

**EXPLORING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Kudzai Debra Matsvororo declare that, **EXPLORING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN** is my own unaided work both in content and execution. All the resources used in this study are cited and referred to in the reference list by means of a comprehensive referencing system. Apart from the normal guidance from my study leaders, I have received no assistance, except as stated in the acknowledgements.

I declare that the content of this dissertation has never been used before for any qualification at any tertiary institution.

I declare that the language in this dissertation was edited by Mr Peter Southey.



Kudzai Debra Matsvororo

30 September 2019

ABSTRACT

Exploring the work-life balance of professionals who work with special needs children

The rise in popularity of work-life balance (WLB) as an essential determinant of one's health, wellbeing and effectiveness in modern society has included research on the WLB of those caring for children with special needs. Most previous studies have however focused on investigating the WLB of parents of children with special needs and consequently, very few studies have looked into the WLB of the professionals who work with these children. The purpose of my study was therefore to close this gap in the literature by gaining some insight into the work-life experiences of professionals who work with special children.

The study sought to unearth how work-life balance plays out in these professionals' lives and also to discover the factors that influence their work-life balance. Another objective was to ascertain the challenges that they face in integrating their work and life domains and to bring to light the strategies that they use to cope with their various work-life demands.

An inductive qualitative inquiry carried out through combined phenomenological and autoethnography research design was used to investigate the work-life experiences of a sample of professionals who work with special needs children in therapy, pre-primary and primary schools, in the Gauteng Province in South Africa. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to select participants for inclusion in the study. Data was collected through a series of unstructured in-depth interviews, unstructured observations, personal memory and photographs.

Seven themes emerged from the findings of the study. The results also indicated that the majority of the sampled professionals who work with special children were experiencing work-life conflict due to the time-based and strain-based conflict that emanated from their work domains. These professionals' WLB was also found to be mostly influenced by work-related factors as the work domain appeared to be their

major source of conflict. The study also unearthed some very interesting and unconventional micro-level WLB strategies used by these professionals in their attempt to achieve greater WLB. An example of such strategies include the use of prayer and faith in God to reduce perceptions of conflict and enhance capacity to deal with life's adversities.

The findings from this study may therefore be used to develop and focus meso and macro level interventions to assist professionals who work with special needs children to better manage the various demands from their life domains. This will in turn ensure a healthier lifestyle for these professionals, which also has positive implications for the developmental outcomes of the children under their care. Moreover, enhancing these professionals' ability to achieve WLB is anticipated to improve their motivation, satisfaction and retention.

Key words: work-life balance (WLB), special needs children, professionals working with special needs children, WLB challenges and outcomes, WLB strategies

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The Lord, my God

Thank you for the grace you have shown me and for reminding me that you are there, always.

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This dissertation would not have been one of my success stories if it weren't for your guidance, support, warmth, encouragement and honesty (even though sometimes I did not want to hear the truth and fantasised about wringing your neck, lol). Thank you for trusting that I could do this, especially when I was having doubts. You were just the right person to walk this journey with.

My Participants

Thank you for taking time out of your very busy schedules to relay your stories to me. I am truly grateful for your cooperation and willingness to be part of this project. Without your very touching stories, I would not have been able to conduct this analysis.

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Thank you so much for your promptness, without which I would have missed my submission deadline for the second time. I am truly grateful. Your good humour made the last stretch of this journey a lot more bearable; I will never make a semi colon mistake ever again.

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For all your love, support, encouragement and belief in me, I will forever be grateful. Thank you for stepping in and taking good care of our son when I was busy chasing milestones and deadlines. You inspire me to be the best that I can be. This has been the most trying time of our lives and you have proved to me that you are the perfect match for me, and for that I thank the Lord.

My (not so little) Prince, Nyasha

Thank you for giving my life meaning. Now that the dissertation is done, I will forgive you for all those nights you were up until the wee hours of morning, watching cartoons, giggling and ransacking my bedroom while I tried to study. You are my everything; what would I do without you?

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PREFACE

As a writer and as a reader, I really believe in the power of narrative to allow us ways to experience life beyond our own, ways to reflect on things that have happened to us and a chance to engage with the world in ways that transcend time and gender and all sorts of things. – Kim Edwards

Before you lie open the dissertation, “Exploring the work-life balance of professionals who work with special needs children”, allow me to introduce myself.

I am Debra Matsvororo, a wife, a mother to one, an employee and a student completing a Master’s degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology. In November 2016, my son, Nyasha, was diagnosed with Autism. My husband and I could feel the financial pressure and emotional distress as we strived to do everything that we possibly could, to close the gaps in Nyasha’s cognitive, social, emotional, behavioural, speech and language development. I constantly felt like I was one breath away from the last straw, as I struggled to juggle work, doctors’ appointments, therapies, school for both Nyasha and I and just life in general.

One of the factors that helped to keep me sane during all of this was the optimism, support, encouragement and guidance that I received from my son’s teachers, therapists and doctors. Not only did they work really hard on ensuring Nyasha progresses, they also played a huge role in keeping me and my husband sane. It dawned on me how invested these people really were in ensuring that Nyasha reached his full potential and that we had the support we needed as a family. I wondered how all this responsibility they took on impacted on their ability to integrate the various roles in their lives. This realisation, which led to curiosity, formed the basis for this research. I was interested in exploring the work-life balance of these individuals.

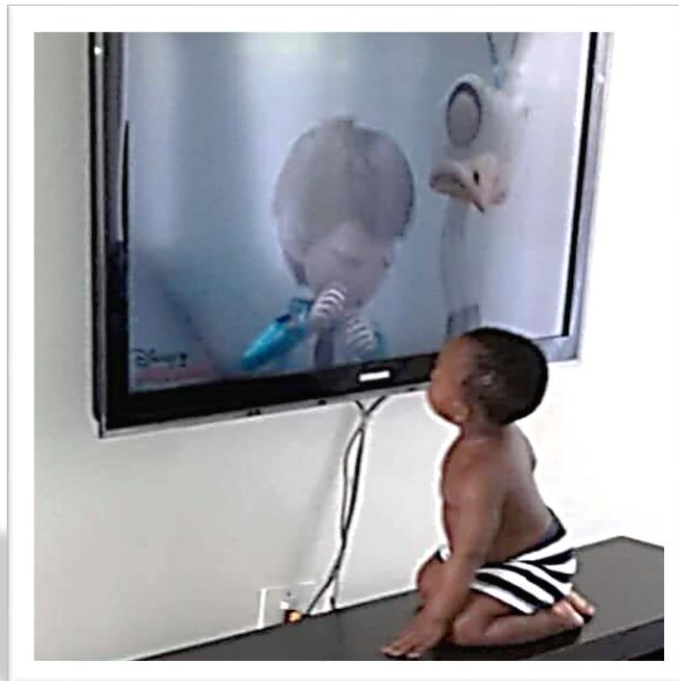
In attempting to explore, understand and explain the work-life balance of professionals who work with children who have special needs, I have deviated from the traditional academic rigours usually found in a dissertation. My aim was to carry out a qualitative inquiry that combines phenomenological and autoethnography research designs in an

attempt to capture thick, rich accounts (Creswell, 2003; Finlay, 2013) of the work-life interface of these professionals, while using my own personal experience as a lens (Saldana, 2015; Smith, 2005) through which I could understand their trials and tribulations.

I made use of a confessional writing style in Chapters 1 and 3, in order to engage the reader and make him/her aware of how the research relates to my background and experiences. My personal reflections were worked into the text so as to create a flowing piece of writing (Chang, 2016; Saldaña, 2018). Chapters 2, 4 and 5 follow a more traditional approach to academic writing and structure, since I am by nature more conservative in my writing style and these chapters warranted a strong structure. Additionally, in an attempt to engage the reader and make the writing more user-friendly, not only have I incorporated autoethnography, I have also made use of photographs to tell my story in a way that makes it more vivid for the reader (Erdner & Magnusson, 2011).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In November 2016 I took my 2-year 3-month old son, Nyasha, for a consultation with his paediatrician as he had tonsillitis. Once she was done examining him I mentioned in passing that he still wasn't talking despite all the story reading and the conscious effort we were all making at home to converse with him (as per her advice at his 18 month paediatric visit). I wasn't expecting the response I got from her. She looked at me with concern and said, "you might have to start looking at things like autism, because at this stage he should be saying ten to fifteen words and short sentences at the very least." I looked at my son and back at the paediatrician and I said, "He is fine. I am sure it's just that he is an only child and we use more than one language at home, so it must be really confusing for him."



Photograph 1: Nyasha immersed in watching Miles from Tomorrowland at 22 months

I started telling her about all the clever things that he does in order to convince her (or myself) that there was no way he could be autistic. I reminded her how he used to count from one to five or say “Bye see you” when he was just over a year old; how he has my android smartphone all figured out (downloading games, cartoons and taking selfies) and just generally how healthy he is. She took a deep sigh and then explained to me that autistic children are some of the most intelligent children and how all these things that I was telling her (his interest in electronics, regression in speech and how clever he seems) are all typical characteristics of children on the autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

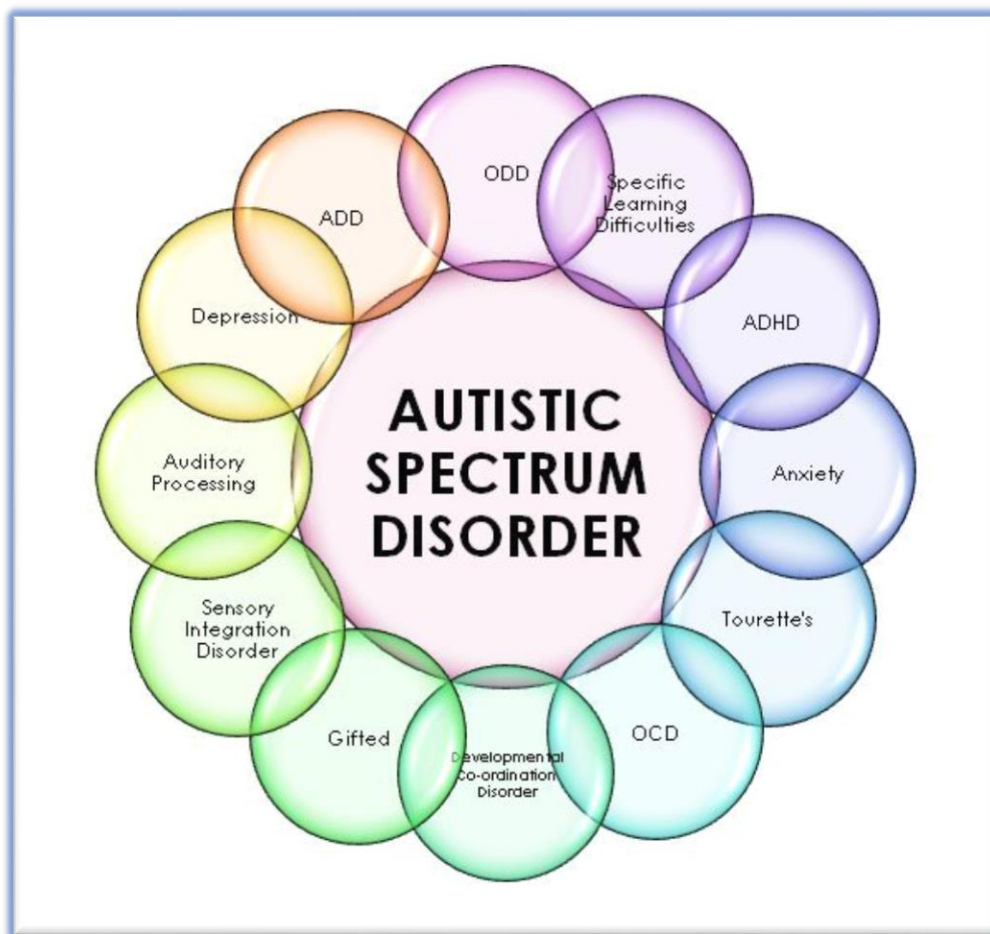


Figure. 1. 1 Autism spectrum disorders

She then suggested that I do a hearing evaluation. If there was no problem with his hearing then I needed to see a paediatric neurologist for a formal diagnosis. I went home, still not convinced. To my mind I had done everything right: for the duration of the pregnancy I had taken all my iron and vitamin tablets, eaten healthily and had never smoked or taken a sip of alcohol. So how could this be? However, I started

reading up on autism and watched videos on the internet of autistic children, and the more I read the more I realised that my son did present some of the autistic features.



Photograph 2: Nyasha engrossed in figuring out how a laptop works

I had a massive headache for two weeks; I cried, could not eat, could not sleep and spent every minute I had trying to get my son (poor child), to say a word, just one word. After feeling sorry for myself and my son for two weeks, I finally decided to get over it and actually do something about the situation.

As soon as we received positive results from the hearing evaluation in mid-November 2016 I made an appointment with a paediatric neurologist, scheduled for November 2017. You can imagine my frustration when I realised that I had to wait a whole year to find out whether the features Nyasha presented were pathological or not! I wanted to get to the bottom of this urgently, but we don't always get what we want. In the meantime, my husband and I enrolled our son into preschool and took him for speech and occupational therapy in the hope that by the time we consulted with the neurologist all of his symptoms or at least most of them would have reversed. Needless to say, I truly thought that this would be the case as I genuinely believed that doctors could be such alarmists sometimes.

Nyasha started preschool, speech and occupational therapy in January 2017.



Photograph 3: Nyasha's first day of school

This period turned out to be one of the most stressful times of my life. He would weep, scream, whimper and cling onto me for dear life as I left him at school every morning. The first day was the worst for both me and him. As I walked away from the classroom, he wailed and for the first time I heard something that sounded like “Mommy!” in his muffled cry. My heart just broke. I turned with tears in my eyes, hand on my chest and one of the teachers (who was looking on as this drama played out) smiled at me reassuringly and said, “Go, Mommy, he will be okay,” adding, “They are all like this the first week.” I remember walking back to the car park so fast before the tears that had welled up in my eyes gushed out. I was also fearful that the longer I heard Nyasha crying, the more likely I was to have a change of heart and walk back to fetch my little prince and tell the teacher that we would try this again in a couple of days when he was ready. Later that day, they told me that he cried his little heart out until he fell asleep.

Contrary to the teacher’s belief, two weeks later Nyasha still cried when I left him every morning. To add salt to the wound, I had just started a new job (full-time with flexible working hours, as I also had to take Nyasha for therapy every Wednesday and

Thursday) and I was also busy with the first semester, block week for my Master's. I would go about my lectures worrying and wondering how the little prince was coping back at school. It was really hard to concentrate with images of Nyasha kicking and screaming in my head. Towards the end of February 2017, things got a little better. The crying stopped, but I could still clearly see that my son was miserable and not enjoying school despite having all the other little angels to play with. During this time, Nyasha's teacher also started pointing out what was now so obvious to me: there was something different about Nyasha. He seemed to be in a world of his own. He was happy playing by himself in his own little corner, he didn't seem to hear you when you spoke to him, he was constantly on the move and he would not sleep at nap time even after being on his feet all day long. I remember dreading pick-up time because it seemed as if every time I went to fetch Nyasha there would be complaints about what he was doing differently from other children or what he could not do that he should have been able to do.



Figure. 1. 2 Nyasha's first quarter school report (a)

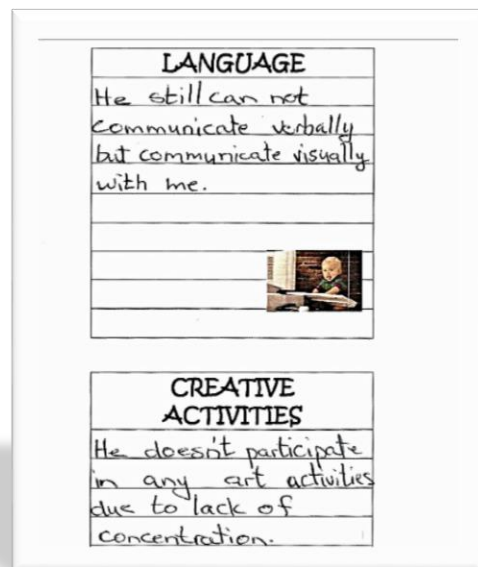


Figure. 1. 3 Nyasha's first quarter school report (b)

I tried to reassure the teacher that all of this was probably because Nyasha had not previously been exposed to a structured environment, that he was so used to playing with adults at home hence interacting with other children his own age was somewhat new to him, that some children just generally sleep less than others and that with time he would fall into routine (which I truly believed at that point). I recall regretting being

so open with the school about the paediatrician's suspicions that Nyasha may be autistic. I felt that this was being used against him and they were not giving him a chance to adjust to the new structured environment. However, the month of May came and Nyasha had still not fallen into routine. I would find him awake while the other children took a two-hour afternoon nap. Back home I would consider it my lucky night if he slept before midnight. It did not help one bit that it was now winter and the endless colds, flu, throat and ear infections just made the situation worse. I ended up taking Nyasha out of school for the rest of winter because I realised I was spending way too much time in hospitals, doctor's consulting rooms and the pharmacy.



Photograph 4: Femina Hospital, End May 2017



Photograph 5: Medforum Hospital, Mid May 2017

Being an MCom student in a new job aggravated an already bad situation. I was almost always in a panic about both work and university deadlines as well as Nyasha's therapy schedules. I could not wait for the consultation with the neurologist in November, who I thought would have a quick fix for all the issues we were currently experiencing with Nyasha. Thankfully, things seemed to be going fairly well in the therapy sessions, except that the speech therapist was certain that Nyasha was on the ASD spectrum. Nyasha seemed to find the therapy environment less threatening, probably because it was less structured and also because I would sit in during the sessions with him. The occupational therapist's suspicions on the other hand leaned more towards sensory integration disorder. However, only the paediatric neurologist

could say for certain what was wrong with Nyasha so we continued with half day preschool and occupational and speech therapies once a week while we waited for November.

November came and we met with the neurologist who confirmed our worst nightmare. Nyasha was indeed on the ASD spectrum. He was diagnosed with mild to moderate autism. I was devastated. It was as if I was hearing for the first time that Nyasha might possibly be autistic. I had truly believed that the neurologist was not going to find anything wrong with him, especially after almost a whole year of speech and occupational therapy. For about a week I was depressed, crying frequently and unable to eat or sleep, while my husband tried to convince me that this was not the end of the world (which it felt like to me) and that the diagnosis could have been worse. I could not see any positives in this whole situation, however, and did not feel the relief that he was feeling. In fact, I felt a whole lot worse than when I had first heard about the possibility of Nyasha being autistic. A formal diagnosis made it more real for me and there was a sense of finality to it, as if there was nothing that we could do about it now that he had been diagnosed — he was autistic and that was our fate!

After this period of mourning I pulled myself together and we started looking into the neurologist's advice to enrol Nyasha into applied behaviour analysis (ABA) therapy in order to try to "snatch him out of the autism". I had heard about ABA therapy from the speech therapist, but I never really thought it would come to this. The bad news was that Nyasha was autistic, but the good news that my husband had been seeing all along was that with the right therapy there was still a chance for him to develop into a fully functional and independent human being. So my husband and I sat down and we revamped our lifestyle in order to raise the necessary funds for the treatment that Nyasha needed.

Following the appointment with the neurologist, Nyasha's teachers and therapists were all anxiously waiting to hear the feedback from the specialist. Needless to say, the diagnosis was no surprise to the speech and occupational therapists. They have a lot of experience working with children on the spectrum and they had been fairly certain that Nyasha fell somewhere on the spectrum. However, to my relief and amazement they already had plans for how to assist Nyasha to reach his full potential.

The occupational therapist, even offered to accompany me to a meeting at Nyasha's school to provide them with the feedback from the neurologist and to map a way forward for Nyasha for the year 2018. She also requested that I keep her informed about how Nyasha was doing in school and in all his other therapies.

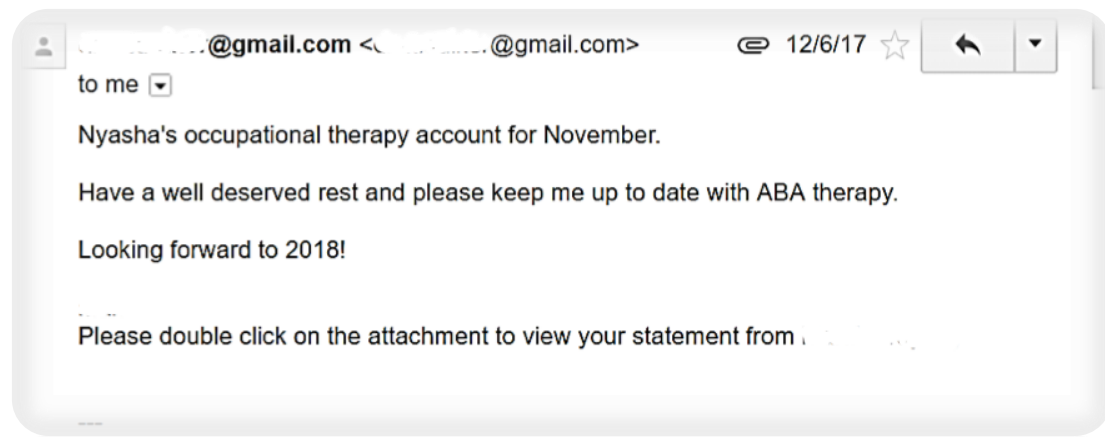


Figure. 1. 4 An email from the occupational therapist

The speech therapist, on the other hand, keeps me up-to-date with any new developments in autism treatment. She has a lot of reading material on raising an autistic child printed out for me at every session, which I find extremely helpful because I know exactly what to expect and how to deal with it. She also monitors Nyasha's speech development in ABA instruction. Similarly, the ABA therapy instructors have all been wonderful. They love Nyasha and they have gone all out to create a loving and non-threatening learning environment for him. All his instructors are very warm and they have pet names for him like "our boy", "our little man" and "little champ". When Nyasha started at the Star Academy, I was very anxious; I thought we were going to go through his first day of school all over again. But to my surprise, he loved it there and he still does. I believe he feels safe, loved and accepted.

WhatsApp Chat with Nyasha Parent Comms

2018/01/16, 20:39 - Star Academy: Look how beautifully Nyasha completed his puzzle today 🌟🌟

2018/01/16, 20:39 - Star Academy: What a superstar!

2018/01/16, 20:43 - Debs: Oh wow 😊 He really did great

2018/01/16, 20:43 - Debs: Thank you so much for the clip 🌟🌟

Star Academy: Nyasha was a star this morning 🌟 He was such a happy chap from the moment I saw him 😊 he babbled a lot of sounds throughout my session. Ate his food like a champ. 🌟 came around to see us and we pushed him hard but he worked very well and hard. I'm so proud of him 🌟 have a good evening everyone

2018/01/23, 20:55 -

2018/01/30, 19:47 - : Good evening 🌟
I had our little boy first session and it was great 🌟

Figure. 1. 5 WhatsApp chat with the speech therapist

WhatsApp Chat with

Debs: Hi, I couldn't resist sending you this clip from today's ABA session 🌟

2018/02/06, 20:15 -

: It works like a bomb I knew he will do well

2018/02/06, 20:16 -

Debs: He really is doing so much better 🌟🌟

2018/02/06, 20:17 - : 🌟🌟🌟

2018/04/03, 15:54 - Debs: Hi, hope you are good. I couldn't help sharing these with you 🌟

2018/04/03, 15:57 - Debs: <Media omitted>

2018/04/03, 16:17 -

: Going well aah he is doing great

2018/04/03, 16:51 -

Debs: Yeah, you were so right about ABA

2018/04/03, 19:47 -

: I am glad it really makes a difference in these kids

Figure. 1. 6 WhatsApp chat with ABA instructor

Currently (2018) Nyasha attends ABA therapy (three days a week, half day), occupational therapy (once a week), speech therapy (once a week) and he goes to preschool for half a day (two days a week). His ABA instructors, teachers and therapists are in constant communication, figuring out how each one of them with their own different set of skills can contribute to Nyasha's treatment (i.e. learning, behaviour and social interaction). It is as if Nyasha has his own team of multidisciplinary experts striving to ensure his treatment will be a success story. They are all very positive, eager to know how he is progressing and they put so much energy in helping out where they can.

Seeing the passion, drive, patience, commitment, positive attitude and the love that my son's teachers and therapists have in trying to ensure that he reaches his full potential; I realised that dealing with children with special needs is not just inherently stressful for us parents but also for the people who work with these children. I saw how invested "Nyasha's team" was and still is in his well-being and I began to wonder whether those employed in the demanding circumstances of working and caring for special needs children also experience the same intense mental and emotional strain and frustration that we as parents sometimes feel. I wondered how they manage to get through the day with more than one child to care for, when I could hardly keep up with Nyasha alone. I wondered what their experience of work-life balance (WLB) is like and what strategies they make use of to remain jovial, energetic and positive every single day they work with our children. By the time we were required to submit our research topics, I knew exactly what I wanted to focus on in my dissertation.

As a result of the unexpected blessing of being acquainted to my son's behavioural instructors, therapists and teachers and the positive impact that their work has had on Nyasha's development, I became curious to find out how WLB plays out in these professionals' lives. The purpose of this study is therefore to understand the concept of WLB from the perspective of the professionals who work with special needs children. The study seeks to uncover these professionals' individual WLB experiences; given the nature of their work and the great responsibility involved in caring for and working with special children. I aim to explore the problems that these professionals face in integrating their work and personal lives; the strategies that they use in ensuring a healthy work-life integration as well as the consequences of a good WLB or a lack of it.

Apart from satisfying my curiosity, I feel that the information that I will gather during the course of this study could potentially provide insight into the job involvement, engagement, satisfaction and retention of those who work with special needs children. My study may consequently provide invaluable information, that can be used in devising solutions to address personnel shortages in the special needs children occupational field. Furthermore, through an exploration of the strategies that this specific group of professionals employ in reconciling their work and life domains; my study will also add to the current body of knowledge on WLB by providing insight into

the role of the “individual” in ensuring work-life integration. I feel that this information will in turn assist industrial and organisational psychology (IOP) practitioners to come up with ways in which organisations and the individual can collaborate to ensure harmony between the work and life spheres, which results in enhanced individual and organisational effectiveness.

Nonetheless, this study will not be focussing on measuring the WLB of the professionals who work with special needs children. It will focus instead on obtaining thick descriptions of the WLB experiences of this sample of professionals. The measurement of WLB is thus beyond the scope of this particular study. As was noted earlier, the choice of the boundaries of the study was driven by my gratitude and high regard for the professionals who work with special children and my resolve to give their WLB attention, given the numerous stresses associated with working with this group of children.

The structure of the study is illustrated in Figure 7. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background to the study. This chapter relays the drive behind the study and also explains what the study seeks to achieve. Chapter 2 is the literature review, it will contextualise the study and provide the current state of knowledge on WLB. Definitions of the key constructs in the study are also provided in this chapter. Chapter 3, which is the methodology, will outline how the study was conducted and detail the philosophical assumptions and beliefs underpinning the study. The chapter also provides details of the inquiry strategy and explains how a combined phenomenological and autoethnography design was applied in the study. The sampling, data collection and data analysis methods used in the study will also be explained in this chapter. The chapter ends with an explanation of how quality and rigour were ensured throughout the research process. Chapter 4 will provide the study results or findings. The initial coding scheme as well as the themes and subthemes that emerged in the study will be provided and supported by verbatim quotes. Relationships between themes will also be illustrated at the end of the chapter. Chapter 5 be an interpretation and discussion of the findings and how these link to findings from previous studies. Chapter 6 will provide a conclusion to the study, wherein the study’s contribution to the current WLB body of knowledge is discussed.

The study limitations and recommendations for future studies will also be provided in the concluding chapter.

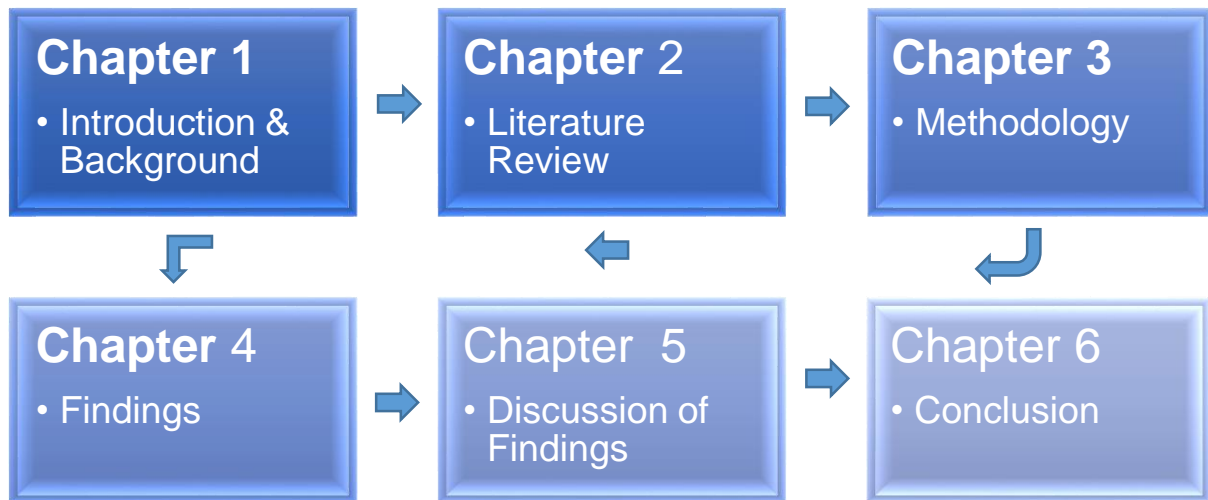


Figure. 1. 7 Structure of the dissertation

CHAPTER 2: WORK LIFE BALANCE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by citing, with no expansive discussion provided, the social, economic and technological forces that have made work life balance, commonly referred to as WLB, a major public issue in the modern world of work. A critical analysis of the key constructs and concepts used in this study as they are provided in the work-life, mainstream management, psychology and human resources management literature is provided. From this analysis, the researcher's own conceptualisation of the constructs and concepts is presented. The chapter further depicts the nature of the environment in which those who work with special needs children operate, as derived from the literature. Previous studies on antecedents, moderators, outcomes as well as strategies for achieving WLB are critically reviewed. The chapter ends with an examination of previous studies on the WLB of parents of children with special needs.

A number of issues have led to the growing need to reconcile the work and non-work domains by individuals, organisations and society at large. Some of these issues include the rise in female labour market participation, the rise in dual-earner families in the paid labour force (owing to the 1980's and 1990's economic recessions), the increasing rates of sole support parents, the gendered nature of child and elderly care, the changing nature of work (i.e. transitioning from agricultural to manufacturing to service oriented jobs) as well as increased stress and pressure stemming from globalisation, work intensification and rapid technological change (Allvin, Aronsson, Hagström, Johansson & Lundberg, 2011; Gregory & Milner, 2009; Khallash & Kruse, 2012; Korabik, Lero, & Whitehead, 2008; Oduaran & Akanni, 2017). Although a variety of social and business realities have seen WLB issues receiving a lot of attention from researchers, practitioners and policy makers, the rise in maternal employment is considered a major contributing factor, since women retain the burden of domestic

tasks and family responsibilities in addition to their work related duties (Korabik et al., 2008; Roberts, 2007; Rehman & Azam Roomi, 2012). Moreover, dual-earner couples are noted to experience the most time strains in the wake of the increasing necessity for two wage earners in most families.

2.2 WLB as defined in literature

Notwithstanding the popularity of WLB in policy debates, the press and scholarly journals and its well documented benefits for organisations, individuals and their families; there is no formal agreed definition of the construct in the literature. So many conceptualisations of the construct have been proposed, with some researchers defining it in terms of equality of time and satisfaction across multiple roles (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003); some emphasising the importance of individual satisfaction with multiple roles (Clark, 2000; Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Kirchmeyer, 2000); others highlighting the prominence of roles at a given point in time (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Haar, Sune, Russo & Ollier-Malaterre, 2018); a few describing it in terms of perceived autonomy over one's multiple role demands (Fleetwood, 2007; Kalliath & Brough, 2008) and others denying its existence altogether in favour of work-life harmony and other terms that suggest mutual reinforcement across life domains (McMillan, Morris & Atchley, 2011). Table 1 is a representation of some of the most commonly used and generally accepted definitions of WLB in the literature.

Table 2. 1 Definitions of Work-life Balance

<u>Definition</u>	<u>Author</u>
WLB refers to “a satisfying, productive life that includes work, play and love...”	Kofodimos (1993, p. xiii)
WLB means “achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains through the use and well distribution of personal resources such as energy, time and commitment across domains”	Kirchmeyer (2000, p. 80)
Work/life (family) balance refers to “lack of conflict or interference between the work and family roles” It entails “low levels of inter-role conflict and high levels of inter-role facilitation”	Frone (2003, p. 145)
WLB is “the extent to which an individual is engaged in and equally satisfied with his/her work role and family role”	Greenhaus et al. (2003, p. 513)
WLB is when “work resources meet family demands, and family resources meet work demands such that participation is effective in both domains”	Voydanoff (2005, p. 825)
WLB is “The accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains”	Grzywacz & Carlson (2007, p. 458)
WLB refers to “the extent to which an individual’s effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are compatible with the individual’s life role priorities at a given point in time”	Greenhaus & Allen, (2011, p. 8)
WLB is “a state of equilibrium between an individual’s work and personal life”	OECD, (2011, p. 124)
WLB articulates “the desire of all individuals to attain a balance between their paid work and their life outside of work, from childcare and housework to leisure and self-development”	Khallash & Kruse (2012, p. 682)
WLB refers to “individuals’ perceptions of how well work and non-work roles fit together and are managed in accordance to their personal system of life values, goals and aspirations”	Haar et al. (2018, p. 2)
WLB refers to “a high level of engagement in work and non-work life with minimal conflict between social roles in the work and non-work life”	Sirgy & Lee (2018, p. 232)
<i>Source: Self-developed based on literature</i>	

A salient feature among these proposed conceptualisations is their common emphasis on multiple roles, perceptions of good balance or fit between work and life, the distribution and allocation of resources across life domains as well as cross-domain effects in the relationship between work and life. The assumption here is that there are numerous life roles to be assumed in both the work and non-work domains, and overall life satisfaction is a product of full engagement in these multiple roles. It is argued that participation in the multiple roles provides an opportunity for the fulfilment of the full spectrum of human development needs, which consequently leads to satisfaction with life (Sirgy & Lee, 2016). Moreover, good balance across the multiple life domains has to do with paying attention at a given point in time to the demands of the various life roles in relation to their perceived importance (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). This will in turn ensure that there is little to no role conflict across the various life roles, with the ultimate goal being work-life harmony arising from role integration and role enrichment (McMillan et al., 2011; Sirgy & Lee, 2016).

Although there is a common thread of meaning in the generally accepted definitions of WLB as noted in Table 1 (i.e. implications of high levels of satisfaction, functioning, and effectiveness across multiple roles), it is worth noting that the definitions emerge from three different notions of the work-life interface, i.e. the conflict, enrichment and balance notions. These three schools of thought are categorised as follows:

- (1) Work-life conflict — the degree to which role pressures from the work and non-work domains are mutually incompatible, causing interference with an individual's effectiveness in either role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).
- (2) Work-life enrichment — the extent to which experiences in one domain enhance the quality of life in other domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).
- (3) Work-life balance — the traditional school of thought defines WLB in terms of absence of conflict between the work and life domains (Frone, 2003), whereas the newer schools of thought refer to it as the degree to which an individual is equally engaged in and equally satisfied with work and non-work roles (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Consequently, due to the multifaceted nature of the construct a clear universal definition of the construct has not been established to date. However, for the purpose

of this study the focus is on an overall WLB, without differentiating between positive or negative work-life interaction.

A review of these definitions also illustrates that WLB and work-family balance (WFB) have been used interchangeably by various researchers and authors. In these definitions 'life' has generally been taken to mean 'family', probably because family is a very significant role within the personal life or non-work domain. However, according to Kalliath and Brough (2008) the difference between WLB and WFB is that WLB is holistic and therefore encompasses everyone including people who do not have children but also wish to strike a balance between roles in their work and non-work domains. Due to the fact that work and family are considered to be the two dominant spheres of life, there has been a lot of interest on the relationship between work and family in work-life research, with conflict as the dominant paradigm (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Haar, Russo, Sune & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014).

In spite of the dominance of work-family research in the literature, it is important to note that the non-work or personal life domain consists of more than just the family role/sphere. It also entails the leisure, personal care, health, spiritual, community and education spheres, which comprise various activities as illustrated in Table 2 (Haar et al., 2018; Keeney, Boyd, Sinha, Westring, & Ryan, 2013; OECD, 2011; Roberts, 2007). As posited by Sirgy and Lee (2016), these various non-work life spheres contribute to the satisfaction of different developmental needs (i.e. biological, safety, social, esteem, actualisation, knowledge and aesthetic) which facilitates the gratification of the full spectrum of human developmental needs.

Table 2. 2 The Non-work Domain

<u>Life/non-work domain</u>	<u>Activities</u>
Family sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care Attending to children’s school functions Helping children with homework etc. Spending time with a spouse or partner Household management
Leisure sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing sport Traveling Watching television Pursuing hobbies/interests
Social sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialising with friends or non-family members outside of work Sharing a meal Going to the movies
Personal care sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleeping Eating Resting
Education sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursuing further studies Doing a course for personal growth Attending a seminar or conference
Health sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercising Visiting the Doctor/Dentist
Spiritual sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going to church Attending to church activities
Community sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in fundraisers or political campaigns Volunteering Attending community events
<i>Source.</i> Self-developed based on literature	

Frone (2003) conceptualised the work-family interaction in terms of direction of influence between the work and family roles and the type of effect that the roles have on each other. His conceptualisation gave rise to the following four components: work-to-family facilitation (WFF); family-to-work facilitation(FWF); work-to-family conflict (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC). Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) as cited in McMillan et al. (2011) concurred with this conceptualisation and also made reference to the potential for four reciprocal influences between the work and life domains (i.e. work positive/life positive; work positive/life negative; work negative/life positive and work negative/life negative). Additionally, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) assert that these four constructs (WFC, FWC, WFF and FWF) are invaluable in the absence of a conceptually based instrument for assessing WLB. In their components approach to measuring WLB, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) argue that scales for WFC and WFF may in the meantime be valuably used to measure WLB.

In view of the many proposed definitions of WLB in the literature, the researcher concluded that in this study WLB is essentially an attempt to create a healthy integration between the multiple roles in the work and non-work domains in order to avoid the following two scenarios:

- i. The demands from the various roles in the work domain dominating life to such an extent that the resources allocated to the work roles take away from the resources available for the roles in the non-work domain, thereby creating conflict between the domains (time-based, strain-based and behavioural-based conflict), which negatively impacts individual functioning and wellbeing.
- ii. The role pressures and/or demands from the various roles in the non-work domain interfering with an individual's effectiveness in the work domain due to a lack of sufficient supportive resources to meet these demands, which translates in family-to-work interference or family-to-work conflict; which is equally detrimental to an individual's optimal functioning and wellbeing.

In the researcher's opinion and in-line with the accommodation theory, WLB is not merely about equal division of time and resources between the two domains as suggested by Sirgy and Lee's (2016) balanced role commitment approach, or Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance

components. WLB is about devoting more time and resources at a given point in time to a domain of choice in accordance with one's life priorities and preferences as well as with the goals and preferences of one's role-related partners. This choice is informed by the desire to meet human developmental needs and it serves to ensure meaningful experiences in the domains of both work and non-work. It is about the distribution of time and commitment to either role in a way that is consistent with one's values, needs and wants, provided the difference (in work time/commitment and family time/commitment) does not reach the threshold level noted by Greenhaus et al. (2003). Although the researcher agrees that work-life balance is a psychological construct, she also concurs with Grzywacz and Carlson's (2007) assertion that WLB is certainly a social construct as well, hence the inclusion of role related partners' goals and preferences. Considering this, in her view an evaluation of an individual's work-life balance ought also to encompass role related partners' perceptions and/or appraisals of this balance.

The general agreement in literature suggests that WLB is an essential determinant of individual health, well-being and effectiveness. In spite of this, researchers like Khallash and Kruse (2012) are of the opinion that should economic conditions become harsher in the future, WLB may become a luxury commodity enjoyed by only a few privileged workers. Khallash and Kruse (2012) substantiate earlier research cited in Gregory and Milner (2009) which submits that work-life boundaries are mediated by people's socioeconomic positions. According to these researchers, WLB becomes an illusion in an environment characterised by economic stagnation and tougher global competition. Under these circumstances people will be so worried about losing their jobs that they are relieved to have a job where they work harder for longer hours. Although this may be true to an extent, the negative impact on one's productivity, engagement, satisfaction and commitment cannot be ignored.

2.3 Special needs children as defined in literature

Notwithstanding the challenge of value judgements in defining "special needs" as highlighted by Wilson (2002), a review of the literature suggests that special needs children (also referred to as special children) are children with academic, cognitive, social and emotional difficulties. These are children who present with a variety of

developmental disabilities ranging from autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), hearing impairment, speech defects, visual impairment, learning disabilities, communication handicaps, mental handicaps, behavioural deficits, emotional conditions, and acute and chronic physical illnesses (Anderson, 2009; Barratt, 2008; Hammarberg, Sartore, Cann & Fisher, 2014; Hastings & Oakford, 2003; Matthews, Booth, Taylor & Martin, 2011; McGlone, Santos, Kazama, Fong & Mueller, 2002; Raps, 2003). They include children with chronic conditions such as congenital heart disease, transverse myelitis, Down syndrome and Asperger's syndrome (Jang & Appelbaum, 2010; Lee & Park, 2016). Moreover, these children's achievement on individually administered standardised tests in reading, mathematics, written or verbal expression is substantially below what is expected for their age, schooling and level of intelligence (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008).

However, this study uses Todaro, Failla and Caldwell's (1993) definition of children with special needs. According to Todaro et al. (1993, p. 262) special children are children "with a broad range of disabilities, chronic illnesses, handicaps, health-related educational impairments, physical or sensory impairments and behavioural problems which may be diagnosed at any time during childhood". The researcher chose this definition due to its holistic nature. It encompasses children who are at an increased risk of chronic developmental, emotional and speech conditions that make their learning needs different from those of an ordinary child (Van Dyck, Kogan, McPherson, Weissman & Newacheck, 2004). Children who depend on the use of assistive technology such as computer switches, wheel chairs and joy sticks, to mention a few, are also included in the definition (Todaro et al., 1993).

2.4 The nature of the work environment for professionals who work with special needs children

Special needs children have complex needs. They need more help and support than the ordinary child to engage in daily activities and participate in all aspects of their lives (Barratt, 2008). This is a great responsibility for the people who care for and work with these children. Consequently, a lot of time and energy is invested in ensuring that these children are provided with safe, healthy and calm environments (Todaro et al., 1993).

Owing to the diversity of disabilities or special needs categories for special children, the dynamic advances in treatment and the ever-changing needs of the children as they grow older; it is crucial for the people working with these children to keep updated on advances around the special needs categories of the children under their care (Hillel Lavian, 2015; Mitchell, Franklin, Greco & Bell, 2009). A special needs environment requires that an individual takes responsibility for their own professional development in order to be more sensitive to and have a better understanding of the children's needs (Scarborough & Deck, 1998). This implies huge investments in time and energy (i.e. in researching, reading and attending workshops and conferences on new developments) in order to expand one's knowledge and understanding of the unique social, emotional and learning needs arising from the children's conditions and how best these needs can be addressed.

Furthermore, because most children with special needs require therapeutic interventions from a variety of specialists (i.e. occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, clinical psychologists, neurologists, educational psychologists and/or behavioural technicians), providing holistic care for them requires trans-disciplinary working. The trans-disciplinary approach entails the collaboration between a team of experts from a range of disciplines (each focusing on their professional specialism) in assessing a child and formulating ideas for appropriate interventions, informed by the relevant expertise of the professionals making up the team (Hillel Lavian, 2015; McConnellogue, 2011). This approach is recommended and preferred over the multi-disciplinary approach because it ensures that a child receives holistic, streamlined and integrated care which enhances understanding of their needs. Notwithstanding the benefits of trans-disciplinary working, it clearly requires a huge investment of time and commitment from the professionals involved and this has the potential to create time-based strain for them (Mitchell et al., 2009).

Moreover, there is evidence in the literature that working within a special needs environment poses powerful affective demands on those working in this environment (Hillel Lavian, 2015; Mackenzie, 2012). In a study with staff who work with children with special educational needs in England, Mackenzie (2012) found that respondents were deeply emotionally attached to their work and experienced intense positive

feelings such as passion, nurturance, warmth, love and care. Hillel Lavian (2015) similarly notes passion, commitment, self-sacrifice and vulnerability as factors contributing to the complexity of teaching in a special education environment. According to Mackenzie (2012) working in a special needs environment requires that one possess a genuine emotional empathy towards others. Resultantly, people working in this environment have a strong personal commitment to their work and most often describe it as rewarding or a privilege (Muskat, Brownstone & Greenblatt, 2017). However, this emotional commitment comes at a price. Those who work with special needs children often report experiencing profound negative emotions associated with the nature of their work (i.e. exhaustion, fatigue, frustration, anger, grief, disengagement, isolation and emotional stress), which has implications for their health and well-being if not properly managed (Mackenzie, 2012; Muskat et al., 2017).

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that a lot goes into successfully providing special children with the best possible care, particularly concerning personal resources such as time, energy and commitment. The above account clearly depicts that working in a special needs environment poses unique demands on the resources of those who work with these children, which has implications for their work and life interface.

2.5 Previous studies around the topic

2.5.1 The antecedents of WLB

According to previous studies, WLB¹ is preceded by a variety of personal, job related, familial and environmental or contextual factors. Table 3 lists some of the antecedents of WLB that are documented in the literature. However, the list is by no means exhaustive and a brief discussion of some of these factors follows Table 3.

¹ WLB in some of these instances is used as an umbrella term for various terms of the work-life interface such as conflict, enrichment, facilitation, integration and enhancement.

Table 2. 3 Antecedents of WLB

<u>Type of Antecedent</u>	<u>Factors</u>	<u>Authors cited in the literature</u>
Personal	Positive affect Conscientiousness Self-concept Extraversion Hardiness Stress coping style	Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Korabik et al. 2008; Oduaran & Akanni, 2017
Familial	Family support Family size Ages of children	Brown, 2014; Brown & Clark, 2017; Haar et al. 2018; Korabik et al. 2008; Maruyama, Hopkinson & James, 2009
Job or work related	Number of hours worked Job autonomy Skill variety & job complexity The interplay between job demands & resources	Haar et al. 2018; Korabik et al. 2008; Maruyama et al. 2009; Matthews et al. 2011; Sirgy & Lee, 2018
Environmental or contextual	National culture Organisational culture Supervisor support Co-worker support Technology & ICT use	Brown, 2014; Brown & Clark, 2017; Haar et al. 2018; Korabik et al. 2008; Matthews et al. 2011
<i>Source.</i> Self-developed based on literature		

2.5.1.1 Personal factors

Personality traits and individual characteristics. Although much research on the antecedents of WLB has focused on job related, familial and environmental factors; there are a few studies in the work-life literature that have investigated the role of personality in work-life relationships (Michel & Clark, 2011). Studies on the relations

between personality and WLB illustrate that concepts of disposition (i.e. negative or positive affect), personality traits and/or characteristics are significant predictors of WLB (Minnie & Devadoss, 2013; Oduaran & Akanni, 2017; Padmasiri & Mahalaekamge, 2013).

Specifically, findings from a qualitative review of personality and work-life integration conducted by Michel and Clark (2011) and a study on the WLB of academics conducted by Oduaran and Akanni (2017) indicate that certain personality traits are significantly related to WLB, implying that individuals' experiences of WLB may vary depending on their individual personality. Similarly, Korabik et al. (2008) and Minnie and Devadoss (2013) found that people who score high on personal traits such as openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness are more likely to experience facilitation between the work and non-work life roles.

Moreover, in a study on the work-family relations of mothers of children with learning disorders, Al-Yagon and Cinamon (2008) found that extroverted individuals with high levels of hardiness and self-esteem are likely to experience lower conflict and higher facilitation between their work and non-work life roles. The reason for this is that personality has been found to impact individuals' interactions with and their adaptation to their physical and social environments (Padmasiri & Mahalaekamge, 2013). Extroverted individuals with high levels of hardiness are therefore more likely to perceive stressful situations as manageable rather than threatening. Additionally, these individuals are also more likely to use resources gained in one domain to improve role performance in other domains, resulting in facilitation between domains (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Korabik et al., 2008; Michel & Clark, 2011).

Apart from the enabling effects of personality on WLB noted above, certain personality traits have also been found to act as barriers to WLB (Michel & Clark, 2011; Minnie & Devadoss, 2013; Oduaran & Akanni, 2017). Neuroticism and negative affect, for example, have been found to be more closely associated with WFC than WLB (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Minnie & Devadoss, 2013). Al-Yagon and Cinamon (2008) found in their study that negative affect as well as a lower sense of coherence translated into difficulty in achieving mutual interactions between the family and work domains among mothers of children with learning disorders. Michel and Clark (2011)

similarly discovered that individuals high in negative affect and neuroticism perceive less facilitation and more conflict between roles in the work and non-work domains.

In conclusion, there is general agreement among studies on personality and WLB that personality plays a pivotal role in one's ability to achieve WLB. This is largely a result of the influence personality has on an individual's perception of how they experience their work and life domains, as well as the behaviours they choose to engage in to balance demands from the various life domains.

2.5.1.2 Familial factors

Family size and child age. Family size and child age have been found to have a massive impact on an individual's overall perception of the level and intensity of their family responsibilities (Brown, 2014; Korabik et al., 2008; Maruyama et al., 2009). A review of the work-life literature shows that the number of children in a family has been associated with parenting role stress, a decrease in work hours, changes in employment status and work-family fit (Brown & Clark, 2017). The reason for this is that the larger the family size the greater the financial pressure. Additionally, the more time one spends caring for others the more excessive one's caring burden and the more likely one is to experience role conflict owing to the depletion of mental and physical resources that ought to be devoted to other life roles (Haar et al., 2018). Brown's (2014) study specifically illustrated that more hours spent caring for others was predictive of higher levels of work interference in family (WIF). Additionally, the younger the children the greater the caring burden. Therefore, a large family size and younger children are predictors of work-life imbalance (Haar et al., 2018; Brown, 2014; Brown & Clark, 2017).

2.5.1.3 Job related factors

Job autonomy. Autonomy and the ability to control one's work hours appear to be influential factors in achieving WLB (Maruyama et al., 2009; Nijp, Beckers, Geurts, Tucker & Kompier, 2012). Job autonomy, defined by Korabik et al. (2008) as one's discretion over where, when and how one's job is to be performed, has been found to be associated with positive spill-over between the work and non-work roles.

Maruyama et al. (2009) found in their study that teleworkers who had greater autonomy to choose when to work, reported positive WLB despite working long hours. Similarly, work time control (WTC), defined as workers' ability to control the duration, position and distribution of work time, was noted to have a significant positive association with work-non-work balance, for both global and multidimensional measures of WTC (Nijp et al., 2012). The explanation for this is the importance of workers' perceptions of greater control over decisions about important things in their lives. Korabik et al. (2008) also postulated that perceptions of greater control over how one works is likely to lead to more willingness by workers to cross apply their skills between the work and non-work activities, thereby facilitating role enrichment.

Number of hours worked. In line with the fit and balance perspective that proposes that greater work demands negatively impact WLB, previous studies have found that the number of hours an individual works is positively related to work-family conflict and negatively related to work-family balance (Haar et al., 2018). Findings from Brown's (2014) study similarly illustrate that more hours worked by an individual were predictive of work-family conflict and higher work interference in family. Correspondingly, Deery and Jago (2015) found in their study that employees with heavy workloads had low WLB. The reason for this is that the strain experienced in the work role would then impact negatively on one's ability to function effectively in other life roles, resulting in perceptions of low WLB. Brown (2014) goes further to illustrate that it is not just the number of hours that one works oneself but also the hours worked by one's partner that influences perceptions of WLB.

Skill variety and complexity. Individuals who are in jobs that offer them exposure to high levels of skills are able to use these skills gained from the work domain to solve problems in the non-work domain, which results in the work domain facilitating or enriching the non-work domain. Likewise, skills gained in the non-work domain may also be applied to the benefit of the work domain (Korabik et al., 2008; McMillan et al., 2011; Voydanoff, 2005). This transfer of resources between the domains is noted to enhance role functioning and role performance, thereby reducing role strain and conflict (Haar et al., 2018). The level of complexity in a job as well as its demand for the application of a variety of skills is thus a predictor of WLB (Korabik et al., 2008).

2.5.1.4 Environmental or contextual factors

Organisational culture. Previous studies have consistently shown that the presence of a WLB culture within an organisation influences perceptions of WLB (Korabik et al., 2008; Brown & Clark, 2017; Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Zheng, Molineux, Mirshekary & Scarparo, 2015). Therefore, a key determinant of individuals' ability to attain WLB is an organisational culture that ensures that work-life policies are put into practice in order to promote an environment that is amenable to facilitation between work and life (Deery & Jago 2015; George, Vickers, Wilkes & Barton, 2006). In his study, Brown (2014) found that more family-supportive organisational policies (FSOP) within an organisation were predictive of lower levels of WFC. However, the mere implementation of family supportive organisational policies unaccompanied by utilisation has little impact on individuals' ability to integrate their work and non-work domains. Therefore, a culture that encourages the uptake of work-life policies is positively related to WLB (Korabik et al., 2008).

Supervisor and co-worker support. The degree to which employees feel that their supervisors care about their wellbeing has an influence on people's ability to achieve WLB (Brown, 2014; Brown & Clark, 2017; Haar et al., 2018). Moreover, supervisor and co-worker attitudes towards those seeking to balance their work and non-work domains has been shown to affect the usage rate of family supportive programs and policies (George et al., 2006; Korabik et al., 2008). Supervisor and co-worker emotional and instrumental support in viewing WLB as a necessity rather than a luxury is therefore crucial in the successful implementation of work-life policies, which in turn cultivates a family-supportive culture within an organisation (Deery & Jago, 2015; Kallash & Kruse, 2012). Brown (2014) confirmed this in a study whose specific findings were that lower levels of supervisory support were predictive of higher work-family conflict and higher work interference in family, which implies that supervisor and co-worker support has positive repercussions on individuals' perceptions of WLB.

It is worth noting that the relationships between the above mentioned antecedents and WLB are not always direct; they may in some instances be moderated by other factors. Additionally, the relationships between the antecedents and WLB may not be generalizable considering that individuals' experiences of WLB are embedded in their

specific cultural and structural national contexts. Furthermore, some of the antecedents noted in Table 3 may also be WLB moderators, depending on what WLB relationships are being tested. For example, a study by Haar et al. (2018) found that the relationship between demands (i.e. work and/or family demands) and WLB is moderated by supervisory support as well as job autonomy. Moreover, should practitioners decide to use the antecedents to develop WLB interventions, they need to be cautious and aware of antecedents that have competing effects on balance (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

2.5.2 The moderators of WLB

As noted earlier, some of the antecedents noted above have a moderating effect on WLB depending on the relationships being investigated. Therefore, only a few moderators of WLB will be discussed in this section. A review of the work-life research illustrates that some of the moderators of WLB cited in literature include gender, motherhood, fatherhood, resources and technology usage (Haar et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2018; Korabik et al., 2008; Nam, 2014).

2.5.2.1 Gender and Gender Egalitarianism (GE) Studies on the relations between gender and WLB have yielded contradictory results, with some researchers proposing that gender differences moderate individuals' capacity to achieve WLB (Baral & Bhargava, 2011; Rehman & Azam Roomi, 2012) and others denying this (Lyness, & Judiesch, 2008).

Findings from a study by Rehman and Azam Roomi (2012) on women entrepreneurs in Pakistani indicate that gender bias and women's stereotypical domestic roles (among other issues such as religious prescriptions and cultural and social norms) are the most significant hindrances encountered by these women in achieving WLB. The women entrepreneurs reported that husbands' non-involvement in domestic chores (as a result societal expectations of women's gender roles) resulted in their working long hours (often at the cost of their health) in order to manage the overload of work and domestic responsibilities. This gender imbalance and the disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities in turn moderates these women entrepreneurs' ability to create harmony between their work and life domains.

In a study on the relationship between work-family antecedents and work-family enrichment conducted by Baral and Bhagavar (2011) in India, gender was found to have a moderating effect on the relationship between work-life balance policies and work-family enrichment. Within the context of a gendered labour market (Emslie & Hunt, 2009) in which women identify and invest more in the family role while men identify and invest more in the work role, the relationship between work-life balance policies and work-family enrichment was found to be stronger for women than for men (Baral & Bhagavar, 2011). Moreover, because of the centrality of paid work in men's lives, gender was also found to moderate the relationship between job characteristics and work-family enrichment, such that the relationship between the two was stronger for men than for women (Baral & Bhagavar, 2011; Emslie & Hunt, 2009).

Conversely, Lyness and Judiesch (2008) found no gender differences in the relationship between perceptions of WLB and career advancement potential for managers in a cross national study in 33 countries. Similarly, Valcour (2007) found that gender had no moderating effect on the relationship between work hours and satisfaction with work-family balance. In this study, work hours affected satisfaction with work-family balance similarly for both genders.

Gender egalitarianism (GE), defined as beliefs about whether one's biological sex should determine the roles that men and women play in their homes, at work and in their communities; was also found to have a moderating effect on WLB relationships in a number of studies (Haar et al., 2014; Lyness, & Judiesch, 2008).

In Lyness and Judiesch's (2008) cross national study, they found that gender egalitarianism moderated the relationship between managers' perceptions of WLB and career advancement potential. Correspondingly, Haar et al. (2014) in a cross national study among seven different cultures also illustrated that gender egalitarianism moderated the relationship between WLB and job and life satisfaction. In this study, individuals living in high gender egalitarian cultures experienced a strong positive relationship between WLB and job as well as life satisfaction. The logic behind this is that in high gender egalitarian cultures there is less adhesion to traditional gender patterns (i.e. stereotypical gender roles wherein men are portrayed as breadwinners and women as caregivers and homemakers). Therefore, the role

prescriptions that instil and foster expectations that men ought to prioritise the work domain over the non-work domain and vice versa for women are less prominent. This provides individuals with a better opportunity to successfully fulfil role expectations in the work and non-work domains (Haar et al., 2014; Rehman & Azam Roomi, 2012). Resultantly, little to no role conflict leads to job as well as life satisfaction.

2.5.2.2 Parenthood/parental status According to findings from past studies, parenthood/parental status has been found to be essential in explaining variations in WLB (Nam, 2014). Parents with young dependent children and/or children with special health care needs in particular, bear the brunt of the caring responsibility of their young children. Parental care responsibilities have been consistently found to be associated with poor health and interference with work due to the various stressors associated with care giving [i.e. the amount and nature of care required and the time required to provide care] (Korabik et al., 2008; Maruyama et al., 2009). Additionally, failure by employers to equally recognise the needs of fathers who are increasingly involved in caring responsibilities for their young and/or disabled children (owing to the fact that WLB was initially considered to be a woman's issue) has a huge impact on these fathers' ability to attain WLB (Brown & Clark, 2017; George et al., 2006). However, a small body of research has also investigated the effects of caring responsibilities from an enrichment perspective. According to this research engagement in caregiving roles may in fact be beneficial to caregivers as occupying multiple roles enriches their participation in other life domains. Parental satisfaction for instance has been noted to have positive spill over effects on other life domains (Sirgy & Lee, 2018)

2.5.2.3 Resources In their study, Haar et al. (2018) discovered that resources (both work and non-work resources) have a buffering effect on role demands such that when role demands exceed the resources available to an individual for execution of role expectations, individuals experience low WLB. When resources exceeded role demands, individuals had an increased capacity to achieve WLB and reported high levels of WLB.

2.5.3 The outcomes of WLB

A review of the work-life literature indicates that a number of studies were conducted to investigate the effects of work-life balance on several individual and organisational outcomes (Haar et al., 2014; Sirgy & Lee, 2016; Sirgy & Lee, 2018). These studies also touched on the outcomes of a lack of work-life balance as detailed below.

2.5.3.1 Individual outcomes Individual outcomes that have been associated with high levels of work-life balance include positive affect, individual health and well-being, enhanced quality of life, individual effectiveness, job satisfaction, marital satisfaction, parental satisfaction, family cohesion and overall life satisfaction (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Sirgy & Lee, 2016; Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

According to Sirgy and Lee (2016) WLB defined from a role commitment perspective (which asserts that WLB is achieved when an individual has balanced role commitment across social roles in multiple life domains) is likely to be achieved by people who are fully engaged in a balanced way in various roles in the different life domains (i.e. health, leisure, education, family, social, personal care and spiritual domains). The reason for this is possibly the buffering effects of involvement in multiple roles. According to Greenhaus et al. (2003) engagement in various roles shields individuals from the possible impact of negative experiences in another role. Sirgy and Lee (2018) similarly posit that high levels of engagement in multiple roles translates into the transfer of positive affect and experiences across various roles in the multiple life domains. Therefore, individuals who hold a balanced orientation in multiple roles will probably experience high levels of life satisfaction owing to the gratification of the full spectrum of human development needs (after having reached threshold levels of satisfaction in a number of salient life domains). Moreover, people with high levels of WLB are also likely to experience high levels of role integration because of the minimal role conflict across life domains. High levels of integration consequently lead to subjective wellbeing, less role overload, domain satisfaction and lower levels of depression (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

Moreover, owing to their ability to access the full spectrum of human development needs, individuals with a high level of WLB experience a sense of harmony in life

(arising from optimal psychophysiological conditions) which ultimately contributes positively to their physical and mental health (Haar et al., 2014).

5.5.3.2 Organisational outcomes Organisational outcomes that have been linked to perceptions of WLB include increased work engagement, affective organisational commitment, embeddedness, greater organisational citizenship behaviours, higher returns on investment in human capital and higher overall organisational performance (Baltes, Clark & Chakrabarti, 2010; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Sirgy & Lee, 2016; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Sitimin, Fikry, Ismail & Husein, 2016). The logic behind the link between WLB and these positive organisational outcomes is simply that people who have a good balance between their work and non-work domains are more likely to be energised and motivated to work beyond their expected work responsibilities, because they do not feel strained, burnt-out or conflicted (Korabik et al., 2008).

The negative individual and organisational outcomes that have been associated with a lack of WLB (also referred to as the stress-related outcomes of WLB) are role and psychological strain, impaired wellbeing (i.e. hypertension, anxiety disorders and mood disorders), burnout, absenteeism, poor performance, intentions to quit, work-family conflict, family-work conflict, domain dissatisfaction, depression and turnover (Matthews et al., 2011; Sitimin et al., 2016; Korabik et al., 2008; Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

Similar to antecedents, outcomes of WLB are not always direct effects; they are moderated by other factors. For example, Greenhaus et al. (2003) found that WLB was associated with quality of life only when substantial time, psychological involvement and satisfaction are distributed across multiple work and life roles.

2.5.4 Strategies for achieving WLB

A review of the work-life, mainstream management and human resources management literature reveals that there are a number of WLB strategies that diverse populations (that have been the focus of previous studies i.e. top executives, managers, teleworkers, entrepreneurs, parents of children with special needs, acute care paediatric social workers etc.) have used in order to integrate their work and life roles. Following the widespread realisation that WLB is not just an individual problem,

but an institutional as well as societal problem, the use of multiple support sources at micro, meso and macro levels have been identified as the best way of addressing work and life stresses (Gregory & Milner, 2009; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

2.5.4.1 Individual level strategies

Segmentation According to Stock, Bauer and Bieling (2014); segmentation refers to an active attempt by an individual to keep the work and non-work domains completely separate in order to minimise interference or conflict between the two. However, although segmentation involves boundary separation between the work and non-work domains (Korabik, 2008), the complete detachment of the two domains is not as easy as it sounds (Baltes, et al., 2010). Good examples to illustrate this are the situations of employed parents of children with special health care needs or someone going through a divorce. It is very difficult for these individuals to postpone or neglect the demands from the family role even while they are at work (George et al., 2006). In spite of this, segmentation is still considered a highly efficient strategy in minimising work-life inter-role conflicts. It is also likely to be adopted by individuals living in countries with an individualistic culture (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

Integration This entails blending the work and non-work domains in such a way that one can flexibly transition between the multiple roles in the various domains, enabling the transfer of affect, experiences, values, skills and behaviours across multiple domains (McMillan et al., 2011; Nam, 2014). Integration is anticipated to reduce some of the tension emanating from multiple role demands, resulting in facilitation across multiple roles (Korabik et al., 2008; McMillan et al., 2011). Notwithstanding the obvious benefits of integration, research has found that high integration may result in blurring of boundaries between the two domains, which consequently results in inter-role conflict, stress and dissatisfaction with both domains (Baltes et al., 2010).

Decisions to adopt either segmentation or integration as a boundary management strategy is noted to be influenced by several personal (i.e. gender and personality), familial (i.e. care giving resources and living arrangements) and organisational factors (i.e. level of autonomy in one's job and organisational climate).

Compensation This involves making up for dissatisfying life domains by seeking more satisfaction in other life domains through increased engagement or cognitive manipulation of the relative importance of domains that are sources of dissatisfaction (Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Stock et al., 2014). When an individual experiences dissatisfaction in one domain such as the work domain, they may compensate for this by engaging more in other life domains that are likely to generate positive affect such as the family or leisure domains. These in turn compensate for the decreased positive affect from the work domain. Alternatively, one can decrease the salience of life domains that are a source of negative affect and increase the importance of domains that are a source of positive affect (Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

Accommodation This involves decreasing the amount of time and resources available for one role to meet the demands of another role (McMillan et al., 2011; Stock et al., 2014). For example, an individual seeking to complete a master's thesis may limit involvement in the work domain by adopting part time employment instead of full time employment in order to accommodate the demands from the education or study domain.

Boundary management techniques (Time management) Time management skills entail making decisions about what needs to take priority in daily activities, maintaining a methodological approach to activities and making to-do lists (Baltes et al., 2010; Stock et al., 2014). Time management will ensure the effective allocation of time between activities and also offer greater control over activities that will enhance balance between the work and non-work domains.

2.5.4.2 Strategies at the organisational level

Family supportive organisational cultures Findings from previous studies on WLB propose that one way in which organisations can assist employees to achieve sustainable WLB, is through discouraging gendered organisational cultures which deter workers from choosing a healthy work-life balance (Gregory & Milner, 2009). Many researchers advocate the creation of a positive organisational climate that encourages and enables the extensive utilisation of family supportive workplace programs and/or policies by both men and women (Baltes et al., 2010; Gregory &

Milner, 2009; Zheng et al., 2015). Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) advocate changing work processes that undermine workers' ability to balance their work and life/non work domains. According to Korabik et al. (2008) due to the interdependence between the work and non-work domains it is crucial for organisations to acknowledge this interconnectedness and its implications.

Family-friendly policies and work-life programs The implementation of family-friendly programs and/or policies is another strategy for assisting employees to better meet the demands of their multiple work and non-work roles. These programs and/or policies include offering financial support to employees through paid leave (maternal, parental and carers); flexible working hours; flexibility in work location (i.e. telecommuting); on-site child care/caregiver services, compressed work weeks, job sharing, part-time work and wellness classes (i.e. training programmes on conflict and stress management) (Brown, 2014; Gregory & Milner, 2009; Jang & Appelbaum 2010; Sirgy & Lee, 2016).

Baltes et al. (2010) go a step further and suggest that in order to encourage extensive utilisation of family support policies, there is a need to ensure alignment between the policies and an individual's boundary management strategies (i.e. individuals seeking integration between the work and non-work domains are more likely to find on-site child care facilities appealing and those seeking segmentation will likely favour flexitime). Korabik et al. (2008) also highlight the need for organisations to be wary of the financial, material and human resources available within an organisation when implementing these policies and programs. Sirgy and Lee (2018) and Zheng et al. (2015) on the other hand, draw attention to the need for continuous evaluation of the efficacy of these programs to enable organisations to select the most effective programs.

Innovations of the Fourth Industrial Revolution Embracing the technological breakthroughs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is also a strategy that organisations may use to assist employees to balance their work and life domains. The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution has transformed how people do work, where it's done and when it's done owing to the fusion of physical and digital worlds through increased connectivity and convergence (Eberhard et al., 2017; Ghislieri, Molino & Cortese,

2018; Schwab, 2016). Therefore, willingness by organisations to adopt these emerging technologies and embrace the opportunities they present has the ability to offer flexibility (i.e. time, place and method flexibility) to those with care obligations, for instance. This in turn reduces time based and strain based family to work conflict for such employees, thereby enhancing their work-life balance.

Supervisor and co-worker support Employees who have helpful and accommodating supervisors are more likely to perceive their organisations as supportive work environments that provide a climate conducive for the management of work and life demands (Brown & Clark, 2017; Haar et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2015). In line with social support resources theory, perceptions of an organisation as family supportive leads to reduced stress and prevents stressors from escalating into strain outcomes which resultantly equip employees to deal more effectively with the incompatible pressures from the work and non-work domains (Brown, 2014; Matthews et al., 2011). These employees are also more likely to be satisfied in their jobs and consequently committed to the organisation (Korabik et al., 2008).

2.5.4.3 Strategies at macro level

State laws and policies Owing to the fact that people's work-life experiences are embedded in the prevailing national structural and cultural contexts (Haar et al., 2018), the state laws and policies within a country are a major determinant of whether workers in that country have negative or positive work-life experiences. Previous studies on WLB have therefore advocated the reconfiguration of the prevailing national gender cultures (particularly in low gender egalitarian societies) that seem to encourage assumptions of unencumbered workers and the gendered take up of family supportive workplace programs (Gregory & Milner, 2009). A total revamp of these national laws and policies is one way of providing workers with the opportunity to integrate their work and non-work domains. Paternity and parental leave, as in the Norwegian context "a father-friendly welfare state" Gregory and Milner (2009, p. 7), is an example of how this may be achieved. However, as noted in literature there is still the need for the reinforcement of parental leave as a collective right (George et al., 2006).

Additionally, state laws and policies that circumscribe greedy organisations' claim on workers' presence and commitment in the workplace also assists individuals to achieve a healthy work-life balance. According to Roberts (2007) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2011), regulations such as the "European Union Working Time Directive" that put statutory ceilings on working times are useful in creating organisational and national cultures that prohibit longer working hours and thus encourage people to also spend time on leisure and personal care activities. These regulations are also necessary for creating national cultures that ensure sustainable work-life balance (Gregory & Milner, 2009). However, findings from Roberts' (2007) study noted that it is not the lengthening of hours of paid work that leads to the widespread dissatisfaction with working hours. It is in fact a combination of issues that have contributed to the widespread experiences of time pressure, some of which include: people becoming victims of hyper-consumerism or the "work-and-spend culture" Roberts (2007, p. 335); the desire by women (particularly, mothers with paid jobs and young dependent children) to be the "ideal worker" and "ideal parent" (Korabik et al., 2008, p. 16); widespread feelings of job insecurity in the absence of 'jobs for life'; more work being done at odd hours and work intensification that has put workers under pressure to generally do more.

Jang and Appelbaum (2010) illustrate that steps are being taken to protect workers and create societies with better working conditions, particularly for working parents of children with special needs. State laws that institute and endorse policy interventions that ensure paid family leave as well as more generous grants to assist with medical and other expenses for children with special needs have been implemented in states like New Jersey and California. This is anticipated to ameliorate the financial burden of caring for a child with special needs and thereby reduce the stress and conflict experienced by parents of these children. Possibly it may even lead to increased utilisation of family leave to care for children because parents would have to worry less about losing income while attending to the needs of their children.

A rather interesting strategy proposed for promoting better work-life balance among working parents of children with special needs is the use of humanoid robotic care givers or nursing robots as hypothesized by Sitimin et al. (2016). In light of the amount of time that is required to care for a child with special needs, it is proposed that

artificially intelligent robotic technology may be used to substitute or replicate human care. This is anticipated to reduce the caring burden on parents of children with special needs and thereby minimise perceptions of strain, which in turn enhances optimal wellbeing (Hashim & Yussof, 2017). Exemplar uses of robots include assistance with household tasks, assistance with walking for children with disabilities and monitoring of health metrics such as blood pressure and temperature (Hashim & Yussof, 2017; Sitimin et al., 2016).

2.5.5 The work-life balance of parents of children with special needs

A perusal of the work-life literature illustrates that over the years there have been a few (but growing) studies that have focused on investigating the WLB of parents of children with special needs (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; George, Vickers & Barton, 2006; Jang & Appelbaum, 2010; Matthews et al., 2011; Sitimin et al., 2016). These studies had varied objectives, ranging from exploring the experiences of working parents of children with special needs (i.e. the limited support, negative and unsupportive attitudes that these parents receive in the workplace, the conflictual and facilitatory aspects of the work-family relations of these parents, the strategies they adopt in order to enhance WLB and their needs in order to better cope with work-life demands) to uncovering the role of government in supporting these parents to achieve a better work-life balance.

Moreover, a substantial amount of research has looked into the mental health of parents caring for atypically developing children (Hsiao, 2016; Mcbean & Schlosnagle, 2016; Vasilopoulou & Nisbet, 2016). Other studies have focused on the financial impact of caring for an atypically developing child (Clasquin-Johnson & Clasquin-Johnson, 2018; Parish & Cloud, 2006; Sharpe & Baker, 2007). Needless to say, most of these studies were qualitative studies due to the nature of the objectives. Some studies used surveys and others semi structured interviews to collect data. A few researchers also used quantitative analysis methods; for example, Brown (2014) used hierarchical regression analysis. Other researchers such as Al-Yagon and Cinamon, (2008) made use of both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods.

Apart from the diverse objectives of these previous studies, the nature of special needs inherent in the children of the parents that were studied is also very diverse. Al-Yagon

and Cinamon (2008) investigated mothers of children with learning disorders; Matthews et al. (2011) and Sitimin et al. (2016) studied parents of children with autism; Jang & Appelbaum (2010) studied parents of children with chronic illnesses such as pulmonary hypertension, asthma and cystic fibrosis as well as parents of children with disabilities or chronic conditions such as Asperger's syndrome and cognitive development issues; Brown (2014) studied parents of children with developmental disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder, pervasive developmental disorders, anxiety disorders, neurological disorders and down syndrome

The most common findings among these studies include the following:

- i. Flexibility in working hours and where work is carried out were consistently identified as among the best ways in which organisations can assist parents of children with special needs to balance their work and life roles (Brown, 2014; George et al., 2006; Jang & Appelbaum, 2010). Parents with more flexibility (specifically time flexibility) were noted to experience higher levels of role quality (Brown, 2014). In spite of this, studies on the work-family relations of parents of children with special needs reveal that only a few employers offer this flexibility. According to George et al. (2006) flexibility offered to these parents in the workplace was inextricably linked to employers' attitudes. Most employers were found to be unaware of the unrelenting stresses involved in caring for a child with special needs. Previous studies have therefore advocated training employers in order to enhance understanding of what caring for a child with special needs entails. This is anticipated to increase organisational understanding and thereby create more supportive work environments for these parents (George et al., 2006; Matthews, et al., 2011; Sitimin, et al., 2016).

Notwithstanding the ability of flexible work arrangements to assist parents of children with special needs in balancing their work and non-work demands, highly flexible work and non-work boundaries (resulting from flexible work arrangements) as well as frequent transitions between work and non-work activities (due to work and non-work activities being conducted in the same place) are anticipated to contribute to more work-life conflict (Matthew et al.,

2011). The argument is that the constant switching between domains is likely to create situations wherein parents experience increased perceptions of work-family conflict. However, this notion is noted to require further investigation.

- ii. Various forms of leave (i.e. carer's leave, family and community services leave) were also identified as having very good potential to alleviate some of the time and strain-based stress experienced by parents of children with special needs (George et al., 2006). However, most studies revealed that most forms of leave were rarely utilised by these parents because they were unpaid. The financial burden of caring for a child with special needs (i.e. higher health care costs and higher routine expenses) has been a barrier to the use of most forms of leave as most parents cannot afford to take unpaid leave. In support of this aspect Jang and Appelbaum (2010) posited that the trade-off between income and time off is one of the WLB challenges that is faced by parents of children with chronic conditions. George et al. (2006) also drew attention to the fact that most leave entitlements are not available to casual or contract workers, yet a significant portion of parents of children with special needs work part-time as they find it extremely difficult to maintain fulltime employment (Parish & Cloud, 2006; Vasilopoulou, & Nisbet, 2016). Fear of negative career consequences such as being placed on the "mommy track" (Brown, 2014, p. 855) (i.e. a career track that lacks opportunities for advancement) was also another reason why leave was rarely utilised by working parents of children with special needs.
- iii. Another great challenge experienced by parents of children with special needs in blending their work and life roles is trouble accessing appropriate childcare as a result of non-traditional work schedules or lack of child care facilities that are both equipped and willing to care for children with disabilities (Brown & Clark, 2017; Matthews et al., 2011; Sitimin et al., 2016). The excessive caring burden is also identified as one of the challenges faced by these parents (Sitimin et al., 2016). According to Jang and Appelbaum, (2010) some of the daily tasks and responsibilities of caring for a child with special needs include the following:
 - Giving children several medications (depending on the conditions some are taken at all hours of the day, some are taken every time a child eats)

- Attending doctor's visits
 - Preparing healthy meals (for some children with severe allergies all the food is prepared at home)
 - Attending various therapies and school activities
- iv. There also seems to be consensus in the work-family literature that most parents of children with special needs have experienced negative emotions such as severe emotional stress/depression, fear, grief, frustration, anger, guilt and despair at some point in their lives (i.e. either before or after diagnosis) (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Jang & Appelbaum, 2010). Although parents of children who are typically developing may experience the same negative emotions, parents of children with special needs are likely to experience higher levels of these negative emotions. According to Matthews et al. (2011), parents of children with special needs have limited opportunity to replenish resources. They have no chance to recover from work at home or disengage from home while at work. This is possibly the reason why they experience elevated levels of negative emotions.
- v. Although in most studies parents of children with special needs reported experiencing strain based as well as time based family-to-work conflict, in line with the conservation of resources theory some parents also reported experiencing work-family enrichment, what Brown (2014) referred to as the buffering effects of work. According to this theory, work became the domain where these parents sought to replenish resources and resultantly the work domain facilitated the family domain (Matthews et al., 2011). Consequently, work-family researchers have investigated both the conflictual and facilitatory aspects of the work-life interfaces of working parents of children with special needs. However, conflict between the work and family interfaces has received greater attention and little has been researched on the facilitatory aspects of the two domains.
- vi. Apart from the conservation of resources theory, other theories that have been used to conceptualise the work-life interfaces of parents of children with special needs include, but are not limited to, the following:

Ecological system theory — argues that an individual's work-life experiences are shaped by the dynamic and reciprocal interactions between the individual and their micro, meso, exo and macro systems throughout the individual's lifespan (Al-Yagon and Cinamon, 2008; Korabik et al., 2008; Matthews et al., 2011; McMillan et al., 2011).

Super's lifespan life space theory — proposes that there are reciprocal interactions and influences between the work and family domains as a result of permeable boundaries (Al-Yagon and Cinamon, 2008).

Boundary theory — has to do with the development and maintenance of boundaries in order to protect one domain (Matthews et al., 2011). It involves an evaluation of the meanings people attach to home and work, which informs decisions regarding domain integration or segmentation (Baltes et al., 2010).

Conservation of resources theory — argues that people strive to obtain, build, replenish and protect their resources, which include personal characteristics, energies, support, conditions and objects (Matthews et al., 2011; Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson & Kacmar, 2007).

Role theory — deals with assorted individual roles. It proposes that participation in multiple roles can be described by two complementary perspectives: scarcity and enhancement.

- According to the scarcity perspective, human energy is fixed and limited such that when a person has to perform multiple roles, the roles compete for his or her scarce time and energy. Additionally, time and energy expended in one life role becomes unavailable for use in another life role. The more roles a person has to fulfil and the higher their involvement in each role, the more energy gets depleted.
- Contrastingly, the enhancement or role accumulation expansionist perspective assumes that human energy is an expandable resource such that by engaging in multiple roles, people increase their overall

available energy. This perspective argues that the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that are derived from meeting role demands enhance energy and positive moods. According to the enhancement perspective, greater involvement in each role that a person has to fulfil fosters energy, as perceived extrinsic and intrinsic rewards energise the individual (Matthews et al., 2011; Stock, Bauer & Bieling, 2014).

As previously noted, the most commonly cited difficulties in attaining WLB experienced by parents of children with special needs include finding appropriate childcare facilities that offer optimal care for their children as well as meeting the financial burden of the children's care and treatment (George et al., 2006; Matthews et al., 2011; Sitimin et al., 2016). As a result of the financial burden of caring for these children, most parents (particularly single parents) cannot afford to take unpaid family leave or forgo their jobs in order to be fulltime caregivers to their children (Brown, 2014; Jang & Appelbaum, 2010). Therefore, they depend heavily on other caregivers or helpers (i.e. teachers, therapists, instructors) to provide their children with quality care, while they work to finance their treatment or simply take some time off from the tiring responsibility of caring for their children (Jang & Appelbaum, 2010; Sitimin et al., 2016). Consequently, carers and/or professionals working with children with special needs are an important resource in facilitating the work-life balance of parents of children with special needs. However, following a thorough review of the work-life literature, no studies could be found on the WLB of special needs children's caregivers (other than their parents). Therefore, in response to the call for expansion of the focus of interest for work-life research as noted by Matthews et al. (2011) the present study sought to close a gap in literature by exploring the work-life experiences of the unique population of professionals who work with special needs children.

2.6 Conclusion

WLB has become a prominent driver of talent retention in modern society. Consequently, the attraction, satisfaction and retention of personnel working with special needs children (especially in special education) has become a source of concern for industrial and organisational practitioners (Deery & Jago, 2015; Kirchmeyer, 2000; Simpson, Whelan & Zabel, 1993; Stempien & Loeb, 2002). There

is therefore a definite need to uncover how professionals who work with special needs children negotiate the integration of their work and personal lives in order to ensure positive spill-over between their work and life domains. This information is invaluable as it can be used for the management and retention of talented personnel in the special needs environment.

The purpose of this study was therefore to explore the individual WLB experiences of professionals who work with children with special needs. The study was an investigation into the potential stressor effects of working with children with special needs on the professionals' wellbeing and functioning. The research sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

Primary Questions

1. How do professionals who work with special needs children perceive their WLB and work-life satisfaction?
2. To what extent does the work domain impinge on the non-work domains of professionals who work with special needs children?
3. What are the effects of working with children with special needs on the professionals' wellbeing and functioning?

Secondary questions

4. What are the factors that influence the work-life balance of professionals who work with special needs children?
5. What strategies do they employ in order to cope with work-life demands?

Findings in the work-life literature suggest that conflict between the work and life domains induces feelings of stress and exhaustion, which resultantly impacts on job performance (Stock, Bauer & Bieling, 2014). The information from this study may therefore be used to develop strategies for coping with work-life stresses that are specifically suited to the needs of the unique population of professionals who work with special needs children. This is anticipated to ensure healthier lifestyles for these caregivers. Enriching their lives will consequently enhance their job attitudes and performance, which is critical to the functionality of the children under their care. Therefore, apart from improving the wellbeing of the professionals who work with

special needs children, a healthy WLB for these individuals will also translate into the enhancement of the wellbeing of the children under their care.

The next chapter (chapter 3) offers a detailed description of the research process that was followed during this qualitative study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of how the study was conducted, the specific philosophical assumptions and beliefs that informed the study, the unique strategy of inquiry and the specific research methods that were used. This study is unique in that it used a mixed method approach in which autoethnography and phenomenological research designs were inextricably intertwined. The study sought to explore the lived experiences of a sample of professionals who work with special children in order to discover the subjective meanings that they attach to WLB, the psychological capital resources that they use in negotiating WLB and the outcomes of WLB as they perceive them. However, I also felt that my personal experience of raising and caring for an autistic child (while being employed full time and completing a master's degree), made me more of an insider rather than an outsider in the knowledge generation process of this study. I felt that my experience had the potential to influence my observations, interpretations and generally how I would relay my participants' stories.

I therefore decided to make clear my position in this study from the onset by including glimpses of my personal journey as the parent of a child with autism; who struggled to strike a balance between the work and life domains. For this reason, autoethnography was incorporated as one of the research methods as it allowed me to look at the lives of my participants through the lens of my own personal experience, as illustrated by Saldana (2015) and Smith (2005). Although I was not actively participating in the study, I was able to incorporate interpretations of my own experience and to compare and contrast my personal experiences with those of my participants' in order to extend understanding and enhance their self-discovery. This study was therefore an inductive qualitative inquiry into the work-life balance of a sample of professionals who work

with special children, carried out through combined autoethnography and phenomenological research design.

3.2 Who am I and my relationship to the topic under study

I conducted this study as a 34-year old black African female; married and a first time mother to an amazing three-year old autistic boy (mild to moderate autism). I am Zimbabwean by nationality, belonging to the Shona cultural group, which is the largest Bantu ethnic group native to Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia. I am resident in a foreign country, South Africa, where my husband, son and I are the only members of our family living in the country. I am also an MCom student at one of the esteemed universities in the country. Additionally, I am a full-time earning specialist in a start-up company based in Pretoria.

I am a spiritual woman, Christian by religion, with a deep and meaningful relationship with God. My faith is extremely important to me and functions as one of the anchors that define me. It is this same faith that has helped me to handle my son's condition as well as I have. My religious background has led me to believe that one goes through trials and tribulations because God wants you to learn something from that particular situation. Therefore, I hope and pray that I have learnt or that I am yet to learn all that God intended me to learn from raising an autistic child. I also hope that He will be pleased with me when this phase in our life finally passes. My faith and belief in God give me peace in my heart that we have done what is humanly possible in assisting our son to reach his full potential; the rest lies in God's hands. I also believe that God works in His time and therefore when it is time in God's book, I will be able to have a conversation with my son about how his day at school was.

I come from a cultural background where "a woman's place is in the home" and resultantly raising a child is to a large extent the responsibility of the mother. By raising a child I refer to feeding, bathing, teaching, playing and generally taking care of the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child. In my culture a father's responsibility is mostly financial rather than the day to day (and night to night) hands-on nurturing of a child. In my culture it is also a wife's responsibility to ensure that the home is a clean, tidy, soothing haven in which one's husband and children

feel relaxed and comfortable. It is also a wife's responsibility to make daily meals for the family. So, in addition to my responsibilities as a student and a full-time employee, I had these responsibilities somewhat imposed on me by my culture. Sadly, my husband, being from the same cultural group, was very aware of what was expected of me as a wife and a mother, and he conformed rigidly to these expectations. Needless to say, with an autistic child and no family support to rely on, these cultural expectations were truly a tall order.

I remember times when I felt I was raising Nyasha alone. I think my husband felt that since he was such a generous provider, he did not have to bother himself with the day-to-day nitty-gritties of taking care of a child. From a cultural point of view he was doing his part. However, from my point of view I needed him to do more than just provide for the family financially. I needed him to offer to put Nyasha to bed while I finished up doing the dishes or to take him to the park so that I could catch up on some much needed sleep or even make a meal while I studied or caught up on some work. So my house for some time turned into a battlefield because I would constantly be complaining about how he was not helping me with everything that I had to do. From his point view I was nagging and being an ungrateful wife because he was doing exactly what he is culturally prescribed to do — provide financially.

I am also a very passionate person who values family, honesty, hard work and accountability and believes in the importance of having a good work-life balance. Because these values are central to my being, I wholeheartedly embrace my responsibilities as wife, mother, student and employee. As a result, I perform my responsibilities in these various life roles to the best of my ability. However, it was not long before I started feeling the emotional and physical burden of the demands of these roles. I felt I was drowning. Becoming a mother for the first time can be very overwhelming, so you can imagine how extremely overwhelmed I felt as a first time mom to an autistic child, in a full time job, with family support 427 miles away and in the process of completing a master's thesis at one of the top research institutions in Africa. They say one of the good qualities of parenting is patience. All I can say is that when raising an autistic child, patience is truly a cardinal virtue.

Nyasha is hyperactive, constantly on the move and climbing on every piece of furniture in the house. He even climbs on top of the fridge. He is also very curious and wants to know what everything is and to understand how it works. He even tried to fry himself an egg the other day (luckily the stove was switched off at the mains). Therefore, one really needs to be full of energy and alert at all times to keep up with him and ensure that he does not hurt himself.



Photograph 7: Nyasha in the freezer



Photograph 6: Nyasha in the washing machine

Needless to say, the only way to keep the house clean and orderly with him on the loose is by being on your feet all day long. For some reason having a neat and tidy house became extremely important to me. I think I desperately needed to feel I had things under control and still had some sort of control over the life that didn't feel like mine anymore. It felt as though the pace of my life was being dictated to me and that everything was spiralling out of control, making my head spin. To add to the hyperactivity, Nyasha also has a sleeping disorder. Despite all the energy-sucking activity he engages in all day long he does not feel the need to sleep as often or as long as other toddlers his age do. This means a sound, good night's sleep is a rare

commodity for me. I consider myself lucky on nights when I manage to get up to five uninterrupted hours of sleep. It is like having a new-born baby for three years straight.

Unfortunately for me, similar to most mothers of children with special needs, as indicated in Chapter 2 I needed to keep my job in order to lessen the financial burden of Nyasha's therapies, health care costs, school fees and my own university tuition. So I kept my full-time job and thanks to my empathetic bosses managed to negotiate some flexibility in my work hours and work location, which kept me fairly sane. I would drop-off Nyasha for therapy every morning and when I did not have to attend the sessions with him I would rush off to the office to put in some work. I would pick him up after the session and take him home where the nanny took over and I continued with my work at home. As a blessing and a curse my husband got a promotion to finance director, which alleviated the financial strain but also meant he had to put in more hours at work and frequently travel out of town. Consequently, this left me to deal with the demands of my various life roles all by myself.

My typical day started at 06.00 and ended around 20.00 or sometimes later when there was an urgent work assignment to complete. When you are working in a start-up company, the business is still trying to make a mark in the industry, claim its position in the market and prove it is just as good as or even better than its competitors. Consequently, this translated into long hours of work with no room for mistakes or disappointments. There was thus a lot of pressure from work, pressure that I think I would have handled with ease had it not been for all the other demands on my time. I constantly felt everyone wanted a piece of me and it was overwhelming.

Fortunately, I had an incredibly patient nanny who got on really well with Nyasha, which is extremely important for an autistic child. She stayed in three nights a week, which relieved some pressure on me because for those three nights I had someone to watch Nyasha and sometimes even to prepare dinner while I caught up on my studies or the missed hours of work when I was travelling to and from Nyasha's therapies. However, my day did not end there. On the two nights that I did not have live-in help, I also had to prepare dinner, clean up afterwards and get Nyasha ready for bed (things that my husband, in accordance with cultural expectations, never used to help with until I was on the verge of a breakdown and our marriage was in trouble). After Nyasha went to

bed, if I did not have some work to catch up on I then had confusing and boring academic articles full of technical jargon to read for my thesis, which is the last thing one would want to read when you are feeling as fatigued as I was. I therefore frequently went to bed after midnight. If I was lucky Nyasha would sleep through the night and then we would start the vicious cycle all over again the next day.

Weekends were no different as Nyasha was always on the go and the nanny worked Mondays to Fridays, which left me drained with a super busy Nyasha and no nanny to the rescue. On weekends there was homework from Nyasha's therapy sessions that I needed to do with him before his next sessions the following week. In between the homework I tried to do some fun things with him, like going to the park, spending the day at the dam or going for a walk so that we could spend some quality time together. Daddy tagged along when he did not have to work. I often felt extremely guilty that I did not spend as much time with him as I would have wanted to, so on weekends I tried to have fun-filled quality time with him.



Photograph 8: Fun things with Nyasha



Photograph 9: Weekend things

However, even after all this activity Nyasha still never took an afternoon nap unless he was ill (which was even more stressful than dealing with his hyper activity). I only got to get some rest when he finally went to bed in the evening. I begged God in my

prayers every night to pour the Holy Spirit onto him, so that he could fall into a deep sleep and I could get some much needed rest. By the time we got to the end of the week I would be so exhausted I would just want to sleep and not wake up for a week.

Against this background I certainly began this study with convictions about the physical and emotional fatigue arising from the stress of working with and caring for children with special needs. I was however fully aware of the danger that my personal journey might influence my perspective, the manner in which I interacted with my participants, what I observed during the course of the study and the way in which I interpreted what I observed. I therefore took full responsibility for my positionality in this research project by clarifying who I am and my relationship to the topic and acknowledging the potential effect that it had on the participants, the knowledge generation process and the outcome of the study. Additionally, I constantly used self-reflection, self-analysis and critical self-examination to ensure that my personal experience enhanced rather than contaminated the study.

3.3 Research paradigm

A research paradigm as defined by the encyclopaedia of qualitative research is a set of philosophical assumptions, perceptual orientations and beliefs about the nature of reality and humanity (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how that knowledge can be produced (epistemology) as well as the role of the knower in the knowledge construction process (anthropology), which then informs the research methodologies to be adopted for a particular study (Bergh, 2013; Creswell, 2003; Tuli, 2010).

The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm was used to inform the inquiry process of this study because the primary goal was to understand the lived experiences from the point of view of a sample of professionals who work with special children. The study sought to gain understanding of the WLB phenomenon within the specific context in which it was studied. The participants were therefore studied in their naturalistic environment with no control over events that occurred or any manipulation from the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm was also identified as appropriate because it acknowledges that although the researched are central to the knowledge generation process of the study, the

researcher is also an important part of the meaning construction process. The paradigm was thus suitable because in as much as it emphasised “the world of experience as it is lived, felt, undergone by social actors” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 236), it also appreciates and acknowledges the significance of the interaction between the researcher and the researched in the “collective generation of meaning” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 240). Moreover, the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm allowed the researcher to make interpretations of participants’ histories, actions and language for the purpose of enhancing understanding of the WLB phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). For all these reasons the interpretivism/constructivism philosophy was identified as the most fitting paradigm to shape and govern the process of inquiry for this particular study.

3.4 Research approach and design

A research approach refers to an inquiry strategy or the type of research activity that is used in solving a research problem in a particular study (Kotze, n.d.). A research design on the other hand is a comprehensive and exhaustive plan detailing how a specific study was conducted (Miller & Salkind, 2002). The research problem that needed solving in this case was the need to close an existing gap in the WLB literature by uncovering details about the WLB experiences of professionals who work with special needs children. As illustrated in Chapter 2, no previous studies could be found that investigated the WLB of this specific sample of individuals. The investigation of this sample of professionals’ experiences of WLB was therefore conducted through an inductive qualitative inquiry carried out through phenomenological and autoethnographical research designs.

Unlike quantitative research that arrives at findings by means of statistical procedures and other means of quantification, qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach, in which the phenomenon of interest is studied in its real world setting (Golafshani, 2003). Qualitative inquiries seek to understand, describe and explain the meaning of phenomena with very little disruption to the natural setting in which the phenomenon occurs (Fox & Bayat, 2007; Kegler et al., 2019; Merriam, 1998). These approaches are concerned with the way people interpret, construct and attach meaning to their experiences (Becker et al., 2002). For these reasons, I identified qualitative research

as the most suitable approach for my study because of its capacity to provide in-depth descriptions of the meaning of WLB, as constructed and/or ascribed by this unique sample of professionals who work with special needs children. The flexibility of the qualitative approach allowed me to probe beneath surface appearance, which in turn provided me with thick data about the WLB of this sample of professionals. Furthermore, in line with Denzin and Lincoln's (2013, p. 3) definition of qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world", this approach allowed for extensive personal contact with the participants over a period of time for the purpose of establishing the meaning of the WLB phenomenon from their point of view (Creswell, 2003; Tuli, 2010).

An inductive inquiry on the other hand refers to an approach that is explorative, where the aim is to develop new theory based on thick descriptions of data gathered; rather than test an already developed theory (Creswell, 2003). As previously noted, no previous studies have been found that focused on the WLB of professionals who work with special children; therefore, the variables that needed to be investigated for this study were unknown and needed to be explored (Creswell, 2003). The inductive qualitative approach was therefore chosen as an appropriate inquiry strategy because it allowed for the exploration of the professionals' lived experiences in order to unmask the subjective meanings that they attach to WLB, the psychological resources that they use in negotiating WLB and the outcomes of WLB as they perceive them (Tuli, 2010). Typical of an inductive inquiry, this study began with the recording of observations of interactions between the sample of professionals and the special children under their care. Any theories and/or patterns of meaning inferred from these observations were only inductively developed and proposed towards the end of the research process.

A phenomenological design was identified as suitable for the study for its ability to enable the systematic study of phenomena that are difficult to observe and measure (Wilding, & Whiteford 2005). Phenomenology involves studying a small number of participants in order to gain a thorough understanding of their lived experiences and the unique meaning attached to these experiences (Creswell, 2003; Van Manen, 2017). According to Wilding and Whiteford (2005) it is concerned with the phenomenon itself and revealing something that has received little attention or

something that is not well understood. A phenomenological design was seen as a fitting design for this study, given that WLB is difficult to observe and measure and that the WLB of professionals who work with special needs children has had limited research attention. Additionally, the emphasis in phenomenology on description, context, gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of participants and viewing the world from the participants' perspective also influenced the decision to include it as a suitable research design for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Finlay, 2013; Groenewald, 2004).

However, a methodological limitation associated with phenomenology is that the researcher usually has some connection, stake or experience in the situation under study, which makes the process of knowledge creation complex and challenging (Williams, 2011). To keep this limitation in check, I decided to make my ontological and epistemological position and its potential influence in the study crystal clear. This led to the decision to include autoethnography as one of the research approaches used in the knowledge generation process of this study.

Autoethnography is defined as a type of narrative research that offers "highly personalised accounts that draw upon the experience of the researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Autoethnography as a research method offered me the opportunity to share my journey as a married, full time employee, who is also a master's student and a mother to an autistic three-year-old boy, soon to be four. It allowed me to use my personal experience as a lens through which I looked at the lived experiences of my participants in order to gain greater understanding of them. Additionally, I was able to enrich my participants' stories by incorporating my views, thoughts and feelings regarding my own struggle to negotiate work-life balance in the interpretation and analysis of their stories, as proposed by Chang (2016) and Smith (2005).

One limitation associated with autoethnography concerns its academic rigor and methodological soundness as a result of its subjective nature. In order to minimise the effects of such a limitation, reflexivity (i.e. internal self-dialogue and critical self-examination) was used throughout the research process to ensure that researcher subjectivity and researcher bias (potentially emerging from my own personal

experience of raising a child with special needs) was closely monitored in order to facilitate qualitative research practice that was reliable, valid, credible and ethical (Darawsheh, 2014; Finlay & Ballinger, 2006).

3.5 Sampling

The study population for this research was professionals who work with special needs children in therapy and in pre-primary and primary schools that are classified as special education schools, located in Gauteng Province in South Africa. I identified therapists, tutors, assistant tutors, instructors and a nurse in these schools as a suitable sample for this research because they work specifically with special children. Non-probability sampling was adopted to purposively select professionals from the study population. According to Uprichard (2013) this refers to a sampling procedure in which data sources are selected for the purpose of extending and deepening knowledge about the sample itself rather than making wider inferences about the population.

Purposive sampling was considered appropriate for the study because it selects participants based on the anticipated richness and relevance of information to be provided in relation to the study's research questions (Emmel, 2013; Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbin, 2015). This allowed the researcher to use personal judgement to target suitable individuals. It also allowed the researcher to stop recruiting more participants once no more significant new information was being obtained. Therefore, the number of professionals selected for participation depended on data saturation.

Additionally, snowball sampling, in which the researcher accesses research participants through referrals provided by other participants, was also used to recruit study participants (Geddes, Parker & Scott, 2018; Noy, 2008). After completing an interview with a purposively selected participant, the researcher would ask the participant to refer any other professionals that they knew who currently worked with special needs children. This chain referral process enabled the researcher to include participants that she would not otherwise have accessed. Moreover, this sampling method is simple and cost effective (Noy, 2008).

A limitation associated with non-probability sampling is that it has greater scope for selection bias owing to researcher control over the recruitment of participants (Tansey, 2007). However, for this particular study, selection as a participant was based on current experience working with special children; hence there was not much room for selection bias. Additionally, the snowball sampling included individuals who were referrals from previous participants and not necessarily the researcher's selection. A limitation specific to purposive sampling is researcher judgement on the credibility (honesty and truthfulness) of recruited participants. To reduce the impact of this limitation, I consistently encouraged the participants to respond as truthfully as possible. This was achieved through reminding them that this was an anonymous study, hence their names would not appear in the interview notes and they could not be personally identified via their responses. Lastly, a sampling limitation for this study is that the findings from the study cannot be generalised beyond this specific sample (Creswell, 2003). Nonetheless, generalisability was not the aim of the study.

3.6 Data Collection

Informed by interpretivist-constructivist assumptions, the data gathering methods that were employed in this study were multiple unstructured in-depth interviews (with the assistance of an interview guide, Appendix A), naturalistic observations, field notes, and personal memory. Unstructured in-depth exploratory interviews were an appropriate data gathering technique for this study because they offered the necessary flexibility to probe and uncover embedded meaning from the lived experiences of this sample of professionals working with special children. The interviews facilitated the study's goal to collect "thick descriptions" (Tuli, 2010) of participants' views of WLB, the subjective meanings they attach to their work-life experiences, the strategies they employ to reconcile the two domains and the outcomes that result from a good balance between their work and life spheres as they perceived it. The interviews were audio taped and later transcribed.

Unstructured observations were also used to complement the interview method. Unstructured observations refer to field surveillances made without ascribing to a strict checklist of pre-set behaviours to look out for (Mulhall, 2003). Although researchers using this method may have some ideas regarding what to observe, they do not focus

solely on the observation of these predetermined ideas. For this particular research, participants were fully aware of the researcher's role as an observer engaging in sporadic observation alongside interviewing. Participants for the study were therefore observed (with their consent) as they conducted their daily work activities (i.e. working with special children). This was necessary in order to gain an understanding of the nature of their work, the context in which they operate and their interactions with the special children in their care.

Unstructured observations were an appropriate tool for use in the present interpretive/naturalistic research because data was captured in a more natural setting, which was useful in facilitating understanding and interpretation of behaviour (Mulhall, 2003). One of the benefits of using naturalist observations to complement the interviews was that the researcher was able to observe what the professionals actually do, as opposed to what they think they do or what they would like others to think they do, which is likely to be the information gathered from the interviews (Caldwell & Atwal, 2005).

Limitations associated with observation as a data collection technique include that it is reliant on the subjectivity of the researcher in choosing what to observe and what to record, particularly when there is only one observer (Caldwell & Atwal, 2005). Two ways in which this pitfall may be addressed is to use multiple observers, if feasible, or to video record the observations. However, because of the need to keep participants anonymous, video recording could not be used in this study. It was also not possible to get a peer involved with this part of the study since everyone was busy with their own studies. Additionally, there was the potential risk that participants altered their behaviour because they were aware that they were being observed (Caldwell & Atwal, 2005; Mulhall, 2003). However, according to literature, researchers who have used observation as a technique contend that most participants are bound to revert back to their normal behaviour after the researcher's initial entry into the field, thereby diminishing the potential impact of the Hawthorne effect (Mulhall, 2003). Additionally, prolonged engagement with the participants for the purposes of creating trust and testing for misinformation or distortions was also used in overcoming the reactive effects of the observer's presence. Lastly, observation is a very time consuming data gathering technique (Mouton, 2001).

Observational notes were used as a data gathering technique in this study. These are detailed notes recording participant observation data taken before, during and after entry into the field. The notes entail details regarding:

- 1) The environment (i.e. field setting)
- 2) The behaviour, interactions etc. of the participants
- 3) The daily activities of participants
- 4) Dialogue
- 5) Personal reflexive thoughts about events occurring in the field (Mulhall, 2003).

I therefore also kept a reflective journal in addition to a field notebook.

Personal memory was also used as a source of information in the study. I used it primarily to recollect events that occurred in my personal journey as well as to recall events that occurred during the course of the study. Limitations associated with personal memory as a data collection method include its subjective nature and the fact that memory is selective and tends to portray partial truths. However, as previously stated, researcher subjectivity in this study was embraced as proposed by Finlay and Ballinger (2006), rather than seen as a contamination that needed to be eliminated. The purpose of including glimpses of my personal story in the study was to outline clearly how my personal experience informed and supplied the cultural assumptions I invoked when interpreting the participants' stories. Therefore, personal memory data was used to relay events in my journey as I perceived them because that was my reality. Additionally, field journal notes were used in conjunction with personal memory to capture events that occurred during the course of the study.

I also decided to use photographs to complement personal memory in gathering data from myself. Photographs were used in the study as a way to furnish evidence of events that took place in my own personal journey as a parent of a child with autism. As posited by Harper (1994), they were used as undeniable static records of the truth. They were also used for the purpose of capturing and describing my life story (Erdner & Magnusson, 2011). In order to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants, the use of photographs was restricted to the collection of auto ethnographic data; therefore, no photographs of events that occurred during the course of the study were taken.

3.7 Data Analysis

Conventional content analysis was adopted as the non-numeric data analysis technique for the study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This technique is suitable for a study design that aims to describe phenomena and/or a study with limited research literature for the phenomenon under study, all of which applies to the current research. Conventional content analysis was also an appropriate technique because it allowed for researcher immersion in the data collected for purposes of gaining a holistic understanding of the data before any clusters or patterns of meaning and common themes could be sought (Williams, 2011).

Collected data was read iteratively in as unbiased a manner as possible, before any codes could be derived directly from the textual data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). After this process had been repeated multiple times, labels for codes emerged directly from the text as initial coding schemes. Thereafter the codes were categorised into meaningful clusters based on relations or links between the codes as well as arguments that could be inferred from the text. These clusters were added to and subtracted from until an appropriate set of categories and subcategories were finalised. I used traditional coding for the analysis and depended on my own organisational skills to keep track of the coding frames. Thereafter, themes and sub-themes were determined and defined in order to simplify the reporting of findings.

A major strength of content analysis is that no preconceived categories are imposed on the data, but are derived directly from the text instead. Additionally, content analysis is also widely recognised as being transparent and methodical (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016).

As a possible limitation, when interpreting the data gathered during the research process there is a risk of researcher bias since the researcher's personal, cultural and historical experiences influenced the interpretations (Mouton, 2001). However, in accordance with the interpretivist ontological and epistemological assumption that the researcher and the researched cannot be separated, researcher subjectivity was embraced and used to enhance rather than contaminate the study (Tuli, 2010; Mulhall, 2003). Furthermore, as proposed by Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick,

(2008) and Theron (2015), the initial coding and analysis of the data was shared with participants in order to get them to confirm and validate the researcher's interpretation of the textual data before themes could be developed. Sharing the initial coding framework with the participants mitigated the risk of lone researcher bias and in turn enhanced the credibility of the study. Additionally, strategies for ensuring quality and rigour in qualitative inquiry were also employed to mitigate the limitations imposed by the chosen research methodology, design and methods, as detailed below.

3.8 Demonstrating the quality and rigour of the proposed research design

A number of strategies were employed to ensure quality and rigour in this study. In order to ensure the credibility of the findings, member checking, defined as the process through which the researcher clarifies and confirms the interpretation of information from the participants, was employed to establish the truth or correctness of information gathered during the first round of interviews (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Additionally, the process of immersion — which according to Vaismoradi et al. (2016) refers to establishing a closeness with the data through careful reading of transcripts, listening to tapes and studying notes — was used to ensure researcher awareness of participants' "life worlds", thereby enhancing accuracy of interpretation (Wilding & Whiteford 2005, p. 102). Moreover, the authenticity of the study was enhanced through both data triangulation, which refers to the use of different sources of information (i.e. tutors, therapists, a nurse and behavioural instructors) and methodological triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple qualitative methods (i.e. interviews, observations and recordings) (Golafshani, 2003; Groenewald, 2004; Tongco, 2007).

Reflexivity, defined as a continuous process of internal dialogue and critical self-examination in order to recognise and acknowledge the impact of the researcher's positionality on the research process and findings, was employed throughout the research process to facilitate a reliable, valid, and credible study (Berger, 2015). As clearly illustrated in Section 3.1, I positioned myself in the study and explicitly acknowledged the potential effect that my beliefs, values, attitudes, feelings, perceptions and personal experiences may have had on the research process, the findings of the study and the reporting of the findings. Somewhat similar to reflexivity,

“bracketing”, which refers to the deliberate effort by the researcher to put aside his/her beliefs about the phenomena under investigation; was also used in data collection and data analysis to mitigate contamination of the research findings (Chan, Fung & Chien, 2013; Wilding and Whiteford, 2005). Bracketing was therefore employed to minimise researcher biases and predispositions and enhance the credibility of the study, as posited by Wilding and Whiteford (2005).

3.9 Ethical considerations

A research protocol outlining how the study was to be conducted and the application for authorisation to conduct the study were submitted to the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. Authorisation to carry out the research was granted. Following receipt of clearance, the selected participants were furnished with details regarding the purpose of the study, its objectives, the procedure that would be followed and the risks and benefits of the research (Groenewald, 2004).

Participants were also informed of their rights as research participants, after which their written consent for participation in the study was solicited prior to the interviewing process (Groenewald, 2004). They were issued with a consent form (see Appendix B) detailing that participation in the study was voluntary and that no incentives would be offered to entice participation. However, they would be offered feedback of the findings of the study. The consent form also further reassured them of confidentiality and anonymity by clearly stating that data collected during the research process would be password protected and any notes taken in the field would be stored under lock and key. Moreover, they were assured that information collected would be used solely for research purposes as previously explained to them. The form also informed them of their right to opt out of the study with no consequences at any time during the research process.

3.10 Conclusion

The above account details my ontological and epistemological position in the study as well as its potential effect. It also describes the strategies that were used in ensuring that my positionality did not colour or influence my interpretation of the participants’

stories. The chapter discusses the research paradigm that underpins the research methodologies that were adopted in the study. It sets out the process that was followed in selecting participants for the study, collecting the data and analysing it. The chapter concludes by giving an account of the various strategies that were employed to ensure that the study was valid, reliable and credible. The next chapter (Chapter 4) details the findings or results of the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a synopsis of the results of the study. The chapter begins by presenting the characteristics of the sample of professionals who participated in the study. It goes on to display the characteristics of the children under the participants' care. Key concepts that emerged from the data during the first cycle of coding are then presented as the initial coding scheme. Themes and subthemes that were inductively developed during the second cycle of coding are also presented. The chapter ends with an overview of the findings under each theme and using verbatim quotes to illustrate the findings.

4.2 The Results

This section provides a report of the findings of the study based upon the methodologies applied to gather the information, as detailed in Chapter 3.

4.2.1 Sample Characteristics

All the participants in the study were female. Their ages ranged from 23 years old to 54 years old, with an average age of 37; 56% of the sample were married and 44% were single; 56% had children and 44% did not have any children. The average number of years that the sample had working with special needs children was nine and the average number of hours worked per day was eight. Table 4 presents the participants' biographical information.

Table 4. 1 Participants' Biographical Details

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Marital status</u>	<u>No of children</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Tenure</u>	<u>Work hours</u>
1	Female	29	African	Married	None	Autism Technician	8 years	7.30am to 5pm
2	Female	49	White	Married	3	Speech Therapist	23 years	7am to 4pm
3	Female	39	African	Married	2	Assistant Tutor	6 months	6.30am to 2pm
4	Female	39	African	Single	2	Assistant Tutor	5 months	10am to 5.30pm
5	Female	27	White	Single	None	Tutor	6 years	6.30am to 2pm
6	Female	23	White	Married	None	Tutor	4years	6.30am to 3pm
7	Female	27	African	Single	1	Autism Technician	4 years	8am to 4pm
8	Female	54	White	Single	None	School Nurse	11 years	7am to 3pm
9	Female	49	White	Married	3	Occupational Therapist	26 years	7am to 1.45pm

4.2.2 Child Characteristics

The children under the participants' care suffered from a variety of pathologies, as illustrated in Table 5, and their ages ranged from birth to 18 years old.

Table 4. 2 Characteristics of the Children Under the Participants' Care

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Age range</u>	<u>Pathologies</u>	<u>Total # of children under one's care</u>
1	3 – 17 years	ASD spectrum ranging from high support needs to low support needs children (do not get told specifics)	One-on-one therapy with six (6) children
2	18 months – 3 years	Autism, cerebral palsy, brain damage, feeding problems, sensory problems, articulation disorders, reading and spelling difficulties	One-on-one therapy with 50 – 60 children
3	7 – 14 years	ASD spectrum	A class of six children
4	5 – 16 years	ASD spectrum	A class of eight children
5	3 – 16 years	Different disabilities (speech & language delay, physical handicaps, autism etc.)	A class of eight children (with a cognitive level of one, two and three year olds)
6		ASD spectrum	A class of seven children (who can almost function as a Grade R class)
7	8 – 16 years	Low functioning & high functioning autism, down syndrome, learning disabilities (children with deficits in concentration or memory)	One-on-one therapy with four children
8	6 – 18 years	ASD spectrum, ADHD, severe and mild intellectual disabilities, hearing disabilities, down syndrome, epileptic children, visual problems i.e. partially sighted or blind, various other physical and neuro developmental problems	The only nursing sister for 350 children (31 classes) in the school.
9	Birth – 17 years	ASD spectrum, cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus children, epileptic children, down syndrome, speech delays and developmental delays (Some come with diagnoses, some not)	One-on-one therapy with twenty 22 children

4.2.3 Initial coding schemes

After the researcher had listened to the interview audio recordings several times and following iterative reading of the transcripts, the researcher developed the following 48 initial coding schemes as per Appendix G. Table 6 provides the initial coding framework.

Table 4. 3 Initial Coding Framework

<u>Initial codes</u>	<u>Colour code in transcriptions</u>
Prior contact	Tan text
Context	Green text + teal highlight
Work hours	Gold text
The nature of work	Grey 25% highlight
Specific job or work responsibilities	Yellow highlight
Child characteristics	Blue lighter 60% text + grey highlight 50%
Work Characteristics	Light orange text + blue highlight
Expertise in a particular field	Orange text
Transdisciplinary working	Indigo text bold + bright green highlight
No fixed schedules/Lack of routine	Pink text
Intrinsic rewards and motivation	Light blue text + violet highlight
Personal development and growth	Purple text
One-on-one interaction	Orange text + dark blue highlight
After hours work/late hours	Light blue text + teal highlight
High mental focus	Dark purple text + grey highlight 25%
Sense of responsibility	Yellow text + green highlight
Mental and/or emotional strain	Light green text + dark blue highlight
Physical demands	Sky blue + green highlight
Work-related personality demands	Lavender text + dark blue highlight
The work environment	Plum text + bright green highlight
Work challenges	Light green text + violet highlight
Participant personality	Turquoise text
Character traits	Rose text
Passion	Green text
Commitment	Dark red text
Life outside of work	Light yellow text + dark red highlight
Family Sphere	Pink text and teal highlight

Ages of own children	Light blue text + dark red highlight
Subjective meanings of WLB	Yellow text + Teal highlight
Personal experiences of WLB	Sky blue text + pink highlight
Family perceptions of WLB	Rose text + yellow highlight
Antecedents of WLB	Gold (lighter 40%) text + dark blue highlight
Perceived control over WLB	Light yellow text + teal highlight
Outcomes of a lack of WLB	Light blue text + dark yellow highlight
Challenges faced in reconciling work and life	Dark teal text
Strategies for achieving WLB	Blue highlight
Emotional detachment	Dark blue text + pink highlight
Positive self-talk	Teal text + green highlight
Time management & effective prioritising	Dark teal text + yellow highlight
Active segmentation	Light yellow text + violet highlight
Choosing to have quality of life	White text and dark red highlight
Setting boundaries and boundary management	Light orange text
Rest and relaxation	Dark green text + grey 25% highlight
Getting into character	Blue text
Peer support	Light yellow text + green highlight
Support from family and friends	Light yellow text + pink highlight
Faith in God & Prayer	Pink text + grey 25% highlight
Counselling	Lavender text and green highlight
Wellness Courses	Yellow text and blue highlight

4.2.4 Theme Emergence

Following further analysis and examination of all data within a particular code across transcripts, as per Appendix G (i.e. formulating meanings and identifying patterns of meaning), the following seven themes and 24 sub-themes emerged from the data.

THEME 1 - NATURE OF WORK

This refers to the type of work performed, the circumstances in the job and/or the conditions under which the professionals work as well as inherent job/work characteristics.

SUB-THEMES

- i. **Specific job tasks or work responsibilities** (the actual work that these professionals do)
- ii. **Child characteristics** (the ages, pathologies and number of children under a professional's care)
- iii. **Job/work characteristics** (the aspects specific to the participants' jobs)
 - Expertise in a particular field
 - Personal development and growth
 - One-on-one interaction
 - Sense of responsibility embedded in the job
 - Mental and/or emotional strain
 - After hours work and late hours
 - Lack of routine
 - Physical demands
 - Transdisciplinary working
 - Work related personality demands
 - High spirited
 - Soft-hearted/tender-hearted
 - Composed
 - Flexible and adaptable
 - Patient
 - Supportive
 - A good listener
- iv. **The work environment** (the overall feel of how the participants experience their work environment)
- v. **Work challenges** (the day to day difficulties or problems encountered by the professionals in their specific jobs)
- vi. **Intrinsic rewards and motivation** (the feelings of contentment and satisfaction attached to the work [as a result of its meaningfulness] that in turn motivate behaviour)

THEME 2 - PERSONALITY

This refers to the personal characteristics and/or qualities displayed by this sample of professionals

SUB-THEME

- i. **Character traits**
 - Passion (refers to feelings of intense enthusiasm and enjoyment of work or a compelling desire for the work)
 - Commitment (refers to the quality of being dedicated to a cause)

THEME 3 - NON-WORK DOMAIN

Refers to this sample of professionals' life outside of work i.e. the activities that they engage in, in life domains other than the work domain

SUB-THEMES

- i. **Life outside of work:**
 - Family
 - Personal care
 - Leisure
 - pursuing interests
 - Study or education
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Social

THEME 4 - WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Refers to the WLB issues of this sample of professionals who work with special needs children.

SUB-THEMES

- i. **Subjective meanings of WLB** (the meanings attached to WLB by this sample of professionals)
- ii. **Personal experiences of WLB** (the individual experiences of WLB for this sample of professionals).
 - Perceived control over WLB
 - Family perceptions of participants' WLB
- iii. **Antecedents of WLB** (the specific aspects that precede WLB for this sample of professionals who work with special needs children)
 - Technology
 - Partner support/assistance with role fulfilment
 - Ages of own children
 - Job autonomy
 - Number of hours worked

THEME 5 - CHALLENGES RECONCILING WORK & LIFE

This refers to the specific challenges that this sample of professionals who work with special needs children face in attempting to integrate their work and non-work domains.

NO SUB-THEMES FOUND

THEME 6 - OUTCOMES OF A LACK OF WLB

The consequences of a lack of WLB for this sample of professionals

NO SUB-THEMES FOUND

THEME 7 - STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING WLB

The plans, schemes or tactics employed by this sample of professionals in efforts to cope with demands from the work and life spheres.

SUB-THEMES

- i. Positive self-talk
- ii. Emotional detachment
- iii. Time management & effective prioritising
 - To-do-lists
- iv. Setting boundaries and boundary management
- v. Choosing quality of life
- vi. Active segmentation
- vii. Rest and relaxation
- viii. Getting into character
- ix. Peer support
- x. Support from family and friends
- xi. Faith in God and Praying
- xii. Counselling
- xiii. Wellness courses

4.2.5 Findings per theme

The following is an overview of the findings of the study per theme.

THEME 1 - NATURE OF WORK

SUB-THEME: Specific work responsibilities

The specific job tasks or day-to-day duties performed by this sample of professionals who work with special children are vast and they vary depending on one's line of work, the children's pathologies, their severity, the ultimate goals of intervention and whether it is within a school or therapy environment. Below are exemplars of the diversity of these professionals' work tasks (see Appendix G for the comprehensive list of tasks).

Participant 1

... to give one-on-one therapy to children with autism.

It's looking at a child holistically and then identifying the gaps. ... then we know build a skills repertoire in that domain.

I mean if it means I have to go to school with this child so that the kid can adapt to the school environment... I will be in Grade 1 class. Shadowing the child throughout the day.

Participant 2

... my goal, ultimate goal in the end is for the children to be able to communicate. So whether I do alternative communication to teach them that pictures can mean something... or I teach them to speak... and then feeding therapy where I have to actually help them to either due to a motor problem, develop things.

Participant 3

Also, like changing diapers... And when they are playing also we're playing with them, singing with them, doing everything with them.

Participant 5

... we have to manage the class basically. ... I have to plan out everything. I will do my morning ring with them, sing a song, read a story, do colours, all of that. ... we have life skills which I teach them something like we have to brush our hair, tie your shoelaces on your own. ...we have music, dance, play with instruments whatever, they just danced now...

Participant 6

... I can do a little bit of normal school work, yes. ... They can do sounds, they can more or less write. They can count, they can do shapes, they can do patterns...

Participant 7

... so we call them catch-up kids. They go to mainstream school. ...And then at the end of their school day they'll come to us, and then we'll just basically, as the term suggest, help them catch up to their peers, to their classroom, and just help them learn better in class. ... So, we're trying to equip the children with the skills.

... with the children on the spectrum you also work a lot on behavior, you know.

Participant 8

... there are children that receive medication every day. And every hour on the hour there are children that get medication. ... I must still check but did all the children get their medication today.

So, a lot of my time goes in a sense, in educating the parents. But also, to give a listening ear to the parents.

And then because many of our children have medical conditions, and they go for check-ups, I follow up on that. ... We prepare a report for the doctor to say how is the child at the moment, if there are improvements, if there are concerns, to get feedback from the doctor.

Participant 9

... sometimes it's just babies that don't reach their milestones and then you have to help them to... help them to cope in their environment, in the school ... And also helping the parents and the family to cope with the special needs kid...

SUB-THEME: Child Characteristics

The characteristics of the children under the participant's care are also quite diverse, as illustrated in Table 6. What is worth noting is that in school environments the children are put in a class based on their abilities rather than their age or pathology. Hence you may find a 14-year-old child (who is still being potty trained and in diapers) in the infants' class. Participant 3 said the following:

Like in our class it's... We're calling it the stimulation room, because it's the babies.

When asked about the age ranges of the children in the stimulation group she responded that they are between the ages of 7 and 14 years old.

SUB-THEME: Job/Work Characteristics

Below are the pertinent work characteristics that were found to be inherent in this sample of professionals' jobs as well as the frequency with which they were raised across participants. These were aspects specific to the participants' jobs that make up the nature of their work.

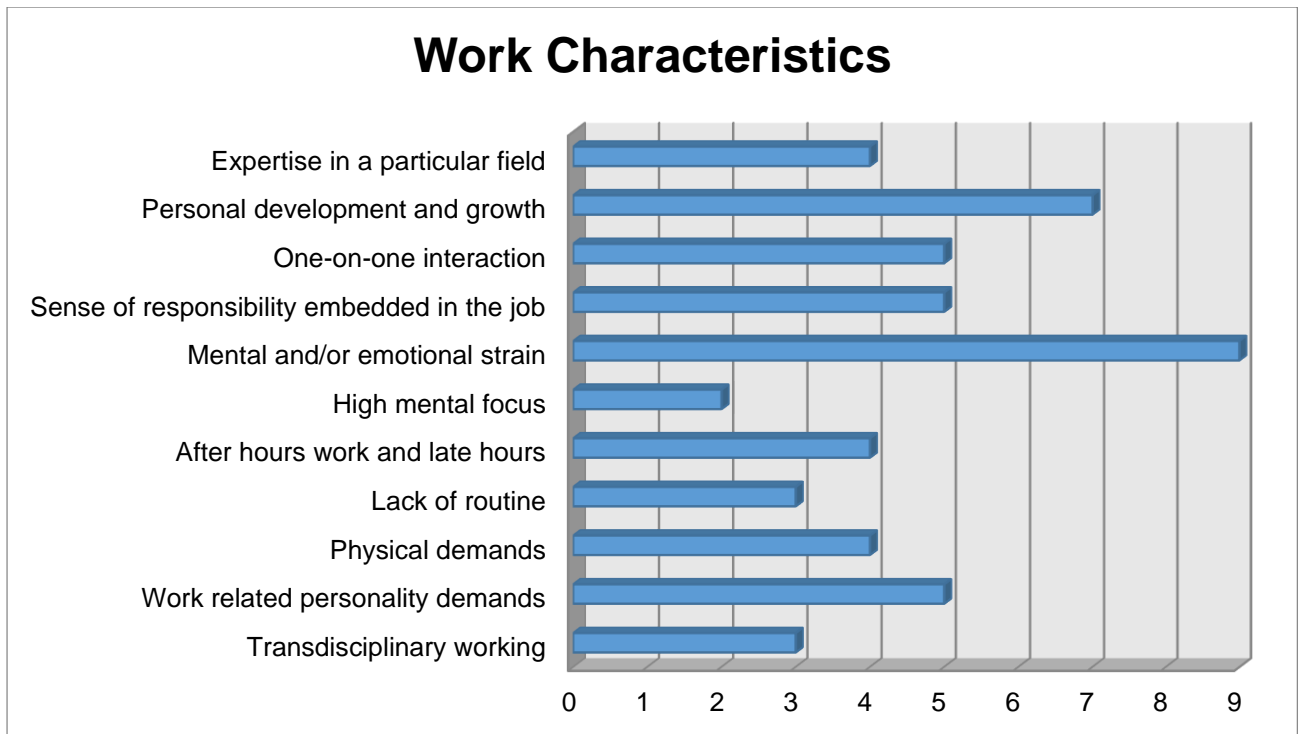


Figure. 4. 1 Frequency counts of work characteristics specific to sampled professionals

Expertise and/or specialisation in a particular field

Four participants revealed that they have specialised and have expertise in specific areas of intervention for children with special needs. Although the fifth participant is still busy with her studies she indicated that she intends to specialise in art therapy. Below are exemplars of this aspect.

Participant 1

I am a Board Certified Autism Technician.

... I am certified by the applied behaviour analysis board, which is based in America, to give one-on-one therapy to children with autism.

Participant 2

Our degree, when I studied it was called Logopedica, so it's B Log, it's the short. Nowadays they call it Communication Pathology, I think. ... so I started working in 1992, and I've been in the profession all the time. ... I took off 3 years from the profession.

Participant 8

I've got a Honours' degree in nursing. Ja, and I did general nursing, psychiatric nursing, midwifery and community health.

Participant 9

I did my degree in occupational therapy and then I did my NDT (the neuro development, that's more the physio of the movement part). And I did my sensory integration (that's a sensory integration, making sense of the environment.) And I did my floor time also.

Personal development and growth

Six participants emphasised the need to continuously develop oneself in their work environments in order to remain relevant and be able to better assist the children under their care. One participant had the following to say:

Participant 1

... you know with the way things are changing, medication is changing, the environment is changing, so you need to know what's gonna work for your kid.

One participant also referred to developmental enrichment gains she acquires from her job; she said:

Participant 8

... I've been taught. So, I thought I'm going to come and teach somebody, but I'm the one that learnt. So, I've learnt tremendously. I mean, the diagnosis of children. I mean, 11 years ago we didn't know a lot about autism, so in that area I've learnt a lot.

One-on-one interaction

Four participants explained that their work involves having one-on-one interactions with the children under their care. All four work in a therapy environment. However, one participant who works in a school setting also reported that although the children

are in a class set-up, she has some one-on-one time with every child every day in order to address their unique needs. This participant said:

Participant 5

And then I take one, one and work with them. Because most of them are different speech levels, cognitive levels, because I can't really work with them in a group. All of them are different. I take them one, one, one, one, work with them...

Sense of responsibility embedded in the job

Five participants disclosed that there is a sense of responsibility attached to the work that they do, which pushes them to commit to what they do and also to go the extra mile. Below are exemplars of this aspect.

Participant 2

... and then I start seeing children at the age of two and I know that this child's scholastic performance is dependent on me, it's dependent on what I'm doing now, how he's going to cope, is he going to go to a normal school, so the pressure on you as the professional is quite big.

Participant 7

Because here you are, you're literally responsible for somebody else's life. ... And you turn your head away for one second, anything can happen, you know. And it's on you, you know.

But as soon as I step into that place, I... It's like I have to become superhuman basically, you know what I mean. I have to become superhuman because here is somebody who is relying on me to make their lives better, to equip them with skills so they can, so they can come into the world, you know, just like any other children.

Participant 8

And also coming from a medical background, you know what, if I'm going to make a mistake somebody can die. ... So, coming back into the medical field you realise that, you know what, I know of the consequences of decisions.

Mental and/or emotional strain

There is a great deal of mental and emotional strain associated with the work that this sample of professionals do. Eight participants (some consciously and others unconsciously) revealed this during the course of the interviews. Exemplars of this aspect include the following:

Participant 1

... it is honestly a stressful job. ... So it does get stressful, when you know listen, this is supposed to work but it's not working. ...you know it gets very stressful and frustrating at times. ... You know it is a high stressful job.

Participant 2

Well... it is – it is emotionally draining. You get tired, on an emotional level... you can also feel frustrated sometimes if you want to achieve something and there's a reason why you can't.

Participant 3

I was working at a normal crèche before, with normal children. Then when I started here it was so hard for me. ...like I was scared. How I'm going to cope... firstly, I couldn't like, understand these kids...

It's just that, what I can say, I'm more tired than where I was before because of it's like hard work here. It's... How can I put it, it's too much...

Participant 5

I think the other thing is when a child dies because of his disability. It's also really big. ... So, ja, there's a lot of emotional...Strain, yes. A lot of emotional strain. ... I think no one knows how hard it is. Nobody knows how hard it is

except the other teacher or tutor or whatever, because there's a lot of emotional stress.

Participant 6

... honestly, there's days where I feel like I'm gonna go mad now, this instant. Because they can... They know when to push what buttons and like, seriously. ... And because you're always like, you have to be aware of everything all the time, and I think because you're always alerted of everything it also tires you. It really does.

Participant 9

... it's really, it's hard emotional on a person just to cope with your... Especially because the children you see is really tricky...

Interestingly, one participant tried so hard not to say her work is stressful (which according to the "oxford dictionary" means causing mental and emotional stress) but she was saying exactly that. This is what she had to say:

Participant 7

So, it's like you are present from the time you get into that session, you are present. So, it's very, I guess for lack of a better word, that's stressful in that sense, you know.

So, it's very, very... It's crazy. I don't know what to say. I don't want to say it's stressful... I wouldn't necessarily say it's stressful. It's tiring. But just very high paced. And my work is very demanding, you know...

Only one participant (participant 4) reported that she did not find her work stressful at all.

R: So, in terms of, like stress wise, how is that?

I: Eish, I'm not taking like maybe pills that can help me... No. I'm fine. I'm fine by myself.

R: Ja. But do you find it stressful maybe? sometimes?

I: Ah..., no.

In spite of this, she did admit that she finds the work tiring.

Yes. I think it's tiring. Because some of them, they don't understand. Even when you like tell them to sit there, they don't understand. Then you must be all over at the same time.

High mental focus

Two participants pointed out the need for high levels of mental focus when working with special needs children. They had the following to say:

Participant 9

... You have to leave all your own baggage aside, and you have to come into the session just focusing on the child. ... And one of the reasons why I don't work full day anymore because you can't see the type of children, and really be focused in on them by doing a whole week therapy.

Participant 7

So, it's like you are present from the time you get into that session, you are present. ...and then we do a lot of data taking. ... So, here you are with this child who either has, they work on either a logbook or a file. So, usually with a file that means you have a whole lot of papers that you need to be filling out information for, you know. ... So, it's you watching the child, it is you doing the lessons with the child, it is you playing, engaging the child.

After hours work and late hours

Four participants explained that there is significant after hours' work involved in their work.

Participant 1

So you go home, you take your work home with you, because you are sitting there thinking wait, what can I do to improve this? what can I do, what's the new way that I can try tomorrow?

Participant 2

The other thing is, especially if you have a private practice, is your time, you only get paid when you have a child in front of you, so your work hours, you spend seeing patients; so all your admin are left for afterhours. And that makes the workload very high.

Participant 8

I also made myself available for the parents. They are allowed to phone me after hours, because I realise with the mummies coming home maybe at 6 o'clock, and then she reads her child's message book and who must she phone? ... And our children can't speak, they can't explain. So, parents are allowed to phone me after hours. My phone is on until 9 o'clock. Ja.

Lack of routine

Three participants indicated that things change quite often within their work such that there is no routine and there are no fixed schedules.

Participant 8

The other thing also is that there are not two days that are the same. Sometimes I start in the morning with something, and by 4 o'clock I haven't touched it. ... I've got routine work, but in between it is just disrupted because I never know what is going to happen. I never know when the child is going to fall and maybe break his leg or have a seizure.

Participant 1

So I can't really say, you know, here is my day plan. As much as we get our schedules weekly, so that we are able to like plan our lives around the schedule,

change just happens like that... so, you take each day as it comes. There is no like here is my plan for the day.

Physical demands

Four participants described their work as physically demanding which can be a challenge particularly as one ages. Exemplars of this aspect include the following:

Participant 3

... the difficulty for me there it's to carry. There's one with a wheelchair, he can't move, we must like lift him up, put it here on the floor, on the mattress. Put him back, maybe they're saying we're also going for the changing time, take him again by the wheelchair. That is hard.

Participant 5

And a lot of the children you have to physically do stuff with them... Because they can't do whatever they have to do. So, ja, it's hard work.

Participant 9

It's physical because you have to move up and down, and it's hard on your own body especially when you're getting older, you realise that.

Transdisciplinary working

Three participants conveyed that their work involves collaboration with a variety of experts from different disciplines in order to provide the children with holistic and integrated care. Exemplars of this aspect include:

Participant 5

But we work with the speech therapist, with the occupational therapist. Ja, they guide us towards whatever we have to do.

Participant 8

Then also you need to be able to work with professionals because you work with therapists, you work with doctors, you work with specialists.

Participant 2

... we have to phone doctors to ask them about the child.

Work related personality traits

Five participants pointed out certain key personality traits that one needs to possess in order to successfully work with children with special needs. The following are exemplars of these traits:

▪ **High spirited**

Participant 1

... as soon as I walk in that door, you know that gate, I gotta be high spirit, you know I have to get my energy levels up. ... You know it's that thing that you know it's a job requirement.

Participant 7

So, if you're moody and if you're not... If you're not giving it your all... And the thing is with the children, let me tell you something, they can tell. They can really, really tell. They pick up the energy... If you don't have rapport they cannot give you the best results. It becomes a mess, you know. So, it's like it's my job to be joyful [laughter] and happy, and full of energy. You know what I mean? Because that's when I get the best results out of it.

▪ **Soft-hearted and compassionate**

Participant 8

You must have a heart for children. ...and I think you need to have understanding...

Participant 4

...you just give them love, care and you must be soft, you mustn't be harsh because you are scaring them.

- **Composed**

- Participant 4

- *... and then they don't like noise. They don't like noise, you must be calm... Yes, you need to be calm then they will also be calm.*

- **Flexible and adaptable**

- Participant 8

- *You need to adapt the whole time because in front of you is a 19-year-old or 18-year-old, but he acts like a six-year-old.*

- Participant 1

- *It's a really good working environment for someone who likes a challenge. For someone who likes change, someone who is willing to try new things all the time.*

- **Patience**

- Participant 7

- *So, there's no time for impatience, there's no... There's no space, there's no room for being impatient with the children, for being moody. I really feel like there is no space for that.*

- **Supportive**

- Participant 8

- *And I think you must be able to give support.*

- **Good listener**

- Participant 8

- *You must be able to listen.*

SUB-THEME: **The work environment**

Three participants explained that their work environment is not an easy environment to work in. The following are exemplars of how these participants experienced their work environment:

Participant 3

... It's not easy. And other kids, they are aggressive. Others, they are too emotional. And others they are, how can I put it, most of the kids here are too hyper...

Participant 5

And just these children are rough. Their minds are the age of a two-year-old but their body is 16. You can think. ... People are like, why are you...? Don't you cry all the time? ... A lot of them still potty training. And they're very busy, very busy kids. ... You're so tired every day and some children are hitting you, some are spitting on you, some are throwing their diapers at you.

Two participants pointed out that their work environment is a fast paced and high intensity environment and they had this to say:

Participant 7

Like I said, every minute counts, okay? And so, you feel like every minute is counting, you feel it, you feel it. Like you hardly even have time to have coffee, and be like, okay, let me go have coffee... And you're always chasing something, you know. If you're not chasing a lesson, you're chasing some play time, you're chasing some documenting. You're always chasing something. There's always something to do.

Participant 8

...You know, I often think, the only way that I can describe it is it's like emergency service. You never know what is going to come.

One participant indicated that the environment was a really great environment to work in for someone that is flexible and highly adaptable.

Participant 1

It's a great environment to be in, especially if you don't like, you know routine if I should say so. ... It's a really good working environment for someone who likes a challenge. For someone who likes change, someone who is willing to try new things all the time.

SUB-THEME: Work challenges

This sample of professionals who work with special needs children reported that they encounter a variety of challenges in their work. Some of these challenges include, but are not limited to:

- i. A lack of balance between work and life.
- ii. Lack of cooperation from parents
- iii. Parents who are still in denial about their children's conditions and have unrealistic goals about their children's progress
- iv. Lifting and carrying children who cannot walk
- v. Aggressive children who hurt other children
- vi. Lack of funding to consistently replace learning materials for the children
- vii. Lack of alignment between tutors and management
- viii. Conflict between colleagues

The comprehensive list of challenges faced is detailed in Appendix G.

SUB-THEME: Intrinsic rewards and motivation

Notwithstanding the tough environment in which the participants work and the challenges that they face in the execution of their duties, seven of them disclosed that they get satisfaction and personal fulfilment from their work, which drives them to want to do more. Exemplars of this aspect include:

Participant 5

... I think that is why we all stuck it out. That's why we keep on going. Because I don't think there's another work as rewarding as this. It's so rewarding. It takes a lot from you but it's very rewarding, it is really. I can't see myself doing anything else, I love these kids so much, really. I love them, I love my job, and I want to do more. I think all of us want to do more.

Participant 7

... I think that's one thing that has kept me at [name of school omitted] for so long. ... You come into that session [phone message] and you're hoping and you're praying that there's going to be that one positive thing, you know. And then you have kids come up and they give you their all. And you can't help but rejoice, and be joyful because it's just like, you're just helping change lives. And I can't imagine that it gets better than that.

Participant 1

You know, it's the one thing that like just pushes me you know, I have been doing this for eight years you know... Because I feel like I want to do this... It's like I am all over, because I feel like listen, let's just you know help. So many parents out there, so many kids out there, if I can reach them, let me.

Participant 6

... But seeing the children like progress, and how they develop, and the goals they reach every time makes it just worth your while.

THEME 2 - PERSONALITY

Almost all of the professionals who participated in this study depicted the personal qualities of commitment and passion. Eight out of the nine participants interviewed disclosed a great deal of commitment to their work. Exemplars of the professionals' commitment include:

Participant 2

... the responsibility that we have, makes it hard to say ah I've done enough today, I'm just going to leave it, because I can't just leave things, I'm seeing this child tomorrow, I've got 12 sessions with him, I need to sort out his feelings, I have to plan, what am I going to do, how am I going to do it.

Participant 5

I think about quitting all the time. [Laughing] But every day there's something that reminds me why I'm here, every day...

Participant 8

... There were times, especially when I started at the school, and because I wanted to know everything about the children, that I would work 12 hours a day. Easily 12 hours a day to go through the children's files, to read all their records. I made summaries of every child's medical history. I also made myself available for the parents. They are allowed to phone me after hours...

Participant 9

So, I will say the last ten years I decided only to see the special needs population. ... for me it was that thing of that's children that I like to see, and that I'm good with.

Eight out of the nine participants interviewed evinced great passion for their work. Exemplars of the professionals' passion include:

Participant 1

... it's as if this is my own kid, so I want to see my kid progress. I want to see this working. ... you know in a session if I am boring and lacking energy, my kid is not going to respond to me. And if my kid is not responding, parents are wasting money, I am wasting this kid's time, the gap, I have to close the gap; you know. His peers are busy learning and then I'm wasting his time. So it's that thing of at the end of the day you know this is what I have to do.

Participant 5

It's really hard work but I love my job, really, I do. Call me crazy, I do. I love my job.

Participant 7

... I promise you, from the time I started there I fell in love with my job, with the children, with what I did. It was, I think for me, the most fulfilling, the most incredible... I don't even know how to describe it. It was really something that touched my heart. And I've never looked back ever since. ... I'm loving the children; I'm loving what I do. I'm loving the fact that I'm making a difference. It gives me joy; you know what I mean.

One participant actually broke down while describing the nature of her work. She had this to say:

Participant 8

You definitely, now I am getting emotional [laughing and crying]. You must have a heart for children. [Crying] ...Patience, and I think you need to have understanding, and you need to be able to adapt the whole time. Because you see children in front of you... [Crying] Sorry, I never get time to speak about my job, so, so sorry.

THEME 3 - NON-WORK DOMAIN

SUB-THEME: **Life outside of work**

The participants' life outside of work consists of a variety of activities in the following life spheres:

Family sphere

A majority of the participants indicated their involvement in family commitments such as child care, helping children with homework, attending to children's school functions, house work and spending time with their spouses or partners.

Participant 7

And then I go pick my son up. So, in the morning before I go to work I go take my child to school, actually down this road. He just started school this year. So, I drop him off in the morning. And then after work I go pick him up at home, I mean, at school.

Participant 4

At home, I cook, I help my daughter with her school homework.

Participant 6

I also go, have to do the stuff at home because I have a husband and all that stuff...

Participant 9

... but then my afternoons is my children's time... And just being there for them. Helping them... And it's not always working, but going away a lot, spending time with them, and just being there. ...at the school my youngest is playing hockey so I'm part of the hockey organisation...

Personal care sphere

A few participants also indicated their engagement in personal care activities such as sleeping, eating and resting.

Participant 3

Then I will be cooking for supper for her and my mother...

Participant 4

Then bath, then eat and then go back to...go to bed

Participant 5

When I'm home. I start to do washing, clean the house...

Participant 3

Ja, on the weekend I will rest.

Leisure sphere

▪ **Pursuing interests**

Two participants reported that they have an interest in training and are therefore very much involved in training activities within their professions. They had this to say:

Participant 2

But I'm also not just at my practice working; I also present courses, I have to prepare for the courses, I have to plan courses, I have to work on budgets to do the courses, and we do a lot, we do about, for SANDTA we do about six courses a year, for Prompt I do about four courses a year that I have to organise

and plan and do budgets and things like that. So that takes up a lot of my after hour time, to do that.

Participant 9

...I do mentoring of the other therapists still because I'm doing training. So, I... being part of the sensory integration organisation, I do the final training for sensory integration in South Africa, and I'm also heading, and head the training there. And I'm vice of the SAISI organisation. ... SAISI got about 1000 occupational therapists that's part of SAISI, and our main purpose is to do training in sensory integration. I was vice for the past three years, so it's quite busy.

Study or Education sphere

Four participants indicated that they were currently furthering their studies.

Participant 7

Except Wednesdays because I have got classes. I am studying, yes. I'm upgrading my psychology so that I can do an Honours.

Participant 5

Weekends I'm just studying and doing my laundry because I don't have time during the week...

Health and well-being sphere

One participant disclosed that she engages in exercise religiously.

Participant 9

I'm a jogger and a walker... and just trying to do 10 k's a day.

Another participant also reported having recently joined the gym during confirmatory interviews.

Social sphere

One participant indicated that she enjoys spending time with her friends.

Participant 4

My weekends, I just rest with my friends. Yes, I like going out, shopping, yes.

THEME 4 - WORK-LIFE BALANCE

SUB-THEME: Subjective meanings of WLB

Four participants revealed that they had never heard of the term work-life balance prior to the interviews. One participant pointed out that although she wasn't acquainted with the exact term work-life balance, she had an idea of what it was. She and one other participant defined WLB as follows:

Participant 8

I think if I say balance to me it says 50, 50. That is a balance. And I think there should be a balance between your normal life and your work life. Ja.

Participant 2

Well it means do I have a life after work, I think... Ja, and how do I balance the things, ja I think that's what it means.

One participant interestingly defined WLB as quality of life and moving through life a little slower in order to see more of life. She had this to say:

Participant 9

And I think it was just deciding because we want quality of life... We want to write our own story... And if you move slower through life you see more. If you rush through life you can't. And life is observing, you know.

Although four participants had never come across the term WLB before, following a brief description of what WLB is and how it is generally defined in the literature, they all thought WLB is important. Two participants had the following to say in response to the question, do you think WLB is important?

Participant 2

Oh yes, yes, yes. ... for your sanity, ja it's definitely important.

Participant 7

I do. I do think it is important because I mean... We're, we're soulful beings, if you know what I mean. It is very important for you to actually do other things, or give yourself time which you need to do other things that feed your soul, you know what I mean, and sing to you, you know... It's so important to be, what's the... You know, just well rounded. ... So, if one area of your life is sort of just taking over, I think you reach a stage where... Ja, you just, you get burnt out basically, and you don't want to.

SUB-THEME: Personal experiences of WLB

Five participants disclosed that they do not have a good balance between work and life because their work was overlapping too much into their other life domains. The following are exemplars of descriptions of their individual experiences of WLB:

Participant 1

...no it's not a good balance honestly. Work is taking more.

Participant 2

...it feels to me as though I'm working all the time. So I get home after work, I cook for us, we eat and then I start working again on my computer. ... So there's always things to do, and I think that's one of the things why you could feel that you never stop.

Participant 5

... I think I'm just... I don't have a balance; I know I don't have a balance. I know I go sleep too late and I wake up too early. ... I don't see my family; I don't see my friends. I don't go out...

Participant 8

80%, 20% [laughing] My work takes a bit out of it... and I know I chose to do that, but the school is taking up my life. And I think I might be a little bit burnt out.

Participant 7

Not so good. No, I don't know whether to blame where... What... Work, but like, no. I've even... Lately I've just been feeling very, very tired. I'm so exhausted... So, I don't feel like I have a good balance because by the time I get home, and I have to do my home life I'm just like, mum, can you handle that for me? I want to sleep, I can't, I'm done. So... No, and I don't know if it's just like a phase or whatever...I don't know if it gets better. ...But right now, as I'm feeling, I don't feel like it's... The balance is there, no. I don't feel, I don't feel like the balance is there.

Two of these five participants explained that their families viewed their WLB in the same light as they do and also felt that their work interfered a lot with their other life roles.

Participant 2

... but I do get the question at home: Mommy you're always working and take off a little bit, and Mom you're working too hard. And last night my husband said to me, you're always tired... So that should explain to you what my work/life balance is like.

Participant 9

My husband will tell you I'm too busy. But I'm trying to get balance, ja. ... And that's why sometimes, especially in the beginning of the year that I get busy, my husband get cross with me because we've decided to have quality of life.

Four participants also mentioned that their WLB fluctuates a lot for a variety of reasons, such as the time of the year, the nature of projects undertaken or advancement in technology. Exemplars of this aspect include the following:

Participant 9

It depends on the time. At the beginning of the year was quite tricky for me because I did a big course in July again in Cape Town. So, then I was in front of the computer 24 hours per day. ... The last phase of this year is a quiet time again... So, it depends on the phase, and like next year is going to be a quiet year, but the next four years after that is going to be quite busy. Then I'm... I will be president of SAISI, of the sensory integration, and then I will have lots of responsibility.

Participant 1

...the balance you know, it kind of shifts all the time, you try and say okay I have figured it out and then it just changes again... Ja it shifts a lot. You know work takes over a lot, you know especially now with technology as much as it has made things easier, it has also like complicated things in a way.

One participant explained that although she could not say that she has a good balance between the work and life domains, she felt that the imbalance had decreased a great deal and she felt really relieved about this.

Participant 6

I think it's very better now. ... I get a lot more done in my life now that my hours are a little bit less. ...So, it's a little bit better, I have more control over my studies, so I have more control over getting stuff done at home. So, but it was very terrible. ... It's a lot better now for me. I believe it can still be improved. But, ja it's better so I'm happy.

Only two participants indicated that there was no conflict between their work and other life roles. They felt that the two domains of work and life are totally separate and do not impact on each other. When asked whether their work tended to overlap into their home lives they responded as follows:

Participant 3

No.

Participant 4

It doesn't affect my home...

Perceived control over WLB

One participant remarked that she felt she had better control over her WLB because she is self-employed and runs her own practice. She had this to say:

Participant 2

Luckily if you're your own boss, you actually can set your own pace.

SUB-THEME: Antecedents of WLB

Subsequent to the analysis of the work-life experiences of this sample of professionals who work with special needs children, the following factors were noted as antecedents to their WLB:

Technology

Participant 1

... because of like how technology is these days and stuff... you know there are some jobs where, when it's done four o'clock you close, you will come see it tomorrow morning, but where with us it's take work home.

Ages of own children

Participant 2

Luckily my children are bigger now, they're older, so it's easier to work and let them be on their own. When children are small it's more difficult...

Partners support or assistance with role fulfilment

Participant 2

... and also it depends on what your husband is doing, whether he can actually fill some of those roles.

Job autonomy

Participant 2

... But I've got the ability to say this week I'm going to take off, or I'm going to bake cookies now or I'm going to do this, and not be working on that.

Number of hours worked

Participant 6

And I also, the hours that I used to work, had a really, really big, big impact on stress levels...

Self-employment

Participant 2

Luckily if you're your own boss, you actually can set your own pace.

Interplay between job demands and resources

Participant 8

... But as the school grew my responsibilities they didn't adapt. So, I have the same responsibilities, but the workload increased, there was never adaption to that.

THEME 5 - CHALLENGES RECONCILING WORK AND LIFE

This sample of professionals revealed a variety of challenges that they face in reconciling the work and life domains. One participant described technology, and how it has allowed for people to work from anywhere and at any time of the day, as one of the challenges that she faces in an effort to integrate the work and life domains. The participant had this to say:

Participant 1

... you know especially now with technology as much as it has made things easier, it has also like complicated things in a way. ... I mean if I have back to back sessions and finish at five, and then I only get home at like seven at night and I still have to sit down and then do feedback for my day; from there I check on my team, is everyone still on board or did someone derail, you know and then if maybe there was something that didn't work, we still have to take that hour to just think of okay tomorrow maybe let's try this, let's try that. So you find that you are home at seven but the two hours are still dedicated to work. And then only at nine can you say okay everyone, I am here ...[laughing] you know. And by that time, it's time for bed...

Another participant pointed out that the nature of the work that she does and the responsibility attached to the work makes it difficult for her to separate or draw a line between work and life, because she goes home and feels obliged to continue working in order to find solutions for the children under her care.

Participant 2

... So I never get the feeling that I'm done for the day. ...We never finish. It goes on, on, on the whole time. ...the responsibility that we have, makes it hard to say ah I've done enough today, I'm just going to leave it, because I can't just leave things, I'm seeing this child tomorrow, I've got 12 sessions with him, I need to sort out his feelings, I have to plan, what am I going to do, how am I

going to do it. I have to read up on something, you get cases where you don't have the answers, we have to phone doctors to ask them about the child...

Being self-employed was also noted as one of challenges faced in reconciling the work and life domains as one tends to push oneself professionally and ends up blurring the lines between the two domains.

Participant 2

... I think you know being your own boss is hard because you tend to push yourself a little bit...

Another participant also pointed out that because of the need to do one-on-one programming for each individual child under their care, the work load increased and resulted in work overlapping too much into the professional's other life roles.

One participant mentioned the lack of alignment between job demands and resources as the one challenge she faces in integrating the work and life domains. This participant had the following to say:

Participant 8

But as the school grew my responsibilities they didn't adapt. So, I have the same responsibilities, but the workload increased, there was never adaption.

THEME 6 - OUTCOMES OF A LACK OF WLB

The six participants who indicated that they are currently experiencing an imbalance between their work and life domains described a variety of outcomes (both positive and negative) resulting from this imbalance. Below are exemplars of these outcomes.

Negative outcomes

Participant 5

... But, ja. I think it's definitely affecting my studies. ... I don't see my family; I don't see my friends. I don't go out...

Participant 6

He used to didn't like the long hours, but he didn't say anything. And he's working shifts as well. So, there's some weeks that we missed each other entirely because he was working either night shift or afternoon shift, and it could be like two weeks that we were just like, hi, bye, okay and then go. So, sometimes it was like, aah, it's frustrating.

Participant 8

... I think I might be a little bit burnt out. I had a very big back operation last year, and I think it was after that that I realised, you know what, I think I've given a lot, and I think I've sacrificed a lot. ... Because I think there is a price that you pay for it. Not just your health, but I think also with relationships. Also, relationships with your colleagues because when you overwork and over stress you... and you become impatient with teachers. Impatient, but I think more I withdrew from them. Because, you know what, I start to feel, you know what, you're sucking the life out of me.

Participant 9

I think the problem there is the moment that you don't take care of yourself you get sick, and it's affecting your work at the end.

Positive outcomes

Participant 9

... But I think afterwards, in retrospect when I go look back I learnt so much doing that that it was worthwhile.

Additional positive outcomes noted during confirmatory interviews include:

- self-fulfillment arising from knowledge and skills acquired through continuous learning
- being recognised and rewarded at work for the hard work
- reassurance of career path

THEME 7 - STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING WLB

This sample of professionals who work with special needs children indicated that they employ a variety of strategies (13 in total) in order to enhance their capacity to achieve WLB. Figure 9 is a frequency chart illustrating the number of participants using a specific WLB strategy. The participants also had the following to say regarding the WLB strategies employed:

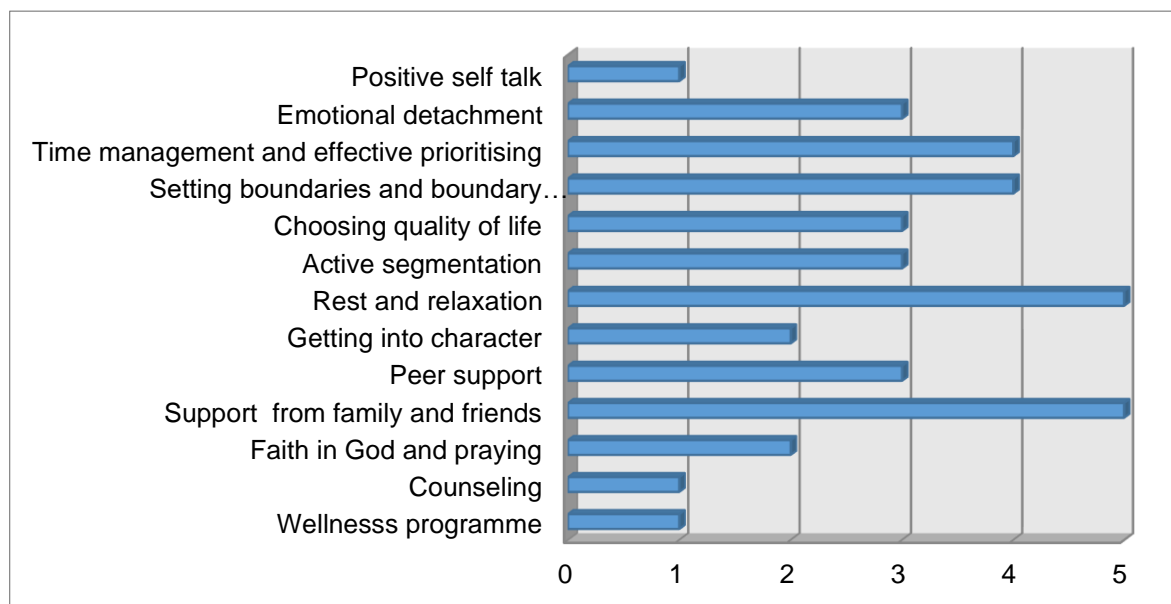


Figure. 4. 2 Frequency counts of coping strategies adopted by the sample

SUB-THEME: Positive Self-talk

One participant indicated that she makes use of this strategy.

Participant 5

But I'm saying to myself, you know what, I want a good education, I want that for myself. And for the kids as well. So, I have to do it now, it will be better. ... You just go with it, you're just coping. You just go with it, you clean it up, tomorrow the sun will shine again. That's all that you say to yourself.

SUB-THEME: Emotional detachment

Three participants reported that they distance themselves emotionally from their work in order to buffer their perceptions of emotional strain.

Participant 1

... because first things first they always tell you before you start working, that do not get emotionally attached.

Participant 2

... and ja, because our work is not just, it involves emotions, you get emotionally involved with your clients, and you have to actually protect yourself from that, to not get too involved.

Participant 8

... So, somewhere you have to, like distance yourself. ... So, I've started to, in a sense, to distance myself from my work, and to concentrate on my core responsibilities, that is the children's medical condition, ja.

SUB-THEME: Time management & effective prioritising

Four participants indicated that they use this strategy.

Participant 2

... So luckily my 13-year-old is in the hostel so I don't have to hear from him that I'm not giving attention. So I work very hard in the week so that weekends I do less, so that I can have time with him.

Participant 6

... every factor that was impacting my whole work situation negatively I started to eliminate, take it away. ... I think it's the choices that we have to make to keep that balance. So, I think you have to decide what is important, and then the other important, not so important things, you have to start eliminating. So, for me it was like working aftercare. So, it was not that important for me and my health. So, that's why I eliminated it because it started reflecting negatively on my day...

SUB-THEME: Setting boundaries and boundary management

Four participants indicated that they have set some boundaries to prevent their work domain from infiltrating other life domains.

Participant 1

... but like I know weekends, I am sorry, my phone, especially Saturday, my phone is off work. You know, Saturday is my day. ... Saturday makes up for all the stolen times...

Participant 2

... So I do things like I don't work after 4, 4 is the cut-off line; that's when I stop. And previously I have, there were times when I worked till 6, and then I just made the decision, this is too much, I'm going to stop at 4, sorry.

Participant 8

... knowing I'm going to another opportunity, I think one is cautious to say but you know what, be careful, don't jump in on the deep end, take it easy. ... And I'm very cautious of what I'm going to allow myself to do, ja.

Participant 9

And also, in my practice we don't work Friday afternoons. My therapists can't work Friday afternoons or weekends because you need your time. And you need to be a wife and you need to be a mum, and you need to be your own person the whole time.

SUB-THEME: **Choosing quality of life**

Three participants explained that they had made conscious decisions to work towards having a well-rounded life.

Participant 2

I used to work on Saturdays, every second Saturday, and the end of last year, obviously because my son is going to hostel and is going to only see him over weekends, I just made the decision; and it was hard to tell parents I'm sorry, I can't help you on Saturdays anymore, so you either come in the week, or I'm going to have to refer you to somebody else.

Participant 8

And I just feel, you know what, it is time for a change. ... And I think I've noticed mistakes that I've made, especially to my workload. And I will be cautious at the new post not to over compensate. And also, to... In a sense a little bit hold back, and to realise, you know what, there need to be a balance. ... Because I realised, you know what, I think it is just time, just to look after myself.

Participant 9

... I made a mind switch to have control over my life. So, it was something that I decided to do with my husband, and we actually, each year we had our own personal meeting where we decided this is what we want for the year. ... So, it was very much a cognitive decision...

SUB-THEME: **Active segmentation**

Three participants indicated that they tried to draw a line between their work and life domains and to keep the two domains separate.

Participant 8

... Especially after my back operation I don't take work home anymore.

Participant 9

... but then my afternoons is my children's time... So, I only work mornings at this stage.

SUB-THEME: Rest and relaxation

Five participants reported that they rest and engage in relaxation activities in order to recuperate.

Participant 1

... But it's all about going home, relax, have a good night's sleep and then tomorrow is a new day.

Participant 2

Well I think if I didn't go on holiday, I would go mad... So if a holiday is 3 weeks, I will always work 2 weeks and take 1 week off, so to just take off a period of time where you can just get away from things.

Participant 7

... Sometimes you need to take time out and relax. Sometimes you need to go and have coffee with a friend, you know. And go to the movies with friends and family and things like that.

SUB-THEME: Getting into character

Two participants explained that they make use of what they called "getting into character" as a coping mechanism.

Participant 1

You know I think it's also about, it's that thing of getting into character, something that, you know how they say, "fake it until you make it". ... when you

get on stage, if you are going to be shy and reserved, no one is going to think you are funny, no one is going to come to your shows. But for the sake of that, you have to get into character. So it's the same thing with us here, you know as soon as I walk through the gate, as soon as my session starts, I need to get into that character.

Participant 7

... And as much as I'm human and sometimes I'm tired and I don't want to do it. But as soon as I step into that place, I... It's like I have to become superhuman basically, you know what I mean.

SUB-THEME: Peer support

Three participants indicated that they find support from their peers really helpful in reducing work and life stresses and perceptions of strain.

Participant 6

... If I can say without my co-employees, I would not survive. They really, they really make it worthwhile.

Participant 5

It's full now, with the assistant... And she's so great, she helps me with everything. When I'm busy with them in group time, some of them jump up, whatever, and she helps me sit them down while I'm reading the story. When it's lunchtime I'm sitting them down, she quickly goes and gets them their drinks and their food. Whatever they have to do, she really helps me, I can't do it without her. I'm telling you I can't.

SUB-THEME: Support from family and friends

Five participants indicated that they make use of support from family and friends to relieve stress and strain, thereby reducing inter-role conflict.

Participant 1

... I am very fortunate to have an understanding husband who is in love with music. So you know when I get home it's more of, do you have work to do? I'm like ja, just one hour. He is like okay while you do that, I am in the studio...

Participant 9

... And you can't be a good therapist if you don't have a good support system in your house. And I've got an amazing husband running my practice and amazing children helping out. And you can't, you can't be that if you don't have the support.

Participant 8

... And then I've got a very good group of friends that allows me to talk about the school.

Participant 7

...because by the time I get home, and I have to do my home life I'm just like, mum, can you handle that for me? I want to sleep, I can't, I'm done.

SUB-THEME: Faith in God and praying

Two participant pointed out that their faith in God and praying strengthens and re-energises them.

Participant 3

... As I was saying, maybe it's God that's put me here. ... So, when I entered, first time, and it's like... And I said, God, if it's you who put me in this place I'm going to be in this place.

Participant 5

...but if I have anything that keeps me sane, I'm reading, I read my Bible [laughter] I'm praying, [laughter].

SUB-THEME: Counselling

One participant indicated that she sought counselling to assist her to cope with work-life stresses.

Participant 8

There was a time last year that I went for counselling because I realised, you know what, I'm not coping.

SUB-THEME: Wellness courses

During confirmatory interviews, one participant (participant 5) indicated that she recently attended a self-care course (sponsored by the school) to help her cope better with the demands of work and life which in turn enhances her capacity to achieve WLB.

4.3 Relationships between themes

During the data analysis a few relationships between themes became apparent. These are discussed below.

4.3.1 Work Characteristics — Personal experiences of WLB — Challenges

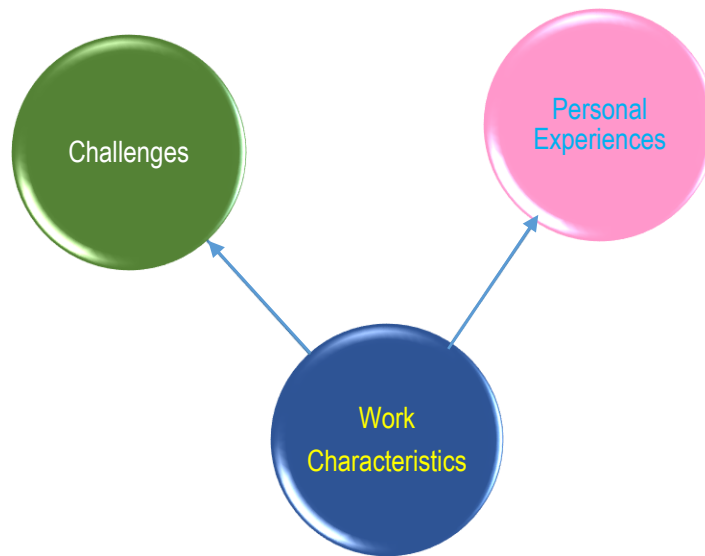


Figure. 4. 3 Relationship between work characteristics & WLB experiences & challenges

The analysis of the findings revealed a relationship between certain aspects of the professionals' jobs (i.e. sense of responsibility embedded in the job; mental and/or emotional strain; lack of routine and after hours' work) and their personal experiences of WLB and the challenges they face in achieving WLB.

4.3.2 Antecedents of WLB – Personal experiences of WLB – Challenges

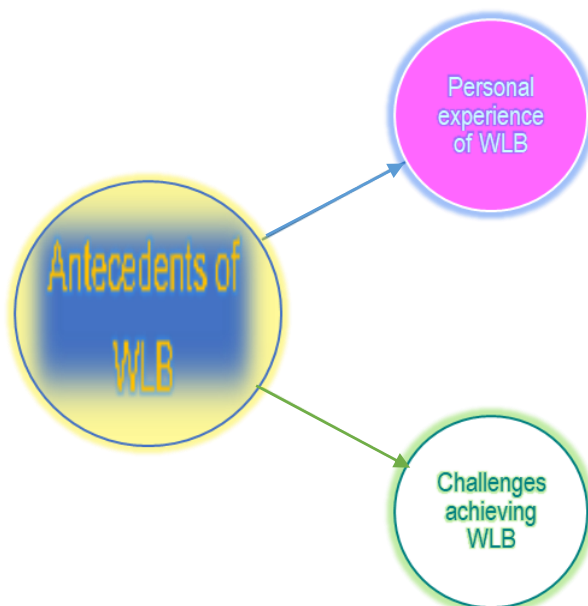


Figure. 4. 4 Relationship between antecedents of WLB & WLB experiences & challenges

There is also a relationship between the noted antecedents of WLB and the professionals' experiences of WLB and the challenges they encounter in reconciling their work and non-work domains.

4.3.3 Personality (passion and commitment) – Personal experiences of WLB

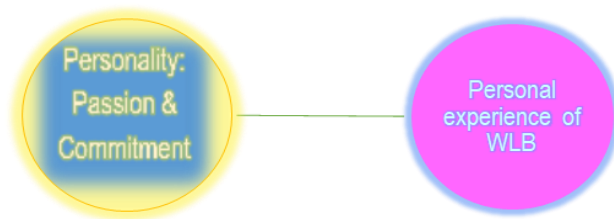


Figure. 4. 5 Relationship between personality & personal experiences of WLB

There is a relationship between the personality traits of passion and commitment and the professionals' experiences of WLB.

4.4 Conclusion

The above account is an overview of the findings of my study. It is evident from the results that the majority of the participants were experiencing an imbalance between their work and non-work domains in which the pressures and demands from the work domain were interfering with performance in roles in the non-work domain. Additionally, although the participants reported both positive and negative outcomes arising from this imbalance, the negative outcomes seem to outweigh the positive ones. An analysis of some of the WLB strategies used by this sample of professionals makes it apparent that they see the significance of achieving some sort of balance between the work and non-work domains. Chapter 5 offers a detailed discussion of these findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a detailed discussion of the key findings of the study. This begins with an explanation of the participants' subjective meanings of WLB, which addresses the study objective: to determine the meaning of WLB from the perspective of the professionals who work with special children. An account of the state of WLB in the professionals' lives and the reasons behind this state of affairs follows. This account addresses two study objectives: to determine the professionals' perceptions of WLB and work-life satisfaction and to ascertain the extent to which their work domain impinges on their other life domains. The chapter goes on to explain other factors that influence the professionals' WLB in addressing Research question 4 as noted in Chapter 2. The nature of the challenges that these professionals face in integrating their work and life domains is also discussed. The outcomes that they get from failure to create harmony between their various life domains are explained to address the study objective: to determine the effects of working with children with special needs on the professionals' wellbeing and functioning. The chapter ends with an account of the strategies that these professionals use to harmonise their life domains, which addresses Research question 5, noted in Chapter 2.

Overall, the findings from the study suggest that the majority of the sampled professionals who work with special needs children are experiencing work-life conflict. The data reveals that this conflict emanates from the time-based and strain-based conflict they experience in their work domains. The findings also suggest that the participants' WLB seems to be influenced mostly by work related factors rather than personal, familial or contextual factors. The data further reveals that the challenges they face in integrating their work and life domains are quite similar to the ones faced by most working adults in various professions, as portrayed in prior work-life studies (Deery & Jago 2015; Rehman & Azam Roomi, 2012; Stock, Bauer & Bieling, 2014).

Similarly, the negative individual outcomes that result from their failure to attain WLB seem to mirror those experienced by other working adults in previous WLB studies (Matthews et al., 2011; Sitimin et al., 2016; Sirgy & Lee, 2018). However, in contrast to the findings from prior studies; the professionals in this study also reported some positive individual outcomes of a lack of WLB. The findings also suggest that the participants are aware of the importance and benefits of attaining WLB, based on the numerous individual level strategies that they employ in order to attain greater WLB.

5.2 Discussion of findings

The key findings of the study are discussed below and linked to findings from previous studies.

5.2.1 Sampled professionals' subjective meanings of WLB and how it plays out in their lives.

Almost half of the participants in the study expressed that they had never come across the term work-life balance before. However, the few who defined the term interestingly mirrored the WLB definitions that are proposed in the literature. Participant 8 defined WLB as a state of equilibrium between one's work and life domains; Participant 2 defined it in terms of satisfaction across one's work and non-work roles and perceived autonomy over these multiple roles. Participant 9's definition, on the other hand, seemed to relate to the relative prominence of roles at a given point in time: she and her husband had to decide which roles were going to take precedence in their lives. These findings demonstrate the diversity in the meaning of WLB as demonstrated by prior WLB studies (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Haar et al., 2018; Khallash & Kruse, 2012; Maruyama et al., 2009; OECD, 2011). Although some of the participants were not well acquainted with the term WLB at the beginning of data collection; the findings suggest that by the end of the study they all agreed that WLB is essential for one to be a well-rounded and functional individual.

Similar to findings from the literature that illustrate that the life or non-work domain consists of more than just the family sphere (Haar et al., 2018; Keeney et al., 2013; Roberts, 2007), the participants in this study were found to engage in a wide variety

of non-work-domain roles in addition to their work role. The combined non-work spheres for this sample of professionals include the family, education, health, personal care, leisure and social spheres. The findings also revealed that the activities and responsibilities from the professionals' non-work domains were just as important as those from their work domains. Their life outside of work was found to take up a significant portion of their time; hence their non-work domain roles were an important determinant of their WLB.

The findings indicate that the majority of the participants were currently experiencing an imbalance between their work and life domains. They also reported that they felt fatigued and overwhelmed. This finding is consistent with findings from a number of prior studies that found conflict in the work-family relations of parents of children with special needs (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; George et al., 2006; Jang & Appelbaum, 2010; Sitimin et al., 2016). However, contrary to findings in which the parents reported experiencing family interference with work (i.e. the strain and conflict stemmed from the family domain), the participants in this study reported work interference with life as a result of their work domain constantly encroaching on their other life domains.

It appears the major reason for this overlap between the participants' work and life domains is the high mental and emotional strain that they are subjected to in their jobs. The findings reveal that this strain stems from the burden of caring for children with special needs. The participants in the study reported that their work was 'stressful', 'frustrating', 'hard', 'emotionally draining', 'scary', 'demanding', 'high paced', 'crazy' and 'exhausting'. These descriptions seem to demonstrate the potential stressor effect on the carer's wellbeing and functioning of caring for a child with special needs. This finding aligns with prior studies on the WLB of parents of children with special needs that suggest that child difficulties or behavioural problems in children with special needs are linked to parental stress, parental depression, somatic complaints and burnout (Jang & Appelbaum, 2010; Matthew et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the findings from the study illustrate that the participants are so passionate and committed to their work that the more they invest in the optimal development of the children the more susceptible they become to a great deal of strain, particularly when they do not get the child development outcomes that they are hoping

for. Eight out of the nine participants alluded to this strain-based conflict when asked to describe the nature of their work and the environment in which they worked. The study findings therefore illustrate that the mental and emotional strain they suffer leaves them so drained that they have very little energy to attend to the demands from their other life roles, which creates conflict across domains.

The findings also suggest that the sense of responsibility that is inherent in the professionals' work aggravates the time pressure they experience. All the participants who reported work to life interference explained that they felt personally responsible for the development outcomes of the children under their care. This internalised sense of responsibility therefore pushes them to go the extra mile in ensuring that the children reach their potential. This translates into a lot of after-hours work and consequently work-related time conflict, as defined by McMillan et al. (2011). Additionally, the sense of responsibility embedded in the professionals' jobs makes it difficult for them to transition from work at the end of the day. This in turn affects their functionality and performance in other life domains, causing strain-based conflict and work interference with life.

Moreover, findings from this study illustrate that another source of both time-based and strain-based conflict for these professionals is the extension of their responsibilities beyond the children under their care, to the families of those children. This responsibility entails educating and/or providing support to the parents and guardians of the children. Based on the participants' stories as well as findings from Lee and Park's (2016) study, where immigrant Korean mothers of children with special needs reported appreciation of the emotional support, informational support, optimism and encouragement they received from the professionals working with their children, it appears that this aspect of the participants' role is immense and taxing. Therefore, it is the researcher's opinion that the role overload experienced by these professionals is also exacerbated by this particular aspect of their work.

Only two participants, working in the capacity of assistant tutors, reported that they experienced no conflict between their various life domains. Although they were just as committed as the other participants to providing best practice care to the children under their care, they reported that in their positions they never had to take work home

and therefore did not experience any time pressure. They also reported that their various life domains were separate and hence did not impact on each other. This finding seems to suggest that one's position, nature of responsibilities and workload have an influence on how one experiences one's work-life interface. The finding also aligns with prior studies suggesting that one's workload is linked to one's capacity to achieve WLB (Deery & Jago, 2015).

A few of the participants also reported that although they were currently experiencing an imbalance, they felt that the balance between their various life domains fluctuated a lot. This fluidity was reported to depend on the nature of projects undertaken as well as spatial and temporal flexibility, made possible by advances in digital technology. For these reasons the WLB for these particular professionals is not constant.

5.2.2 Factors influencing the WLB professionals who work with special needs children.

The most powerful predictors of WLB reported by the participants appear to be job or work related. In addition to the job-related factors noted above, other factors that seem to influence their WLB include the number of children under their care and the severity of the children's conditions. Participant 2 and Participant 8 who expressed that they felt their work was taking over their lives, also reported that they cared for very large numbers of children; some of whom had very severe conditions. Participant 2 reported that she cared for between 50 and 60 children, some of whom suffered from brain damage and cerebral palsy. Participant 8 cared for approximately 350 children, some of whom had epilepsy and severe intellectual disabilities. This finding suggests that the number of children under one's care and the severity of their conditions have an impact on the strain experienced by the carer, which in turn affects the carer's ability to attain WLB. The finding aligns with prior studies on the WLB of parents of children with special needs that suggest that child difficulties and the severity of disabilities significantly predicted work-family conflict because of the intensity of the care giving burden (Brown & Clark, 2017; Brown, 2014).

The findings also indicate that the two participants who were self-employed and worked in their own practices felt that they had better control over their WLB because

of their ability to “set their own pace”. This finding resembles findings from the literature that assert that job autonomy and the ability to control one’s working hours has an impact on one’s ability to integrate the demands from one’s various life roles (Maruyama et al., 2009; Nijp et al., 2012). Participant 9 reported that she does not work in the afternoons because she reserves this time for her children. Participant indicated that she has the ability to decide when to take some time off work. This autonomy therefore gives them the opportunity to attend to the demands from their other life roles, thereby giving them better control over their WLB.

One participant (Participant 6) reported a great improvement in the level and intensity of conflict she used to experience between her various life domains, following a reduction in the number of hours she worked. She reported that she and her husband could go up to two weeks without spending any time together because when she came home he would be leaving for an afternoon or night shift. This finding suggests that the number of hours one works has an impact on social and emotional stress as well as on one’s ability to reconcile the demands from one’s various life roles. However, there are conflicting findings in the literature regarding the effect of number of hours worked on ability to achieve WLB. For example, Haar et al. (2018) found that hours worked were negatively related to WLB. Similarly, Brown (2014) found in his study that more hours worked were predictive of work-family conflict and higher work interference in family. Conversely, Roberts’ (2007) findings suggest that the time pressure experienced by employees has little to do with hours actually worked but is a result of a combination of trends, such as the intensification of work and the slow increase in free time compared to spending power and aspiration.

Similar to the findings from literature, this study also found that support from one’s partner and assistance with role fulfilment determines one’s ability to integrate the multiple roles from one’s life domains successfully. Participant 2 noted that her ability to achieve WLB is enhanced by her husband’s assistance in fulfilling the demands from some of her life roles. This finding is supported by previous studies that found that partners provide instrumental and emotional support that is important for attaining WLB (Brown & Clark, 2017; Jang & Appelbaum, 2010; Zheng et al., 2015).

Participant 8 also identified the interplay between her job demands and resources as one of the major reasons why she was currently experiencing conflict between her work and life roles. She reported that the resources she had available were insufficient for meeting her work demands. This led to work-related strain and consequently an inability to function optimally in other life domains. This finding aligns with the fit and balance perspective proposed by Voydanoff (2005) that suggests that greater work demands reduce one's capacity to achieve WLB. Moreover, the finding resembles findings from Haar et al.'s (2018) study that demonstrated that high work demands were negatively related to WLB.

This study did not corroborate the findings in studies by McMillan et al. (2011) and Nam (2014) that parental status is essential in explaining variations in WLB. In this study, parental status; marital status and number of years working with special children did not seem to influence one's experience of WLB. Married participants, single participants, those with children, those with no children, those with under five years' experience working with special children and those with over 10 years' experience: all reported work-life conflict. An example to illustrate this point is Participant 8 who is single, does not have any children and has over 10 years' experience working with special needs children; yet she reported an 80% / 20% work-life ratio and also revealed that she felt burnt-out.

The only familial and contextual factors that were noted to influence the participants' capacity to achieve WLB in this study were family support, ages of own children and co-worker support. In contrast to findings from previous studies that place emphasis on supervisor support as an antecedent of employees' WLB (Brown & Clark, 2017; Brown, 2014; Haar et al., 2018), the findings from my study place emphasis on co-worker support as an antecedent of WLB. Similar to findings from prior studies (Brown, 2014; Brown & Clark, 2017), some participants in this study also reported that their work-life conflict has diminished compared to when their children were younger.

5.2.3 The challenges faced by the professionals in integrating their work-life domains

The professionals sampled for this study pointed out a variety of challenges that inhibit them from integrating their work and life domains. All but one of these impediments (i.e. the nature of the professionals' jobs) are not different from the challenges noted by other working adults in previous WLB studies.

ICT technology and its ability to enable people to work from anywhere at any time was identified in this study as one of the reasons why some participants experienced work-life infiltration. This agrees with studies by Maruyama et al. (2009), Nam, (2014) and Roberts (2007) that identified new information and communication technology (i.e. phones, computers and the internet) as a source of work encroachment into employees' private lives. Participant 1 explained that after she gets home from work she still has to put in a few hours of work because technology makes it possible for her to work from anywhere at any time which then becomes expected of her. As a result, she experiences time pressure, role overload and stress as she struggles to attend to the demands from her other life roles.

Findings from the study also suggest that being self-employed places a lot of pressure on an individual to do well professionally, owing to the financial risks and demands involved in running a business. Self-employed individuals therefore tend to push themselves harder and end up working really long hours, which blurs the lines between the work domain and other life domains, thereby creating inter-role conflict. This finding corresponds with findings from Edralin's (2012) study on Filipina women entrepreneurs which revealed that the women worked long hours due to the heavy workload stemming from running their own business.

Lack of alignment between work demands and resources was also found to be a challenge in integrating the work-life roles of some of these professionals. The participants felt that their work resources did not match their high work demands, which caused mental and emotional strain as well as an inability to attain WLB following the transfer of negative affect from the work domain to other life domains. As noted earlier, previous studies have already established that work demands are

detrimental to one's ability to achieve WLB (Haar et al., 2018). This finding is also consistent with insights from the resource drain perspective/resources and demands model which suggest that resource depletion has a negative effect on the ability to attain WLB (Valcour, 2007).

Findings from this study also suggest that the nature of the work that the participants do (i.e. dealing with vulnerable little human beings) and the sense of responsibility attached to the work, makes it difficult for them to draw the line between their work and life domains. Their need to find solutions for the problems encountered by the children under their care allows their work domain to infiltrate their other life domains owing to psychological preoccupation with uncompleted tasks in the work domain. This creates conflict as the physical, mental and emotional strain experienced in the work domain is transferred to other life domains which negatively impacts their functionality. Participant 2 reported that the responsibility embedded in her job makes it difficult for her to say she is done for the day, which blurs her work-life boundaries and creates conflict. Similarly, Participant 8 reported that she has made herself available to parents after hours until nine o'clock in the evening because some of the children cannot communicate, hence they cannot explain things, which leaves the parents with no one to talk to regarding their children's message books. However, this has created time-based and strain-based conflict for the participant as she disclosed that she often feels she 'works in emergency service'.

Moreover, because all the children have unique needs that are related to their various conditions, the participants explained that they need to come up with tailored programs or interventions that suit the specific needs of each child. This increases their workload, thereby creating work-related stress as they have insufficient time and energy to attend to all the demands from their other life roles.

5.2.4 The outcomes of a lack of WLB experienced by the sampled professionals

The findings from this study demonstrate that the majority of the sampled professionals experienced negative individual outcomes of a lack of WLB. However, unlike prior work-life studies that noted only the negative outcomes of a lack of WLB

(Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Sirgy & Lee, 2016; Sirgy & Lee, 2018), the participants in this study reported both negative and positive outcomes resulting from their work-life conflict.

Findings from the study suggest that family tension is one of the negative outcomes experienced by some participants as a result of a lack of WLB. Participant 6 reported that she and her husband experienced frustration when they would go for up to two weeks without spending any time at all together, owing to their work schedules. She added that her husband disliked this particular consequence of her long working hours, although he did not verbalise his discontent. Participant 9 also reported that her husband got upset with her during her busy work periods because they had agreed that they would have quality of life, yet her work overlapped into her other life domains during these busy periods. Previous research supports this outcome of work-life conflict as illustrated by studies that suggest that WLB reduces conflicts with family members and is linked to marital, family and overall life satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Haar et al., 2014; Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

Feelings of isolation were another outcome of the work-life conflict experienced by some of the participants in this study. Participant 5, for example, indicated that she does not see her family or friends or go out anymore because there is just no time for her to visit them or engage in activities that she used to enjoy, such as dancing or art work. She reported that this isolation was definitely negatively impacting her studies. Similarly, Participant 8 explained how her relationships with colleagues was affected by role overload and stress. She reported that she withdrew from her colleagues because she felt overwhelmed. This finding aligns with the social alienation approach to WLB that suggests that alienation and disengagement from a life domain has a negative impact on life satisfaction (Sirgy & Lee, 2016).

Burnout; fatigue and health problems were also found to be some of the negative outcomes resulting from a lack of WLB. Participant 2 explained that she sometimes goes for a week with headaches due to fatigue. Similarly, Participant 8 reported that she felt burnt out owing to the intense demands from her work role. This finding resembles those in prior studies that suggest a relation between work-life conflict and the manifestation of illness symptoms such as exhaustion, lack of sleep, fatigue,

depression, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, hypertension, physical health complaints and alcohol consumption (Edralin, 2013; George et al., 2006; Matthew et al., 2011; Sirgy & Lee, 2018).

Contrary to findings from the work-life literature that demonstrate only negative individual outcomes of a lack of WLB, this study revealed that a few of the professionals who reported a lack of WLB feel that their huge investment of time and effort in the work role resulted in positive individual outcomes. One of them was self-fulfilment arising from contentment linked to the knowledge and skills acquired from the work role. Another was the recognition and rewards from their employer for the positive child outcomes they had achieved. A third was the assurance of a career path following recognition of how much they still loved their jobs despite the negative outcomes they experienced. However, the findings from the study suggest that the negative outcomes outweigh these positive individual outcomes.

5.2.5 The strategies employed by the sampled professionals to enhance their WLB.

Findings from this study reveal some interesting, innovative and unconventional strategies used by the sampled professionals in their efforts to achieve WLB. Previous studies have tended to focus on WLB strategies at meso and macro level following the realisation that WLB is more than just an individual problem; it is an institutional and societal one as well. However, this study presents micro level WLB strategies employed by these professionals.

Findings from the study illustrate that the most commonly used WLB strategies are support from family and friends, and rest and relaxation. The accounts by most of the participants demonstrate that these two strategies are useful in relieving stress and reducing perceptions of strain, which mitigates the severity of tension and the effects of work role stressors. Participant 1 reported that her husband minimises her distress by being understanding and accommodating of her need to put in a few more hours of work after hours. Similarly, Participant 9 explained that assistance from her husband and children enhanced her work performance. This strategy is supported by prior

studies, such as Edralin's (2012) study on the WLB strategies used by Filipina women entrepreneurs.

Rest and relaxation is the other frequently used WLB strategy. Findings from the study illustrate that relaxation activities and rest are used by most of the participants to recuperate from their taxing work roles. Participant 1 mentioned that she feels re-energised after a good night's sleep. Similarly, Participant 2 reported that going on holiday has kept her sane over the years. This strategy is supported by the literature and aligns with Rao's (2016) proposition that sound sleep is one of the three symptoms of good health and a booster of WLB.

In line with Nam's, (2014) concepts of boundary permeability and boundary flexibility; some participants in the study reported having set some work-life boundaries and managing these boundaries to minimise work-life infiltration. Participants 1 and 9 reported that they no longer engage in any work activities during the weekends so that they have the time and energy to focus on demands from other life domains. Likewise, Participant 8, who was serving notice after having resigned for another opportunity, explained that she was very cautious this time around to guard against work-life boundary permeability and flexibility.

Similar to findings from the literature on the use of boundary management techniques to enhance WLB (Baltes et al., 2010; Edralin, 2012; Stock et al., 2014), time management and effective prioritising were also used by some of the participants to reduce time conflicts across domains, thereby enhancing their ability to attain WLB. Participant 2 reported that she works extra hard during the week so that she can work less during the weekends in order to spend some quality time with her son. Correspondingly, Participant 6 disclosed how she eliminated all the factors that were aggravating her strain in order to restore balance across domains.

Unlike previous studies on WLB that highlighted the importance of supervisory support in facilitating employees' capacity to achieve WLB (Brown, 2014; Haar et al., 2018), findings from this study draw special attention to peer support as a strategy for enhancing the capacity to achieve WLB. The accounts from the participants reveal

that peer support was used to reduce stress, which in turn minimised stress-related outcomes of WLB and consequently reduced the work-life conflict they experienced.

The findings demonstrate that a few participants used active segmentation in order to reduce conflict across life domains. They reported that they have intentionally made their work-life boundaries less flexible in order to separate the various life domains and guard against negative spill-over effects, particularly from the work domain. This in turn minimises interference and conflict between the various life domains. The literature supports segmentation as an individual level WLB strategy as illustrated by Sirgy and Lee (2014) and Stock et al. (2014).

A few participants reported that they use emotional detachment as a strategy to minimise the transfer of negative affect and experiences from the work domain to other life domains. They reported that they distanced themselves emotionally from their work in order to protect themselves from stress and strain that could potentially spill over to other life domains.

Findings from my study also reveal that a few participants chose to have quality of life and made conscious decisions to pursue this through restoring balance across their life domains. Participant 8 for instance reported that she intended to look after herself in her new post and not repeat the same workload mistakes she made in her previous position. Similarly, Participant 9 pointed out that she and her husband made the conscious decision to have control over their lives and 'not to be part of the rat race'.

An unconventional WLB strategy used by a few participants is prayer and faith in God, which they use to get fresh vitality to deal with life's adversities and to develop the capacity to reduce work-life conflict. This strategy aligns with insights from enrichment theory regarding the impact of a positive attitude and positive outlook on work-life conflict (Zheng et al., 2015).

In line with insights from work-life enrichment theory, positive self-talk was another strategy that a few participants used to reduce subjective perceptions of stress and strain and in turn reduce work-life conflict. Counselling and attending wellness courses were also among the less used WLB strategies. They were intended to equip

the participants with the skills to cope better with work-life demands, thereby decreasing dissatisfaction with life and enhancing the capacity to achieve WLB.

5.3 Conclusion

Notwithstanding the demanding nature of the work and the environment in which the sampled professionals work, the majority of them maintained that they find working with special children enriching and rewarding. However, the findings illustrate that the environment in which they work and the nature of their work has negative implications for their work-life integration, wellbeing and overall functioning. Interventions to address their work-life conflict therefore need to target their work domain, which was found to be their major source of conflict. Moreover, considering that the participants already have a variety of micro-level strategies in place to assist them to attain WLB, it appears that interventions to enhance their efforts to attain greater WLB need to focus on the development of meso and macro level strategies instead. Additionally, the micro level strategies presented in this study should be publicised to ensure that those who work in similar environments have access to this information and can therefore adopt the strategies that are appropriate for their particular situations. Chapter 6 presents a detailed discussion of the contributions of this study, its limitations and some recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In spite of the work-life conflict currently experienced by the majority of the sampled professionals, the findings from the study suggest that it may still be possible for these professionals to attain WLB if they are provided with support and empowered to better cope with their work-life demands. This idea is supported by findings from Zheng et al's. (2015) study that suggests that individuals who exercise their own WLB strategies have better well-being and are more capable of achieving WLB.

This chapter is a discussion of the relevance and importance of this study, its limitations and some recommendations for future research.

6.2 Contributions of the study

The theoretical contributions of the study to the current WLB body of knowledge are discussed below. The practical implications of the findings of the study are also explained.

6.2.1 Theoretical contributions

This study closes the gap in existing work-life research by focusing on the WLB of the unique sample of professionals who work with special children, whose work-life interface has not been much studied so far. The study extends the growing body of work on WLB by investigating these professionals' state of WLB as well as their work-life experiences. A significant contribution to the work-life literature that lies in the findings is insight into how WLB plays out in the lives of these professionals, the various factors that influence their ability to achieve WLB, the challenges that they face in integrating their various life domains, the outcomes from a lack of WLB and the

individual level strategies that they use to harmonise their various life roles. All this information adds to the knowledge gap in the work-life and special needs literature.

Unlike previous studies on the WLB of working parents of children with special needs that have tended to focus on the role of the employer and the state in assisting individuals to balance their work and life domains, this study focused on the role of the individual in integrating the demands from their various life domains. The study unearthed thirteen (13) individual level strategies that this sample of individuals employ to create balance between their work and life domains. Additionally, contrary to most prior studies, this study explores the broader lives (i.e. including a variety of non-work domains beyond family) of this sample of professionals and does not restrict the investigation to their work-family interface. This is all very useful information that can be added to the existing body of knowledge.

6.2.2 Practical implications

Although the prevalence of children with a “special needs” diagnosis has been noted to be stable, globally, in the last decade (Bethell, Read, Blumberg, & Newacheck, 2008; McGuire, Tian, Yeargin-Allsopp, Dowling, & Christensen, 2019); the number of affected children in low-income and middle-income countries such as South Africa has increased significantly (Demirci & Kartal, 2016). This increase gives rise to a need for more affordable, reliable and high quality care facilities for these children. A review of the literature indicates however that there is currently a short supply of appropriate care facilities for children with special needs and the attraction, satisfaction and retention of personnel in the special needs field has also been noted to be a great concern.

In light of this it becomes extremely important to invest in the motivation, satisfaction and retention of professionals who work in the scarce care facilities that are currently available. One way of ensuring that they are motivated, engaged and retained is by equipping and empowering them with the skills to achieve greater WLB. High levels of WLB will in turn reduce the conflict they experience, reduce their dissatisfaction with life and enhance their health and wellbeing. This study therefore provides invaluable information about the sampled professionals’ state of WLB and the challenges that

they face in attaining it. This information may thus serve as focus areas for developing appropriate interventions to assist those who work with special needs children to minimise their work-life conflict. Moreover, other professionals and/or carers working in similar environments may find the WLB strategies used by the participants in this study useful in integrating their own life domains.

Additionally, given the important role that these professionals have in ensuring the optimal development of the children under their care, enhancing their health and wellbeing will in turn enhance their work performance, job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction to the benefit of the children under their care. The findings from this study will therefore benefit both the professionals who work with special needs children and the children as well.

6.3 Limitations and directions for future research

The sample for this study comprises only of female participants which imposes some limitations on the findings considering the reality of gender roles, their influence on the distribution of tasks within the family domain, and the effect of gendered organisational cultures on the explicit and implicit expectations placed on workers. To address this limitation, future research should focus on the purposive inclusion of male participants for a more comprehensive investigation.

Another limitation of this study is that the sample is disproportionately white and college educated. My study focused on a narrow demographic sample of professionals who work with special needs children; resultantly, the findings are not generalizable to the general population. Future research should therefore include other groups of caregivers to explore whether these findings are true for other groups of carers.

My study captures self-reported WLB assessments of the sampled professionals who work with special needs children. To increase the understanding of their WLB, future research may adopt the approach taken by Stock et al. (2014) in their research on the WLB of top executives and also interview their partners. This will provide some insight on their judgement of their partners' involvement in other life domains, their appraisal

of the degree of success with which their partners handle their work and life roles and their perceptions of their partners' quality of life and overall life satisfaction. This social perspective of the WLB of this unique sample of professionals will be invaluable.

Furthermore, future studies may also look into the existence of meso and macro level WLB strategies that are specific to the population of professionals and/or caregivers (other than the parents) who work with special needs children.

6.4 Conclusion

The present study explored the WLB of sampled professionals who work with special needs children in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The results of the study reveal that the majority of these professionals were experiencing work interference with life, owing to the time-based and strain-based conflict that stems from their work domain. The results also demonstrate that these professionals' WLB is greatly impacted by work related factors. Moreover, most of the challenges that they face in attaining WLB were found to be similar to the challenges faced by most working adults in modern society. The study provided a description of the individual level strategies employed by these professionals in curtailing work-related stress and role overload in order to enhance their capacity to achieve WLB. Overall, the findings offer a fresh perspective on the WLB of professionals who work with special needs children, which I hope will encourage further exploration by future work-life studies.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant Biographical Information

Name:	Age:
Gender:	Ethnicity:
Highest Qualification:	Occupation:
Tenure in current position:	Marital Status:
Number of hours worked: If yes, how many and state their ages?	Do you have children?

Demographic characteristics of the children under the professional's care

Age:
Special need categories/Diagnoses:

Interview questions

Please note that these questions will be used merely as a guide to focus the interviews but will not be asked in any predetermined order. The interviews will be spontaneous, natural and free flowing conversations aimed at gaining thick descriptions of the professionals' work and life domains.

Work responsibilities & work experiences

1. What does your job entail?
2. How would you describe your work environment?
3. What would a typical day look like for you, from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed?
4. What sort of challenges do you encounter in your job?

Family responsibilities

5. What are your other responsibilities outside of your work?
6. What sort of activities do you engage in outside of work?

Work-family relations

7. What does work-life balance mean to you?
8. Do you think work-life balance is important?
9. How does work-life balance play out in your life?
10. What challenges do you face in trying to integrate the work and life domains?
11. What outcomes do you get from the integration and/or efforts to integrate your work and life spheres?
12. What outcomes do you get from a lack of integration of the two domains?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Human Resource Management

EXPLORING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Research conducted by:

Mrs Kudzai Debra Matsvororo (17357684)
Cell: 081 042 1423 Email: kudzydeb@gmail.com

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in this research project conducted by Kudzai Debra Matsvororo, a Masters student from the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to explore your experiences as a professional who works with special needs children and how this impacts your work-life balance, given the nature of your work.

Please sign this form to show your consent for participation in this research project:

I, (Name and surname), _____ hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the qualitative research project on the work-life balance of professionals working with special needs children. I also agree that an interview conducted with me will be audiotaped and that this information will be used for the purpose of research.

I understand that:

1. This is an anonymous study as my name will not appear on the interview notes. The answers I give will be treated as strictly confidential as I cannot be identified in person based on the answers I give.
2. The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. I will be provided with a summary of our findings on request.
3. I may choose not to participate or I may choose to withdraw my participation at any time without any negative consequences
4. In research of this nature, the study leader may wish to contact participants to verify the authenticity of data gathered by the researcher. It is understood that any personal contact details that you may provide will be used only for this purpose, and will not compromise your anonymity or the confidentiality of your participation.

You are free to contact my supervisor, Ms Preshanta Pillay on her mobile: 084 899 7535 or email: preshanta.pillay@up.ac.za should you have any questions or comments regarding this project.

SIGNED: _____ NAME (in printed letters): _____

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR OBSERVATION



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Human Resource Management

EXPLORING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Research conducted by:

Mrs Kudzai Debra Matsvororo (17357684)
Cell: 081 042 1423 Email: kudzydeb@gmail.com

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in this research project conducted by Kudzai Debra Matsvororo, a Masters student from the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of a sample of professionals who work with special needs children and how their experiences impact their work-life balance, given the nature of their work.

I, (Name and surname), _____ hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the qualitative research project on the work-life balance of professionals working with special needs children. I also agree that I will be observed while I work and that this information will be used for the purpose of research.

I understand that:

1. This is an anonymous study as my name will not appear on the observation notes. The information will be treated as strictly confidential as I cannot be identified in person based on the notes taken.
2. The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. I will be provided with a summary of the findings on request.
3. I may choose not to participate or I may choose to withdraw my participation at any time without any negative consequences.
4. In research of this nature, the study leader may wish to contact participants to verify the authenticity of data gathered by the researcher. It is understood that any personal contact details that you may provide will be used only for this purpose, and will not compromise your anonymity or the confidentiality of your participation.

You are free to contact my supervisor, Ms Preshanta Pillay on her mobile: 084 899 7535 or email: preshanta.pillay@up.ac.za should you have any questions or comments regarding this project.

SIGNED: _____ NAME (in printed letters): _____

APPENDIX D: VALIDATION OF ACCURACY OF CONVEYED INFORMATION FORM



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
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Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Human Resource Management

EXPLORING THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

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Dear Participant,

You are invited to validate or refute the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of the information that you conveyed to her.

I, (Name and surname), _____ hereby validate that the researcher accurately portrayed all the information that I conveyed to her.

OR

I, (Name and surname), _____ hereby refute that the researcher accurately portrayed all the information that I conveyed to her.

SIGNED: _____ NAME (in printed letters): _____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX E: ABBREVIATIONS

Table 5. 1 Abbreviations

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
ABA	Applied behaviour analysis
WLB	Work-life balance
IOP	Industrial and organisational psychology
WFB	Work family balance
WFF	Work-to-family facilitation
FWF	Family-to-work facilitation
WFC	Work-to-family conflict
FWC	Family-to-work conflict
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
WIF	Work interference in family
WTC	Work time control
FSOP	Family supportive organisational policies
GE	Gender egalitarianism
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Source: Self-developed based on literature