



Organisational initiated work-life balance practises to combat burnout: the mediating effect of work locus of control – Employing the meso paradigm across selected South African public and private sector organisations

Prof Anton Grobler
Graduate School of Business Leadership
University of South Africa, South Africa
<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3017-3247>

Prof Sonja Grobler*
Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology
University of South Africa, South Africa
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7640-9326>
E-mail: grobels@unisa.ac.za

Corresponding author*

Abstract

Employee wellbeing is regarded to be important, not only for the individual, but also to improve organisational performance. The question remains whether it is the sole responsibility of the organisation to ensure employee wellbeing. Alternatively, the question is asked if a dual responsibility exist, in other words employees should also take responsibility for their wellbeing, e.g. taking time off to rest, going on holiday and spending quality time with the family. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which the organisational initiated work-life balance practises (macro component) contribute to employee wellbeing (the absence of burnout – as micro component) from a meso-paradigm perspective. The meso component included in the study (as mediating variable) was work locus of control, thus focusing on the individual. The contribution and value of work locus of control to wellbeing is conceptualised in terms of the planned behaviour theory. A cross sectional and survey design was applied in this empirical research. A total of 1290 respondents from diverse South African organisations in the private and public sector participated in the study. Convenience sampling was employed in the distribution of the surveys. The regression and correlation analysis indicated a significant relationship between the organisational initiated work-life balance practices and burnout (the lack thereof). This relationship is being mediated by the individual (or meso) component, namely work locus of control. The study has managerial and practical implications and recommendations were made to enhance employee wellbeing in the workplace. Recommendations were also made for future research.

Keywords: work-life balance, work locus of control, wellbeing, burnout, meso paradigm, theory of planned behaviour

Introduction

The priority of the working population has changed, resulting in a reduction of personal and family time. Some factors influencing this is for example, an increase of competition within organisations, the introduction of new information technology (Dev & Raj, 2017:), global competition, change in personal/family values, and an aging workforce (Dhas & Karthikeyan 2015). These work-related realities take up considerable time and energy of employees, sometimes even after working hours (Delecta 2011). A central characteristic of work-life balance is the amount of time employees spend at work (Dev & Raj 2017). Work-life balance



is significant to ensure that there exists a balance between the challenges and demand in the work place, and personal needs, activities, obligations and preferences. Examples of these personal activities may include leisure time alone or with family, including but not limited to vacations, hobbies and quality time in general (Delecta 2011). Petrou and Bakker (2016) refer to these activities as leisure crafting behaviours, including time to travel (Dhas & Karthikeyan 2015), thus work live relaxation according to Delecta (2011).

"Work-life balance is an on-going effort of juggling with various roles in life in a balanced way" (Metha & Kundnani 2015:49). It however remains a challenge and the question can be asked who is responsible for the establishment of work-life balance: the organisation or the individuals themselves? It is furthermore argued that work-life balance will enhance the wellbeing of employees, specifically a possible reduction of burnout, which is regarded to impede work-related wellbeing. Various theoretical models and definitions in terms of individual wellbeing have emerged with probably the most popular one by Warr (1987). The model by Warr (1987) focus on mental health that also encapsulate burnout (or the absence thereof). According to Warr (1987), mental health (and hence wellbeing) is complex and multidimensional, affected by a series of environmental factors, in the instance of this study, the work environment. Organisational researchers and industrial psychologists have increasingly studied employee wellbeing over the past few years, as it has a direct influence on not only the individual, but also on organisational performance (Lucia-Casademunt, García-Cabrera & Cuéllar-Molina 2015). Employees will experience wellbeing and "feel better" when there is congruence between their work and personal obligations and aspirations (Gröpel & Kuhl 2009). Gröpel and Kuhl (2009) is further of the opinion that wellbeing is positively affected by employees' experience that they have sufficient time available for both work and personal life. On the contrary, a lack of balance between work and social life influences negatively on wellbeing as it results in feelings of frustration (Gröpel & Kuhl 2009). This may lead to burnout, specifically emotional resilience and a lack of personal accomplishment (Keeton, Fenner, Johnson & Hayward 2007).

It was deemed appropriate to conceptualise this study, and the relationship between the organisational initiated work-life balance practises, work locus of control and wellbeing (low levels of burnout) through the application of the meso-paradigm. This paradigm is referred to as the micro-meso-macro framework and it is based on the work of Dopfer, Foster and Potts (2004). This approach is appropriate to describe and analyse the interactionistic nature of the different levels of the constructs (Jeurissen 1997), and can be applied to various disciplines, including the social and behavioural sciences (House, Rousseau & Thomas-Hunt 1995). Grobler and Grobler (2018) postulated that the macro-organisational phenomena are influenced by individuals and groups (meso level), as individuals enact environments, and vice versa, and it has a certain outcome (on micro level). The levels for this study were identified as work-life balance on macro level, burnout on micro level with work locus of control on meso level. The meso component was assessed in terms of its intervening value, thus the mediating effect that influences the relationship between the macro and meso level components.

The argument that formed the basis of this study is based on the theory of planned behaviour, where employees are seen as active role players in the determination of their destiny, in this instance their wellbeing. It is further acknowledged that the organisation has an important role to play in facilitating work-life balance. This study was done from the premise that employees have the choice on how they view their work, expressed in terms of an internal and an external work locus of control, underpinned by the theory of planned behaviour.

The levels for this study is shown as the conceptual model in Figure 1 below.

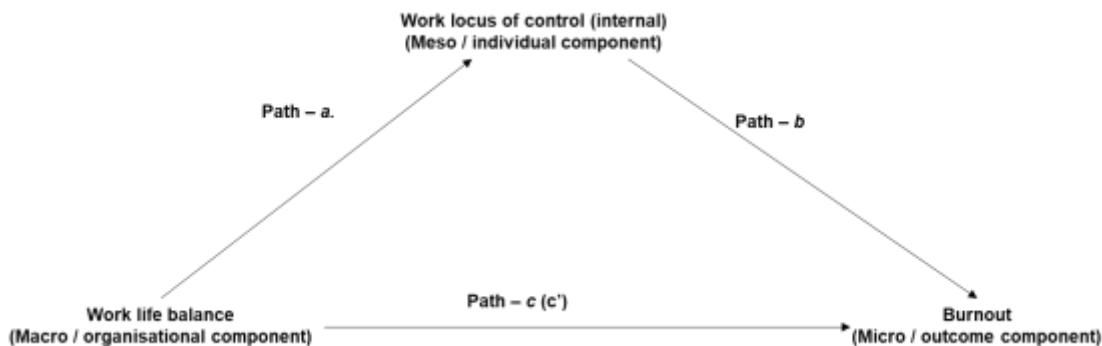


Figure 1. Conceptual model (in accordance to the components of the meso-paradigm

Source: Authors

Research purpose and objectives

This study intended to examine whether the organisation is perceived to provide work-life balance interventions and practises (the organisational component), as well as if the individual component (work locus of control) contributes to improved employee wellbeing, with specific reference to a lower level of burnout.

The following objectives are posited to:

1. Determine the relationship between the perceptions regarding the existence of frequency of organisational initiated work-life balance practises and burnout.
2. Determine the relationship between perceived existences of frequency of organisational initiated work-life balance practises and work locus of control.
3. Test the mediating effects of work locus of control on the relationship between the perceived existence and frequency of organisational initiated work-life balance practises and burnout.

Short literature review: Defining the concepts underpinning the study

This section will provide a brief description of the constructs work-life balance, work locus of control and burnout (as a component of wellbeing). Hence, it will not be an in-depth discussion of the conceptualisation of the constructs, as this empirical study intends to determine the relationship between the constructs, based on existing conceptualisation of it, and instruments that were developed and standardised accordingly.

Work-life balance

Work-life initiatives within the working environment is nothing new, as it can be traced back to the 1930s, even before World War II at W.K. Kellogg Company (Dhas & Karthikeyan 2015). The notion of work-life balance has however evolved over time (since the 1960's) (Lewis & Cooper, 2005), and it includes various permutations to the construct as we know it today. It has received a great deal of attention in human resource management literature and research (McCarthy, Darcy & Grady 2010; Metha & Kundnani 2015). The emphasis on work-life balance is ever increasing due to the shortage in skills (Smeltzer, Cantrell, Sharts-Hopko, Heverly, Jenkinson & Nthenge 2016). Gregory and Milner (2009) suggested that the current conceptualisation of work-life balance developed from the earlier notions of, *inter alia*, work-family stress, work-family conflict or interference, work-family segmentation – all related to



work-family balance. The evolution of work-life balance has led to new conceptualisations of the construct, for instance work-life harmonization and work-life articulation (Gregory & Milner 2009). For the purpose of this study, work-life balance is defined as the employee's perception and experience of a balance between their work and personal life, and specifically whether they perceive that their personal life is in conflict with work demands, and on a positive note, the congruence between work and personal life (Fisher 2002; Hämmig, Gutzwiller & Bauer 2009). It therefore entails the perceived "fit" between the multiple roles in a person's life (Dev & Raj 2017: 30). Dhas and Karthikeyan (2015) refer to it as equilibrium, where the demands and benefits of both contexts (work and personal life) are equal.

Subsequently, work-life balance practices are intended (or even unintended in some instances) to enhance the flexibility and autonomy of the employee by allowing negotiation in terms of their time (also referred to as intention) and therefore presence in the workplace (Gregory & Milner 2009). These practices can be formalised through work-life balance policies. These policies, if implemented effectively, will yield positive results for the organisation (Paschoal, Demo, Fogaça, Ponte, Edrei, Francischeto & Albuquerque 2013) and as Mušura, Korican and Krajnovic (2013) as well as Dev and Raj (2017) suggest that perceived (and actual) work-life balance relates positively with employee productivity. Fotiadis, Abdulrahman and Spyridou (2019) emphasise that the organisational initiated work-life balance practices must form part of the overall human resource management strategy and must be developed through careful alignment with the organisational culture and climate. These work-life balance practices and policies are often intended to address employee retention, job satisfaction, employee morale, and productivity (Dhas & Karthikeyan 2015) which may be seen as organisational imperatives.

On an individual level, Lunau, Bambra, Eikemo, Van der Wel and Dragano (2014) and well as Dev and Raj (2017) reported that there is a definite relationship between poor work-life balance and employee (un)wellness, specifically in terms of stress responses, and physical health problems. Keeton *et al.* (2007) further reports that control over one's work circumstances are the most important aspect of work-life balance, and it predicts burnout (or the lack of it) directly. This is congruent with the opinions of Lucia-Casademunt *et al.* (2011).

The conclusion from literature is that work-life balance contributes to organisational as well as individual gains, through a higher level of productivity, lower turnover, higher levels of motivation, commitment and engagement, as a result of employee wellbeing.

Work locus of control

The individual or meso component to the model is work locus of control. Thomas and Lillian (2006) define locus of control (in general) as an individual's belief that they have control over their life, and their fate. Their conceptualisation of locus of control is based on the seminal work of Rotter (1966), who regards locus of control as a personality trait that concerns individuals who hold expectancies that they control their life outcomes. These individuals are considered to have an internal locus of control, while those having an external locus of control, have an expectancy that outside forces or "luck" determines outcomes. Locus of control can be defined in terms of the generalised expectancy that rewards, reinforcements or outcomes in life are controlled either by one's own actions (internality) or by other forces (externality) (Ng, Sorensen & Eby 2006).

Rotter (1966) states that, based on their perceptions of whether rewards or reinforcements are dependent on their own behaviour or attributes, or whether forces beyond their control and independent of their actions control them, individuals react differently to rewards or reinforcements.



Spector (1988) furthermore states that work locus of control relates specifically to the working environment. This is a general expectancy that work-related outcomes (e.g. appointments, promotion, good fit, general work circumstances) is under the control of the employee, and that the employee is not just a victim of the organisational politics, leadership and human resource processes (Adeyemi-Bello 2001). Various scholars (Cegarra-Leiva, Sánchez-Vidal, & Cegarra-Navarro 2012; Dev & Raj 2017; Dhas & Karthikeyan 2015) alluded to the fact that the failure and shortcomings of work-life practises in many organisations, is the employees' unwillingness to use it. This might be contributed to employees' limited intent to improve their work circumstances, or that they just do not believe that it will add value to their lives and that they have limited control over their circumstances.

One way of explaining this underutilisation or negative value attached to the organisational initiated work-life practises, from the meso-paradigm perspective (with work locus of control positioned as a meso (or possible mediating) variable), it is deemed necessary to position the conceptual model in terms of the theory of planned behaviour. This perspective makes the employee an active role player in the utilisation of work-life balance practises in order to ensure work wellbeing (specifically lower levels of burnout), taking control over expected positive or favourable work outcomes. According to Ajzen (1991), the theory of planned behaviour is a dispositional approach to predict behaviour within a certain context. The specific context that is relevant to this study is employees' attitude towards their work, expressed and conceptualised in terms of work locus of control. This theory is based on three components. Firstly, this entails that employees' behaviour and attitude is largely a result of their intention to adopt a specific attitude towards, and perform specific behaviour, hence taking a deliberate decision in terms of their attitude towards work. This intention is regarded as a function of their attitude towards behaviour (in this instance, general attitude towards their control over work related outcomes). Intention is regarded to be the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behaviour, or to adopt a specific attitude towards a specific issue; in this case, a positive attitude (expectancy) towards work related outcomes. Secondly, behaviour and attitude are however not only a function of the cognitive and rationale processes, as the individual's subjective norms will also play a role. This subjective component concerns what is regarded to be appropriate and of value, often based on past experience (Ajzen 1991). The third and last element of the theory of planned behaviour is perceived control, in other words, perceptions of employees' ability to perform certain behaviour, in this instance, to influence and determine one's work related goals and aspirations (Ajzen 1991). The reason why the theory of planned behaviour is used to explain the role and relationship of work locus of control in this study is to emphasise the interactional nature of the macro-, meso- and micro variables. Employees are thus not seen as "consumers" of the organisational initiated work-live balance practises (or the victim of the lack thereof), but they are active role players with a deliberate intention to be positive (internal locus of control) or negative (external locus of control) towards the work and their work goals and aspirations, and ultimately work related wellbeing.

Burnout as a component of wellbeing

Ryan and Deci (2001:142) define wellbeing in terms of the "optimal functioning and experience" of an individual. This definition according to Ryff (2014) is widely used to examine relationships between wellbeing and mental and physical health, personality traits, family and neurological processes.

Burnout in the work place (or the absence thereof), as an indication of wellbeing has been included in the conceptual model of this study, as a micro or outcome variable. This study focuses on the role of a macro level variable, namely the organisational initiated work-life balance practises, as well as the individual, meso level component (work locus of control) on an employee's wellbeing, specifically the absence of burnout. In order to understand this relationship, it is important to define burnout, as one (of many) opposites of work-wellbeing.



Burnout is defined as a state of continual physical and mental exhaustion, characterised by a lack of energy, which may affect both the work and private life (Meeusen, VanDam, Brown-Mahoney, Van Zundert & Knape 2011). Burnout is often recognised by employees complaining that they are not recognised in the work place (Huntington, Gilmour, Tuckett, Wilson & Turner 2011), that might lead to a loss of meaning and/or feeling of ineffectiveness (Maslach, Jackson & Leite 1996).

A further aspect of burnout that emerged in literature is that the individual tends to view others as objects rather than human beings. This has a profound effect on the individual as well as the people they are in contact with, including colleagues, friends and family (Dyrbye, Schwartz, Downing, Szydlo, Sloan & Shanafelt 2011; Maslach, Jackson & Leite 1996). Objectifying humans is a very serious situation from a personal and from an organisational perspective, as it may erode professionalism, quality of service delivery, increase the risk of work-related errors and accidents, promote early retirement (Shanafelt, Sloan & Habermann 2003), encourage general job turnover, absenteeism and low morale (Maslach & Jackson 1981). On an individual level, burnout can even be related to physical exhaustion, insomnia and interpersonal relationship problems (Maslach & Jackson 1981, Shanafelt, Sloan & Habermann 2003).

A negative relationship has been reported between the existence and use of work-life balance practises and burnout (the macro and micro/outcome variables of this study respectively). It furthermore appears that a relationship exist between the use of the work-life balance practises and work locus of control (the meso variable in this study). These relationships are theoretically evident in the application of the theory of planned behaviour. Lastly, there seems to be a negative relationship between burnout and work locus of control. The relationship between these variables have been studied within a specific occupational group, for instance health practitioners, social workers, bankers and police officials, but never for a diverse occupational and well represented industry sample. The combination of the variables included in this study and the application of the meso-paradigm approach and the theory of planned behaviour) to explain the relationships are unique and provides a unique contribution to the body of knowledge.

The empirical analysis of the relationships in terms of the meso-paradigm will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Research Methods

Context, population and sample

The relationship between the existence and frequency of organisational initiated work-life balance practises, work locus of control and burnout was investigated through an empirical study conducted with employees of various private and public sector organisations in South Africa. The public sector consisted of a blend of National, Provincial and Local government organisation. The private sector was represented by organisations in tourism, energy, finance, construction, manufacturing and agriculture. Convenience sampling was employed, as it was deemed appropriate in the context to yield adequate response levels (Leedy & Ormrod 2016). The final sample consisted of 1290 valid responses that were received after manually deleting the missing data ($\pm .10\%$). In total 27.6% of the sample were management, while 72.4 % were non-management employees. The average tenure of employees is 7 years. A total of 40.9% are employed in core positions while 59.1% are employed in support positions. The average age of the participants is 37.77years ($SD=8.74$) years, and the average tenure of the participants in that specific organisation is 8.52 ($SD=7.12$). One can therefore assume that the



respondents are generally mature and that they have suitable knowledge of the internal organisational environment and specifically the work-life balance practises and interventions.

Research approach and design

A cross-sectional design was used supported by quantitative statistical analysis, a typical empirical paradigm. Data was generated by means of a self-administered survey. Ethical clearance was granted by the business school and permission to conduct research was granted by each of the participating organisation's authority figures. Consent was obtained from each of the participants.

Measuring instruments

The instruments utilised for the data collection purposes were the Work-life balance, Work locus of control and Burnout instruments, and it is discussed in the following paragraphs. For the purpose of this study, all three constructs were analysed as unidimensional constructs, even though it has multiple dimensions. The composite scores were used to determine the relationship between the constructs, and the appropriateness of the utilisation of unidimensional constructs were assessed statistically.

Work-life balance instrument

The scale that measures the existence and frequency of use of the organisational initiated work-life balance practises was initially developed by Fisher (2002), consisting of 21 items, but it was shortened to 15 items by Hayman (2005). The shortened version was used in this study. Hayman (2005) reported an acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient for this instrument (across the three factors, namely Work interference with personal life; Personal life interference with work and Work/personal life enhancement) of .82. This is indicative of high internal consistency reliability in accordance with Pallant (2016). The scale uses a seven-point Likert scale where the participants need to indicate the frequency and existence of a particular work-life balance practise or intervention in the organisation, ranging from not at all (1) to all the time (7). The first item reads as follows, "*Personal life suffers because of work*". For the purpose of this study, work-life balance was analysed as a unidimensional construct.

Work locus of control instrument

The scale developed by Spector (1988) consists of 16 items, of which 8 measures an internal locus of control and 8 measuring external locus of control. The measure was converted where a high score represents an internal locus of control (a positive attribute), and a low score the negative attribute of external locus of control. Spector (1988) reported a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .83 across six samples used during the development and validation of the instrument. One of the external locus of control items of the instrument read as follows "*Getting the job you want is mostly a matter of luck*". On the contrary, a typical internal locus of control item reads, "*A job is what you make of it*". The scale used by this instrument is a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Burnout instrument

The scale developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) was used. The instrument consists of 22 items, and the developers reported acceptable reliability of $\alpha=.80$ across the three factors, namely Emotional Exhaustion, Personal Accomplishment and Depersonalization. The



instrument uses a six-point Likert scale, ranging from never (1) to daily (7). The first item reads as follows, "*I feel emotionally drained from my work*".

Data analysis

The statistical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 25), Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS version 25) and the PROCESS Procedure for SPSS (version 3.1).

The analysis included the descriptive statistics (means and standard deviation) and the internal consistency reliability of the instruments as determined by the Cronbach alpha coefficients (with $\alpha > .70$ as guideline) (Pallant 2016). Correlations and multiple regression analysis were conducted through Pearson product moment. Mediation analysis was conducted in order to test the direct effect of Work-life balance to Burnout, as well as the indirect effect through the intervening variable of Work locus of control (internal). The conceptual model was furthermore analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM – path analysis). SEM was done to assess the model fit and to specify the relationships between the constructs theoretically. The indexes for goodness of fit criteria are: chi-square (χ^2), Ratio of chi square to its degrees of freedom (df), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), based on the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999) and Schumacker and Lomax (1996). Testing the conceptual model was necessitated as the analysis of the three variables were done as unidimensional constructs, while it is conceptualised and validated as multi-dimensional construct.

Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (N = 1290)

	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work life balance	.79	4.96/7	.84	.04	-.47
Work locus of control	.71	3.47/6	.53	.28	-.26
Burnout	.80	2.72/5	.78	.07	1.20

Table 1 indicates that the mean scores are well above average, specifically work-life balance reporting a mean score close to 5 ($M=4.96$; $SD=.84$). Work locus of control ($M=3.47$; $SD=.53$) and Burnout ($M=2.72$; $SD=.78$) measured relatively lower than work-life balance. The internal consistency for all the instruments were reported above .70. The skewness and kurtosis values are reported as normal.

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient assisted in the analysis of the strength of the relationships between the constructs. The correlation analysis results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation analysis (N=1290)

	Work life balance	Work locus of control	Burnout
Work life balance	1.00		
Work locus of control	.29	1.00	
Burnout	-.62	-.34	1.00

$p \leq .001$ (2-tailed)

A negative statistical significant correlation was reported between work-life balance and burnout ($r = -.62$; $p < 0.01$), and positive significant correlation between work-life balance and



work locus of control (internal) ($r = .29$; $p < 0.01$). The implication thus is the higher work-life balance, the lower burnout, and the higher internal locus of control. A negative statistical significant relationship was reported between work locus of control (internal) and burnout ($r = -.34$; $p < 0.01$).

A regression analysis was done to identify the prediction of burnout and the results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.62 ^a	.38	.38	1.99	.38	736.21	1	1207	$\leq .001$
2	.64 ^b	.41	.41	1.95	.03	54.82	1	1206	$\leq .001$

Dependent variable: Burnout

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work-life balance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work-life balance, Work locus of control (internal)

In Table 3 the R^2 value indicates a total variance of 41% for Burnout is explained when all the independent variables (Work-life balance and work locus of control) are entered into the model. The total variance in Burnout is explained by Work-life balance alone on of 38 %. Both scenarios are statistically significant at $p \leq .001$.

The unique contributions are reported in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Unique contribution of the work-life balance and work locus of control indicated by the standardised beta coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	16.38	.34	47.93	$\leq .001$		
	Work-life balance	-1.84	.07	-.62	-27.13	$\leq .001$	1.00
2	(Constant)	18.46	.44	42.29	$\leq .001$		
	Work-life balance	-1.69	.07	-.56	-24.30	$\leq .001$.91
	Work locus of control	-.82	.11	-.17	-7.40	$\leq .001$.91

a. Dependent Variable: Burn out (negative construct)

After studying Table 4, it is clear that no multicollinearity exist between Work-life balance and work locus of control as the tolerance values for both are higher than .10 and the variance inflation factor (VIF) reported less than 10. The results of the combined multiple regression (Model²) for burnout indicate a statistically significant contribution by work-life balance ($\beta = -.56$, $p \leq .001$) and a beta value of -.17 ($p \leq .001$).

One of the objectives of this study was to determine the influence of work locus of control (as meso or intervening variable) on the relationship between work-life balance practises (as macro variable) in the prediction of burnout (or the lack thereof). Mediation was assessed by means of bootstrapping (95% confidence interval), as recommended by Hayes and Rockwood (2017), conducted with SPSS PROCESS. The results of the mediation analysis (with SPSS PROCESS) are depicted in figure 2.

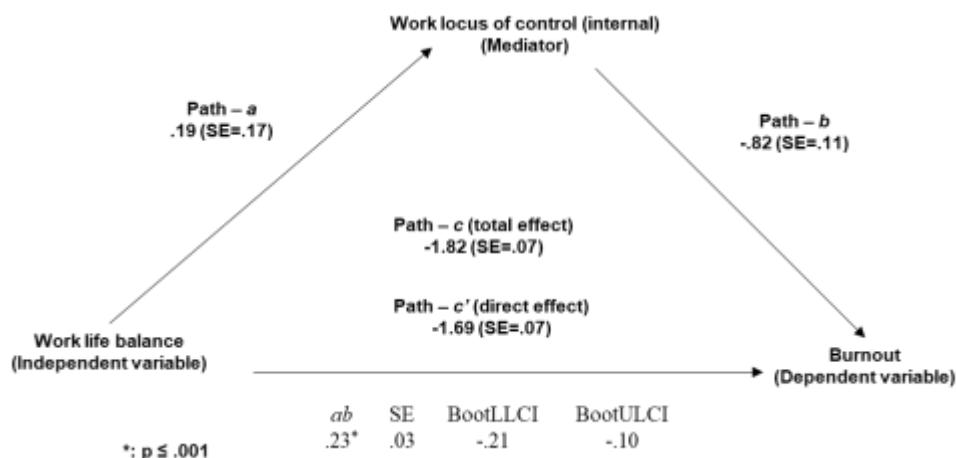


Figure 2. Mediation Analysis

Source: Authors

The bootstrap (95% confidence interval) procedure indicates that work-life balance affects burnout by -1.69 ($SE = .07$). There was a significant indirect effect (mediation) on burnout by Work-life balance through Work locus of control, $ab = .23$ ($SE = .03$) [-.21, -.10]. The analysis was conducted at a CI of 95 %, and it confirms the significance of the indirect effect. The percentage of the total effect (c) that are accounted for by the indirect effect (a^*b) is 23%. The results of the SEM are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the SEM to confirm the conceptual model

X ²	df	X ² /df	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
3510	1176	2.99	.91	.90	.91	.04

The results reported in Table 5 indicate a good fit of the conceptual model ($\chi^2 = 3510$; $df = 1176$, $\chi^2/df = 2.99$, $p < .001$, $IFI = .91$, $TLI = .90$, $CFI = .91$, $RMSEA = .04$), as depicted in Figure 1. This result supports the purpose of the research, as it was found that the individual (or meso) component, namely work locus of control causes mediation in the relationship between the organisational initiated work-life balance practises and burnout (as macro and micro components in terms of the meso paradigm, respectively). The concern that the transformation of the instruments (and constructs) from being multi-dimensional to unidimensional (to simplify the model and to ensure a pragmatic approach) did not influence the results and findings of this study negatively.

Conclusion

The question remains in terms of who is responsible for an employee's wellbeing. In other words, does the organisation have the sole responsibility for ensuring employee wellbeing or is it a dual responsibility shared between the employee and the organisation? This study intended to assess the interactionistic nature of two independent variables on employee wellbeing (burnout), through the meso-paradigm. The dependent variable (micro component/outcome variable) being burnout (representing employee wellbeing), a variable often used in studies regarding health and wellbeing in the work place.

The macro component in the model is the perceived existence and frequency of organisational initiated work-life balance practises. This is regarded to have not only the potential to enhance employee wellbeing, but significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and retain organisational knowledge, particularly during difficult economic times (Dhas & Karthikeyan 2015). Organisational initiated work-life balance practices have been added to the agenda of management and specifically HR (Delecta 2011). Various studies have indicated that the existence and utilisation of work-life balance practises in organisations mitigate the risk of burnout, as the employee has the flexibility and facility to ensure a balance



between the challenges and demands of the work place and personal life. The employee can for instance engage in leisure crafting behaviours or work live relaxation activities such as going on vacation, travelling, hobbies or just spending quality time with loved ones.

The interactionistic nature of the conceptual model includes a meso (or individual) component. This is seen as employees' attitude towards their work circumstances and outcomes. As mentioned before the employee is regarded an active role player with a deliberate intention to be positive (internal locus of control) or negative (external locus of control) towards work and work goals, aspirations and ultimately work-related wellbeing.

The empirical results support the conceptual model depicted in figure 1. It furthermore supports the literature on the relationship between the variables and the paradigm (meso) and theory used in this study. Significant ($p < .05$), negative correlations were reported between burnout (a negative construct) and the perceived existents of organisational initiated work-life practises ($r = -.62$) and internal work locus of control with $r = -.34$. The two independent variables in the multiple regression model (work-life balance practises and internal work locus control) explain 41% of the variance in burnout. The influence of work locus of control (as meso or intervening variable) on the relationship between the perceive existence and frequency of use of work-life balance practises (as macro variable) in the prediction of burnout (or the lack thereof), was determined, with the indirect effect (partial mediation) being 23%, supporting the conceptual (meso-paradigm) model. The model was further assessed by means of SEM. The fit indexes indicated good fit and supports the mediation analysis (bootstrapping on 95% confidence interval).

The perception and use of organisational initiated work-life balance practises has a direct influence on burnout (negative relationship), and this relationship is mediated by an internal work locus of control. Through the application of the theory of planned behaviour, and ensuring an internal locus of control, one can make practical recommendations in terms of intent, subjective norms as well as perceived control over work-life balance in an organisation.

In terms of intent, the organisation must ensure that the related policies and practises are well communicated to employees, with the focus on the benefits it has for the employee (and the organisation). All organisational systems (e.g. IT systems) and HR related policies should be developed to support these initiatives, e.g. policies on acting and secondment policies when employees are absent from work (due to the uptake of work-life balance initiatives). It may call for a review of the general conditions of service for all employees. Many organisations negotiate time share opportunities, vacation and travel packages (for example vacation club points) for employees to utilise. These organisational initiated practises will then most probably lead to employees showing intent (to balance their work and private life), through knowledge and availability of the work-life balance practises in the organisation.

The subjective norm component that is important in the utilisation of these initiatives should not be neglected. This is based on experience and the culture of the organisation. In instances where an organisation had a culture that was not conducive to for instance work flexibility, the organisation should embark on change in culture. This is very important as perceived incongruence between HR policies and the prevailing organisational culture will lead to negativity, which resides in the subjective domain, but will determine the employee's attitude towards, and utilisation of the work-life balance practises in the organisation.

Lastly, employees should be empowered and allowed to manage their own work circumstances (within the policy provisions), in order to enhance a feeling of control and trust. This will contribute to higher levels of utilisation of the work-life balance practises in the organisation. This is only one HR aspect within organisations that can be used to inculcate an internal locus of control, but it is related to wellbeing in general, more specifically the mitigation of the risk of burnout. Literature shows that burnout is directly related to wellbeing (a negative



relationship), and that burnout has a serious impact on an employee's physical and psychological health, and ultimately individual and organisational performance.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

Methodological limitations of this study are firstly that self-reporting questionnaires were used for all three constructs that may lead to method bias, even after the necessary precautionary measures were taken during the briefing that results will be treated anonymously and confidentially. Social desirability and subsequent response bias remain a concern and a limitation in studies such as this, while self-reporting instruments may be a one-sided report from respondents. A further limitation of this study is the drawback of a cross sectional design which might have increased the relationship between the four components artificially.

A recommendation for future studies is to investigate the relationship between the three constructs through a longitudinal study. Another recommendation is to add the effect of membership of specific demographic groups (e.g. generational categories) and to include other work attitudes and organisation behavioural constructs to the analysis.

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