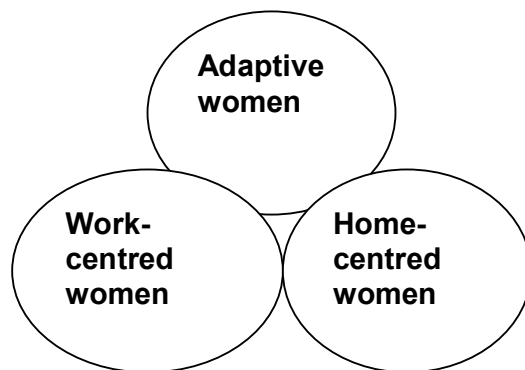


being questioned”, particularly where she has chosen employment for her own well-being rather than being forced to by external circumstances.

## 2.5 WOMEN’S WORK-LIFESTYLE PREFERENCES

Hakim (2006) makes use of preference theory, a new theory for explaining and predicting women’s choices between market work and family work. Hakim (2006) classifies working women in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2: Classification of working women**



**Source: Hakim (2006)**

According to Hakim (2006), adaptive women prefer to combine employment and family work, are generally the largest group among women and will be the group interested in schemes offering work-life balance and family-friendly employment benefits. Work-centred women are in a minority, even though there has been a massive influx into professional and managerial occupations in the last three decades. These women are prepared to prioritise their jobs in the same way as men with family life fitted around their work and many of these women remaining

childless, even when married. Home-centred or family-centred women are relatively invisible in the Western working world and prefer to give priority to private and family life after they marry. They avoid paid work after marriage unless the family is experiencing financial problems.

Tomlinson (2006) also looks at the concept of women's work-balance trajectories derived from three types of transitions made by women, namely 'strategic', 'reactive', or 'compromised choice' transitions which have consequences for the maintenance of careers. According to Tomlinson (2006), strategic transitions are planned and result in women entering employment that offers better working conditions in terms of improved access to family-friendly policies, greater flexibility, or preferred hours of work. Reactive transitions are unplanned and unforeseen and constraint is evident as these transitions would not have occurred unless some other factor in the work-life balance equation had not changed, for example unplanned changes in care networks. Women here struggle to remain in the labour market. Compromised choice transitions involve both choice and constraint in that it may be more logical to consider how to fit work around childcare requirements such as working evenings and school hours to avoid the cost of private childcare.

## **2.6 COPING MECHANISMS**

Work-family concerns came to the fore in the later decades of the twentieth century when white middle-class women began to enter the workforce in vast numbers (Bailyn and Harington, 2004). "Just as a supportive spouse may help

alleviate the stress of the double day, so too may a supportive workplace”  
(Macdonald, Phipps, and Lethbridge, 2005, p. 69).

There is a new kind of brain drain in the workplace where qualified committed women in their career path need to take time out of the workplace and the trick is to help them maintain connections that will allow them to re-enter the workplace without feeling marginalised (Hewlett and Luce, 2005). According to Hewlett and Luce (2005, p. 15), “employers can no longer pretend that treating women as ‘men in skirts’ will fix their retention problems”. Rather they need to employ strategies to build these connections which “include creating reduced-hour jobs, providing flexibility in the workday, and in the arc of a career, removing the stigma of taking time off, refusing to burn bridges, offering outlets for altruism, and nurturing women’s ambition” (Hewlett and Luce, 2005, p. 2).

Those companies that accept their responsibility in the support of women’s treatment in the workplace for family support can improve their bottom line by retaining talented women for their leadership pipeline (Schwartz, 1992). High turnover results when organisations ignore child care and other family concerns and hire women to ensure legislation compliance. “The solution is not merely instituting some ‘feel good’ policies. The solution is fundamental change”, (Schwartz, 1992, p. 162).

Coping strategies for work-family conflict can be classified as work or domestically initiated (Hyman, Scholarios, and Baldry, 2005). Hyman, et al (2005) writes that coping strategies employed in the workplace are largely driven by contrasting

labour processes and labour market positions. “The negotiation of the boundary between work and household involves not only function (who does what? who is breadwinner? who is carer?), but also time (when are these forms of social action carried out) and space (where are they performed?)” (Hyman, et al, 2005, p. 720).

### **2.6.1 Care networks**

Tomlinson (2006, p. 369) refer to care networks as the “formal and informal, paid and unpaid, care arrangements, networks and institutions that provide women with the opportunity to work”. “These resources include care and support by partners, friends and extended family members along with more formal facilities and services such as nurseries, schools and after school clubs” (Tomlinson, 2006, p. 369). However Tomlinson (2006) also says that when these networks break down or are insufficient women face constraints in reconciling work-family life and worst case may move out of the labour market.

Countries like Italy and Australia have cultures where the extended family plays a supportive role in easing the burden of childcare (Hayward, 2005). According to Hayward (2005), indigenous Australians have a community approach to parenting which responsibilities are shared by extended family, neighbours and friends. According to Macdonald, Phipps, and Lethbridge (2005, p. 63), “women, more so than men, use strategies such as self-employment to improve work-life balance”. However Macdonald, et al, (2005, p. 69), also advises that the self-employed person may find better work-family balance but not a reduction in stress as “she works late into the night to meet deadlines”.

### **2.6.2 Support at home by the spouse/partner**

A main idea of Krantz and Ostergren (2001) behind their research on the combined impact of domestic responsibilities and job strain is that traditional gender roles often cause stress reactions in women. They suggest that reducing the exposure to a high level of domestic responsibility and/or job strain would result in health gains for women by reducing their levels of stress experienced.

According to Hayward (2005), there has been an increase in the number of men staying at home while their wives or partners go out to work. This may either be because it makes financial sense or because their culture allows the couple to make this choice. However, some men find it difficult adapting to the change in traditional gender roles within the family unit particularly more when the decision is made out of circumstance rather than choice (Hayward, 2005).

Typically men do not need to feel threatened by their wife's success in the workplace but rather need to continue to derive their feelings of self-worth and recognition in society and at home (Gallagher and Golant, 2000). There are "men who believe in gender equity and view competence in household tasks as a signal of their commitment to their families and their beliefs", (Drago, Black, and Wooden, 2005, p. 345). Kroska (2004, p. 902) comments on the gender ideology model and states that according to this model, "spouses with liberal attitudes about gender should divide domestic work more equitably than spouses with conservative or traditional attitudes about gender".

Husbands have traditionally exercised greater control in marriage which power has been linked with the income and status that men provide as breadwinners (Tichenor, 1999). According to Tichenor (1999), spouses in status-reversal couples seem to ignore or minimise their income and status differences. Status reversal wives also tend to reinforce the position of their husbands by expanding the notion of providing to not just being about money.

## 2.7 WORK INITIATIVES

Clutterbuck (2004) writes that in order for organizations to optimise their work-life management approach they need to integrate these policies into a strategy. He suggests a quality model for work-life balance represented in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: The Quality Model for Work-Life Balance**

POLICIES	PROCESSES	PEOPLE	OUTCOMES
Time Flexibility	Work Organisation	Role Models	For Individuals
Location Flexibility	Technology	Inform/Educate/Consult/ Empower	For the Organisation
Benefits and Support	HR Systems	Training	For Society/the Community
Measurement Benchmarking	Audit	Feedback	Review
Implementation Plan	Resources	Behaviour	Sustainability

**Source: Clutterbuck (2004, p. 18)**

The above model essentially says that work-family support by the organisation requires a holistic strategic measurable approach.

Relating to the above model, Aaron-Corbin (1999) suggests that HR professionals should look at how the effects of role overload contribute to the level of dissatisfaction among women managers and also take into account how job levels are structured. Aaron-Corbin (1999) concludes by saying that conflict is a fact of life but that positive planning by the employer can reduce the stress of conflict for both the organisation and employee.

### **2.7.1 Family- friendly policies**

Family-friendly human resources practices according to Eagly and Carli (2007, p. 70) “include flexitime, job sharing, telecommuting, elder care provisions, adoption benefits, dependent child care options, and employee-sponsored on-site child care”. According to Eagly and Carli (2007) this kind of support from the organisation side can allow women to compete for higher positions by allowing them to stay in their jobs during the demanding years of child rearing, building social networks, and keeping up to date in their fields. Ben-Ari (2000, p. 472) write that “for women who view work as a career and not as a job, employers can improve employee satisfaction through family-friendly policies, such as provision of childcare facilities and support from supervisors for employees’ family commitments”. “Creating formal reduced-hour career options in the workplace requires also, clear policies governing expectations, responsibilities, rewards, and career consequences” (Ben-Ari, 2000, p. 472).

Eagly and Carli (2007, p. 69) write that organisations should “change the long-hours norm”. This would assist women with family demands on their time but also with highly productive work habits, to achieve the rewards and encouragement that they deserve. Eagly and Carli (2007) also believe that employees who have significant parental responsibility be allowed to have more time to prove themselves worthy of promotion.

Some women do not need reduced working hours but rather flexibility in where, how, and when they do their work. Employers however know that family-friendly flexible work arrangements are never cost-free (Hakim, 2006). Hakim, (2006, p. 283), writes that women who need family-friendly flexible work hours usually require short and predictable hours which means that other employees “will be left doing the unsocial hours and overtime that mothers avoid, and they will expect to be properly compensated for their extra availability”.

New technologies, such as advances in telecommunication and information technology, can provide opportunities for employees to balance their responsibilities at work with family duties (Valcour and Hunter, 2004). On the other hand, Valcour and Hunter (2004) go on to say that technology per se is not the answer but rather configurations of technology which may either exacerbate work-life conflict or provide the opportunity to successfully balance these spheres. Technology can have a positive effect on employees’ work-life integration only if the organisation has other flexible work policies or practices in place (Valcour and Hunter, 2004).





### **2.7.2 Work Redesign**

Work redesign is a way of integrating work and family (Bailyn and Harrington, 2004). In the past the focus has been on policies and benefits such as childcare and maternity leave and not the work itself. Bailyn and Harrington (2004, p. 199) write that as research has expanded “it has become clear that aspects of work and work culture were important elements of the work family problem”. According to Bailyn and Harrington (2004, p. 201), the ‘ideal worker’ and ‘time at work with commitment and competence’ create many of the problems of integrating work with personal life because they ignore employee’s lives outside of work and “thus reinforce current constructions of gender and gender roles”. Bailyn and Harrington (2004, p. 206) also writes that work redesign brings organisational task needs and employees’ family needs together and begins to “challenge deeply ingrained beliefs about work, family, and gender roles”.

### **2.7.3 Supportive workplace culture**

There is a perceived backlash in the workplace against work-life policies viewed as favouring women or parents (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005). According to Hewlett and Luce (2005) women have reported that various aspects of their organisation’s cultures penalise those who take advantage of work-life policies. Thus it would appear that a transformation of corporate culture is a pre-requisite for work-family life balance success.

Policies put in place by organisations for work-life balance will not change anything if the culture is resistant (Clutterbuck, 2004). Clutterbuck (2004) writes that to

stimulate culture change, work-life policies must be supported by changes in systems and in the attitudes and capability of people within the organisation.

Bagilhole (2006) undertook a research study of one large public sector organisation's strategy to promote equal opportunities (EO) and family-friendly (FF) policies. Bagilhole (2006) found that although these policies have potential advantages to be gained, it must be acknowledged that some policies may have a differential impact on workers according to gender, age, stage of family formation, etc. Bagilhole (2006) concludes by saying that there needs to be training courses for all staff to address both confused and resistant attitudes as well as a adequate support system and flexibility for those groups not traditionally considered to be the recipients of EO/FF policies, namely men and the childless.

A study undertaken by Smith and Gardner (2007, p. 3) on work-life balance (WLB) in a large New Zealand organisation highlights "the importance of workplace culture in enabling an environment that is supportive of WLB and consequently use of initiatives that are offered by the organisation". Using gender-neutral terms in the workplace may be an essential step in advancing gender equality within the organisation however the effects are negligible without far wider cultural changes within the organisation and in society as a whole (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005).

There needs to be an open workplace conversation about women's changed work and family lives and the need to face this change (Bailyn and Harrington, 2004). Gender equity as found by Bailyn and Harrington (2004, p. 206) "called for fairness in taking the fact of women's responsibilities for families into account in workplace

requirements”. Eagly and Carli (2007, p. 70) believe that male participation in family-friendly benefits should be encouraged as “danger lurks in family-friendly benefits that are used only by women”.

#### **2.7.4 Gender inequality in the workplace**

Most organisations tend to mirror societal norms and add to gender inequity in the workplace by acting as if the historical division of household labour still exists with “women primarily responsible for matters of the hearth” (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000, p. 74). Recent research shows that high levels of female employment and family friendly policies reduce gender equality in the workplace (Hakim, 2006). The reason, according to Hakim (2006), is that these family-friendly policies used by women to cope with combining paid jobs with family work, tend to exacerbate other gender inequity problems in the workplace such as the pay gap and the glass ceiling.

The principle of gender equity is another form of pressure on cultural blockages to successful work-life balance in the workplace. According to Bailyn and Harrington (2004) there is a long-held understanding of private life and employment as separate spheres with women associated with private life and assigned its responsibilities rather than employers. Smithson and Stokoe (2005) found that de-gendered terms ‘flexible work and work life balance’ do not in practice change the widespread assumption within organisations that these terms are strongly linked to working women with children.



## 2.8 CONCLUSION

Organisational practices in the work-personal life domain tend to fall along a continuum (Friedman, Christensen, and Degroot, 1998). The trade-off approach is at the one end, “whereby either the business wins or personal life wins, but not both” (Friedman, et al, 1998, p. 120). At the other end of the continuum is the leveraged approach, “in which the practices used to strike work-life balance actually add value to the business” (Friedman, et al, 1998, p. 120).

According to Bagilhole (2006) knowledge about employee’s preferences for equal opportunities and family friendly policies can also assist employers and human resource managers to develop policies and practices of perceived benefit to their workforce. Smith and Gardner (2007) advise that for employees to make use of work-life balance initiatives, they must first be made aware that these initiatives are offered by the organisation. According to Hakim (2006), employers should not assume that one-size-fits-all work support policies suit everyone. Instead they should look at unisex policies that recognize and value all types of working women, benefiting men and women equally.

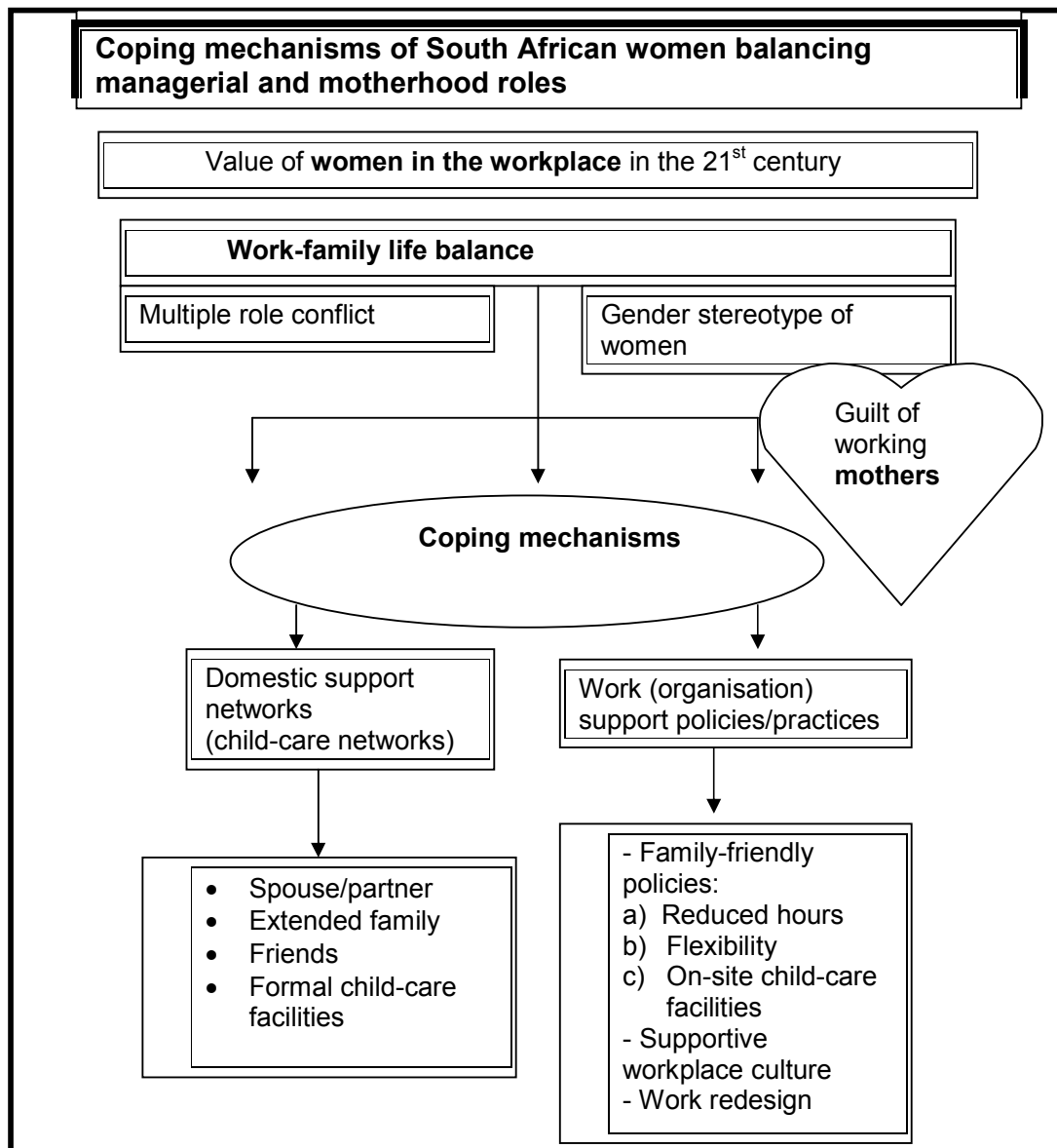
The working environment in South Africa is unique as it has the background of an inadequate public transport system and congested road transport, coupled with an array of available and affordable child-care facilities as well as the availability of domestic help (maids). There also appears to be little research undertaken in South Africa as to how women in the workplace cope with balancing work-family life. This together with the focus on diversity in the South African workplace coupled with the importance of retaining talented women, gives rise to the need for

an explorative study of coping mechanisms on both the domestic and work fronts for balancing work-family life balance.

Organisations can benefit from the opinions of these women as to how the work environment can better support work-family life balance. This research study may also raise the question of whether organisations in South Africa are presently in a position by virtue of their work culture and attitude to gender equity in the workplace, able to support work-family life balance and thus continue retaining talented women in their leadership pipeline.

A framework has been constructed below (Figure 3) to summarise the preceding literature review into a structure that forms a basis for the collection of data in the research study.

Figure 3: Framework - Literature Review Structure



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, research questions are posed due to the exploratory nature of the research study.

Research questions translate the research problem into a specific need for enquiry (Zikmund, 2003). In exploratory research, which is research in a new area that does not have established theories or research findings, a question about the relationship between variables is more suitable than specific research hypotheses (Welman and Kruger, 2001).

**The research questions for the research study are as follows:**

- **Research Question 1:**

Do managerial women that are mothers perceive work-family life balance as a problem or issue?

- **Research Question 2:**

What coping strategies or mechanisms do these women employ to balance work-family life?

- **Research Question 3:**

How do these women currently perceive the role of the organisation as their employer, in assisting with work-family life balance?

- **Research Question 4:**

What would be the ideal work environment for these women in assisting with balancing work-family life?

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 RESEARCH METHOD**

Exploratory or qualitative research was the methodology used in this study. This type of research method is often associated with initial research to clarify and define the nature of a problem (Zikmund, 2003). According to Zikmund (2003), when a researcher has a limited amount of experience with or knowledge about the research problem, the findings discovered through exploratory research would enable the researcher to emphasize further learning on the findings in subsequent conclusive or quantitative research. Exploratory research provides qualitative data as opposed to quantitative research that determines the “quantity or extent of some phenomenon in the form of numbers” (Zikmund, 2003, p. 111).

According to Welman and Kruger (2001, p. 18), “the purpose of exploratory research is to determine whether or not a phenomenon exists and to gain familiarity with such a phenomenon”. Zikmund (2003, p. 114) states “exploratory research is often used to generate new ideas”.

### **4.2 RESEARCH PROCESS**

#### **4.2.1 Population and Unit of Analysis**

The target population chosen in this research study shared some common set of characteristics as defined in the research scope. The relevant population referred to managerial women employed in middle management who are mothers with the responsibility of looking after children up to the ages of 18 years.



The unit of analysis is defined as the opinions of managerial women in the workplace, who are mothers, on how to cope with work-family life balance.

#### **4.2.2 Sample size and sampling method**

Non-probability sampling was used to identify the sample of the respondents belonging to the target population as defined in 4.2.1.

According to Zikmund (2003), non-probability samples may be used for those occasions where it best suits the researcher's purpose. In non-probability sampling, "the probability of any particular member of the population being chosen is unknown" (Zikmund, 2003, p. 380). Based on this research study being exploratory or qualitative in nature, the researcher selected the use of a non-probability sampling technique.

The non-probability sampling technique used in the study was that of convenience sampling which is a "sampling procedure used to obtain those units or people most conveniently available" (Zikmund, 2003, p. 380). According to Zikmund (2003, p. 380) "convenience samples are best used for exploratory research when additional research will subsequently be conducted with a probability sample".

The respondents identified all work for a large banking institution, are employed in middle management positions, and are mothers. The sample size in the study was a total of 14 respondents. As this is an explorative or qualitative study, the small sample size of 14 is not intended to be representative of the target

population defined in 4.2.1. According to Zikmund (2003), with exploratory research, samples are not representative with limited ability to generalise results.

#### **4.2.3 Data collection**

Data collection in the research study took the form of semi-structured interviews with the 14 respondents selected.

According to Trochim (2006), unstructured or semi-structured interviewing, allows the interviewer to move the conversation in any direction of interest that may arise, which is useful for exploring a topic broadly. Although the researcher may have some initial guiding concepts or questions, there is no formal structured instrument for the interview. This allows for exploring a topic broadly.

In this research study the intention with collecting the data via semi-structured interviews was to gain a 'story' on the experience of the respondents on work-family life balance. The researcher encouraged the respondents at the start of the interview to talk from their heart with no time limit on their responses, to express their opinions honestly, and to regard the interview as telling their story on their experience of work-family life balance. When necessary, probing questions were asked during the interview process. According to Zikmund (2003, p. 130), "probing questions such as 'Can you tell me more about that?' or 'Can you give me an example of that?', or 'Why do you say that?' are intended to stimulate respondents to elaborate on the topics being discussed".

See **Appendix 1** for the interview guide used for interviewing the respondents.

Open-ended response questions were mainly used during the interview process. According to Zikmund (2003), open-ended response questions are most beneficial when explorative research is being conducted. They are also valuable at the beginning of an interview as they allow respondents to warm up to the questioning process (Zikmund, 2003).

A pre-test of the proposed interview was conducted on a male colleague also employed in the same banking institution. The pre-test was undertaken to prepare for the following tasks below as prescribed by Trochim (2006):

- ✓ Use eye contact and a confident manner to set the tone for the interview and help the respondent get comfortable.
- ✓ Clarify any confusion/concerns which the respondent may raise during the interview.
- ✓ Observe body language, gestures and tone in which answers are given.
- ✓ Use probes during the interview to obtain adequate responses.

The 14 respondents were interviewed at their place of work but in a quiet closed off area. The interviews were conducted face to face with no time limits placed on the length of the interview. The interview times were on average 25 minutes long, ranging from the shortest interview of 15 minutes to the longest interview of 38 minutes. The interview process included introducing the background to and the reason for the interview. The respondents were advised that their names would be anonymous and not be used in the research report. The respondents were

encouraged to talk from their heart and be open and honest. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents.

#### **4.2.4 Data analysis**

According to Partington (2002, p. 113) “The way in which data are analysed in qualitative research depends on the research question, the way the data were collected and, ultimately, what is appropriate to achieve the objectives of the research”. Content analysis was the qualitative analysis technique used in the study to analyse the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews conducted.

Content analysis is a powerful data reduction technique when used properly (Stemler, 2001). Content analysis is used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within the text so that it is then possible to quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words or concepts, and thereafter make inferences about the messages within the text (Colorado State University, 2007). Content analysis involves more than just simple word counts. Rather, it’s reliance on coding and categorizing of the data makes the technique more rich and meaningful (Stemler, 2001).

The purpose of coding open-ended response questions is to reduce the large number of individual responses to a few general categories of answers (Zikmund, 2003). These categories of answers are assigned after the data has been collected, based on the researcher’s judgment (Zikmund, 2003). The coding categories should be exhaustive, providing for all responses, but should also be mutually exclusive and independent with no overlap between categories (Zikmund,

2003). The coding unit can be words/phrases, themes, items, and time (Hussey and Hussey, 1997).

According to Stemler (2001), there are two approaches to coding data, namely emergent coding and *a priori* coding. With emergent coding, categories are established following some preliminary examination of the data. This is referred to as data based content analysis in the research study. When dealing with *a priori* coding, the categories are established prior to the analysis based upon some theory. This is referred to as theory based content analysis in the research study.

#### **4.2.5 Data validity and reliability**

According to Trochim (2006), alternative criteria for judging qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research, are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The credibility criterion establishes that the results of the qualitative research are believable from the perspective of the respondent in the research process. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of the research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. Dependability, referred to as reliability in quantitative research, emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. Finally, confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of the qualitative research could be confirmed or collaborated by others.

According to Stemler (2001), for the reliability criteria, one of the most critical steps in content analysis would involve developing a set of explicit recording instructions allowing outside coders to be trained until reliability requirements are met. Stemler

(2001) goes on to say that reliability may also refer to intra-rater reliability or stability to test if the same coder can get the same results again and again. Reliability may also refer to inter-rater reliability or reproducibility to test whether the coding schemes lead to the same text being coded in the same category by others. In qualitative research, the validation requirement can take the form of triangulation lending credibility to the findings by incorporating multiple sources of data and methods (Stemler, 2001).

The researcher is of the opinion that when looking at the background to the topic of the research study, the respondents selected in the sample by their demographic nature all could associate with the topic being researched so that the credibility criterion could be met.

#### **4.2.6 Research assumptions and limitations**

An assumption used in the data collection was that the respondents selected in the sample as mothers could identify with and have experienced to some extent with work-family life conflict in their personal lives.

Exploratory research as a research method does have limitations. “The interpretation of the findings is based on judgment, samples are not representative, and these techniques rarely provide precise quantitative measurement. “The ability to generalise results is limited” (Zikmund, 2003, p. 133).

A limitation with the research process is the use of interviews to collect data on the basis that interviewer bias can arise. According to Trochim (2006), interviewer bias becomes a problem when the researcher is investigating political or moral issues on which people have strongly held convictions. Interviewers need to know the many ways that they are able to inadvertently bias the results. In this research study, the researcher is close to the topic being researched as the researcher is employed in the same large banking organisation in which the sample of respondents was collected. The researcher is also a mother and employed in middle management. Thus personal bias may have come into the research process.

A further limitation would be the use of content analysis alone as the qualitative analysis technique used to analyse the data collected. In content analysis to record only the words or phrases of particular interest may mean that large amounts of data are discarded which could add to understanding the phenomenon being studied more thoroughly (Hussey and Hussey, 1997).

A further limitation is that all the respondents selected in the sample are employed in one industry and in the same organisation. The research scope was also limited to women in middle management positions only.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

### 5.1 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The sample of 14 respondents interviewed had the following demographic profile:

**Table 3: Respondent demographics**

Description	Category	Number
<b>Age</b>	< 30 years	0
	30 - 35 years	4
	36 - 44 years	8
	45 - 50 years	2
	> 50 years	0
<b>Race</b>	White	9
	Indian	2
	Black	3
	Asian	0
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	10
	Single (Divorced/Widowed)	3
	Cohabiting partner	1
<b>Job role</b>	Business Manager	6
	Credit Manager	5
	Risk Manager	1
	Specialist Manager	2
<b>Number of children</b>	1 child	7
	2 children	6
	> 2 children	1
<b>Ages of children</b>	> 6 years	6
	6 – 12 years	7
	13 – 18 years	9



The above table reflects the sample of respondents interviewed to be predominantly between the ages of 36 and 44 years of age, of white race, and married. The sample was approximately evenly spread between having 1 or 2 children. There was also an approximate even spread in terms of the ages of the children ranging between pre-school, primary school, and high school.

## **5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The 14 interview transcripts were analysed by using the qualitative analysis method, content analysis. The researcher made use of both data based content analysis and theory analysis as referred to in Chapter 4 under 4.2.4.

The results from the data analysis are presented below in terms of the research questions set in Chapter 3.

### **Research Question 1:**

**Do managerial women that are mothers perceive work-family life balance as a problem or issue?**

The data relating to the first research question was analysed under two areas, namely whether work-family life balance was a problem or issue, and do the respondents feel guilty by virtue of being working mothers.

#### **5.2.1 Work-family life balance a problem/issue**

A frequency count was conducted to ascertain the 'yes' or 'no' or 'sometimes' answers to this question posed in the interview.

**Table 4: Is work-family life balance a problem/issue**

Respondent	Yes	No	Sometimes
1	X		
2		X	
3		X	
4			X
5	X		
6			X
7		X	
8		X	
9	X		
10	X		
11	X		
12	X		
13	X		
14		X	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

7 of the respondents believe that work-family life balance is a problem for them, 5 respondents do not see it as a problem, and 2 respondents said it is a problem sometimes.

Data based content analysis was used to determine the main category reasons indicating why work-family life balance is a problem or not a problem for the respondents.

**Table 5: Reasons for work-family life balance being a problem/issue**

Respondent	Work pressures	Less time with family	Little personal support
1	X		
4	X		
5	X		
6			X
9		X	
10			X
11		X	
12	X		
13		X	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

Of the 9 respondents who said yes or sometimes, the main reasons relate to work pressures (4), less time with family (3), and little personal support (2).

**Table 6: Reasons why work-family life balance is not a problem or issue**

Respondent	Adjusted lifestyle	Spouse/partner support	Extended family support
2	x		
3		x	
7		x	
8			x
14	x		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

Of the 5 respondents who said no, the main reasons relate to suitable adjustment of lifestyle (2), support by spouse/partner (2), and extended family support (1).

### 5.2.2 Guilt of working mothers

A frequency count was conducted to ascertain whether the respondents felt guilty by virtue of being working mothers and whether there was an even balance between time spent with family and at work.

**Table 7: Guilt as a working mother**

Respondent	Guilt - Yes	Guilt - No	Even time spent (No)	Event time spent (Yes)
1	x		x	
2		x		x
3		x		x
4	x		x	
5	x		x	
6	x		x	
7	x		x	
8	x		x	
9	x		x	
10		x		x
11	x		x	
12	x		x	
13	x		x	
14		x		x
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

The majority of the respondents (10) admitted to feeling guilt as a working mother.

The same respondents also felt that the time spent between work and family was uneven with more time needed with their families.

To ascertain the reasons for why 4 of the respondents did not feel guilt as working mothers, data based content analysis was used to generate the main factors, being adjusted lifestyle as a single mother, strong spouse support (househusband), and no work being taken home.

**Table 8: Reasons for not feeling guilt as working mothers**

Respondent	Adjusted lifestyle (single mother)	Spouse support (househusband)	No work taken home
2	x		
3		x	
10			x
14	x		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

**Research Question 2:**

**What coping strategies or mechanisms do these women employ to balance work-family life?**

The data relating to the second research question was analysed under two areas, namely sharing of household duties and child-care networks used.

**5.2.3 Sharing of household duties**

A frequency count was conducted to ascertain the number of respondents using maids and/or spouses/partners to share in the household duties at home.

**Table 9: Sharing of household duties**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Maid</b>	<b>Spouse/partner</b>	<b>No assistance</b>
<b>1</b>	x	x	
<b>2</b>			x
<b>3</b>	x	x	
<b>4</b>	x	x	
<b>5</b>		x	
<b>6</b>	x		
<b>7</b>	x	x	
<b>8</b>	x		
<b>9</b>	x		
<b>10</b>	x		
<b>11</b>	x		
<b>12</b>	x		
<b>13</b>	x		
<b>14</b>	x		
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

12 of the 14 respondents employ maids, whether full-time or part-time. Of these 12 respondents, 4 also have the support of their partner/spouse in assisting with the household duties.

#### 5.2.4 Child-care networks used

Theory based content analysis was used to categorise the child-care networks used by the respondents. The literature review (refer to Figure 3) talks about care networks being spouse/partner, extended family and friends, and formal child-care networks (aftercare/crèche).

**Table 10: Child-care networks used**

Respondent	Extended family & friends	Formal care networks, e.g. aftercare/ creche	Spouse/partner	Total
1	x			1
2	x	x		2
3	x	x	x	3
4	x			1
5			x	1
6	x	x		2
7	x	x	x	3
8	x			1
9	x	x		2
10	x	x		2
11	x		x	2
12	x		x	2
13		x	x	2
14	x	x		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	

The predominant child-care network used is the help of extended family and friends (12), followed by formal child-care networks (8), and spouse/partner (6). 8 of the respondents are able to use a combination of two child-care networks, 4 respondents use only one child-care network, and the remaining 2 respondents use a combination of three child-care networks.

**Research Question 3:**

**How do these women currently perceive the role of the organisation as their employer, in assisting with work-family life balance?**

The data relating to the third research question was analysed under three areas, namely awareness by the organisation of work-family life balance, attitude of the direct report (boss) towards family commitments, and whether the workplace culture was supportive.

**5.2.5 Awareness by the organisation of work-family life balance**

A frequency count was conducted to ascertain whether the respondents felt that their organisation impeded or supported work-family life balance.

**Table 11: Support of work-family life balance by the organisation**

Respondent	Yes	No
1		X
2		X
3		X
4		X
5	X	
6		X
7		X
8		X
9	X	
10		X
11		X
12		X
13		X
14		X
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>

The majority of the respondents (12) feel that their organisation is not aware of work-family life balance through a perceived lack of support in their opinion.

Data based content analysis was used to determine the reasons behind the ‘no’ answers. The reasons were categorised into being a focus on numbers (achieving targets), no gym facilities, not enough staff, and having to attend after-hours events/functions.

**Table 12: Reasons for perceived non-support**

Respondent	Focus on numbers	After hour events/functions	Insufficient staff	No gym facilities
1	x			
2	x			
3		x		
4	x			
6			x	
7	x			
8				x
10			x	
11		x		
12	x			
13		x		
14		x		
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

For the 12 ‘no’ respondents, the reasons are mainly a focus by the organisation on achieving targets (5), followed by having to attend after-hours events/functions (4).

### 5.2.6 Attitude of direct report (boss) towards family commitments

A frequency count was conducted to ascertain whether the direct report of the respondents were supportive of family commitments.



**Table 13: Support by direct report (boss)**

Respondent	Yes	No
1	X	
2	X	
3	X	
4	X	
5	X	
6	X	
7	X	
8	X	
9	X	
10		X
11	X	
12	X	
13		X
14	X	
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

The majority of the respondents (12) believe that their direct report supports them with regards to family commitments.

### **5.2.7 Supportive workplace culture**

A frequency count was conducted to ascertain whether the respondents felt in their workplace environment, that there was a stigma attached to mothers taking time off work to see to family commitments.

**Table 14: Stigma attached to mothers taking time off work to see to family**

Respondent	Yes	No
1	X	
2	X	
3		X
4		X
5		X
6	X	
7	X	
8		X
9		X
10		X
11	X	
12	X	
13	X	
14	X	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>

There was an approximate even spread between respondents perceiving or not perceiving resentment in the workplace towards mothers taking time off work to see to their children.

Data based content analysis was used to determine from whom in the workplace the 8 respondents feel the resentment is derived. These persons were categorised into male managers and more senior female managers in the workplace.

**Table 15: Resentment by whom**

Respondent	Male managers	Senior female managers
1	X	
2	X	
6	X	
7		X
11	X	
12		X
13	X	
14		X
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

5 of the 8 respondents feel that the resentment creating the stigma is derived from male managers.

**Research Question 4:**

**What would be the ideal work environment for these women in assisting with balancing work-family life?**

The data relating to the last research question was analysed under two areas, namely family-friendly policies, and other ideal support policies or practices by the organisation.

**5.2.8 Family-friendly policies**

The respondents were asked whether certain family-friendly policies and practices as found in the literature review (refer figure 3) would appeal to them or to other women in their position. Theory based content analysis was used.

**Table 16: Family-friendly policies**

Respondent	Flexibility	Child-care facilities	Reduced hours	Total
1	x	x	x	3
2	x	x		2
3	x	x		2
4	x	x		2
5	x	x		2
6	x	x		2
7	x	x		2
8	x	x		2
9	x		x	2
10	x	x		2
11		x		1
12	x	x		2
13	x	x		2
14	x	x		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	

The majority of the respondents (13) said yes to flexibility as an option in their jobs. 13 of the respondents also said yes to availability of child-care facilities by their organisation. Only 2 respondents said yes to reduced hours in their job role.

### 5.2.9 Other ideal support policies or practices by the organisation

Data based content analysis was used to identify other ideal support policies or practices which the respondents feel their organisation should be offering. These were categorised into gym facilities, fair pay, improved work processes/systems, and web-based facilities.

**Table 17: Other ideal organisational support policies/practices**

Respondent	Improved work processes & systems	Gym facilities	Increased pay	Web-based facilities
1				
2				
3				
4	x			
5		x		
6				
7			x	
8		x		x
9	x			
10			x	
11				
12	x			
13				
14				
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

Other ideal organisational support policies/practices proposed by 7 respondents, were evenly spread with predominance given on improved work processes & systems.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **6.1 SAMPLE OF RESPONDENTS**

The results for discussion were derived from a qualitative analysis of interview transcripts of 14 respondents who were selected using a non-probability convenient sampling technique. The respondents selected are middle management women working for a large banking institution, who are also mothers looking after children up to the age of 18 years.

The results are now discussed in terms of the research questions set in Chapter 3 in relation to the literature review in Chapter 2.

### **6.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 1**

#### **DO MANAGERIAL WOMEN THAT ARE MOTHERS PERCEIVE WORK-FAMILY LIFE BALANCE AS A PROBLEM OR ISSUE?**

The researcher has observed that when interviewing the respondents, the phenomenon of work-family life balance was not something these women actively thought about, but rather something accepted due to the fact that they had made the decision to enter the corporate workplace. One respondent (Black, single, 39) said, “if you want the job you have to be here”, and “you are just supposed to do your job”. Another respondent (White, partner, 41) said, “you are working in a corporate world, you must behave like a corporate person”. A further respondent (Black, married, 39) believes that, “we put on different hats as it has to be done. We are mothers, we have to be wives, and we still have to be managers”.

### 6.2.1 Work-family life balance a problem/issue

The data shows (Tables 4, 5, and 6) that the majority of the respondents (9) believe that work-family life balance is a problem or issue for them. These particular respondents attribute this due to pressures in their jobs, followed by an imbalance between time spent on their jobs as compared to at home with their families, and also due to lack of support at home. According to one respondent (Indian, married, 33), “keeping the balance is fairly difficult”. Another respondent (White, partner, 41) said, “It is, because my kids have suffered a lot”. Another respondent (Black, married, 39) summarised it by saying “work-family life is not balanced”.

For those respondents (5) who do not believe that work-family life balance is a problem or issue, these women appear to have a good support structure on the home front, summarised as having an adjusted lifestyle, spouse/partner support, and extended family support. One of these respondents (Black, single, 39) believes that “it is just a matter of accepting your situation and making the best of it”. This respondent relies on extended family support for assistance. The spouse of one of the respondents (White, married, 32) was a stay-at-home father out of circumstance due to a car accident. She said, “when I get home, my husband has bathed the kids, homework is done, and 8 o’clock in bed”. Another respondent’s spouse was not a stay-at-home father, however she (White, married, 47) believes that they are “both open and flexible in terms of their roles”, so that “he understands if I have to work until 10, 11, o’clock at night, he does not have a problem with it”. One respondent (Indian, married, 32) said that work-family

balance “is not really an issue as I have a very good support structure - my mum-in-law lives with me”. The 5<sup>th</sup> respondent (White, single, 42) had adjusted her lifestyle to fit around both work and family and she feels that being single has made it easier as “I did not need to accommodate a partner in my life”.

O’Laughlin and Bishoff (2005) refer to types of role conflict relevant to work-family conflict. There are two that tie up with those respondents who referred to work pressures and less time with family as reasons for work-family life balance being a problem or issue. These are stress-based conflict and time-based conflict respectively. The lack of support at home, as another reason for work-family life balance as a problem or issue, ties in with the traditional gender role of women still being dominant. According to Lilly and Duffy (2006), the cultural pressure placed on women to take responsibility for family and household matters indicates that women experience work-family conflict to a greater extent.

### **6.2.2 Guilt of working mothers**

Guilt as working mothers could be seen as being directly related to the consequence of not having enough time with family. The data (Tables 7 and 8) shows that the majority of the respondents (10) do feel guilt as working mothers and the same respondents also felt that there was an uneven spread of time spent between work and family. One of the respondents (Indian, married, 33) felt that due to work pressures and long working hours she was not spending enough time with her son. She said, “I felt very guilty, I wanted to leave my job but I had worked so hard to be where I am”. Another respondent (White, single, 43) who has a small son of 8 years said “I do not have time to read him a book at night”. Another

respondent (White, partner, 41) alluded to the 'super mom syndrome' by saying, "you were just so busy, you want to be good at both, a good mother and good at your job". Another respondent (White, married, 37) with an only child of 4 years of age said that "her son did not ask to come here nor did he ask to be an only child, and all he has is his mommy and daddy". One respondent (Black, married, 39) said that she felt guilty "when I say 'shush' to my kids when I am busy".

Elvin-Nowak (1999) wrote that there is a phenomenon of guilt experienced by working women who have children and it is this phenomenon which provides a greater chance of understanding women's strategies for combining work and motherhood.

It is interesting to see that there could be some mothers that do not feel guilt and feel that they have accomplished an even split between work and family time as seen from Table 8. Two of these 4 respondents are single mothers and had adjusted their lifestyle accordingly. The one single mother (Black, 39) said, "being a single mother I think I am a much stronger person, I can stand on my own two feet". The other single mother (White, 42) said, "I think my saving grace is that I never had those guilt feelings or the luxury of feeling bad. Mothers feel too much guilt because society makes us that way".

It thus appears that South African working mothers may perceive work-family life balance as an issue on the basis that there are work pressures and following that comes a trade-off between work and family time spent. It may also seem that for some of those mothers who do not see work-family life balance as a problem and



also do not feel guilt, that these women may strangely be single mothers who seem to have toughened up to their situation and made the best of it.

## **6.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 2**

### **WHAT COPING STRATEGIES OR MECHANISMS DO THESE WOMEN EMPLOY TO BALANCE WORK- FAMILY LIFE?**

#### **6.3.1 Sharing of household duties**

Working mothers in South Africa have the option of affordable domestic help or maids to assist in the household. Household duties could also be shared with the spouse or partner in the home.

The data shows (Table 9) that the majority of the respondents (12) use maids whether part-time or full-time to assist with the sharing of household duties and that reliance on their spouse or partner alone, without a maid, in sharing of household duties was to a lesser extent (1 respondent-Black, married, 47). There were 4 respondents who have the luxury of being able to use both a maid and their spouse or partner. There was only one respondent (Black, single, 39) who does not rely on a maid but does all the household duties herself.

The respondent who has a househusband (out of circumstance, not choice) also relies on the use of a full-time maid as her husband is not expected to do domestic chores but rather run the household and look after the children. There was 1

respondent (Black, married, 47) who does not have a maid with allocation of the household duties shared with her spouse.

The respondent (White, married, 32) who has a househusband said that her husband although at home did not really run the house well. “I still have to go home and check that everything is running smoothly”. The same respondent also said that there was not a problem with her husband being a stay-at-home father in terms of ‘peer pressure’ because “he has never been a macho kind of guy”. The respondent (Black, married, 47) who does not have a maid but instead uses her spouse and children to assist in the household said, “they must clean their own rooms and do the dishes, I feel the children must have some discipline”. One respondent (Black, married, 39) who does not rely on her spouse for assistance in the household said, “Oh please he is an African man, his mother would cry to death if she were to find that he is doing dishes”.

According to Hewlett (2005, p. 20), “family overload and the traditional division of labour place unmanageable demands on a working woman”. Fritz (1999) says that the labour-leisure model ignores the household responsibilities of women whose alternative to market work is not simply leisure time but household work. “Women have increased their participation in paid employment considerably during the past 30 years, but men have not increased their participation in housework to the same extent” (Evertsson and Neramo, 2004, p. 1285).

It would thus appear that due to affordable domestic help being available to households in South Africa, working women are able to better juggle household

duties with work by employing either part-time or full-time maids. This is important in the light of spouses or partners not appearing to come to the fore in equally sharing household duties particularly where there are smaller children in the family unit.

### **6.3.2 Child-care networks used**

The data (Table 10) shows that the main child-care network used is extended family and friends. One respondent (Indian, married, 1 child, 3 years) said, “Actually I am very lucky, I’ve got my mom and that takes a lot of pressure off me”. Another respondent (White, married, 1 child, 3 years) said, “Thank God my mom is there.” Another respondent (White, married), who also has a small child, 4 years old, said “I rely heavily on my mother. I also have my Aunt as we all live in the same area. I have got a good family support”.

The formal child-care networks are used by those respondents whose children are small and not at high school yet. Only 6 of the respondents, out of 11 respondents who are married or have cohabiting partners, are able to rely on their spouse or partner to assist with their children.

Tomlinson (2006, p. 369) refers to care networks as including “care and support by partners, friends and extended family members along with more formal facilities and services such as nurseries, schools, and after school clubs”. Tomlinson (2006) writes that when these networks break down or are insufficient, women face constraints in reconciling work-family life and worst case may move out of the

labour market. It can be seen from the data above that the respondents rely on child-care networks in order to stay in their jobs and further their careers.

According to Hayward (2005) countries like Italy and Australia have cultures where the extended family plays a supportive role in easing the burden of childcare. In South Africa, extended family, where available, appear to embrace the supportive role in assisting with childcare, particularly for those women who have small children.

Tichenor (1999) talks about husbands traditionally having exercised greater control in marriage, which power has been linked with the income and status that men provide as breadwinners. Based on the data reflecting that not all of the 11 respondents, who are married or have cohabiting partners, rely on their spouse/partner as a care network, points to in South Africa that the traditional gender role of the father as head of the family household may still exist even though the mother has entered the workforce.

It would seem that a change in society in South Africa is imperative in terms of understanding and accepting that the traditional gender roles of men and women are no longer suitable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where women are fast entering the workforce and in some instances becoming the main or sole breadwinners.

## **6.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 3**

### **HOW DO THESE WOMEN CURRENTLY PERCEIVE THE ROLE OF THE ORGANISATION AS THEIR EMPLOYER, IN ASSISTING WITH WORK-FAMILY LIFE BALANCE?**

#### **6.4.1 Awareness by the organization of work-family life balance**

The data (Tables 11 and 12) shows overall that the respondents (12) feel that their organisation is not aware of the need to balance work-family life. This opinion was very strong. One respondent (White, married, 41), said, “I don’t think in our office they have a concept of what really happens”.

A focus on achieving targets (numbers) in the organisation as the main reason for this belief by the respondents (5) indicates that organisations in the business world have yet to realise that understanding the welfare of their staff will in turn lead to sustainable productivity and in turn the numbers or results that they as the organisation wish to achieve. One respondent (White, married, 47) said, “I don’t think they care at all. All they care about is the numbers”. Another respondent (White, married, 37) said, “There is a superficial understanding. The attitude is that we have a business to run and you must organise”. Another respondent (Black, married, 39) said, “There are levels of demands and we must just ‘do,do,do’.”

The organisation also does not appear to understand the dilemma that the respondents go through in having to attend work functions or events after hours. One respondent (White, married, 37) said, “They arrange these recognition functions at night in ‘crummy’ areas.” Another respondent (White, single, 42) said,

“These conferences that they arrange on the weekend, what do you then do with two small children. They frown upon you if you do not attend.”

The respondents also feel that recreational facilities such as a gym at work would help these women to at least devote their lunch hour to a gym work-out and thereby add to the work-family life balance equation. Looking at the work office environment some of the respondents feel that adequate staff would assist in dealing with work pressures currently being experienced. One respondent said (White, single, 43) said, “They don’t replace people quick enough. They just expect the organisation to carry on and if you are doing an extra load they take it for granted you can carry on”.

The two respondents who felt the organisation is aware of work-family life balance perceived this on the basis that the organisation at least talks to them about the importance of balancing time between work and family life. The one respondent (Black, married, 47) said, “They always say we must be wary of taking work home because I think it can become a habit”. The other respondent (White, partner, 41), said, “In our meetings, they ask you how your family work life balance is. For me it is so much better that somebody is asking you about it”.

The literature review emphasizes the importance of the role of the organisation in work-family life balance. Schwartz (1992) writes that those companies that accept their responsibility in the support of women’s treatment in the workplace for family support can improve their bottom line by retaining talented women for their leadership pipeline. Macdonald, Phipps, and Lethbridge (2005, p. 69) say that both

a supportive spouse and a supportive workplace may help “alleviate the stress of the double day”. Friedman, Christensen, and Degroot (1998, p. 120) talk about the “leveraged approach” by the organisation in the work-personal life domain, where “the practices used to strike work-life balance actually add value to the business”.

Yet it appears from the data that the respondents feel that their organisation is not aware of work-family life balance. It may be that the organisation is doing something actively about it but that these employees are not aware of it. According to Smith and Gardner (2007), for employees to make use of work-life balance initiatives, they must first be made aware that these initiatives are offered by the organisation.

#### **6.4.2 Attitude of direct report (boss) towards family commitments**

In contrast to the perceived non-support by the organisation for work-family life balance, the data (Table 13) shows that the majority of the respondents (12) believe that their boss has a supportive attitude when they need to take time off work to see to their children. These bosses (male and female) also have children of school going ages. The one respondent (White, married, 47) said, “He also has kids and he knows what is about”. It was also felt by some of these respondents that taking time off was acceptable provided one’s work performance did not deteriorate. The one respondent (White, married, 41) said, “I think it would become a problem if you were not working and producing results”.

For the two respondents who have a problem with their boss in terms of family commitments, both bosses had older children already out of school. The one

respondent (White, married, 40) said, “Their children are big already, they don’t understand.”

According to Ben-Ari (2000, p. 472) employers can improve employee satisfaction for women who view work as a career, through “support from supervisor for employees’ family commitments”. It is positive to see that the ‘supervisors’ of the respondents, in general, support them with family commitments, albeit that work may not suffer or that these supervisors understand because they also have small children or children not yet out of school.

#### **6.4.3 Supportive workplace culture**

The data (Tables 14 and 15) show that of the 8 respondents who feel that there is a stigma in their work environment towards mothers taking time off work to see to their children, the resentment creating the stigma is perceived to come from male managers in the workplace (5 respondents of the 8 respondents said this). The remaining 3 respondents feel that the resentment comes from other women in the workplace in more senior managerial roles.

One respondent (Black, single, 39) who felt the resentment coming from the male managers, said, “The thing that gets repeated all the time is that we have demanded equal rights so why are we expecting favours”. Another respondent (White, single, 43) who also believes the stigma comes from the men, said, “They don’t fall pregnant. They don’t have to take kids to doctors, which is wrong. They should also have their turn”. One respondent (White, single, 42) who felt the resentment coming from the senior female managers, said “Women are just so



much harder on other females. I get the feeling that women in senior positions say well, they have sacrificed to get where they are”.

What also came out from the respondents when asked the stigma question is the guilt they feel when they do take time off work to see to their children. One respondent (Indian, married, 33) said, “You actually feel guilty for taking time off”. Another respondent (White, single, 43) said, “If he is very sick I will stay with him but then I feel very guilty not being able to work”.

According to Smithson and Stokoe (2005), there is a perceived backlash in the workplace against work-life policies viewed as favouring women and parents. Clutterbuck (2004) writes that to stimulate culture change in supporting work-life policies, there must be changes in systems and in the attitudes and capability of people within the organisation. The data above would indicate that the culture in the organisation may not be wholly supportive of mothers taking time off work to see to their children.

This may also be linked to what the literature says about gender inequality still taking place in the workplace. According to Meyerson and Fletcher (2000, p. 74), most organisations tend to mirror societal norms and add to gender inequity in the workplace by acting as if the historical division of household labour still exists with “women primarily responsible for matters of the hearth”. One respondent (White, married, 37) said, “A senior manager held told me with a big smile on his face, ‘I get home and my kids are already bathed and I don’t have to get involved’.” Another respondent (White, married, 47) said, “I remember this one guy making

such an ugly remark in a meeting when they were talking about whether they should employ someone who has just fallen pregnant. He said how can you employ somebody like that because within 7 months she would go and you would be without the person for about 4 months”.

## **6.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 4**

### **WHAT WOULD BE THE IDEAL WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR THESE WOMEN IN ASSISTING WITH BALANCING WORK-FAMILY LIFE?**

#### **6.5.1 Family-friendly policies**

The data (Table 16) shows that 13 respondents prefer flexibility in the job role and child-care facilities at the workplace as family-friendly policies.

Flexibility in the job role was very important for those respondents who already enjoy this option. One respondent (White, married, Business Manager in sales role) said, “I would not give up this job for an 8 to 5 job. I don’t have to justify where I am, what I am doing, as long as I am performing”. For those respondents who currently do not enjoy the flexibility option such as the Credit Managers, they said that having the suitable tools to work from home with, such as remote access (laptop) would be needed. One of these respondents (White, married, Credit Manager), said “Do you know how much work I will get done”.

For those 13 respondents who prefer child-care facilities at the workplace, they said these facilities should be affordable, and not be sterile with preferably an

outdoor play-area. Just having a child-care facility at work would enable those women with smaller children to spend some of their work-time with their children. One respondent (Indian, married) with a small child of 3 years of age, said “I would love to just pop in and say hi to my son”. They would also have peace-of-mind knowing their children are safe when traffic jams or work pressures delay them from fetching their children on time from formal child-care facilities. One respondent (White, married) with a small child of 5 years of age, said, “It would help in the evenings when you have to see a client late”.

Reduced hours in the job role is not a popular family-friendly policy by the respondents (only 2 respondents said yes), simply because a salary reduction or career drawback is not an option for these managerial women who have worked hard to get to where they are today in their careers. One respondent (White, married, 41) said, “I think you have worked long and hard to get where you are and I don’t think you are going to give it up unless you are dedicated to your children”. Another respondent (White, married, 47) said, “I don’t think it would be fair to do that. The fact is no one wants to go back. Only if I get a nervous breakdown or something would I consider it”. Some of the respondents feel that women are more productive than men and that the hours should not make a difference. One respondent (White, single, 42) said, “Most women work harder than men. It is not fair to lose career opportunities”.

Eagly and Carli (2007) refer to flexitime, job sharing, telecommuting, and employee-sponsored on-site child care as some family-friendly human resources practices that can allow women to compete for higher positions by enabling them

to stay in their jobs during the demanding years of child rearing, building social networks, and keeping up-to-date in their fields. The data indicates that women in the South African workplace may prefer flexibility in their job role as well as on-site child-care facilities as family-friendly policies in the light of the congested roadways and inefficient transport system in South Africa. According to Valcour and Hunter (2004), technology can have a positive effect on employees' work-life integration provided the organisation has other flexible work policies or practices in place. Thus organisations will need to consider the availability of the necessary tools for their employees in order to provide the option of flexibility in the job role.

#### **6.5.2 Other ideal support policies or practices by the organisation**

The data (Table 17) shows that 3 out of the 7 respondents propose an improvement to the work processes and systems to be more streamlined and efficient in order to ease work pressures. Gym facilities came up again as also being important in balancing the work-family life equation. The pay gap between men and women was acknowledged by two of the respondents who feel their salaries should be increased in line with their male counterparts. The one respondent (White, 47) said, "I still think women are not paid at the same levels as men. We are not treated the same".

The fourth option proposed was an innovative one in terms of a web-based functionality facility by the organisation that would assist with balancing work-family life for mothers. This respondent (Indian, married) said that her previous organisation (also a large banking institution) provided the women employees with

an internal website service that sourced and delivered on order baby food and other baby paraphernalia directly to the workplace or home at economical prices.

Bagilhole (2006) says that knowledge about employees' preferences for equal opportunities and family-friendly policies can also assist employers and human resources managers to develop policies and practices of perceived benefit to their workforce. According to Hakim (2006) employers should not assume that one-size-fits-all work support policies suit everyone. Bailyn and Harrington (2004) say that the focus in the past in integrating work and family has been on policies and benefits such as childcare and maternity leave and not the work itself.

South African organisations may need to perhaps consider asking their employees for suggestions on ideal family-friendly policies that could be implemented in the workplace to assist with work-family life balance. This would enable a more efficient and holistic work-life balance quality model proposed by Clutterbuck (2004), that incorporates family-friendly policies into a strategy for the organisation.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the research study was to explore the coping mechanisms of women in the South African workplace balancing managerial and motherhood roles. The study has managerial relevance for the business world in that South African organisations need to retain their talented women for their leadership pipeline. According to The Business Women Association's report on South African Women in Corporate Leadership 2007 Census, it was found that women corporate leaders continue to be a minority.

The research scope included working mothers employed in middle management positions. These women are perceived as having to juggle work and motherhood roles in their career climb to reach senior and executive positions in the workplace. The traditional gender role of women appears to be still accepted in today's age where working mothers who have entered the corporate workplace are still viewed as being primarily responsible for child-care and household duties. This view is coupled with the traditional gender role of men, where men although to a lesser extent, are still regarded as head of the household and that although women have significantly increased their participation in the corporate workplace and in some cases become sole bread-winners, men on the other hand have not increased their participation in family responsibilities.

## 7.2 FINDINGS

The middle management women interviewed in the study appear to desire promotions but fear that the pressure of a new position with added work responsibilities will be too much to handle and that the trade-off would be to focus more on their families than their careers in order to not neglect their children. On the other hand, these working mothers do not want to stay at home and do nothing and are horrified to think that there are some women out there, referred to as 'work-centred women' by Hakim (2006), that remain childless in order to further their careers. The feeling with these women is that they have the right to both a successful career and a family.

It was also perceived by the women interviewed that the organisation does not appear to be supportive of work-family life balance. Their perception is guided by the notion that the organisation's focus is on meeting targets only. The problem with this is that without conveying to these women that the organisation is fully supportive of work-family life balance, just pushing numbers is not the answer. Job satisfaction is known to lead to job productivity which is to the benefit of the organisation. The women interviewed also felt there to be resentment coming from the male managers and to a lesser extent, senior female managers, in terms of having to take time off work to see to their children.

The organisation needs to understand the work and family roles these women have to juggle with. These women are not able to easily attend after-hours work functions or events and would prefer that these work events or functions are held within working hours or if after-hours that they include the family as well.

Thus the emphasis on looking at how these working mothers cope with work-family life balance and their expectation of the role of the organisation in assisting with work-family life balance. The literature surrounding work-family life balance provides key insights to both domestic and work coping initiatives. Table 18 below illustrates the similarities and differences between the literature review and the findings of the explorative research study.

**Table 18: Literature review and study findings on coping mechanisms**

Category	Lit Review	Study
<b>Domestic: Child-care networks used and sharing of household duties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended family</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Formal child-care facilities</li> <li>• Spouse/partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended family</li> <li>• Formal child-care facilities</li> <li>• Domestic help (maids)</li> </ul>
<b>Work: Ideal family-friendly policies and support practices by the organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced hours</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• On-site child-care facilities</li> <li>• Supportive workplace culture</li> <li>• Work redesign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• On-site child-care facilities</li> <li>• Supportive workplace culture</li> <li>• Work redesign</li> <li>• On-site gym facilities</li> <li>• Equal pay</li> <li>• Web-based facilities for mothers</li> </ul>

The about table shows that reliance on the spouse/partner as a domestic coping mechanism in terms of the literature review, is not prevalent in reality. This then points to the issue of the traditional gender role stereotypes of men and women still being adopted in today's age in South Africa. This needs to be changed and in the eyes of one woman interviewed, is a mind-set change and a gradual change.



What is not said in the literature and what may be considered unique to South Africa is that the study shows that these women rely heavily on domestic help (maids) in the household to assist with the sharing of household duties. Also, single mothers interviewed, in contrast to the literature, appear to have successfully mastered the juggling of work and family roles only because it seems that they have had no other option.

On the work side organisations need to be aware of what their employees, in particular working mothers, prefer in terms of family-friendly policies and other supportive practices to assist with work- family life balance. What the study did find in contrast to the literature is that the women interviewed do not seem to prefer the option of reduced hours as this may have reward and career consequences. In their opinion it is not the number of hours that counts but that the hours worked are productive. Flexibility in the job role and on-site child-care facilities are important to these mothers based on the congested roadways and inefficient transport system in South Africa.

### **7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO STAKEHOLDERS**

This research study has practical implications for both working mothers who are intent in climbing their careers to get to the top executive positions, and for organisations intent on retaining their talented women for their leadership pipeline.

Working mothers need to encourage their spouse/partner and be firm in getting them involved in family responsibilities. This should not be frowned upon but rather

accepted in today's age. It requires an attitude and mid-set change. Working mothers must also involve the organisation, as their employer in assisting with work-family life balance and not be afraid to speak up and state their preferred family-friendly policies to assist with more productive and satisfying work outflows.

Contented employees should mean reduced turnover of employees for the organisation. Table 19 below depicts a descriptive quality work-family life balance model, adapted from Clutterbuck (2004), which can be used to develop an holistic work-family life balance strategy for the organisation.

**Table 19: Quality work-family life balance model for organisations**

<b>POLICIES</b>	<b>PROCESSES</b>	<b>PERSONS RESPONSIBLE</b>
Flexibility in the job role	Provide necessary tools	Line Managers
On-site child-care facilities	Provide employee-sponsored on-site suitable child-care facilities based on demand	Approval of budget by executive committee
Supportive workplace culture	Attitude training for all employees	Human Resources Managers and Line Managers
Work redesign	Improved and streamlined work processes/systems	All - employer and employees to both get involved in generating ideas
On-site gym facilities	Provide recreational activities at the workplace	Approval of budget by executive committee.
Fair pay between male and female managers	Re-align salary bands between genders	Human Resources Managers and Line Managers
Web-based functionality	Provide internal website work-family life balance initiatives	All - employer and employees to both get involved in generating ideas

**Source: Adapted from Clutterbuck (2004)**

It is hoped that this explorative research study will contribute towards understanding the relevance of work-family life balance for both employers and employees, particularly managerial mothers in organisations who aspire to move up their career path in their search for senior or executive positions.

#### **7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

As this research is an explorative or qualitative study, future research could focus on using the qualitative findings in subsequent conclusive or quantitative research for further learning. An idea here would also be to convert the descriptive model in Table 19 into a normative model in terms of empirically testing the different ideal organisation support policies or practices to assist with balancing work-family life.

Future research could look at whether the findings of the research study could be generalised across other organisations and industries and across different levels within the organisation.

Future research could also include a study on the views of men and childless women in the workplace on work-family life balance.

A further research idea could include a study on whether single mothers are able to juggle work and family roles better than married or cohabiting mothers.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### Interview guide for semi-structured interviews

##### A) Introduction

Why doing the research  
Explain background to the topic  
Explain relevance to the business world in SA (**Refer to Figure 3**)  
Confirm anonymity  
Obtain permission to use voice recorder

##### B) Collect demographic information on respondents

- Before starting interview** – emphasize that no time limit is placed on the length of the interview and that the respondent must try to be open and speak honestly.
- Probe WHY as opposed to WHAT* during the interview.

##### C) Current situation

Research Question 1 & 2 – start interview by asking if work-family life balance is an issue and if it is how are they coping.  
Look at the guilt factor and the traditional gender role of women, be guided by domestic coping mechanisms in LR (**Refer figure 3**)  
Research Question 3 – In their opinion does the organisation support or impede work-family life balance. Look at the workplace culture and support by direct report (boss)

##### D) Ideal situation

Research 4 – Look at what the respondents would see as their ideal work environment (**refer to Figure 3** – for family friendly policies)  
Also ask the respondent for ideal support policies/practices by the organisation

- Closing comments** - Ask the respondent if she has anything else to add in terms of work-family life balance.
- Thank the respondent** for her valuable time.



## APPENDIX 2: DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Respondent	Age	Race	Marital status/period	No. of children /age	Partner's occupation	How long as manager
1	33	Indian	M – 10 yrs	1 – 3 yrs	IT specialist	4 yrs
2	39	Black	D – 10 yrs	1 – 19 yrs 2 – 7 yrs	N/A	1 yr
3	32	White	M – 11 yrs	1 – 7 yrs 2 – 4 yrs	Unemployed (disabled)	1 yr
4	41	White	M – 20 yrs	1 – 14 yrs	Bank branch manager	7 yrs
5	47	Black	M – 20 yrs	1 – 14 yrs 2 – 18 yrs	ABSA	2 yrs
6	43	White	D – 7 yrs	1 – 8 yrs 2 – 16 yrs	N/A	2 yrs
7	47	White	M – 11 yrs	1 – 5 yrs	Electrical engineer	3 yrs
8	32	Indian	M – 10 yrs	1 – 4 yrs 2 – 8 yrs	Project IT manager	6 yrs
9	41	White	D – 18 yrs P – 4 yrs	1- 14 yrs 2 – 16 yrs 3 - 17 yrs	Credit manager ABSA Bank	10 yrs
10	40	White	M – 7 yrs	1 – 3 yrs	Construction	8 yrs
11	37	White	M – 13 yrs	1 – 4 yrs	Project IT manager	4 yrs
12	39	Black	M – 19 yrs	1 – 15 yrs 2 – 17 yrs	Team manager	1 yr
13	32	White	M – 9 yrs	1 – 6 yrs	Correctional Officer	7 yrs
14	42	White	D – 20 yrs	1 – 7 yrs 2 – 8 yrs	N/A	18 yrs