

Chapter 6: Discussion

This final chapter answers the research questions pertaining to this study, and discusses the major findings of the study. Subsequently, the contributions and limitations of the study are explained, followed by recommendations for future research.

6.1 The First Research Question

The first research question investigated the relationships between WFC and certain biographical-type variables and characteristics. The variables that were investigated included support received with children and household duties, marital status, gender, spouse and manager support, being the primary breadwinner, working day schedules and flexibility, travelling time and utilisation of work resources.

Biographical-type variables and characteristics that were found to be statistically significantly related to WFC are discussed first. This is followed by a discussion on the variables that failed to confirm statistically significant differences in their relationships with WFC.

Statistically significant differences were found for the entire sample between WFC scores of respondents who seldom received support with children and respondents who never received support with children. Support with children entails any assistance or support from a nanny, domestic worker, family member or au pair. Such a finding does not make conceptual sense and one would have expected a significant difference to exist between participants regularly receiving support with children and those not receiving support with children. Although this biographical variable is regarded as a finding, the researcher will not work with this finding further. Statistically significant differences were also confirmed between respondents' WFC scores and transporting of children to and from work. WFC is related to child-rearing

activities and responsibilities (Sariati & Martin, 2003). Therefore, respondents who are the primary caregivers in their families may not perceive their family life as interfering with work because of the salience of the family role. Therefore, such respondents who occupy the primary caregiver role, experiences of WFC may be higher due to child-rearing activities.

Biographical-type variables and characteristics that failed to show statistically significant differences with WFC were support with household chores, child/children with an illness, marital status and gender for the entire sample.

The results of the question on support with household chores are the opposite of what the researcher had anticipated. One would have expected to find a statistically significant relationship between respondents who receive assistance from a nanny, domestic worker, family member or au pair with WFC. The presence of such an individual provides a major source of social support for working individuals. A study conducted by Lo, Stone and Ng (2003) found that the availability of such individuals assisting with household chores eliminated a lot of the pressures on working individuals, especially working mothers.

No statistically significant relationship was found between WFC and respondents who indicated that they had a child or children who suffered from a mental, physical, emotional or life threatening condition(s). One would expect that having to care for a chronically ill child or children at home might be a potential high-risk factor for experiences of WFC. According to a study conducted by Green (2007), the life of a mother who has a child with a disability is emotionally complex. The majority of the research based on work-family conflict and children with disabilities confirms the distress of a mother raising a child with a disability. Because the type and severity of the mental, physical, emotional or life-threatening conditions were not investigated within the scope of this study, one can assume that such children might have been placed in a special facility that medically catered for their needs. Another reason why no relationship was found between WFC and an ill child could be

because a dedicated spouse stayed at home and took care of the child, or a full-time nurse might be employed who assumed primary responsibility for the child. One could assume that if either of the above scenarios were true, then participants would experience less WFC because of the additional support received with their ill children.

No statistically significant difference was found for the entire sample between participants' marital status and gender with WFC. One would expect that married or partnered individuals with children are likely to experience greater WFC than single individuals. There is, however, a possibility that married working women with children may take on less challenging jobs in order to successfully combine work with household responsibilities, thus experiencing less WFC. A variable that could be further investigated to mitigate levels of WFC across marital status and gender is the role of spousal support in providing an enabling environment that minimises the interference between work and family responsibilities.

With regard to the difference between men's and women's level of WFC experiences, no statistically significant differences were found, even though the mean score for working women's experiences of WFC (4.3) was slightly higher than the mean score reported for men (4.2). From a societal expectations perspective, work is regarded as the traditional domain for men, as family is regarded as the traditional domain for women. Although working women's traditional roles have changed, women still exhibit a unidirectional relationship between work and family (Posig & Kickul, 2004). The reason why no statistically significant differences were evident between men's and women's level of WFC is unclear. Perhaps for the current sample it could possibly be true that domestic and child-rearing responsibilities are important to both the men and the women. However, before such an argument can be acceptable, further investigation needs to be conducted into additional factors affecting family dynamics, to broaden our understanding of the work and family factors that lessen conflict for both men and women.

In terms of primary breadwinners in the household, no statistically significant difference was found between WFC, being the primary breadwinner and not being the primary breadwinner. According to the normative nature of gender roles, men are assigned the breadwinner role in the family unit, while women occupy the caregiver role. As respondents were only asked to indicate whether they were the primary or not the primary breadwinner in the family, the number of men and women who answered this research question was unknown. It might therefore be valuable to investigate the WFC of working women in the total sample that occupy the primary breadwinner role in their families. WFC is believed to be strongest when individuals do not conform to the expectations of a given role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Therefore, because women are subjected to societal expectations to occupy the caregiver role, WFC may be greater for working women than for men, owing to their limited preoccupation in the work domain.

With regard to whether differences exist between WFC and support from one's manager, higher mean scores on WFC were confirmed for respondents who did not receive support from their managers. As expected, manager support variances were statistically significantly related to WFC for the entire sample. The findings suggest that working individuals who perceive their managers as being accommodating and supportive may experience less WFC because they have the flexibility to change their work demands to suit and satisfy their family responsibilities; for example, having the ability to leave work early to attend to family issues. One can assume that such perceived flexibility has the ability to lessen feelings of anxiety when managing work and family responsibilities, especially when family emergencies occur. Conversely, when work and family challenges arise and a manager is unable to offer some form of assistance, it may be likely that WFC may increase. Manager-support practices may play a more vital role in mitigating individuals' WFC in their various roles. Caution needs to be taken, however, concerning the manager-support instrument that was developed for this specific study; it needs to be further utilised in other samples before firm conclusions can be drawn. Relationships that were found to be statistically significant with WFC

will be discussed next. These relationships included the following variables: spouse/partner support, children living or not living at home, work hours, utilisation of work resources and travelling time.

A weak inverse relationship was found between spouse/partner support and WFC ($r = -.08$). Spouse/partner support refers to child-rearing support, support with household chores and financial support. Similar findings were also found in Aycan and Eskin's (2005) study, with a correlation coefficient of ($r = -.09$) between spouse support and WFC. Existing literature on social support and WFC confirms that higher levels of spousal support with family activities assist individuals to manage both work and family responsibilities. An apparent source of support for working women, whether married or cohabiting, is a spouse or a partner (Baxter & Alexander, 2008). Because the number of working women with children with a spouse or partner was not measured, and because the correlation is so low, it may be considered of little practical significance, even though the relationship is statistically significant. One can speculate that the insignificant relationship between spouse support and WFC is due to the buffering effect that spouse support has on the detrimental job demands from work that increase individuals' experiences of WFC.

Upon examining the relationship between children living at home and WFC, a weak positive relationship ($r = .07$) was found. This finding did not yield the expected result that children living at home potentially increased WFC, and because the correlation is so low, it is considered of little practical significance, even though the relationship is statistically significant. A moderate relationship ($r = .28$) was found between children not living at home and WFC. A possible reason for the statistically significant differences found for children living and not living at home with WFC may be that respondents have good support structures in place that alleviate the extent of WFC.

In a study conducted by Mazerolle, Bruening, and Casa (2008), working long hours directly contributed to WFC for men and women. In this research study,

a correlation was found for the entire sample between working hours and WFC ($r = .27$). Working long hours and inflexible working schedules have frequently been cited in the literature as job-related stressors and antecedents to job dissatisfaction and burnout (Scriber & Alderman, 2005). The literature has frequently alluded to the fact that women are less likely to conform to organisational expectations than men are because they do not have as much free time as men do. This is because of the primary caregiver role that women assume. Further investigation may be required to understand the potential impact that organisations supporting a culture of long working hours may have on working women with children's WFC.

A very weak relationship was confirmed between WFC and travel time to and from work ($r = .04$). This research question was specifically asked to discern whether travelling to and from work contributes to respondents' experiences of WFC. For many individuals, time is viewed as a limited resource and the more time and energy individuals exert in a particular role, the less time and energy the individual has available to spend in another role, thus resulting in conflict (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Due to the low correlation, the relationship found between travel time and WFC is of little practical significance, even though it is statistically significant. A moderate positive relationship was found between average hours per week utilised on work tools such as desktop computers, laptop computers, BlackBerry devices and paperwork and WFC. Organisations place certain expectations on individuals who utilise these resources; that is, individuals may be required to work over weekends or after hours. If such individuals regard the family role as more salient than the work role, and much time is utilised on the work tools mentioned above, such individuals are likely to experience greater levels of WFC.

The last section pertaining to this research question was to determine whether respondents participating in flexible working arrangements experienced less WFC than participants not participating in flexible working arrangements. The differences in WFC scores between participation and non-participation in flexible working arrangements are statistically significant. As expected,

respondents not participating in flexible working arrangements reported a statistically significantly higher mean WFC score (4.4) than the mean score of participants who participate in flexible working arrangements (4.0). The use of technological tools, such as the laptop, provided to employees by organisations, creates the flexibility to work in any location and at any time. Airport lounges, buses, car parks, even cafés, have all become virtual workplaces (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2005). Employees feel that they are expected to work over weekends to demonstrate their career commitment (Roberts, 2007). It is to be expected that participation in flexible working arrangements would potentially lessen experiences of WFC. It may also be valuable to understand the extent to which flexible working arrangements impact on working women's WFC in senior roles. Working women in senior positions may be required to attend meetings or handle daily issues that may arise at work, regardless of the flexible working arrangement. This means that working women who have opted to take part in flexible working arrangements do not always utilise this benefit, for fear of being perceived as not being productive at work.

6.2 The Second Research Question

The second research question enquired about the relationships between FWC and WFC with burnout among working women with children, other working women and men. FWC and WFC were measured by the conflict scales of Netemeyer et al. (1996), and burnout was measured by the Burnout Inventory General Survey of Maslach et al. (1996). The relationship between FWC and burnout will be discussed first, followed by a discussion on the results of the relationship between WFC and burnout.

The results indicate that FWC for working women with children is statistically significantly stronger on both the EE/CYN dimension ($r = .64$) and the PE dimension ($r = .56$) of burnout, when compared with other working women and men. Other working women and men reported correlation coefficients of ($r = .42$) with the EE/CYN dimension and ($r = .31$) with the PE dimension of

burnout. Although the relationship between FWC and both factors of burnout is statistically significantly different for working women with children, other working women and men are also prone to the experiences of FWC and burnout, but to a lesser degree. These findings clearly indicate that the relationship between FWC with both burnout factors (EE/CYN and PE) is statistically significantly different for working women with children than for other working women and men. The findings are consistent with a growing body of research which has found that work and family conflict variables have significant relationships with several work and individual health outcomes such as burnout (Van Daalen, Willemsen, Sanders, & Van Veldhoven, 2009). Moreover, respondents who work specifically more with people, as opposed to information processing, may be more likely than other respondents to experience stress resulting from the pressures of their work and family roles (and experience high FWC). This may be especially true when most of a respondent's work and family roles consist of high emotional management.

It is generally presumed, in job stress research, that job resources (such as autonomy and social support) may buffer the negative consequences of job demands on individuals' burnout levels (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004). Furthermore, the interaction between job resources and FWC moderates the prevention of emotional exhaustion, regardless of respondents' high levels of FWC. In essence, the presence of job resources in the form of autonomy and social support may lessen respondents' experiences of FWC, regardless of gender.

Working women with children reported statistically significant differences from other working women and men in both EE/CYN and PE dimensions of burnout with FWC. As FWC was statistically significantly stronger on both burnout dimensions for working women with children, the following patterns may provide some insight into this finding. Demographic changes within the family structures, such as the increase in single-parent households, dual-career couples, and families with child- and elder-care responsibilities, have elevated the discourse about satisfying responsibilities at work and at home. Owing to

these demographic changes, participating in multiple incompatible roles may cause working women with children to experience greater emotional exhaustion and cynicism towards their work. Exhaustion is not simply perceived as an experience; rather, exhaustion evokes an emotional behaviour that makes an individual withdraw emotionally from work as a way to deal with and manage work overload (Maslach et al., 2001). The results therefore indicate that working women with children's experiences of burnout on both dimensions (EE/CYN and PE) are more prevalent with FWC than with WFC.

The second part of this research question was to investigate whether a relationship exists between WFC with burnout for working women with children, other working women and men. The results indicate that WFC, for working women with children, is positively related with both the EE/CYN dimension ($r = .65$) and with the PE dimension ($r = .34$) of burnout. Other working women and men reported a strong relationship ($r = .58$) between the EE/CYN dimension, and a weak relationship ($r = .21$) between the PE dimension of burnout with WFC. The results indicate that the differences found between WFC with both burnout dimensions (EE/CYN and PE) for working women with children and those of other working women and men are not statistically significant, indicating that experiences of WFC are prevalent in both working women with children and other working women and men.

6.3 The Third Research Question

The third research question enquires into the relationships between FWC, WFC and job satisfaction for working women with children and other working women and men. FWC and WFC were measured through the scales of Netemeyer et al., (1996), and job satisfaction was measured by the MSQ instrument of Weiss et al. (1967). The relationship between FWC and job satisfaction will be discussed first, followed by a discussion on the results of the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction.

The results indicate that the relationship between working women with children's experiences of FWC and job satisfaction is statistically significantly stronger than that of other working women and men. A moderate inverse relationship was further found between FWC and job satisfaction of other working women and men, indicating that as levels of FWC accumulate, satisfaction on the job decreases. Moderate inverse relationships were also found between WFC and job satisfaction for working women with children and other working women and men, thus implying that an increase in WFC contributes to lower levels of job satisfaction. Although the correlation coefficients between WFC and job satisfaction are statistically significant, a comparison of the confidence intervals indicated no statistically significant differences between working women with children and other working women and men.

The gender-role theory may assist in providing a possible explanation for the statistically significant differences between FWC and job satisfaction for working woman with children. The gender-role theory plays a significant part in understanding working women with children's experience of job dissatisfaction, and is largely due to such women's multiple-role participation. The more time and emotion that is invested in a role, the more salient the role becomes to that individual's sense of self. If the demands and pressures in the work domain drain time and energy that is required for the family role, working women with children may perceive this as a threat to their self-identity (Noor, 2004). It makes sense that the source of conflict will be regarded negatively and viewed as a threat to individual goals and ideals. This therefore suggests that work is endorsed as the source of such conflict, which may lead working women with children to develop negative perceptions towards their jobs. Because working women with children regard the family as more salient, work will be less likely to intrude and interfere with family activities.

Another possible reason why a statistically significant difference between FWC and job satisfaction is found for working women with children may be

based on the perception that when family interferes with work, the demands of the job are not being achieved. Working women with children are more willing to permit family activities to interfere with work responsibilities, thus reflecting the uneven permeability of the work and family domains (Pleck, 1977). The role of a spouse or partner may further reinforce such women's negative appraisals towards work and job dissatisfaction. For example, if a spouse or partner perceives that the prescribed mother-role is being violated, family conflict and resentment develop, thus making the working woman with children shift the blame onto her job. Taken together, the results support the notion that when working women with children's work conflicts with family roles; such inter-role conflict predicts the lower level of job satisfaction they may experience. The findings show that working women with children have considerably higher FWC than other working women and men, thus supporting the notion that women still assume the caregiver role in the family. The findings of this research question clearly indicate that FWC is statistically significantly related to job satisfaction, and the relationship between FWC and lower job satisfaction is statistically significantly stronger for working women with children than it is for other working women and men.

6.4 The Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question investigates whether differences exist between burnout for working women with children and other working women without children. The findings show that working women with children's experiences of EE/CYN is higher than for other working women, while mean scores for PE failed to show statistically significant differences between these two groups.

There may be various possible reasons for the statistically significantly higher levels of EE/CYN in working women with children's experiences, compared with those of working women without children. Because individuals are exposed to stressful situations that extend beyond the work environment, it can be assumed that conflict persists due to the multiple participation in various roles. A primary distinguishing factor between working women with

children and other working women is the presence and management of children. This is not to say that the presence of children is the only differential factor between the two groups, but children are regarded as a potential strain in attempting to manage both work and family responsibilities.

The job demands-resources model developed by Bakker et al. (2003) may be used as a framework for understanding how working women with children experience role pressures. If the theoretical framework of the job demands-resources model is applied to working women with children, one can speculate that higher burnout could be experienced because of the simultaneous management of work and domestic obligations. Working women with children's experiences of stress may be due to a lack of available resources, with childcare support in particular. Another explanation that could cause working women with children to experience higher EE/CYN than other working women may be the demands of the job. That is, when the demands of the job require more effort and time, working women with children may not have these at their disposal to fulfil such requirements. Therefore, the negative load effects that build up during the workday eventually spill over into the family domain, and ultimately lead to emotional exhaustion and perceived cynicism towards work. Working women with children may feel that work is taking up much of their time and energy that they would have preferred to spend with their family and children.

The findings of this question confirm that a statistically significant difference exists between working women with children and other working women on the EE/CYN dimension of burnout. However, no statistically significant differences were found for PE between working women with children and other working women. One can assume that the management of multiple roles in the face of competing demands from work and family carries inherent challenges for working women. To a certain degree, gender role behaviours play an important role in working women with children's status and progression at work. For instance, when such women return home after a day at the office they frequently find domestic demands waiting for them,

accompanied by work demands that have accrued at work. Therefore, working women with children's levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism at this stage are at their peak. The significant differences between working women with children and other working women's burnout levels may be a function of the conflicting social roles and expectations that accompany work and family life.

6.5 The Fifth Research Question

The fifth research question investigates the differences between the role identities of working women with children and other working women and men. The different role identities identified in this study are employee-role identity, self-in-role, and mother-role identity. The first part of this research question compares the rating of themselves or self-in-role (RIW) of working women with children and ratings on the employee-role identity or counter-roles (RIE). The second part compares working women with children's ratings of themselves (RIW) and ratings on the mother-role identity (RIM) on a set of opposing adjectives.

The results indicate that the role identity (RIW) differs significantly from the perceived role identity of employee (RIE) in the case of working women with children. That is, the differences in the mean scores between RIE and RIW are statistically significant for working women with children. The second part of this research question found that working women with children identify more closely with the mother-role identity (RIM) than with their self-in-role identity (RIW). The mother-role identity has the highest mean score; the perceived self-in-role for working women with children has a slightly lower mean score than the mother-role. The difference in the mean scores indicates that the perceived self-in-role of working women with children appears to be situated closer to the mother-role identity. This is indicative of the tension and conflict that working women with children experience, which may potentially reside in the fact that they see themselves as caught between two prominent

role identities. Conflict arises for working women with children as they simultaneously try to be good employees and good mothers.

The above findings imply that working women with children's family role (the role of being a mother) is more salient than that of other working women and men. A reason may be that working women with children not only regard family as important, but also experience greater conflict between work and family roles. Another interesting concept that has relevance to this study is Mead's (1934) inference that social identities influence relationships with other individuals. Therefore, because the mother-role identity is regarded as salient by working women with children, there is a high possibility that working women with children enact such maternal behaviours in the workplace. On the basis of this formulation, one can assume that when confronted by role conflicts, working women with children may find it difficult to act out their maternal role identities, which end up contained by what work requires from them.

According to Callero (1985), the most noticeable effect of role-identity salience is the relationship to an individual's behaviour. In the light of this, one can assume that as working women with children assume the mother-role identity, they may enact and internalise the behavioural expectations associated with the salience of that particular role identity. In this way, the mother-role identity is realised. Working women with children's dedication and commitment to their family role renders higher role salience than any other role identity, especially during their child-rearing years. One can assume that as working women with children's commitment to, and salience of, their families intensify, so does the probability that conflict will arise. This is especially true because working women with children manage their work and family role behaviours simultaneously. The conclusions from this research question suggest that working women with children struggle to develop a career identity (employee-role identity) while satisfying social and individual expectations regarding their identity as mothers. Therefore, the more committed working women with children are towards the mother-role identity that defines their sense of self,

the greater the likelihood that the mother-role identity will conflict with the employee-role identity.

6.6 The Sixth Research Question

The sixth research question investigated whether those working women with children who identify more closely with the mother-role identity experience higher FWC or higher WFC. This study found that the experience of WFC was stronger than the experience of FWC for working women with children who identified more with the mother-role identity. Previous research studies have also indicated that due to the permeability of family domains, greater conflict spills over from work to family. Therefore, WFC is more often experienced than FWC (Garies, Barnett, Ertel, & Berkman, 2009; Anderson, Mikulic, Vermeylen, Yrjanainen, & Zigante, 2009). The findings show that working women with children who identify more with the mother-role identity not only regard their family role as highly salient but also limit the amount of conflict that interferes with the family domain.

Critical to such a finding is the assumption that the mother-role identity forms a greater part of the self of working women with children than the other role identities in this study. That is, the mother-role identity is regarded as the overriding part of the self, taking precedence over other role identities and affecting general self-perceptions and behaviours such as protecting the family domain from the influences of work. The associated meaning of being a mother corresponds with the meaning associated with the general self of working women with children. The other role identities, although represented to varying degrees in the self-definition of working women with children, are less important to their overall self-definition. It is thus apparent that the mother-role identity is regarded as more salient for working women with children, and family activities and issues are put before work.

Role identities differ from traditional conceptualisations of roles in that they are not limited to societal expectations. That is, working women with children

continue to manage both work and family role demands, but dedicate a disproportionate amount of time to their families at the expense of their work. Working women who regard the family role as salient will tend to avoid any work activity that may potentially interfere with family life. Such working women may even, according to Mackey and Coney (2000), search for jobs that will cause minimal interference with their families, and are non-threatening to their roles as mothers. If work demands and pressures interfere with family activities, these women are more inclined to experience negative perceptions towards their jobs. Such a proposition can be further reinforced by the structural factors that contribute to such women's commitment to and identification with the mother-role identity.

A major concern for working women with children that would require further investigation is dealing with the conflict that arises from the multiple-role participation, rather than from conflicting expectations within a specified role.

6.7 The Seventh Research Question

The seventh research question aims to establish whether working women with children experience more –FIW or –WIF than other working women and men. Interference (negative or positive) and direction (from work-to-family or from family-to-work) was measured utilising the SWING instrument of Geurts et al. (2005).

This research question found that working women with children reported a statistically significantly higher mean score on –FIW (0.7) than the mean score of other working women and men (0.4). This was contrary to the researcher's assumptions; one would have expected working women with children to experience higher –WIF than higher –FIW. A possible reason for this may be that working women with children regard family as significantly salient over work, and therefore they prefer to spend their time and energy in family-related activities. Demerouti and Geurts (2004) explain WIF as a process in which an individual's functioning in a specific domain, such as home, is

influenced, either negatively or positively, by the demands of another domain, such as work. One can therefore expect the reverse to be true for FIW, which is a process in which an individual's functioning in the work domain is influenced negatively or positively by the demands of the family domain.

A further investigation regarding demographic and family characteristics would also be helpful in clarifying the reasons why statistically significant differences exist for working women with children and –FIW. The presence of young children at home may have some bearing on why working women with children experience greater –FIW than –WIF. Research indicates that –FIW has the potential to increase with the presence of young children in the household (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Behson, 2002). It seems plausible to expect that if there are young children still at home, the demands of the family may interfere more with work in a negative way. Other family characteristics that are domain predictors of FIW are childcare support (Fox & Dwyer, 1999), spouse or partner relationships (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), high family involvement and greater time demands from family (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001), employment status (Yang, Chen, Choi, & Zou, 2000) and lack of a family support structure.

6.8 The Eight Research Question

The eight research question enquires whether a relationship exists between social support (from spouse/partner) and FWC among working women with children as opposed to other working women and men. A weak inverse relationship ($r = -.15$) was found between FWC and spouse/partner support for working women with children. However, the correlation is so low that it is of little practical significance, even though this relationship is statistically significant. The relationship found between spouse/partner support and FWC for other working women and men is also considered low ($r = .05$) and therefore of little practical significance.

It is evident that working women with children require a spouse or partner to provide and create an enabling environment at home in order to minimise the constant interference of work and family demands. It is, however, clear that the findings from this research question imply that support from a spouse or partner reduces the severity of family role demands and in turn minimises FWC. Perhaps another reason for the statistically significant difference between FWC and spouse/partner support for working women with children may be the additional support received with household and child-rearing activities, which may alleviate working women with children's experiences of conflict. Such support allows working women with children to combine the responsibilities of family and work more effectively.

6.9 Contributions of the Present Study

The current research makes several significant contributions to the body of knowledge in the field of organisational behaviour and especially the study of work and family conflict, job satisfaction, burnout and role identity among working women with children. The concept of role identity is introduced as a significant variable to consider in the investigation of work and family conflict, as well as burnout and job satisfaction, for working women with children. By incorporating the role-identity variable as a construct, this study was able to link the mother-role identity, or self-in-role, with the development of WFC for women with children working in a brewing, sales and distribution industry. A further contribution of the present research study was to bring new insight and understanding into the significant role that identity plays in work and family, and the salience of specific roles that working women with children assume. The study has further shown that working women with children who identify more closely with the mother-role identity experience greater conflict than do other working women. Therefore, one can infer that role identity is a contributing factor when conflict is experienced, especially for working women with children.

This study also assists in understanding the work and family role integration of working women with children versus other working women and men. The study provides a wide range and consolidated overview of the current work and family theories within a conceptual and unifying framework. The conceptual framework shows how WFC contributes to undesirable work outcomes such as burnout and decreased job satisfaction. Therefore, this research is not only descriptive in nature, but offers a conceptual framework that outlines the relationship between WFC and role identity and burnout and job satisfaction, by investigating the mechanisms by virtue of which such relationships exist. Such a framework includes not only the variables frequently evaluated in the work and family literature, but also the less explored and under-researched constructs such as FWC. The construct of FWC has for some time been absent and neglected within organisational research. The research study also assisted in broadening the FWC literature and definitions.

This study found that conflict (both WFC or FWC) and direction of interference (–WIF or –FIW) appear to be very similar constructs. Equally, the strong correlations between –FIW and FWC are also indicative of potential construct redundancy. Several researchers refer to conflict and interference as distinct constructs, used to depict essentially the same concept. This makes it exceptionally difficult to build research streams in the work and family literature for each construct. By contrast, other researchers regard the constructs conflict and interference as overlapping in nature and use these constructs interchangeably to essentially represent the same concept. Therefore, if the conflict and interference constructs are not empirically or conceptually documented, redundancy issues seriously hinder our understanding of phenomena, and our ability to offer guidelines for further work and family research. Therefore, a major contribution to the field of work and family research is that negative interference can no longer be assumed to be a separate component of conflict, regardless of direction (from family-to-work or from work-to-family). Furthermore, it appears that the difference

between conflict and interference is that conflict may be regarded as a symptom of negative interference.

The results and recommendations of the study can be used by organisations to enable a supportive organisational culture. Specific recommendations can be made to organisations that employ women, especially if the women have children. Organisations should consider the effects of women's challenging work environment on their work-life interaction. Organisations are required to counsel individuals regarding their well-being and assist them to manage their work and life-role integration. They have the capacity to offer preventative programmes and strategies at the organisational level. For instance, flexible working arrangements could be investigated further, to ensure that such arrangements provide working women with children the flexibility and time to fully satisfy their family responsibilities. Family-friendly programmes and strategies, accompanied by adequate resources, would help working women with children to deal efficiently with the high demands of their jobs, yet limit the risk of conflict developing between work and home.

The results also assist our understanding and demonstrate the importance of utilising flexible work arrangements as an aid to reducing WFC. A flexible working environment will foster individuals' positive perceptions in managing their work and family integration. Organisations that want to minimise WFC need to create working environments that allow employees to exercise freedom and independence in carrying out their work. Managers need to be encouraging and supportive of employees' work and family issues. If organisations can entrench this behaviour change, they are most likely to witness increased levels of employee satisfaction at work and a decrease in employee stress, burnout and WFC. The implementation of work-family policies and programmes alone will fail to yield the valuable effects for both organisations and their employees. In saying this, Thompson et al. (1999, p. 393) posit that, "despite formal policies and programs designed to help individuals balance work and family, it appears that unsupportive cultures and managers who enforce the norms associated with such cultures may

undermine the potential effectiveness of these programs”. Therefore, organisations can proactively encourage and construct family-friendly workplace cultures and managerial styles that are supportive of employees’ work and family integration. In hindsight, for family-friendly policies and programmes to be successful, they need to go hand in hand with the respective organisational processes.

From a practical point of view, this study shows specifically that FWC was regarded as a potential stressor, with undesirable effects on working women with children’s well-being, particularly relating to burnout, and their experiences of job satisfaction. Enriching interventions are therefore required to improve the family life of working women with children, and to avert any interference from family to work accompanied by its undesirable outcomes. For example, structural changes, such as flexible working arrangements and childcare support, will alleviate the conflict of working women with children so that their emotional well-being is further improved by their work. Therefore, by improving the quality of family life of working women with children, it would be possible to influence their work-life quality. The study further proposes that if supportive family interventions, such as family-friendly policies and measures of equality at work, are adopted, FWC with its undesirable consequences on the family may be minimised and or averted.

As identities form part of a hierarchal structure of significance, the findings of this study show that for working women with children, the mother-role identity takes priority over other role identities examined in this study. One caution, however, needs to be considered, in that it is not known whether the invocation of the mother-role identity applicable to a specific situation may be solely situational. In other words, working women with children might assume the mother-role identity only in the family domain and perhaps not in their work role. Therefore the hierarchy of salience for working women with children becomes important in the prediction and understanding of their experiences of WFC both as work and at home. The finding that working women with children experience greater WFC, utilising the role-identity theory,

is beneficial to organisations and practitioners alike. Examples that organisations and practitioners alike could use to lessen working mothers' experience of WFC in the workplace include introducing part-time work, flexi-time and flexi-place, and family and sick leave to take care of family responsibilities.

Traditionally, high identity salience has been viewed negatively as it has been thought to lead to more FIW (Frone et al., 1992). Of the two forms of interference, –FIW is more related to the specific roles that working women with children regard as salient, in this case the mother-role identity. According to Frone et al. (1992, p. 74) “the threat of not being the caretakers of the family” is more important for working women with children than “a threat to constructing or maintaining a desired job-related self-image”.

This study offers organisational behaviour practitioners direction on ways to reduce and deal with burnout, job satisfaction and role conflict in organisations. For instance, organisations should build a culture that recognises the significance of the family-identity salience of working women with children and encourages work and family balance. The way in which working women with children perceive themselves at work holds certain implications for the development of their conflict, burnout and job satisfaction levels. Organisations seeking ways to reduce the undesirable effects of conflict at work need to understand how working women with children perceive themselves in relation to the mother-role identity. By becoming conscious of various work-related variables that alter the role-identity perceptions of working women with children, and how these may influence their experiences of WFC, managers can play a critical part in developing programmes to alleviate WFC. Through the implementation of such programmes, working women with children may perceive the organisation as supportive of their family and work situations, which will assist them in achieving a balance between their work and family lives.

Lastly, limited research has been conducted to understand the specific manner in which South African employees experience the interface between their work and family lives (McLellan & Uys, 2009; Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010b) and the impact of multiple-role participation among working women with children.

6.10 Limitations of the Present Study

The research study has several limitations that should be considered when relaying and generalising the results. The Nijmegen (SWING) questionnaire developed by Geurts et al. (2005) was used to measure interference of conflict. The SWING questionnaire is the only valid and reliable instrument used in the South African context. However, although the SWING questionnaire has been well researched and regarded as psychometrically valid (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010b; Marais, Mostert, Geurts, & Taris, 2009; Mostert & Oldfield, 2009; Pieterse & Mostert, 2005; Rost & Mostert, 2007), it is not without limitations. The SWING questionnaire measures only interference between work and family and thus excludes interference from any other dimension of an individual's personal life, such as hobbies or roles within the community. A recommendation for future research would be to use an instrument that encompasses multiple roles over and above the work and family roles.

The MBI-GS developed by Weiss et al. (1967) was used to measure burnout. Although the MBI-GS seems psychometrically sound, equivalent and reliable instruments within a South African context seem to be limited (Marais et al., 2009). The participants in the study came from diverse backgrounds and language groups; all of them completed the original English version of the MBI-GS instrument. Various South African research studies conducted in the past have generally reported that issues of race, education and language are the key areas that influence the construct and item comparability of psychometric tests (Meiring, Van de Vijver, Rothmann, & Barrick, 2005). In future research it would be beneficial to obtain the various instruments utilised

in this study in different languages to cater for the diverse language groups in South Africa.

Careful consideration was given to ensuring that the sample group was homogeneous in nature; that is, to ensure that there was a sufficient representation of working women with children, working women without children and a similar number of working men. However, the first research question that investigated biographical-type variables made no distinction between the actual number of working women with children, other working women and men. The biographical-type variable questions were tested on the entire sample ($N = 545$). It was therefore difficult to understand which specific biographic variables had an influence on working women with children's experiences of WFC.

The current study compartmentalised working women with children and other working women and men into separate groups. The research study did not specifically measure the effects of the various facets of job satisfaction on working women with children's experiences of WFC. Therefore, further research is required to fully understand the influences of specific facets of the job that lead to job dissatisfaction in working women with children versus other working women and men.

Another limitation of the study is that a single organisation within the brewing, sales and distribution industry was sampled. Such a limitation might imply that the findings and relationships found in the study are specific to this sample. Recommendations for future research would include expanding the current study to incorporate other similar organisations, to ensure a more comprehensive perspective.

Another aspect of this study that is viewed as a limitation is the inability to establish causality between the independent variable (work-family conflict) and dependent variables (family-work conflict, job satisfaction, and burnout and role identity). Although statistically significant relationships were

confirmed in the study, causality could not be established. It would be of particular interest to investigate whether WFC or FWC causes lower job satisfaction and burnout for working women with children. Although it would appear conceptually to be the case, one could also argue that it was perhaps the other way round. In addition, confirmation that the mother-role identity actually causes experiences of WFC for working women with children would be of significant value in understanding the direction of conflict for women who identify more closely with the mother-role identity.

6.11 Recommendations for Future Research

For organisations, practitioners, and individuals wanting to conduct further research on the work and family interface, several investigations in similar industries should also be carried out. Additional research into WFC and the psychological well-being of individuals from other organisations, especially an examination of various demographic and family characteristics, could serve to improve and add greater depth to the work and non-work roles of working women with children.

Although the study found the MBI-GS instrument to be reliable and confirming a two-factor structure, further research is required to verify the reliability and validity of the MBI-GS in other South African samples. Recent research into the burnout phenomenon has introduced a newly developed scale ('alternative exhaustion scale') that facilitates greater focus on the burnout instrument (Marias et al., 2009). A future recommendation would be to utilise the alternative exhaustion scale of Van Horn, Taris, Schaufeli, and Schreur (2004) to evaluate whether cognitive weariness levels of burnout for working women with children have an impact on levels of WFC. Despite being a successful instrument from a clinical perspective, the MBI-GS is restricted in capacity and needs to be supplemented by a scale that is proficient in evaluating cognitive weariness.

Greater depth could be provided for the work and family literature if an explicit life-course perspective were adopted when examining the WFC of working women with children. A life-course perspective would assist researchers, organisations and individuals to understand periods in life when higher levels of conflict are experienced. Causes might be the presence of young children at home or lack of social support from a spouse or manager. For families with older children, the discordance between work and school schedules makes life exceptionally labour intensive and emotionally exhausting. The future holds a continued growing diversity of families and employment, and a major concern for organisations of the future is the stagnation and even decrease in maternal employment due to high levels of WFC during critical periods in the mothers' lives. The future of work and family research needs to take into account the issues prevalent in the work and family interface during different life cycles, especially for working women with children.

The work and family interface is to a large degree predicated by the larger macro environment, particularly the global, social, economic and political context. South Africa is by no means immune to the effects of such influences. Comparative studies with other countries would be beneficial to investigate their cultural norms and values, legislative and public policy requirements and gender ideology with regard to work and family. Such comparative studies would assist our evaluation of the various effects of culture on WFC for working women with children.

A further recommendation for the field of work and family research is additional research on coping and support mechanisms for working women with children. Few studies have investigated the effects of family-friendly organisational supportive measures. In addition, as work and family support mechanisms take place on different levels, in other words at an individual, group, or organisational level, future research might investigate the types of support on the various levels of analysis.

From a construct redundancy perspective, two recommendations for future research are posited to avoid redundancy issues between constructs WFC, WIF and FWC and FIW. The first recommendation is that researchers be required to investigate other constructs that may be of a similar conceptual nature to the focal construct in their research. The second recommendation, and possibly a slightly more critical one, is that issues of redundancy must be examined and reviewed on an ongoing basis, especially in work and family scale development work.

It would also be interesting in future studies to construct a structural equations model of relationships between work-family/family work conflict, role identity and burnout based on the researcher's conceptual framework and the results from this study. The measures of model fit (e.g. Chi-square test statistics, AIC, CFI, RMSEA, GFI) will be useful in future studies to evaluate how consistent the data represents the proposed framework and its primary latent factors, while the modification indices (e.g. the Lagrange multiplier test indices and Wald statistics) can be utilised to gain a better understanding into the system of relationships between the items in each factor (Hu & Bentler, 1995; Kline, 2005).

Future research into the work and family interface requires more research to be conducted on family-domain variables, as the majority of research available investigates work-domain variables. A holistic perspective of working women with children's non-work lives is lacking; this area has not been sufficiently examined and researched. The non-work domain variables of working women with children such as leisure time, volunteer and community work and even spiritual activities, omitted from this study, need to be explored further. This might be especially valuable because multiple-role participation can act as a buffer for stress and improve working women with children's quality of life. Another aspect omitted from this study was other sources of social support for working mothers (such as that of the extended family).

An interesting construct that was not measured in the current study is that of enrichment: the theory that participation in work and family roles produces beneficial resources within these roles (McNally et al., 2010). A future recommendation is that researchers and practitioners alike should continue investigating the relationship between work-family enrichment and WFC. For example, enrichment (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1994) is said to act as a buffer that may potentially protect working women with children from the adverse effects of various stressors that cause WFC. Yet working women with children's participation in multiple roles can have both negative and positive effects. That is, multiple-role participation requires the application of greater resources to various other roles (which promotes enrichment), but also time limitations and stressors (which create conflict). Therefore, future research should investigate the conditions under which multiple-role participation encourages either enrichment or conflict for working women with children.

Extensive literature is available on the antecedents of WFC and FWC; however, most of the research studies on the work and family interface have relied heavily on cross-sectional designs, thus eliminating assertions on causality. While this is an issue that cannot be entirely alleviated, the research design utilised in this study is consistent with previous research studies in the work and family field. Although the researcher hypothesised that conflict precedes burnout, job satisfaction and role identity, the reverse might also hold true. Whether conflict leading to burnout, lowered job satisfaction and role-identity dilemmas is indeed the directional nature of causality is a question that researchers need to investigate by conducting studies that are longitudinal in design.