CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE ACTS, PROCEDURES, SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES THAT GOVERNMENT AND ORGANISATIONS USE TO SUPPORT WORKING WOMEN

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 has clearly shown that the feminisation of the labour market in South Africa, especially from 1994 onwards, has brought with it significant opportunities, as well as some problems. The opportunities include the opportunities for and participation of women in the political and economic life of the nation as never before. This is in itself an index of development, as women represent more than half of the population of the nation. However, the process of feminisation has also exacerbated the problems of balancing work and home responsibilities, a phenomenon which is not unique to South Africa, but common to all modern economies. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, Chapter 2 has highlighted the variety of problems which women face, ranging from problems embedded in the society, to those inherent in the nature of organisations as well as in the individual women themselves. From the discussion in Chapter 2, it is clear that something drastic has to be done, if the potential contributions of women are to be fully realised. This chapter is a critical review of the range of various acts, procedures, systems and practices used by government and organisations to support working women.

As has been shown in Chapters 1 and 2, the percentage of women in the population, coupled with the discrimination and oppression which they suffer at work and at home, are factors which have induced the ruling party to place the liberation and emancipation of women high on the political agenda since 1994. Changes in the demography of the workforce, such as the rapid feminisation of the labour market, the rise of dual income-career families and the more than 3 million single parents, all add to the pressures for organisations, both private and public, to recognise the role of women in general and the salience of work and family issues in particular. In the section which follows, the interventions

used by government and organisations to address women's issues and provide support to working mothers are documented.

For a better understanding of these interventions, the chapter synthesises them into a conceptual framework, using the systems perspective, which incorporates inputs, processes, outputs and feedback mechanisms. Consequently, this chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part provides a review of the legislative interventions and structural mechanisms designed to deal with women's issues and emancipation from the perspective of government. The second part examines the nature of support which organisations can or should provide for women in the light of the problems facing women in these workplaces. The efforts of both government and the private sector are then assessed critically.

3.2 LEGISLATION AND POLICIES SUPPORTING WORKING WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Apart from being an employer of labour itself, the role of government in society is to protect and promote the welfare and well-being of its citizens. In fulfilling these roles, government is divided into its legislative, executive and judiciary functions. The legislative arm of government enacts laws, while the executive administers the affairs of the State and the judiciary looks after the administration of justice, safety and security of the nation and its citizens.

Women constitute an oppressed group which is discriminated against in all societies – the situation in South Africa is no exception. In Chapter 1, it was noted that women's emancipation became a priority for the new democratic government. The ruling party's unequivocal link between women's liberation and the liberation of society as a whole was expressed by President Nelson Mandela himself. Government's avowed stance was translated and incorporated into several laws over the years. Since 1994, South Africa has passed more than twenty laws designed to empower women directly or indirectly (see Table 3.1).

However, in the employment relationship, four documents stand out in their concern for the emancipation of all and, especially of women, from oppression and discrimination. These are the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997a) and the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998d) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, Act 4 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000a). Other documents relevant to women's emancipation are Government White Papers, some of which are also reviewed in this chapter. The significance of these documents is discussed.

3.2.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

At the dawn of independence, feminists formed the Women's National Coalition in 1992, consisting of 54 South African women's groups which strove to ensure that women, by law, received equal rights and opportunities in the new South Africa (Mufweba, 2003:15). The Women's Charter for Effective Equality was drawn up in 1993, followed by the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1995. The role of women also featured prominently in the African National Congress's (ANC's) fundamental document, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994, and in recognition of the heroic struggle of women in the fight against apartheid, August 9 was declared National Women's Day (Mufweba, 2003).

The results of women's lobby groups and international pressures manifested themselves, among other forms, in the firm entrenchment of gender equality in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), where Section 9(1) states that 'Everybody is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law'. Chapter 2 of the Constitution, Section 9 (3) states, *inter alia*: 'The State may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture,

language or birth'. In sub-section 9(5), the Constitution maintains that 'discrimination is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair'. These provisions of the 1996 Constitution clearly indicate that neither the State nor any other person can disadvantage qualified women by excluding them from influential and managerial positions in the South African public service: 'Fair discrimination that promotes equal opportunity is regarded as legitimate when applied to the advancement of women and other previously disadvantaged groups' (Republic of South Africa, 1996a).

Several other Acts and policies were enacted to further the objective of section 9(2) of the 1996 Constitution, principal among which are the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997a) and the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998d), both of which are briefly discussed below.

3.2.2   Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act was intended to transform the South African labour dispensation. Its aim was to improve basic conditions of employment, thereby giving effect to the rights to fair labour practices enshrined in the Constitution. It covers domestic workers, public and private sector employees, temporary and part-time employees and contract workers.

The core dimensions of the Act relating specifically to women are working time and overtime, maternity leave, alternative employment before and after birth, special precautions before and after birth and family responsibility leave.

Working time and overtime
The Act stipulates that an employee may not work more than 45 hours per week and may not work overtime for more than three hours a day, or ten hours a week. The regulation of working time and overtime is a significant improvement for women, especially in the service sector, which is characterised by long working hours.

Maternity leave

While the Basic Conditions of Employment Act generally regulates leave periods, it specifically acknowledges and entrenches a women's right to a minimum of four months maternity leave, thereby securing her employment for that period. This means that during maternity leave, women are entitled to receive all their employment benefits, including promotions and bonuses. In the event of a stillbirth or miscarriage during the third trimester, women are also entitled to maternity leave for a period of six weeks. According to Amien and Paleker (1997:375), this reflects an enlightened attitude towards women, because it takes cognizance of the physical and emotional changes which accompany pregnancy, as well as the trauma resulting from the loss of a foetus. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act also provides that during maternity leave, women employees must be remunerated in terms of the Unemployment Insurance Act, Act 63 of 2001 (Republic of South Africa, 2001b).

Alternative employment before and after birth

During pregnancy and for six months after birth, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act enjoins an employer, where practicable, to offer a woman employee alternative employment if she performs night work, or if the work poses a health risk to herself or her unborn child. Amien and Paleker (1997:376) are of the opinion that the prerequisites for securing alternative employment are rather narrow and the qualification 'where practicable' is broad and leans more towards benefiting the employer.

Special precautions before and after birth

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act mandates employers to take special precautions to protect the health and safety of pregnant and lactating mothers. This is supplemented by a Code of Good Practice for employers, which outlines measures to be implemented by employers to minimise the risk of harm to pregnant and breast-feeding employees. The Code also identifies and assesses the various types of potential hazard in the workplace and the manner and degree to which pregnancy may affect the employee's ability to work.

Family responsibility leave

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act entitles an employee, subject to certain qualifications, to three days paid leave, on the birth, sickness or death of that employee's child. The employee is also entitled to the same period on the death of either her or his spouse or life partner, parents, grandparents, grandchildren and siblings.

3.2.3 The Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998

The cardinal objective of Employment Equity Act was to further the aims of the 1996 Constitution in promoting equity. However, as Amien and Paleker (1997) argue, equity is not possible if men and women competing for the same position are not equal due to previous policies that were not gender-sensitive. These authors suggest that equity could be promoted by providing equal opportunities in promotions and training for women and also conditions of employment favourable to women's employment and career advancement. To address the existing imbalance and to ensure that women are afforded managerial positions in the public service, the Employment Equity Act prescribes the implementation of affirmative action. In terms of section 15(2) of this Act, policies implementing affirmative action are also expected to eliminate employment barriers to and unfair discrimination against women, as well as other designated groups (Amien & Paleker, 1997).

The Employment Equity Act is specifically aimed at
   creating workplace equity among all individuals, as well as ensuring the equal representation of designated employees in the workplace;
   promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and
stipulating that designated employers should introduce affirmative action measures designed to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups are afforded equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels (Hassan, 1999:15).

Women-friendly aspects which could be used to ensure their rightful position in the labour market, as provided by the Employment Equity Act are

  the prohibition of unfair discrimination (Chapter 2 of the Act);

  the promotion of equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practices (section 5 of the Act);

  the abolition of any form of discrimination on any ground (section 6(1) of the Act).

Chapter 3 makes provision for affirmative action to be enforced in the workplace, which includes broadening the criteria for recruitment and selection to include formal qualifications, prior learning, relevant experience and capacity to acquire the ability to do the job, which are aspects that cater particularly for women.

Although the Employment Equity Act requires close monitoring and evaluation on an annual basis, a major criticism of the Act is that it only caters for larger organisations (those that employ 50 and/or more employees), and excludes the small organisations where women employees are in the majority.

3.2.4 The White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service, 1998

The White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (Republic of South Africa 1998e:4) defines affirmative action as 'the additional corrective steps which must be taken in order that those who have been historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination are able to derive full benefit from an equitable employment environment'. Unlike the Employment Equity Act of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998d), which focuses on all employment sectors, the 1998 White Paper on Affirmative in the Public Service focuses specifically on the public service, an environment that is unique in comparison to other sectors. It sets out mandatory requirements and guides the public service on how to implement affirmative action for the benefit of women and other designated groups. It also identifies role players and responsibilities such as accountability,

monitoring, reporting and coordination, thus ensuring compliance with the proper procedures in advancing women to managerial positions in the public service.

3.2.5 The White Paper on Human Resources Management in the Public Service

This White Paper (Republic of South Africa, 1997b) focuses on two important aspects relating to the advancement of women to managerial positions, namely, recruitment and diversity management, both of which aim at achieving equity and diversity in an environment where men have predominated in the past. Diversity management is important in order for male employees to value gender differences and appreciate the important contribution that women can make in the workplace. On the other hand, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (Republic of South Africa, 1995a:41-43) provides guidelines for departmental affirmative action programmes, and denounces tokenism and reverse discrimination against men.

3.2.6 Other Acts

Since 1994, South Africa has passed more than twenty pieces of legislation designed to empower women. They cover important issues such as the family, legal rights, employment, health, property, education and training (see Table 3.1, overleaf). Note that a discussion of all these Acts falls beyond the scope of this study, but that they are listed here for the sake of completeness. The discussion focuses mainly on those Acts and documents that are marked as Code 3 (Employment). Only the Acts in Code 3 are fully referenced.

Table 3.1: Summary of important legislation introduced to empower women in South Africa since the 1994 general democratic elections

YEAR	LEGISLATION						CODE
CODE	**1** **Family**	**2** **Legal**	**3** **Employment**	**4** **Health**	**5** **Property**	**6** **Education and Training**	
1995	Labour Relations Act, Act 66 of 1995						3
1996	National Education Act, Act 27 of 1996						6
1997	Marriage Act, Act 50 of 1997						1
	Divorce Courts Amendment Act, Act 65 of 1997						1
	Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, Act 75 and 85 of 1997						2
	Criminal Law Amendment Act, Act 105 of 1997						2
	Unemployment Insurance Act, Act 63 of 2001						3
	Basic Condition of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997						3
	Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act, Act 92 of 1997						4
	Housing Act, Act 107 of 1997						5
	Land Restitution and Reform Laws Amendment Act, Act 63 of 1997						5
	Higher Education Act, Act 101 of 1997						6
1998	Maintenance Act, Act 99 of 1998						1
	Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1998						1
	Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, Act 99 of 1998						1
	Adoption Matter Amendment Act, Act 56 of 1998						1
	Witness Protection Act, Act 112 of 1998						2
	Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998						3
	Labour Relations Amendment Act, Act 127 of 1998						3
	National Water Act, Act 36 of 1998						5
	Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act, Act 19 of 1998						5
	Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998						6
	Further Education and Training Act, Act 98 of 1998						6
1999	Prevention of Organised Crime Amendment Act, Act 24 of 1999						2
	Reform Laws Amendment Act, Act 18 of 1999						5
	National Student Financial Aid Scheme Act, Act 56 of 1999						6
2000	The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, Act 4 of 2000						3

3.2.7 Appraisal of these Acts

Studies by Van Zyl and Roodt (2003) and Cilliers and Stone (2005) assessing the effectiveness of employment equity policies have reported contrasting results. One of the objectives of Van Zyl and Roodt's (2003) study was to determine if there were gender differences with regard to perceptions of employment equity practices in a sample of 4 729 participants from different companies and industries, using items from the Employment Equity Questionnaire. Reviewing studies from across the globe, they came to the conclusion that it 'seemed internationally that the Equal Employment Opportunity [policy] had not worked that well', adding that, while legislation has brought the discrimination to the fore, it cannot curb 'systemic discrimination' (Van Zyl & Roodt, 2003:15).

By contrast, the study by Cilliers and Stone (2005) focused on five white HR managers in three South African Information Technology (IT) companies. It used in-depth interviews, a method which was able 'to penetrate the illusion in order to get to the reality underlying the illusion' (Higgs & Smith, 2003:76, cited in Cilliers & Stone, 2005). In particular, their study was able to reveal that all was not well with the implementation of affirmative action in the companies studied. It showed that the employees were polarised into those who fear losing power and those who see affirmative action as an opportunity to further their growth and development. In particular, the system generated much anxiety among whites who are skilled, and feared losing their competitive edge to black Africans. Conversely, the black Africans put in positions of responsibility without corresponding training support felt abandoned and betrayed. Those in the Human Resources department who were promoting the scheme became scapegoats and were caught between the two camps. In short, the system was so filled with paranoia, blaming and name-calling that the laudable objectives of affirmative action were lost in the process.

Cilliers and Stone (2005) concluded that the employment equity policies (EEPs) in the three IT organisations were not working effectively. Even though they were approved by management, planned and implemented by the Human

Resources departments with good intentions, the irrational attitudes held by the various groups towards each other 'derailed and deconstructed the good intent and plans to a situation where the EEP became a forum where the different subgroups played out their power struggle' (Cilliers & Stone, 2005:55).

3.3 FORMAL STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT WORKING WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

In order to deal effectively with gender issues, the government of South Africa decided to establish structures whose function it was to mainstream a gender perspective into every relevant aspect of government at all spheres. The Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming defined it as '(re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by actors normally involved in policy making' (cited in Adams, 2003:26). Adams (2003) refers to various structures responsible for this task, including governmental and non-governmental structures. The most important of these are discussed below.

3.3.1 Structures at government level

There are four main government structures, namely the National Office on the Status of Women, the Provincial Office on the Status of Women, Gender Focal Units and Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities.

3.3.1.1 National Office on the Status of Women (NOSW)

Established in 1997 and located in the Office of the President, the functions of the NOSW include formulating a gender policy, coordinating and facilitating the implementation of government policy and programmes on gender in government.

3.3.1.2 Provincial Office on the Status of Women (POSW)

It was expected that a similar structure to the NOSW would be duplicated on a provincial level and housed in the Office of the Premier.

3.3.1.3 Gender Focal Units (GFU)

These are units established in all government departments. Their main role is mainstreaming gender into their various departments. The work of the GFUs is coordinated by the Office on the Status of Women at both the national and the provincial levels.

3.3.1.4 Ministry for Women, Children and People with Disabilities

This ministry was created in May 2009 to draft a gender equity bill with the aim of speeding up gender transformation in all spheres of society. According to the ministry the gender equity bill will have "enforcing mechanisms" to persuade the private sector to comply with equity targets. 'This could include fining companies in South Africa who do not meet the desired gender equity target' (Davis, 2010:1).

3.3.2 Parliamentary structures and committees

These committees are the primary vehicles for vigorous debate in Parliament, and have immense power to change or reject legislation. Some of the most important ones are :

the *Joint Monitoring Committee* on the improvement of quality of life and status of women*;*

The *Parliamentary Women's Group* whose activities include capacity building for women in Parliament; lobbying and caucusing around key legislation for women; mobilising women in Parliament across party lines, in respect of gender issues; assisting the provinces in establishing similar

structures; and providing a link between women in government and civil society; and

the *Women's Empowerment Unit*, which is located in the office of the Speaker of the Gauteng Legislature, but has national scope. Its function is to identify and address the specific factors which hinder women from participating fully in the law-making process and to identify appropriate intervention strategies, including training and capacity building for women Parliamentarians at all levels, a function which serves to enhance the performance of Parliamentarians (Amien & Paleker, 1997:390).

3.3.3 Independent structures for promoting gender equality

A Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) was established in 1997, with the constitutional mandate to promote respect for, and strive to attain, gender equality. It has many functions, some of which are 'making recommendations to government for promoting gender equality, public education and information, and investigating inequality as well as monitoring and evaluating the policies and practices of government and private institutions. Its mandate includes resolving gender-related disputes, investigating inequality' and the commissioning of research (Adams, 2003:31).

In commenting on the status of women in Parliament at the national and provincial levels, Amien and Paleker (1997) argue that women are still 'severely under-represented', considering that about 52% of the population consists of women. The problem of under-representation is even worse at the local levels. Some of the reasons for the low representation include a male-dominated environment, which prevents women from delivering their full potential in the law-making and policy-making processes. Another reason is that the structures and resources necessary to transform Parliament into a more gender-sensitive institution are compromised by a lack of budgetary allocations, a lack of staffing and a lack of recognition and support for women's initiatives.

In his incisive study of the Western Cape Province, Adams (2003) notes several weaknesses in the Western Cape Office on the Status for Women and Gender Focal units, such as

political problems (political marginalisation of gender structures, a bureaucratic culture of opposition or indifference to women issues);

management and structural problems (a lack of financial and human resources, inefficiency, a fragmentation of administrative organisation within and between government departments and various structures of the gender machinery); and

economic problems (budgetary constraints).

Other problems identified include a lack of capacity building and conceptual understanding of gender mainstreaming and heavy workloads, with gender work as merely an add-on and, lastly, the absence of support from management (Adams, 2003).

Amien and Paleker (1997) conclude that for women to be given equal opportunities to share in South Africa's socio-economic life, gender obstacles must be removed by, *inter alia*,

improving the level of social assistance for child support;

intensifying efforts to make the private maintenance system more effective;

mobilising private sector resources for childcare and early childhood development facilities;

measures to eliminate discriminatory practices, such as violence against women, which undermine women's rights;

giving priority to adopting special policies and measures that facilitate women's access to resources, such as land, capital and credit;

improving the working conditions, social security benefits and job security of domestic workers, informal sector employees, and those engaged in casual forms of employment;

giving priority to the adoption of policies and measures which will facilitate indirect access by women to various resources.

In summary, it can be said that government initiatives to empower women through legislation and other governmental structures and mechanisms have achieved only limited success, principally because of the resistance such legislation has provoked among those groups which see affirmative action as reverse discrimination. Other reasons include poor implementation and a lack of monitoring and evaluation of women's progress. In particular, a lack of resources and budgetary constraints has prevented women from translating ideas into practical action. In the section that follows, the initiatives taken by organisations to support women's issues and empowerment in the workplace are reviewed, followed by a critical assessment of their impact.

3.4 ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT WORKING WOMEN

3.4.1 Introduction

The sharply increased feminisation of the labour force in South Africa means that work-family conflicts can be expected to increase, with potentially deleterious effects on the individuals, the organisation and the society, if the conflict is not carefully managed. Examples from studies in the USA by Galinsky *et al.* (1993) indicated that a considerable proportion of employed parents (40%) experienced problems in combining work and family demands, often referred to as work-to-family conflict or negative work-to-home interference. Also, contrary to the general belief held by many Human Resources practitioners, empirical research has consistently shown that work demands are far more likely to interfere negatively with domestic obligations than vice versa (Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Leiter & Durup, 1996). Frone, Russell and Cooper (1992) found that work interfering with home (work-to-home interference, WHI) was reported three times more often than home interfering with work (home-to-work interference, HWI) by male and female employees. A meta-analysis completed by Allen *et al*. (2000:278) shows that negative work-to-home interference is associated with serious consequences, including depression, psychosomatic complaints, and reduced marital satisfaction, while home-to-work interference can lead to unsatisfactory behaviours at work such as delays, absenteeism, a lack of motivation, reduced output and problems in the family (Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose 1992; Frone *et al*., 1992).

Therefore, the role of organisations in providing resources to mitigate these negative effects becomes critically important. Resources are defined as 'those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions or energies' (Hobfoll, 1989:516); and as 'structural or psychological assets that may be used to facilitate performance, reduce demands, or generate additional resources' (Voydanoff, 2005a:823).

A number of work-family scholars have paid attention to the role of various work-based resources in helping people to meet multiple role demands successfully (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003; Bakker & Geurts 2004:348; Bakker *et al*., 2005; Koekemoer & Mostert, 2006; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Luk & Shaffer, 2005; Mclellan & Uys, 2009; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008; Voydanoff, 2005a, 2005b). In general, the research results indicate that having greater resources to draw on for managing work and family roles increases employees' ability to meet multiple role demands and thereby increases their perceptions of a work-family balance.

While the discussion in the previous part of the chapter has highlighted the role of government in enacting laws, creating special bodies and mechanisms to deal with various aspects of women issues, including work-family conflicts, this section is devoted to analysing the role of organisations in providing resources for their employees in general and women employees in particular, in mitigating the effects of work-family conflicts to which women in particular are subjected. Organisations here refer to both public sector and private sector institutions. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Demerouti *et al*. (2001) was used as a framework in this discussion. The usefulness of the Job Demands-Resources model is first articulated, followed by a discussion of the role of job resources in buffering and or moderating the impact of work-family conflicts, based on a review of empirical studies. The managerial implications of the model for mitigating work-family conflicts are then summarised.

3.4.2 The Job Demands-Resources Model

As noted by Allen, Lambert, Pasupuleti, Cluse-Tolar and Ventura (2004), work environments are more than just tangible physical structures. They are also social and psychological structures, divided into organisational structures and job characteristics. Hackman and Oldham (1976) developed a job characteristics model in which any job can be described in terms of five core dimensions: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. These dimensions lead to critical psychological states of experienced meaningfulness, responsibility and knowledge of results. The more strongly these three psychological states are present, the greater employees' motivation, performance and satisfaction and the lower the absenteeism and likelihood of employees' leaving the organisation (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Job characteristics have been studied intensively because of their immediate and pervasive effects on employees, as either job demands or job resources. Research has revealed the importance of job resources in coping with job stress and preventing emotional exhaustion (Bakker *et al*., 2005; Koekemoer & Mostert, 2006; Oldfield & Mostert, 2007). The relationship and interaction between job demands, job resources and job stress can be best comprehended in terms of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Demerouti *et al*. (2001).

A basic assumption of the Job Demands-Resources model is that, although every occupation may have its own risk factors associated with job stress or burnout, these factors can be classified into two general categories (job demands and job resources), thus constituting an overarching model that may be applied to various occupational settings, irrespective of the particular demands and resources involved. Thus, it enables us to examine the role of organisations, whether public or private, regardless of the occupations involved.

Job demands are those physical, social and organisational aspects of a job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort on the part of the

employee and are associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Examples of job demands in an organisational environment include high work pressure: time pressures, high workload, role overload, role conflict, and lengthy work hours. Although job demands are not necessarily negative, they may turn into job stressors when meeting those demands requires a high degree of effort (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003; Bakker *et al*., 2005:170).

By contrast, job resources are considered to be 'the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that either: (a) reduce job demands and the associated costs; (b) are functional in achieving work goals; or (c) stimulate personal growth, learning and development' (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003; Bakker & Geurts 2004:348; Bakker *et al*., 2005:170). Resources to support employees may be provided at a variety of different levels within an organisation, for example,

at the organisational level, job resources include pay, career opportunities, and job security;

at the social or interpersonal level, resources include supervisor and/or co-worker support, and a positive team climate;

at a work level, job resources may arise through the organisation of the work, in the form of role clarity, participation in decision-making, career opportunities, flexible work options; and

at the task level, resources consist of skill variety, task identify, task significance, autonomy and performance feedback (Demerouti *et al*., 2001; Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli & Schreurs, 2003; Bakker & Geurts, 2004:348).

In addition, the Job Demands-Resources model proposes that the well-being of a person is the result of two relatively independent processes (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003). During the first process, the presence of unfavourable job characteristics or chronic job demands (such as work overload or conflict) can lead to exhaustion. This, in turn, has the potential to deplete employees' physical and psychological coping resources and can lead

to burnout or fatigue after a while. This phenomenon encloses the second assumption of the model, which is that job stress or burnout develops – irrespective of the type of job or occupation – when certain job demands are high and when certain job resources are limited.

In the second process, the availability of job resources may help employees to cope with the demanding aspects of their work. At the same time, it may stimulate them to learn from and develop in their jobs. Adequate job resources have motivational potential and can lead to high work engagement, low cynicism, and excellent performance (Bakker & Geurts, 2004:348). In general, job demands and resources are negatively related, because job demands may prevent the mobilisation of job resources (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003).

Finally, the Job Demands-Resources model states that many different types of job demands and job resources may interact in predicting job stress. In other words, there are many potential resources that can facilitate the achievement of a specific goal or demand, implying that different goals or demands are likely to be influenced by several resources. However, the dynamics of the interaction between demands and resources can be intricate, for example, combining job demands and family demands does not necessarily create unhappiness or stress. Several scholars cited by Hochschild (1997) and Kirchmeyer (1993) have pointed out the beneficial effects of combining work and family demands, which in some cases have tended to outweigh the costs.

Williams and Alliger (1994:837- 868) examined the extent to which multiple 'role juggling', task demands, personal control and goal progress affect the mood states of employees in work and family settings. They found, among other things, that unpleasant moods tended to spill over from work to family and vice versa, but pleasant moods had little spill-over. Women employees displayed stronger spill-over from family to work than men did but, contrary to expectations, they also displayed stronger spill-over from work to family, because employed mothers are likely to have greater combined work and family workloads than employed fathers. Negative mood states also persist and linger

across time and roles. According to Williams and Alliger (1994:864), these findings 'imply that working parents may need to make deliberate attempts to unwind through, for instance, exercising or personal time to prevent psychological strain from accumulating. If the negative spill-over effects are primarily a result of chronically high family demands placed on individuals, attempts should be made within a family unit to share or redistribute family responsibilities'. These results imply that organisations are not solely responsible for providing support and resources to ease job and family demands, but that employees should also take responsibility in managing their stressors.

Bakker *et al*. (2005) furthermore advised that an increase in some resources may not always coincide with a decrease in symptoms of burnout. The authors mentioned Warr (1987), who had argued earlier that job resources such as autonomy, social support, and feedback may act like vitamins and have a non-linear effect on well-being: 'Just like an overdose of vitamins may lead to a toxic concentration in the body and ill health, an overdose of job resources may undermine employee well-being and foster burnout. Job autonomy, for example, is assumed to follow an inverted U-shaped pattern: very high levels of job autonomy are potentially harmful for employee wellbeing because it implies uncertainty, difficulty in decision making, and high responsibility on the job' (Bakker *et al*., 2005:178-179).

What can practitioners and organisations learn from studies of interventions to reduce burnout using the Job Demands-Resources model? According to Bakker *et al*. (2005:178-179), the message to organisations is clear: they need to ensure all employees have the necessary resources, because the aim of every organisation is to ensure that people can fulfil their job demands without endangering their health, thus the task of the organisation is to create proper job resources that can effectively buffer the effects of specific job demands. Thus, tailor-made interventions should be the norm.

In summary, the Job Demands-Resources model is a comprehensive, culture-free, yet a flexible tool for analysing the impact of work and family demands in

any organisation or occupational level. Also, it addresses intervention strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of the interaction between job demands and job resources. Work-family demands are not always debilitating, but may produce beneficial effects for both situations too. This is the much sought-after ideal. Finally, interventions to mitigate work-family imbalances need to be tailor-made, depending on the nature of job demands and job resources. The Job Demands-Resources model postulates that several different job resources can play the role of a buffer in several demanding working conditions.

Which job demands and resources play a role in a certain organisations or occupations depends on the specific job characteristics that prevail. For example, in their study of teachers working in elementary, secondary and vocational schools, Bakker *et al*. (2007) found that supervisor support, innovativeness, appreciation and organisational climate were the important job resources that helped teachers to cope with demanding interaction with students. Schaufeli and Buunk (1996:335-338) indicated that lower levels of burnout would be expected in work situations that allow employees to experience success and thus feel efficacious, namely under job and organisational conditions that provide opportunities to experience challenge, control, feedback of results, and support from supervisors and co-workers.

In the next section, the impact of some specific job resources is described, with examples drawn from empirical studies.

3.4.3 Job resources that mitigate job stress and burnout

Bakker *et al*. (2005:170-180) and Van Aarde and Mostert (2008:1-10) did rigorous research and assessments of job demands and resources. Van Aarde and Mostert (2008:8) identified the following as important situational or organisational resources which can potentially buffer the effects of job stress:

social support from colleagues, for example, 'counting on colleagues when employees come across difficulties at work, asking colleagues for help';

supervisor support, for example, 'getting on well with your supervisor, feeling appreciated by your supervisor, counting on your supervisor when you come across difficulties at work';

feedback, for example, 'providing specific and accurate information constructively to employees to maintain, improve or change performance'; and

 autonomy, for example, 'freedom in carrying out your own work activities, deciding for yourself how much time you would like to spend on a task, solving problems that arise in your work yourself'.

In their research, Bakker *et al*. (2005:170-180) examined the two-way interaction effects between four job resources and four job demands with burnout (exhaustion and cynicism). A total of 1 012 employees of a large institution for higher education participated in this study. The job resources included social support, the quality of the employee's relationship with the supervisor, autonomy and performance feedback. The job demands were work overload, emotional demands by students, physical demands and work-home interference. The researchers found that in 56% of the cases, overload, emotional demands, physical demands, and work-home interference did not result in high levels of burnout if employees experienced autonomy, received feedback, had social support, or had a high-quality relationship with their supervisor or manager. All 'the job resources buffered the impact of work overload on exhaustion, and three of the four resources buffered the relationship between work-home interference and exhaustion. For cynicism, the results were slightly different. Emotional demands and work-home interference both interacted with three of the four job resources in predicting cynicism' (Bakker *et al*., 2005:176). In terms of main effects, job demands were the most important predictors of exhaustion, whereas (a lack of) job resources were the most important predictors of cynicism. Autonomy was the resource that acted most often as a buffer for job demands (seven significant interactions). Next came performance feedback (four significant interactions), tying with quality of the relationship with the supervisor (four significant interactions), followed by social support from colleagues (three significant interactions) (Bakker *et al*., 2005:177):

social support may buffer the impact of job demands on levels of burnout because peers provide information, confirmation and emotional support;

supervisor support and a high-quality relationship with the supervisor may buffer the impact of job demands on levels of burnout because employees receive instrumental help and emotional support;

feedback may help, because it provides employees with the information necessary to maintain their performance and to stay healthy; and

autonomy may help in coping with the job demands because employees can decide for themselves when and how to respond to their job demands.

In South Africa, Van Aarde and Mostert (2008:1-10) examined job characteristics and home characteristics associated with negative and positive work-home interaction reported by employed females. The research group consisted of a total of 500 females from six provinces in South Africa. The researchers used multiple regression analyses to analyse the data. Their results indicated that negative work-home interference (WHI) was best predicted by job demands (including pressure, overload and time demands) and a lack of job resources (including autonomy, supervisor support, instrumental support and role clarity). 'Three job resources predicted positive WHI, including autonomy, supervisor support and colleague support. Negative home-work interference (HWI) was best predicted by pressure and a lack of autonomy at home, while positive HWI was best predicted by the presence of home pressure, but with support at home' (Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008:1). The three job resources (autonomy, supervisor support and colleague support) explained 11% of the variance in positive work-to-home interference. These results are similar to the findings of Bakker *et al*. (2005) and support previous findings that also found job resources to be related to positive work-to-home interference (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Grzywacs & Marks, 2000).

Authors such as Bakker, Schaufeli, Demerouti and Euwema (2006:231-232) and Schaufeli, and Bakker (2004:298) attest to the fact that 'job resources may either play an intrinsic motivational role because they foster employees' growth, learning, and development, or they may play an extrinsic motivational role because they are instrumental in achieving work goals'. Bakker, Schaufeli,

Demerouti and Euwema (2006:231-232) argue that job resources fulfil basic human needs, such as the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness. In support of this, they cite proper feedback as fostering learning, thereby increasing job competence, whereas decision latitude and social support satisfy the need for autonomy and the need to belong respectively. Conversely, they also contend that 'job resources may also play an extrinsic motivational role, because, according to the effort-recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), work environments that offer many resources foster the willingness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to the work task'.

Additional resources in the South African context are training and development interventions, mentorship and employee assistance programmes (EAPs), especially as these affect women's advancement, their psycho-social dynamics and their health.

In the final analysis, it should be noted that the perceptions about and use of these resources depend on individual personalities, needs and goals (Diener & Fujita, 1995) As a result, the personality of women in moderating the use of these resources is also examined. In the next section, the nature and impact of these resources in mitigating stress for working women are highlighted.

3.4.4 Job-related social support

In this section, social support is examined and its role in improving work-family conflict and work outcomes is discussed. In general, social support is perceived as an important resource for working women to enable their continued success in both the work and family domains.

The concept of social support has been defined in various ways, which indicates that support may come from diverse sources. Social support could be formal or informal and may take different forms. Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1994, cited in Marcinkus, Whelan-Berry & Gordon, 2007:88) define social support as the structure of relationships, as well as the flow of resources provided by relationships. People may have an on-the-job social support

network and a personal or non-work-based network of supportive relationships. Both types of social support are important resources in assisting working women to manage work-family conflict and to cope with multiple stressors in the work and family domains. Viswesvaran, Sanchez and Fisher (1999) show that social support has a threefold effect on the process of work stress, namely, by positively reducing work-family strains, mitigating perceived stressors, and moderating stressor-strain relationships.

Several researchers, such as Allen and Ortlepp (2000) and Oluwole, Hammed and Awaebe (2008), claim that social support may have a significant buffering and main effect on occupational stress and emotional exhaustion. According to Oluwole *et al*. (2008:s.p.) there are two pathways to describe the influence of social support on health. The first pathway has a direct effect and the second has a buffering effect. The direct pathway implies that levels of social support and social contact act to improve levels of well-being and enhance self-appraisal and self-esteem, thereby positively influencing mental health. The buffering effects imply that social support only influences health in the context of exposure to acute or chronic stressors when people who are exposed to stressors are helped in reappraising the threat implicated in the stressor, in coping with the consequence of the stressor, or through emotional, informational or material support. (Personal or non-work-based social support is discussed in Section 3.4.7.)

3.4.4.1 Work-based social support

Work-based social support, also referred to as on-the-job social support, may come from the organisation at large, co-workers and immediate supervisors. Work-based relationships have positive consequences for improving workers' health, reducing stress, and mitigating work-family conflict (Deelstra, Peeters, Schaufeli, Stroebe, Zijlstra & Van Doornen, 2003; House, 1981; Viswesvaran *et al.*, 1999). Marcinkus *et al*. (2007) also found that work-based social support is positively associated with the job satisfaction, organisational commitment and career accomplishment of working women.

Marcinkus *et al.* (2007:89) indicate that employees differentiate between support from the organisation and support from their immediate work groups and supervisors. Buunk and Verhoeven (1991) note that immediate managers and co-workers or peers are important on-the-job social resources that can contribute to relieving occupational stress by providing emotional and informational support. Kram and Isabella (1985) identified two kinds of peer relationship at work: those which focus on an exchange of information about work and the organisation, as opposed to those which focus on providing confirmation and emotional support. Ducharme and Martin (2000) found evidence that the social support of peers enhances the job satisfaction of all workers.

Allen (2001), Buunk and Verhoeven (1991) and Goff, Mount and Jamison (1990) believe that supervisors are one of the most significant sources of social support and that they play a crucial role in helping working mothers to cope with work and family pressures. Supervisors are expected to give direction and the feedback that employees need to complete their tasks within organisational specifications (Bruce & Blackburn, 1992). In general terms, supervisory support can be defined as the degree to which supervisors value subordinates' contributions and care about subordinates' well-being (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988).

Bakker, Killmer, Siegrist and Schaufeli (2000) have observed that supervisors could have a buffering effect on job stress if they are perceived as interpersonally-oriented leaders who aim to provide guidance and advice to employees. Allen *et al.* (2004:176) assert that if 'supervisors are perceived as failing, particularly in terms of support and consideration, employees are less likely to be satisfied with their work and committed to the organization. On the other hand, employees who perceive supervisors as doing a good job in terms of consideration, support, direction, and guidance, should be more likely to report positive feelings toward their job and the organization'.

Similarly, Väänänen, Toppinen-Tanner, Kalimo, Mutanen, Vahtera & Peiró (2003), also cited by Bakker *et al*. (2005:172) argue that leaders' appreciation

and support may aid workers in coping with job demands, facilitate performance, and act as a protector against ill-health. This view is in line with that of Bakker *et al.* (2005:171-172), who indicate that a 'high quality relationship with one's supervisor may alleviate the influence of job demands (work overload, emotional demands, physical demands and work-home interference) on burnout, because leaders' appreciation and support puts demands in another perspective'. Allen (2001) has also established that supervisory support has both direct and indirect effects on employee job attitudes and family life. Supervisors' willingness to allow employees to take advantage of organisational family-supportive benefits, for example, enhance positive job attitudes and positive work behaviour that can spill over to the family setting (Marcinkus *et al.*, 2007:89).

The findings in the research cited above suggest that a supportive organisational environment and a high quality relationship with supervisors may have a significant effect on employees' work-family outcomes. However, to optimize the benefits of social support, the organisation should also implement work-family policies that enable employees to align both life spheres better. Organisations must create a 'family-friendly' culture in which employees feel entitled to use the benefits and facilities that are conducive to a work-family balance (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2006:95).

Family-friendly organisations are institutions that have formal policies regarding flexible working hours, control over work time, compressed work schedules, options to work at home, childcare facilities and parental leave (Koekemoer & Mostert, 2006). These benefits may support women's ability to meet work and family demands. In a survey of a variety of organisations, Allen (2001:414) concluded that employees who perceive their organisations as less family-supportive tend to experience more work-family conflicts, less job satisfaction, less organisational commitment, and display a greater intention to leave than those who perceive their organisations as more family-supportive. Goff *et al.* (1990) and Marcinkus *et al.* (2007:89) also found that supervisory support in an organisation that provides daycare was associated with a lower degree of work-family conflict and absenteeism for parents with children under the age of five.

3.4.5 Task resources

3.4.5.1 Positive feedback

Bakker and Geurts (2004) found that task resources such as performance feedback and opportunities for `development correlated strongly with work-to-home interference (WHI). According to them, constructive feedback has the potential to evoke positive work experiences and work engagement. Employees transfer these positive feelings from work to home. In general, Bakker and Geurts's (2004) findings are consistent with previous studies by Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer and Schaufeli (2003), Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli and Schreurs (2000) and Demerouti *et al*. (2001) regarding health impairment and motivational processes models. All their models suggest that adequate feedback by supervisors may mitigate the relationship between work-to-home interference and exhaustion, because adequate feedback reduces the tendency to worry at home about work-related issues (Bakker *et al*., 2005). A reason for this buffering effect of constructive feedback in the stress-strain relationship is that feedback promotes a positive evaluation of a person's efforts and thus bolsters the person's sense of self-efficacy (Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993).

Crede and Price (2003:69), drawing on the work of James (1890) and Mead (1934), maintain that having a positive self-conception is an important human need and that as 'social beings, the feedback that we receive from those important to us (i.e. significant others) engenders either negative or positive perceptions of self'. Crede and Price (2003) argue that positive feedback from supervisors reassures employees of the value of their contribution to the organisation, and therefore has a moderating effect similar to that of self-efficacy on the relationship of stress and burnout. They explain that this phenomenon could be the result of increased self-efficacy, which could lead to employees' increasing their estimated self-value, not only at work, but also at home. It thus seems that self-efficacy may precede, as well as follow, employees' feelings of accomplishment and well-being (Llorens, Salanova, Schaufeli & Bakker, 2007). Conversely, a lack of feedback on personal success or negative comments across time and situations give rise to generalised

negative self-efficacy and the development of a poor self-image (Gardner & Pierce, 1998).

3.4.5.2 Autonomy and job complexity

Job autonomy, which refers to the degree of freedom which employees have in making job-related decisions, as well as the latitude concerning their work pace and phases, is crucial for employees' health, mainly because greater autonomy is associated with more opportunities to cope with stressful situations (Jenkins, 1991; Karasek, 1998). Bakker *et al*. (2005:172) cite several studies to support the view that autonomy may act as a buffer against the influence of job demands (work overload and time pressure), as it enables workers to cope with a high workload.

Job complexity (the level of stimulating and challenging demands in a particular job) and control over work time are both positively associated with satisfaction with work-family balance (Valcour, 2007:1513-1519). Each of these two variables explains more than 8% of the variance of satisfaction with employees' work-family balance. Valcour (2007:1513) argues that 'higher job complexity is associated with greater job challenge and higher use of cognitive capacity and complex jobs allow their incumbents a greater degree of autonomy and discretion in deciding how to carry out tasks'. This is so because people in complex jobs tend to have more skills (for example, in planning, organising, handling multiple negotiations, motivating others) and psychological resources (such as self-esteem and self-efficacy) for meeting work and family demands and, thus, more satisfaction with their work-family balance. Also, those whose jobs are complex tend to earn a higher income, which enables them to afford services such as childcare and house cleaning, which, in turn, helps to reduce family demands (Valcour, 2007:1515).

3.4.5.3 Training, development, and mentoring

Training and development

There is no doubt that today's professional and managerial positions are complex and cognitively challenging, thus requiring a wide variety and high level of skills and abilities from their incumbents. Schaufeli and Salanova (2005) indicate that providing employees with a development plan, which includes structuring how and what competencies and skills employees can develop would lead to increased motivation, excellent performance, higher work engagement and lower cynicism. Properly trained and knowledgeable employees usually exhibit higher levels of critical thinking, intellectual flexibility, self-direction, and interpersonal effectiveness; and they model these capabilities at work and at home to approach and cope with the challenges of everyday life (Bakker *et al*., 2006).

In a similar vein, Gill (2007) proposes that training and career development enable employees to continue to develop new skills, self-confidence and self-efficacy to solve problems and to manage a variety of situations, both at home and at work.

The stimulation of personal growth, learning, and development may help employed women to develop a number of skills relevant to managing the work-family interface, including planning, organising, handling multiple tasks, negotiating, communicating, and motivating others.

Recently, organisations have also begun to recognise the importance of providing family members with knowledge and skills to manage and cope with family demands and personal problems. As part of their strategic responsiveness and social responsibility programmes, organisations are exploring different options for non-work-related training and support to employees and their families. In her discussion of the relationship between work and home demands and the ill health of employed females, Mostert (2009) refers to a longitudinal study by Demerouti, Taris and Bakker (2007) in this regard. Their findings suggest that organisations should not only provide work-related training and support to employees, but should also try

to provide training and support for non-work-related demands. They suggest parental training, role reorientation for couples, possibilities for working at home, and childcare facilities as additional resources.

Previous studies have also revealed that the implementation of family-friendly policies may be beneficial for combining work and family responsibilities (e.g. Demerouti, 2006; Dikkers, Geurts, Den Dulk, Peper, Taris & Kompier, 2007; Goodstein, 1994).

Training, skills development and personal growth in South African organisations are strongly promoted through the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998a) and the Skills Development Levies Act, Act 9 of 1999 (Republic of South Africa, 1999a). Both laws are directed at fostering skills among the labour force. The Skills Development Act provides a framework and organisational arrangements for identifying skills needed at sectoral levels, while the Skills Development Levies Act deals with the financing of the skills development.

Mentoring

In the management literature, social support has been primarily addressed in terms of mentoring. Mentoring relationships provide social support in the form of both career development and psychosocial assistance (Kram, 1985). The most recent conceptualization of mentoring by Higgins and Kram (2001:88-89) suggests 'a developmental network perspective, arguing that individuals may receive assistance from many people at any time'.

Mentorship is a modern term for a time-honoured concept associated with the craft apprenticeship schemes of the past (Wilbur, 1987). Clutterbuck and Sweeney (2003:4) define the mentorship process in a contemporary organisational context as 'off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking'. Mentoring can be seen as a developmental, caring, sharing, helping relationship, where one person invests time, know-how and effort to increase and improve another person's growth, knowledge and skills (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). The advantages

of mentoring for individual employees include increased mobility and rapid career advancement, higher incomes and more satisfaction with pay and benefits (Akande, 1994; Hall & Khan, 2002; Parsloe & Wray, 2000). For the organisation, mentoring is a vehicle for creating opportunities for open communication among employees and for assimilating newcomers into the organisational culture (Clutterbuck, 2004).

In the South African setting, compliance with the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998, and its affirmative action component, as described in the first part of this chapter, mandates organisations to employ and develop previously disadvantaged staff, which specifically includes women. According to Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Collins (2001) and Schreuder and Theron (2001), the implementation of mentoring has proven to be a useful mechanism for advancing workplace diversity through the development of female employees (among others) to ensure legislative compliance and to redress past inequalities.

3.4.6   Other caring practices

3.4.6.1 Employee assistance programmes

In Chapter Two, an account was given of the physical, psychological and gender-based violence, burnout and stress due to work-family demands to which women employees in South Africa are exposed. This is coupled with the ravages of HIV/AIDS, which many women suffer from, either as infected or as affected individuals. The cumulative effects of these stressors are the impairment of women's physical, social, mental and psychological well-being, which makes the need for employee assistance programmes (EAPs) urgent and compelling.

EAPA-SA (1999:5) defines an 'EAP as a work-site based programme designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems with employees impaired by personal concerns but not limited to health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress or other personal

concerns which may adversely affect employee job performance'. A literature review by Naicker and Fouché (2003), who conducted an evaluation of an in-source employee assistance programme in South Africa, shows that the propensity to use the facility is influenced by a number of demographic and organisational variables. Specifically in the South African context, black African employees, and to some extent women, who predominantly occupy lower positions in organisations, tend to be the primary consumers.

Organisational factors such as social support and supervisor encouragement are positively related to a propensity to use employee assistance programmes. Positive outcomes include improved performance, lower absenteeism, improved behaviour and better interpersonal relationships. In their own evaluative study of a South African company, Naicker and Fouché (2003) found that the utilisation rate of employee assistance programmes was 5.2%, which is comparable to the international benchmark of 5%. An analysis of the client demographics showed that, while males predominated, the percentage of female clients was much higher than their representation in the employee demographics of the company, due to the incidence of marital and family problems. Couple- and family-related problems were the most commonly reported on admission to the programme, followed by life events, psychological and work relationship problems. Marital and family problems were the most common diagnoses upon discharge from the programme.

3.4.6.2 Childcare practices

In the African and South African context, the role of being a mother is certainly the most common of the multiple roles which present-day women perform. However, due to changes in social support as a result of urbanisation and the wage economy, coupled with the traumas of daily living in a crime-ridden society and the effects of the HIV/AIDS scourge, the number of relatives available for childcare has been radically reduced. Career women, therefore, often have no option but to either rely on organised childcare facilities or undergo changes in their personal employment style, such as working from home or working part-time. Inability to meet this obligation may invoke some

guilt, which many try to relieve by devoting some of their free time to mothering or giving up their sleep or free time instead. According to Lindsey (1997), being a devoted mother carrying the load for household and childcare responsibilities has negative career consequences for women, making marriage and family assets for men, but a career inhibitor for women.

In the USA and other western countries, Goodstein (1994:354) noted that institutional pressures have led employers to consider adopting work-family initiatives which typically assume one of three main forms: first, providing fully or partially subsidized on-site childcare; second, directly financing employees' childcare expenses, for example, by contracting with external organisations or making benefit contributions, or, third, providing childcare information and referral services that link employees to childcare providers. The provision of on-site day care centres in South African organisations is yet to gain prominence

In view of the above, organisations should orient women during recruitment as to the options available to them, including strategies such as part-time work, half-day work, flexitime or on-site childcare facilities, so that employers can reduce low morale among their employees.

3.4.6.3 Work flexibility

McLellan and Uys (2009:5) describe time as a new scarcity and a fixed commodity when it comes to balancing work-family demands. They argue that when one commits a huge amount of time to one role, it may adversely affect the performance of another role. It is because of this that the ability to negotiate working hours is important. Mclellan and Uys (2009) have established that most self-employed women value spending quality time with their children and family. They also found a significant positive correlation between the number of children a woman has and the job-parent conflict she experiences. This finding implies that there is great pressure on black African families who tend to, have more children than their white counterparts.

Ginn and Sandell (1997) found that working hours are inversely related to stress. However, comparatively, the effects of hours worked was small in contrast with the type of job done, which indicates that the lower stress was due to the part-time nature of the work and its associated lower levels of responsibility. These authors therefore concluded that employed women with dependent children may have to work in less demanding jobs with shorter hours so as to maintain a good work-family balance.

Flexibility initiatives are described as efforts to create more flexible working conditions which enable workers to negotiate adjustments to when, where, and how work is done (Dancaster, 2006). It means different and, sometimes, opposing things to employers and employees. On the one hand, for employers, flexibility means that employees are available, mobile and willing to work beyond normal working hours in order to meet customers' demands. This, in essence, means that employees have to work for longer hours, put in extra time and work on week-ends. On the other hand, for employees, flexibility means that they would have more time for the family, work closer to home or at home and are able to manage work to accommodate emergencies (Dancaster, 2006:184).

The two types of flexible arrangement noted by Kropf (1999) are full-time and part-time employment. Examples of flexible arrangements in full-time employment include a compressed work week, while examples of flexibility in part-time employment are job-sharing or reduced time schedules. The benefits of flexibility are retention of valued employees, increases in morale, productivity gains and commitment to the firm.

Studies such as those of Catalyst (1996) and Dancaster (2006) have identified several barriers to the successful implementation of flexible arrangements. These barriers originate in individual, organisational and societal sources. Some of these barriers are a lack of formal policy at the national and organisational levels, stereotypes and assumptions about gender, value placed on long hours and a lack of management support and commitment to flexible work arrangements (Dancaster, 2006:180).

In order to make flexible arrangements work, individual workers and supervisors need to develop an array of skills and behaviours (Catalyst, 1996). The Catalyst study (1996) recommends that supervisors learn to look at results rather than time in the office, and at commitment to planning and communicating clear expectations. Individual workers need to develop skills and behaviours such as personal flexibility, greater self-discipline, responsiveness and trusting relationships.

Through the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997a), South Africa has attempted to meet some of the needs of working women for flexibility at work. The core dimensions of the Act relating specifically to women are working time and overtime, maternity leave, alternative employment before and after birth, special precautions before and after birth and family responsibility leave. Examples from other countries indicate other supporting systems, such as flexible working arrangements, tax systems and financial support for families and childcare facilities (Dancaster, 2006). South Africa should take note of British law, which gives employees the right to request flexible working arrangements, according to its Employment Act, 2002 (cited in Grainger & Holt, 2005). When the Act was reviewed in 2005, 71% of women and 60% of men were aware of this right and that almost a quarter of employees who were eligible to make a request had done so in the past two years (Grainger & Holt, 2005). In addition, the rate of employer refusal of requests had almost halved since the right was introduced (Grainger & Holt, 2005). The Work and Families Act (2006, cited in Grainger & Holt, 2005) extended maternity and adoption pay from six to nine months, and allows a request for flexible working hours to carers of adults as from April 2007. This is equally applicable to South Africa in the light of the burden borne by working families who are also caring for people living with HIV/AIDS (Akintola, 2004).

In summary, Dancaster (2006:184) calls urgently for state policy regarding a work-life balance in South Africa and research into the organisational implementation of family-friendly arrangements, including the role of trade unions. There is no doubt that organisations can enhance their ability to recruit

and retain a top quality workforce if they provide employees with flexibility and resources to help them to combine work and family more easily.

3.4.7 Personal resources and non-work support

3.4.7.1 Personality characteristics

Often, the ability to cope with stress created by the simultaneous demands of work and family is a function of the capabilities of the individual worker. Haynes and Feinlab (1980) suggest that personality characteristics, such as a Type A or Type B personality, locus of control and hardiness act as moderating variables that can buffer the effect of stressful conditions. Type A behaviour, which is characterized by extremes of competitiveness, striving for achievement and haste, has been found to be a significant factor in the development of stress-related illnesses (Haynes & Feinlab, 1980). Locus of control, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which a person perceives events as being the result of his or her own actions, and therefore under his or her personal control (Rotter, 1966). In general, people with an internal locus of control tend to perceive less stress, employ more task-centred coping behaviours and develop fewer psychological disorders (Weiten, 1989).

In a study which examined the relationship between personality dimensions and coping styles among 120 married working mothers, Herbst, Coetzee and Visser (2007:57) found that several personality dimensions and a sense of coherence correlated significantly with coping styles. For example, the results showed that personality traits mainly from the relating, feelings and emotions domain correlated with venting emotions as a coping strategy. Therefore, working mothers who are outspoken, outgoing, democratic and optimistic, but who tend to show a lack of emotional control and are also not modest or independent-minded, would use venting emotions as a coping strategy.

Many writers (Carmona, Buunk, Peiró, Rodríguez & Bravo, 2006; Kalimo, Pahkin, Mutanen & Toppinen-Tanner, 2003; Leiter, 1990, 1991; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) are of the opinion that particular personality characteristics or

traits are associated with burnout. According to these authors, low levels of burnout has been associated with having a hardy personality, being extroverted, having high self-efficacy and using active or confronting coping styles; whereas high levels of burnout have been associated with having a Type A personality, neuroticism, low self-esteem, the use of escapist coping strategies, and perceiving a low level of control. It should, however, be noted that the majority of these studies relied on cross-sectional data, which makes it difficult to determine if personality characteristics are the cause or the effect of levels of burnout. This can only be resolved by a longitudinal study.

3.4.7.2 Personal coping strategies

Kleinke (1991:3) defines coping as 'the efforts we make to manage situations we have appraised as potentially harmful or stressful'. Other authors see coping as perceptual, cognitive or behavioural responses that are used to manage, avoid or control situations that could be regarded as difficult (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984; Moos, 1994; Zeidner & Endler, 1996). According to Fleishman (1984), the term 'coping' refers to either strategies or results. As a strategy, coping refers to the different methods that a person may apply to manage his or her circumstances. As a result, coping refers to the eventual outcomes of this strategy for the person. Callan (1993) defines non-coping as failed efforts to cope, accompanied by various physical and psychosocial disturbances, which result in higher stress.

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) distinguish between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. They describe problem-focused as managing and improving an unpleasant experience or reducing the effects thereof. By contrast, emotion-focused coping behaviour is directed at reducing the effects of stressful feelings caused by an unpleasant experience through relaxation, the use of alcohol and drugs, social activities and/or defence mechanisms. Further variations of the problem and emotion-focused coping are shown in Table 3.3 (overleaf). From these descriptions, it would seem that problem-focused coping is much more salutary than emotion-focused coping.

Table 3. 2: Variations of coping

PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING	EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING
Active coping	Seeking social support for emotional reasons
Planning	Positive re-interpretation
Suppressing competing activities	Denial
Restraint coping	Turning to religion
Seeking social support for instrumental reasons	Venting of emotions
	Mental and behavioural disengagement
	Alcohol and drug use

Source: Adapted from Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989:268–270)

Studies by several researchers (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Mclellan & Uys, 2009; Rotondo, Carlson & Kincaid, 2003) regarding the coping styles of women managers have shown that women use a variety of coping styles. Some of the common strategies are prioritising family concerns, organising and planning and problem-solving, self-controlling and the use of support structures. Most of these are problem-focused coping, as described by Carver *et al*. (1989). However, in some cases women resort to negative strategies or emotion-focused coping such as guilt, escape and avoidance, which amount to non-coping as defined by Callan (1993). There is also the danger that women may regard the responsibility of coping with work and family as a women-only problem, rather than see it as a problem to be shared by husbands, business, government and society at large (Brink & De la Rey, 2001:60). Such a mindset merely compounds the problem of working mothers.

3.4.7.4 Personal social support

Personal social support may come from an employee's spouse or partner, parents, siblings, children, extended family, and friends. Studies cited by Marcinkus *et al*. (2007:90) have shown that husbands contribute in a variety of

areas such as earnings, and personal financial management, home and family responsibilities, career management and support, and interpersonal support. Even if the largest share of the domestic burden falls on women, 'women were generally satisfied with their husband's contributions (Biernat and Wortman, 1991) and spousal support significantly influences job satisfaction and stress (Bures and Henderson, 1995). Finally, to balance the many demands of home and work, couples cooperate and collaborate to attend to all of their obligations (Barnet and Rivers, 1996)'.

In the past, family, friends and neighbours assisted women who were away farming, fishing or collecting firewood. This significant aspect of the African family system has broken down as a result of the wage economy. Nevertheless, women do access such support systems where they are available. These relationships also provide support that reduces work-family conflict by reducing time demands and stress (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1994). However, Adams, King and King (1996) have found that family-based social support was negatively associated with family interfering with work, a dimension of work-family conflict.

In a major study which tested the validity of the above, Marcinkus *et al*. (2007) found support that women in midlife generally received more personal social support than work-based support, and more instrumental than expressed support from all sources. Work-based social support was positively associated with their job satisfaction, organisational commitment and career accomplishments, while personal social support was also associated with their job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

3.5   SUMMARY

The feminisation of women in the labour market, coupled with the increase of dual income partners or single parenthood means that work-family issues have become serious pressure points.

This chapter has drawn institutional theory, and specifically on the external control and strategic choice perspectives to determine how government and organisations, including those in the private and public sectors, react to institutional pressures such as those emanating from women-related issues as defined in Chapter 2. Using the systems perspective, the arguments in this chapter can be illustrated as set out in Figure 3.1.
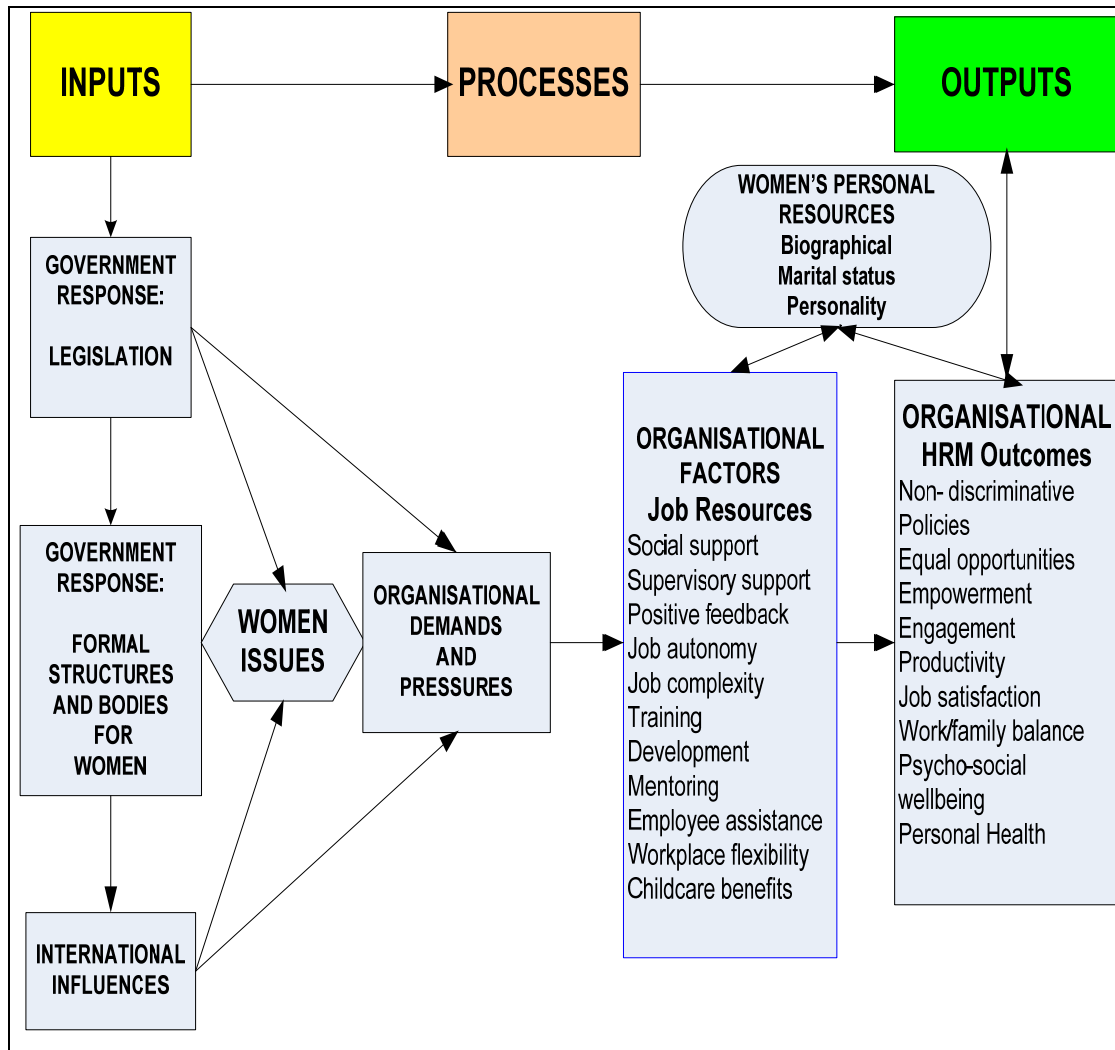
Figure 3.1: Model of the different government and organisational resources that affect work-family demands and pressures

3.5.1 Government inputs

Government has actively pursued legislative interventions from 1994 onwards. The most significant pieces of legislation in this regard are the 1996 Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law, and the Employment Equity Act, which has removed discrimination and opened up employment opportunities for women as one of the designated groups. More than twenty other pieces of legislation have been passed which attempt to empower women in the areas of family, rights, health, education and training (see Table 3.1).

Besides legislative interventions, government has also created some structures and bodies specifically designed to advance women's interests. These are offices and structures at the Parliamentary, national, provincial and local spheres of government to raise awareness of and support for women issues. An independent body, the Commission for Gender Equality, was created as the watchdog for women affairs. But, as noted above, the ability of these bodies to function effectively is still hampered by a lack of capacity, deficiencies in infrastructural facilities, a lack of resources and cooperation by men.

3.5.2 Organisational processes

Based on the Job Demands-Resources model of Bakker *et al*. (2005), critical job resources used by organisations to mitigate the effects of stress on the working mothers were reviewed. These include social support, supervisory support, positive feedback, job autonomy and job complexity, training and development and mentoring. In the South African context, training and development and employee assistance programmes (EAPs) are particularly relevant to the advancement of women and their psycho-social well-being. Others important resources are on-site day care centres and work flexibility arrangements, which mitigate time constraints.

3.5.3 The moderating influence of personality characteristics

Often, the ability to cope with stress created from the simultaneous demands of work and family is a function of the capabilities of an individual and his or her marital status. Personality characteristics, for example, Type A or Type B personality, locus of control and hardiness acts as moderating variables that can buffer the effect of stressful conditions. Studies by researchers of the coping styles of women managers show that women use a variety of coping styles, some of which are problem-focused, while others are emotion-focused. The modern economy has deprived women of the reliance on extended family support. Where it is given, the support from a husband or partner is found to contribute to women's job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

3.5.4 Organisational and human resource outcomes

The outputs of the foregoing represent the challenges which the human resource management (HRM) function faces in today's world of work and, especially, in South Africa, the context of this study. In both public and private sector organisations, much is expected of the HRM function to champion the outcomes desired by employees in general and women in particular. This includes the creation of a non-discriminatory environment and equal opportunities, empowerment, engagement, productivity, job satisfaction and psycho-social well-being, all of which affect work/family balance. In conceiving the role for HRM in the public sector, for example, the White Paper on Human Resource Management makes this point admirably when it states that HRM is required to play a transformative role in society. (Republic of South Africa, 1997b).

But to what extent have all these structures lived up to expectation? The review of the literature in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study bear testimony to the fact that the odds are heavily stacked against working women in general and single women in particular, whether it is in terms of societal or of organisational contexts. Society is still plagued with cultural biases, the economic exploitation of women and violence against women. In addition, many organisations are

characterised by male-dominated values, a lack of mentoring and capacity building and sexual harassment. These are serious indictments of the HRM function, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, they constitute a springboard for action. Thus, HRM needs to proactively and creatively manage the women factor in their organisations, paying particular attention to single women.

3.6   CONCLUSION

Based on the findings presented in Chapter 3, a few central conclusions can be drawn.

First, the efforts of government to support women's issues seem to have had some positive results and have succeeded to a great extent. The feminisation of the South African labour force is a direct result of government's legislative initiatives, and leadership by example. The legislation that has been enacted is comprehensive and deals with vital issues in women's lives. However, while legislation has facilitated the entry of women into organisations, especially public sector organisations, their rise to senior management and executive positions are still fraught with numerous problems. Nevertheless, the prominence given to gender equity in Parliament and government offices bodes well for more 'women-friendly' legislation and action. Indeed, a more determined effort is called for to root out systemic discrimination and to step up the training and development, coaching and counselling of women in managerial positions.

Secondly, while advocates of the feminist cause have continued to favour government legislation, they have also urged that serious attention needs to be given to restructuring managerial work (Schein, 2007). The persistence of the glass ceiling is attributed mainly to patriarchal attitudes and stereotyping of the managerial roles and leadership styles, all of which must be dismantled.

Thirdly, the Job Demands-Resources model reviewed above has highlighted job resources which can be used as levers in mitigating the stress and burnout which handicap working mothers. In particular, considering the neglect of education and development of women, their training and development in

organisations is a prerequisite to their effective performance. Establishing a mentoring programme and the provision of employee assistance programmes (EAPs) would go a long way toward coping with women's advancement and work-family demands and other sources of stress. Also the finding that most working mothers did not think they would be better mothers if they stayed at home is an acknowledgement of the changing roles of women as home-makers and their growing involvement in the workplace (Patel *et al.,* 2006).

In the next chapter, the research design and methodology adopted to provide the data to shed light on the research questions and objectives is discussed.