Work Life Balance in Australian Supermarkets

By

Research Student: Mr Rodney James Hughes (M.Bus)
Project Supervisor: Dr Timothy Bartram (PhD)

A THESIS

Submitted to
Newcastle Business School
Faculty of Business and Law
The University of Newcastle Australia

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

December 2014
Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository**, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

**Unless an Embargo has been approved for a determined period.

______________________________
Name: Rodney James Hughes
Date: 12\textsuperscript{th} December 2014
Dedication

I dedicate this research project to my late father Allan Garfield Hughes. My father provided me with unconditional love and support with all the decisions I have made throughout my life. Without his support and guidance, I may have not taken up the challenge of undertaking the DBA program.
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Timothy Bartram who provided me with guidance throughout my research project. Dr Bartram has been a mentor to me throughout the research project and has taught me a lot about conducting research. I am very grateful for the patience and encouragement that Dr Bartram has provided me with and he has made the challenge of completing the DBA very rewarding.

I am also grateful for the assistance of Dr Suzanne Ryan who assisted me greatly in my research proposal. Her dedication to her students must be commended and I am grateful for her support in the initial development of my research project.

I would also like to thank all the members of my family for their support and encouragement they have provided me throughout my project. Moreover, I would like to thank my partner for her support and understanding of the many evenings and weekends I have needed to sacrifice to complete this project. Not to mention putting up with the large pile of journal articles left on our lounge room floor.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Barbara Nebart from the SDA union who assisted me in obtaining the SDA’s support nationally and being my primary point of contact with the SDA.
Contents

Statement of Originality........................................................................................................................................ ii
Dedication ................................................................................................................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements.................................................................................................................................................... iv
Contents........................................................................................................................................................................ v
Abstract........................................................................................................................................................................... ix
1.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................................................. 1
1.2 Background to the research ......................................................................................................................................... 4
1.3 Justification for the dissertation project ...................................................................................................................... 4
1.4 Key Definitions .............................................................................................................................................................. 10
  1.4.1 Burnout ................................................................................................................................................................. 10
  1.4.2 Work Life Balance (WLB) ................................................................................................................................... 11
  1.4.3 Work Family (WFC) and Work Life Conflict (WLC) ............................................................................................. 11
  1.4.4 Leader Member Exchange (LMX) ........................................................................................................................ 12
  1.4.5 Customer Orientation .............................................................................................................................................. 12
  1.4.6 Absenteeism and Turnover Intention .................................................................................................................... 12
  1.4.7 Compliance Behaviour ........................................................................................................................................... 13
  1.4.8 Affective Commitment ........................................................................................................................................... 13
  1.4.9 Construct Overview ............................................................................................................................................... 14
1.5 Research Question and Hypotheses .......................................................................................................................... 15
1.6 Research Methodology ............................................................................................................................................... 16
1.7 Structure of the dissertation ...................................................................................................................................... 17
2.0 Introduction .............................................................................................................................................................. 18
  2.1 Work Life Balance (WLB) .................................................................................................................................... 20
  2.1.2 Work Life Balance Definitions ................................................................................................................................ 22
  2.1.3 Work Life Balance Concerns .................................................................................................................................. 26
2.2 Job Demands Resources Model (JD-R) ....................................................................................................................... 26
  2.2.1 Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory .............................................................................................................. 28
  2.2.2 Job Demands ........................................................................................................................................................ 30
  2.2.3 Job Resources ..................................................................................................................................................... 31
2.3 Work Life Balance research and practise in the Australian Context ............................................................................. 33
  2.3.1 Work Life Balance in the Australian Supermarkets ............................................................................................ 35
4.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 101
  4.1.1 Demographic statistics ................................................................................................. 102
  4.1.2 Correlations among measures .................................................................................... 105

4.2 Validity and reliability tests .............................................................................................. 105
  4.2.1 Work life conflict ....................................................................................................... 106
  4.2.2 Work life balance ....................................................................................................... 106
  4.2.3 Work family conflict ................................................................................................. 107
  4.2.4 Personal burnout ....................................................................................................... 108
  4.2.5 Customer orientation ............................................................................................... 109
  4.2.6 Compliance ................................................................................................................ 109
  4.2.7 Leader member exchange (LMX) .............................................................................. 110
  4.2.8 Turnover intention .................................................................................................... 110
  4.2.9 Absenteeism ............................................................................................................. 111
  4.2.10 Affective commitment .............................................................................................. 111

4.3 Hypothesis testing ............................................................................................................. 111
  4.3.1 Hypothesis 1a: Work life balance will have a negative association with burnout. ... 111
  4.3.2 Hypothesis 1b: Work family and work life conflict will have a positive association with burnout and a negative association WLB. .............................................................. 112
  4.3.3 Hypothesis 2: Leader member exchange will moderate the relationship between WLB and burnout. .............................................................................................................. 113
  4.3.4 Hypothesis 3: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and customer orientation. ......................................................................................................................... 114
  4.3.5 Hypothesis 4: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and absenteeism. ...... 115
  4.3.6 Hypothesis 5: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and turnover intention. ........................................................................................................................................... 116
  4.3.7 Hypothesis 6: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and compliance. .... 117
  4.3.8 Hypothesis 7: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and affective commitment ........................................................................................................................................ 118
  4.4 Summary of results ......................................................................................................... 120

5.1 Discussion .......................................................................................................................... 121
  5.1.1 Correlations between measures ................................................................................... 122
  5.1.2 Hypothesis 1a - Work life balance does have a negative association with burnout .......... 123
  5.1.3 Hypothesis 1b - Work family and work life conflict will have a positive association with burnout and a negative association WLB ........................................................................ 123
5.1.4 Hypothesis 2 – Leader member exchange did not moderate the relationship between WLB and burnout ................................................................. 124
5.1.5 Hypothesis 3 – Burnout did not mediate the relationship between WLB and customer orientation .................................................................................. 125
5.1.6 Hypothesis 4 – Burnout did not mediate the relationship between WLB and absenteeism 126
5.1.7 Hypothesis 5 – Burnout did mediate the relationship between WLB and turnover intention ................................................................. 126
5.1.8 Hypothesis 6 – Burnout did not mediate the relationship between WLB and compliance ......................................................................... 127
5.1.9 Hypothesis 7 – Burnout did mediate the relationship between WLB and affective commitment ........................................................................... 128

5.2 Implications .......................................................................................................................... 128
5.2.1 Theoretical and practical implications ............................................................................ 128

5.3 Recommendations for future research ................................................................................. 133

5.4 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 135

References .................................................................................................................................... 137

Appendix ........................................................................................................................................ 151

Appendix A – Survey Instrument and Participant Information Statement................................. 151
Appendix B – Organisational consent form ................................................................................. 184
Appendix D – SDA letter of support ........................................................................................... 188
Appendix E – Correlations .......................................................................................................... 189
Appendix F – Reliability Statistics ............................................................................................... 190
Appendix G – Descriptive statistics of constructs ........................................................................ 196
Appendix H – Factor Analysis ..................................................................................................... 216
Appendix I – Demographic Variables ......................................................................................... 243
Appendix J – Regression and standardized regression weights – Work Family Conflict ............ 249
Appendix K – SOBEL Tests .......................................................................................................... 250
Appendix L – Hypothesis 2 .......................................................................................................... 251
Appendix M – Hypothesis 3 .......................................................................................................... 256
Appendix N – Hypothesis 4 .......................................................................................................... 259
Appendix O – Hypothesis 5 .......................................................................................................... 262
Appendix P – Hypothesis 6 .......................................................................................................... 265
Appendix Q – Hypothesis 7 .......................................................................................................... 268
Abstract

Work life balance (WLB) has become increasingly important to individuals and organisations alike. Individuals are seeking organisations that have flexible work practices that allow them to effectively manage both their life and work responsibilities. Organisations on the other hand are seeking to attract and retain talent. In Australia, despite a number of legislated entitlements being introduced with the Fair Work Act (FWA) 2009 and the National Employment Standards (NES), research suggests that there has been little positive improvement for Australian workers.

In Australia, the supermarket industry is a substantial employer with an estimated 275,000 employees. The Australian supermarket industry is considered to have high levels of part time and casual work, female participation and turnover. Moreover, the Australian supermarket environment has long and varied working hours that make it unique compared to the rest of the retail industry. This research aims to expand the knowledge regarding work life balance and burnout in the Australian supermarket environment.

Prior research suggests that work life balance initiatives have the ability to buffer against burnout and some of the associated antecedents of burnout, such as turnover and absenteeism. Burnout may also result in reduced concern for compliance with the organisations policies and their level of customer orientation.
A survey involving 1277 participants within Australian supermarkets was conducted in November 2013 through to January 2014. Analysis of the data in this research project showed that work life balance has a strong negative association with burnout, which suggests, that work life balance initiatives may assist in reducing personal burnout. Secondly, this research found that WLB mediated the relationship between burnout and turnover intention. This suggests that WLB initiatives may assist in reducing an individual’s intention to leave the organisation. Third, this research found that WLB mediated the relationship between burnout and affective commitment. This suggests that WLB initiatives may provide act as an additional resource that may assist in reducing the effect that burnout has on an individual’s affective commitment.

The results of this research have implications for management practice and to further theory development. Moreover, suggestions are given to identify areas for possible future research to assist in better understanding of WLB and burnout within Australian supermarkets.
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Predictions of the JD-R Model based on interaction effects (Bakker and Demerouti 2007, 320) ........................................................................................................................................33

Figure 2.2 Benefits of Work Life Balance (Naithani 2010, 155) ........................................................................................................41

Figure 2.3 Directions of WFC (Carlson et al., 2000) ........................................................................................................................48

Figure 3.1 The research ‘onion’ (Saunders et al., 2009:108) ..................................................................................................................70

Figure 3.2 Conditions for full mediation ...........................................................................................................................................96

Figure 3.3 Conditions for partial mediation .........................................................................................................................................96

Figure 4.1 Hypothesis 3: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and customer orientation ........................................................................................................................115

Figure 4.2 Hypothesis 4: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and absenteeism 116

Figure 4.3 Hypothesis 5: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and turnover intention ........................................................................................................................117

Figure 4.4 Hypothesis 6: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and compliance 118

Figure 4.5 Hypothesis 7: Burnout will mediate the relationship between WLB and affective commitment ................................................................................................................119
List of Tables

Table 3.1  SDA membership size by state........................................................................83
Table 3.2  Sample sizes for different sizes of population at a 95 per cent confidence level
(Saunders et al., 2009:219). .............................................................................................85
Table 3.3  Research constructs and definitions................................................................89
Table 3.4  CFA Thresholds...............................................................................................95
Table 4.1  Descriptive statistics of the demographic variables ........................................104
Table 4.2  Cronbach Alpha for work family conflict construct .........................................107
Table 4.4  Correlation between WLB and burnout..........................................................112
Table 4.5  Correlations between WLB, WLC, WFC and Burnout .................................113
Table 4.6  Summary of results .........................................................................................120