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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to focus on the relationship between supervisor support for Work-Life Balance (WLB) and job attitudes (i.e., overall job satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, quality of work satisfaction, and intent to leave). This study also considered the gender differences between perceptions of supervisor support for WLB and how gender had an influence on the relationship between feeling supported and intent to leave. The data were collected from 161 healthcare system units throughout the United States, consisting of 186,442 participants. Results of the study indicated that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB was positively related to overall job satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, and quality of work satisfaction, and negatively related to intent to leave. Results also indicated significant gender differences in perceptions of supervisor support for WLB and that gender had an influence on the relationship between feeling supported and the intent to leave. These results highlight the importance of perceptions of supervisor support for WLB and the impact this may have on job attitudes. These results also provide important insight into the evolution of WLB research in that the perceptions of supervisor support for WLB are virtually the same for both males and females.
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Most people live in two domains; the work domain and the personal domain. The field of Industrial Organizational Psychology is primarily concerned with the work domain. Yet, research suggests that the personal domain has a direct correlation with their attitudes and behaviors in the work domain (Boyar & Mosley, 2007; Frone, Russel, & Barnes, 1996; Grandey, Cordeiro, & Couter, 2005; Greenhaus & Allen, 2006). For this reason, it is important to study how the two domains interact with one another.

The quest to understand a) the importance of each domain to individuals, b) how individuals balance their roles in each domain, and c) how balancing these separate roles affects individuals as people and as employees has been sought by Industrial Organizational Psychologists for several years. This quest increased in the mid 1970’s when there was a large shift in work participation from women (Broadbridge, 2009). During this time, women entered the workforce at an unusual rate, creating several changes for both men and women in work and personal life domains (Broadbridge). Prior to more women entering professions, women typically worked in the home and men typically worked outside the home. Once women entered into the workforce these traditional roles needed to be re-evaluated and thus the line that separated the work and personal domains became blurred for both men and women.

Ideally, as women increasingly entered the workforce, both men and women would share the work and home responsibilities. Yet, the traditional work-family role system has prevented
this from occurring. For instance, the traditional male role in an organization is to be committed to the organization and to make sacrifices to advance within the organization (Broadbridge, 2009). Organizations based these expectations on the understanding that men had nonworking spouses to manage the home responsibilities. Essentially, men did not have to spend as much time on their home responsibilities, allowing them to make those personal sacrifices for work. Hence, having women enter into the workforce created a restructuring of the traditional “working man’s role”. Men’s personal support systems changed; they could no longer make as many personal sacrifices for work because women also had to make sacrifices for work. This restructuring not only caused problems with men who now had home responsibilities, but it also created an expectation that women had to sacrifice as much as men did in order to be successful in organizations (Broadbridge). Thus, both men and women were faced with conflicting expectations; both were expected to sacrifice aspects of their personal lives in order to succeed at work, and they were expected to sacrifice aspects of being successful at work to take on personal life responsibilities.

More recently, technology (e.g. cell phones, computers, internet, smart phones, and iPads) has made it more feasible for employees to stay connected to work at all hours of the day, blurring the lines between work and home. Of course, employees could engage in work related activities and duties after hours before the advancement of technology, but technology has helped change the traditional work structure to a more continuously connected work structure. Staying connected to work may be viewed as a way to get ahead and progress or to simply survive. Given this increased connection to work, it may be that those who choose to stay connected are more prone to experiencing less work-life balance. This could be because of potential interruptions during personal time (e.g., answering a business call on a cell phone at
dinner; using an iPad to work on a work report during a child’s soccer game; Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007).

Given this restructuring of men’s and women’s roles in our society and the increasingly blurred lines because of advancement in technology, it is important for organizations to reevaluate the expectations they place on employees to allow a well balanced work and personal life. Not only is it beneficial for employees to find this balance, but it is also beneficial for organizations to place importance on this balance (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Organizations need to recognize the toll that staying connected after hours may have on their employees’ personal lives and encourage recovery time from work. Therefore, this study will focus on the importance of Work-Life Balance (WLB) and the influence a supportive work-life culture within organizations can have on both employees and organizations.

Work-Life Balance

An emphasis has been placed on researching WLB since the early 1970’s (Broadbridge, 2009; Greenhouse & Powell, 2006). Research gives two different terms for this topic: Work-Family Balance (WFB) and Work-Life Balance (WLB). For the purpose of this research, I will refer to the construct as Work-Life (rather than Work-Family) Balance to emphasize the balance between work and personal life, including but not limited to “family”. Although many researchers have developed a definition for WLB, I will be using the definition of WLB given by Greenhaus and Allen (2006), who define WLB as “the extent to which individuals are equally engaged in, and equally satisfied with, work and family roles” (p. 513). Hence, not only do individuals have to be satisfied with their WLB, they have to be engaged in each role.

A construct similar to WLB, but at the opposite end of the continuum, is Work-Life Conflict (WLC). Greenhaus and Allen (2006) consider WLB to be the absence of WLC. If
employees are equally engaged and satisfied with their work and family/personal roles then there should not be a conflict between their work and family domains. Unfortunately, the absence of WLC is very difficult to achieve. There are several variables contributing to WLC such as work interfering with personal life (WIL) and personal life interfering with work (LIW). WLC is defined as the frequency and intensity in which work interferes with personal life (WIL) or personal life interferes with work (LIW; Greenhaus & Allen). WIL occurs when demands within the work domain (e.g., working extra hours, taking on greater responsibilities, supervising employees, working on the weekends, traveling for business trips) increase, resulting in interference within the personal life domain (Greenhaus & Allen). LIW occurs when demands within the personal life domain (e.g., caring for sick child, attending children’s extracurricular activities, going to appointments, caring for sick relatives, maternity leave, cleaning house, buying groceries, running errands) increase, resulting in an interference within the work domain (Greenhaus & Allen).

As mentioned before, finding balance between work and personal life domains can be beneficial to both an organization and its employees. On the other hand, a lack of balance can negatively affect both. WLC has been shown to be negatively related to performance and satisfaction and positively related to turnover and absenteeism rates, increased tardiness, and levels of burnout (Boyar, Maertz, Mosley, & Carr, 2008; Boyar & Mosley, 2007). WIL and LIW have been negatively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Frone et al., 1996; Grandey et al., 2005).

WLC can affect an individual’s family/personal life in several ways. Frone et al., (1996) found that an increased level of WIL is associated with family-related distress and dissatisfaction, poor family performance, and family-related withdrawal. Their results also
indicated an increased level of WIL is associated with a decrease in family support and job satisfaction. Evidence also suggests that distressed workers may create discord within their family life, limiting the family’s ability to provide emotional and social support (Adams et al., 1996). WIL is also related to lower quality of family life. This lower quality of family life is associated with lower levels of life satisfaction among workers (Adams et al.).

WLC has also been shown to affect individuals’ well-being. When individuals experience stress-related outcomes associated with WLC, their ability to function daily at work and at home may be compromised (Livingston & Judge, 2008). Change in daily function due to conflict may lead to burnout at work and home, which can be associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, lowered psychological well-being, reduction in work performance, and lowered job satisfaction (Jones & McKenna, 2002). Psychological symptoms experienced by an individual may also include psychological distress and symptoms of depression. Additionally, Frone et al. (1996) illustrated a significant and positive relationship between WLC and depression, poor physical health, and heavy alcohol use.

In contrast, achieving a balance between work and family/personal life can have a positive impact on individuals in both work and personal domains. Research describes this positive impact as work-life facilitation (WLF). Boyar and Mosley (2007) define WLF as “the extent to which participation at work (or home) is made easier by virtue of the experience, skills, and opportunities gained or developed at home (or work)” (p. 266). Ideally, this positive and fulfilling interaction is what most individuals seek between work and family. Unfortunately, Jones and McKenna (2002) found that only a minority of their 204 female participants experienced positive work-home “spill-over”.
Research suggests WLF can improve job performance, physical and mental health, work attendance, relationships with spouses and children, and life satisfaction (Boyar & Mosley, 2007; Jones & McKenna, 2002). Research also suggests that multiple roles within both domains can provide role enhancement within each domain (Boyar & Mosley), creating a sense of empowerment. In fact, role enhancement tends to be positively associated with job related attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Boyar & Mosley), as well as with greater marital satisfaction and family satisfaction. Role enhancement may also be associated with positive health outcomes such as sleep quality and general well-being (Allen & Shockley, 2009).

There are also two types of WLF: work to personal life facilitation ($W \rightarrow LF$) and personal life to work facilitation ($L \rightarrow WF$). $W \rightarrow FL$ occurs when one’s involvement in work provides skills, behaviors, or positive moods that positively influence the personal life. $L \rightarrow WF$ occurs when involvement with family results in positive mood, support, or a sense of accomplishment that helps the individual cope better, work harder, feel more confident, or reenergized for their role at work (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Boyar and Mosley evaluated 124 employees at a retirement facility and found $W \rightarrow LF$ was associated with increases in job satisfaction, which in turn was related to lower turnover rates, as well as higher family/personal satisfaction. Hence, it is in an organization’s best interest to not only foster their employees’ WLB but for them to also foster $W \rightarrow LF$. Research shows there are several differences in the way men and women experience WLB. Thus, the next section will look into these differences.

**Gender Differences in WLB**

As stated before, women have entered the workforce at an increasing rate since the mid 1970’s and remain as prevalent as men in the workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).
Blumenstein reported in the Wall Street Journal (2011) that “women are now graduating from college and graduate school in greater numbers than men and entering the work force in equal numbers” (p. R.1). Since the 1970’s, men’s personal responsibilities/demands (e.g., caring for sick child, attending children’s extracurricular activities, going to appointments, caring for sick relatives, cleaning house, buying groceries, running errands) have doubled (Keene & Quadagno, 2004), but the family domain is still dominated by women, at least in terms of hours worked (Livingston & Judge, 2008). Including paid and unpaid work, American women work 5-7 hours more per week than men (Livingston & Judge). Hewlett (2002) provided statistics that suggests of high achieving men and women (those making over $55,000 per year), women attend to at least 30 percent more of the primary childcare and household responsibilities (e.g., 45 percent of women reported having primary responsibility of house cleaning and 5 percent of men reported having the primary responsibility). Research suggests that WLC occurs in both women and men, but generally the research evidence is that women experience higher levels of WLC than men (Grandey et al., 2005). For instance, Duxbury, Higgins, and Lee (1994) evaluated potential differences of WLC by gender. After observing the relationship between gender, family type, and perceived control, they found women’s levels of WLC were significantly higher than men’s. Women experienced more overload and interference from family to work than men and they also experienced more work to family interference than men.

Although women do experience more WLC, men are also feeling the pressure of balancing work and personal demands and are beginning to pay more attention to how their organizations are supporting their WLB (Kenexa, 2008). As stated earlier, men’s household responsibilities have doubled while many organizations may still operate with the understanding that there is a nonworking spouse to manage the home responsibilities (Keene & Quadagno,
2004). Many organizations expect employees to conform to the traditional male definitions of commitment (Broadbridge, 2009), which entails working late hours and sacrificing personal time to progress at work. This expectation may create pressure for both men and women to demonstrate their ability to distance themselves from their personal lives to demonstrate organizational commitment. For many this means making personal sacrifices and letting work interfere with their personal lives more so than letting family interfere with work (Broadbridge).

Organizational Support for WLB

The impact of women increasingly entering the professional workforce has created a reason for organizations to begin thinking of how family conflicting with work influences the workplace and ways to reduce the conflict to improve productivity. Organizational efforts to promote WLB begin with a positive work family culture. Research has provided evidence that employees who perceived a more supportive work family culture were more satisfied, more productive, and more committed to the organization (Keene & Quadagno, 2004).

Work family culture is the extent to which an organization’s culture respects, supports, and values their employees’ family and life responsibilities and obligations (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Noe (2009) argues that a positive work family culture also “encourages managers and employees to work together to meet personal and work needs” (p. 478). Research suggests there are two main components to an organization’s supportive work-life culture: Family-supportive policies and family-supportive supervisors (Foley, Linnehan, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2006; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Family-supportive policies are formally developed initiatives and programs within an organization to help employees reduce potential WLC and achieve WLB (Foley et al., 2006; Keene & Quadagno; Noe). Examples of popular family-supportive policies include dependent care flexible spending accounts, flextime, family leave above company Family
Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requirements, telecommuting, and compressed workweeks (Noe). Other family-supportive policies include job sharing, on-site child care, child care referrals, child and elderly care benefits, backup child care, sick child care, paid leave for new fathers and employees who are adopting children, and reimbursement for adoption expenses. Some organizations go as far as providing services to make WLB easier to achieve, such as dry cleaning and laundry services, photo development, hair salon services, and automotive service centers (Noe). In the 2010 Employer Benefits Survey from the society for Human Resource Managers, Human Resource professionals reported 49 percent of their organizations offered flextime, 55 percent offered telecommuting on an ad-hoc basis and 34 percent on a part time basis, and 37 percent offered job sharing (Catalyst, 2011). Organizations may also include programs on handling the stress of WLB or management training to help them understand the importance of WLB and the influence WLB has on their employees and the organization as a whole. This training may also emphasize the important role supervisors play in the organizations overall work-life culture (Warner & Hausdorf, 2009). According to the Family & Work Institutes 2008 National Study of Employers, 50 percent of employers reported training supervisors to respond to work-family needs of their employees (Catalyst, 2011). Similarly, the Catalyst study, Women and Men in U.S. Corporate Leadership: Same workplace, different realities, found that 91 percent of senior-level women and 94 percent of senior level men agreed they can be flexible with their schedule when they had personal matters but only 15 percent of women and 20 percent of men agreed they could use flexible work arrangement without feeling like they were putting their career advancement at risk (Catalyst, 2011).

Yet, offering family-supportive policies is not enough to address employees’ concerns unless they are accompanied by a change in the organization’s norms and values regarding WLB
PERCEPTIONS OF SUPERVISOR SUPPORT FOR WLB

(Allen, 2001). An organization’s expectations of an employee have to match their efforts to support WLB otherwise employees do not perceive the organization to value WLB and they will be less likely to utilize the family-supportive policies (Allen). In short, an employee should feel like they can manage work expectations. One component of the work family culture that may influence how employees perceive potential WLB consequences is work demands. Work demands may influence the extent to which employees decide to utilize work family benefits (Allen). For example, if a company rewards employees who spend long hours at work, offering flextime or job sharing may not be consistent with the underlying corporate culture, making it unlikely that employees will feel comfortable taking advantage of these programs (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999).

Another component of a supportive work-life culture is the extent to which supervisors support and respect their employees’ family personal responsibilities and obligations (Thompson et al., 1999). As indicated by Carlson and Perrewe (1999), House (1981) stated social support is an interpersonal transaction that involves emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, or appraisal. It has been argued that the degree of social support an individual has in a situation may affect the entire stress process. Social support provided by supervisors can demonstrate sensitivity to employees’ family responsibilities (Allen, 2001). Ideally, a family supportive supervisor sympathizes with their employees and desires a healthy WLB for their employees. Such supervisors will engage in efforts to help their employees accommodate their work and personal responsibilities (Allen, 2001). These efforts might include their willingness to allow their employees to take advantage of the family-supportive policies even if the work demand is high (Allen). According to the Family & Work Institutes 2008 National Study of Employers, 60 percent of employers reported it was “very true” that supervisors are encouraged to be supportive
of employees family needs (Catalyst, 2011). This component is crucial to how employees' perceive and experience the work-life culture in an organization. Thus, this study will focus on how supervisor support is influential to WLB.

**WLB and Supervisor Support**

The importance of a family supportive supervisor can be realized in that even when family-supportive policies are part of an organization’s work-life culture, supervisors have the ability to undermine the policies and programs. This is often done when supervisors do not allow their employees to participate in family-supportive programs or only allow a portion of employees to utilize such policies (Thompson et al., 1999). Past research has indicated that supervisors do not typically embrace the utilization of family-supportive policies (Allen, 2001). If employees perceive this lack of support they may fear the consequences of taking advantage of family supportive policies. In essence, such employees may feel they cannot participate in these policies due to fear of damaging their career or any future career prospects within the organization (Allen).

It has been well established that supervisor and organization support have significant roles in the reduction of WLC (Warner & Hausdorf, 2009). Research has shown that employees whose supervisors supported their efforts to balance work and personal life were less likely to experience WLC (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). On the other hand, lack of social support was related to higher levels of WLC (Warner & Hausdorf). In addition to supervisor level of support, research also suggests that support at the organizational level can also impact perceptions of WLB. Specifically, organizations supportive of WLB have been found to be associated with increased levels of organizational commitment (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999). Further, those who indicated more favorability toward organizational
efforts to support WLB also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization (Kenexa, 2008). In addition, organizational support was found to enhance employee job attitudes and behaviors (Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

Not only do organizations need to provide a supportive work-life culture, employees need to perceive that their organization supports their WLB. Interestingly, there is little research regarding employees’ perception of supervisor support for their WLB. Although research indicates that women have higher levels of WLC (Duxbury et al., 1994; Grandey et al., 2005), recent research also indicates that there has been a shift in women’s perceptions about WLB (Kenexa, 2010). In the past, women often found it more difficult to maintain balance due to the competing pressures at work and demands at home (Kenexa). Recent research, however, indicates that woman have a more positive perception of their organization’s efforts to support their WLB than men (Kenexa). For males, working in an organization that does not support WLB has a significant and unfavorable impact on how these workers rate their pride in their organization, willingness to recommend it as a place to work and their overall job satisfaction (Kenexa, 2008). Additionally, those male employees who have unfavorable views of their company’s support for WLB report a much higher intention to leave the organization (Kenexa, 2008).

Research suggests women are more likely to experience more WLC than men (Duxbury et al., 1994; Grandey et al., 2005), but their perceptions of organizational support for WLB are more positive than men’s perceptions (Kenexa, 2010). This study will try to better understand the difference in perceptions of organizational support by evaluating how supported women and men feel their supervisors are of their WLB.
Chapter II

Rationale and Hypotheses

Sixty percent of adults report experiencing difficulty balancing work and personal domains (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Research suggests that employees’ attitudes and behaviors in their personal domain have a direct correlation with their attitudes and behaviors in the work domain (Boyar & Mosley, 2007; Frone et al., 1996; Grandey et al., 2005; Greenhaus & Allen, 2006;). Thus, employees’ balance between work and personal domains can be beneficial to both an organization and their employees. Low levels of work-life balance (WLB) can negatively affect job performance, retention, attendance, and job satisfaction (Boyar & Mosley; Frone et al., 1996; Jones & McKenna, 2002). When the two domains are balanced, research suggests that a positive experience in one domain may enhance the experience in the other (Boyar & Mosley).

Organizational efforts to promote and support WLB were found to enhance employee job attitudes and behaviors and reduce conflict between work and personal domains (Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Warner & Hausdorf, 2009). A large component that is crucial in how employees perceive and experience the efforts and support of WLB from an organization is how well a supervisor supports and respects their employees’ WLB (Thompson et al., 1999). Research has provided evidence that employees who perceived a more supportive work-life culture were more satisfied with their job (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H1: Supervisor support for WLB will be positively correlated with overall job satisfaction.

A significant portion of work-family culture that may influence how employees perceive an organization's support for WLB is their perceptions of work demands (Thompson et al., 1999). Arguably, supervisors will engage in efforts to help their employees accommodate work demands so they do not interfere with personal demands (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Further, the more employees perceive their supervisor to support WLB the more satisfied they may be with their work demands. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Supervisor support for WLB will be positively correlated with the amount of work demands satisfaction.

Similar to supervisors, Keene and Quadagno (2004) suggest those who perceive their organization to be supportive of WLB are more productive. Likewise, it may be that employees who perceive their supervisor to support WLB may also perceive their own quality of work to be satisfactory. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Supervisor support for WLB will be positively correlated with quality of work satisfaction.

Research also suggests the more employees perceive a work-family culture the more they are satisfied with the organization (Kenexa, 2008). Similarly, it may be that those who perceive their supervisors to be supportive of WLB will be more satisfied with their supervisor. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Supervisor support for WLB will be positively correlated with supervisor satisfaction.
Although research indicates that women have higher levels of conflict between work and personal domains (Grandey et al., 2005), research also indicates that there has been a shift in women’s perceptions about WLB (Kenexa, 2010). In the past, women often found it more difficult to maintain a balance between work and life due to the competing pressures at work and demands at home. Recent research indicates that women have a more positive perception of their organization’s efforts to support their WLB than men (Kenexa, 2010). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Women will have more positive perceptions of supervisor support of WLB than men.

Research also indicates supportive work-family cultures are positively related to organizational commitment and negatively related to intent to leave the organization (Thomas et al, 1999). Further, those who reported more favorability toward organizational efforts to support WLB also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization (Kenexa, 2008). Likewise, similar results may be true for supervisor support. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Supervisor support for WLB will be negatively correlated with intent to leave.

For male workers, working in an organization that does not support WLB has a significant and unfavorable impact on how these workers rate their pride in their organization, willingness to recommend it as a place to work and their overall job satisfaction (Kenexa, 2008). Additionally, those male employees who had unfavorable views of their company’s support for WLB stated a much higher intention to leave the organization than males who felt supported (Kenexa). When considered with the notion that supervisor support for WLB may be negatively correlated with intent to leave, it may be that gender may moderate the relationship between supervisor support for WLB and intent to leave. Such that men may always feel as if they are the
“provider” and they may have a intent to leave if better financial opportunities were available, but when they feel less supported by their supervisor the may have a higher intent to leave if a better financial opportunity were available. Also such that women who feel highly supported may not even consider looking for these opportunities. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Gender moderates the relationship between supervisor support of WLB and intent to leave, such that when women have higher perceptions of WLB support, their intent to leave will be lower than men (see Figure 1).
Figure Caption

*Figure 1.* The Hypothesized Relationship between Supervisor Support of WLB and Intent to Leave, as Moderated by Gender.
Chapter III

Method

Participants

This study evaluated an archival data set collected in April 2010. The data were collected from 161 government healthcare system units throughout the United States. Data were collected from 186,442 participants. These participants worked in healthcare system units implementing medical assistance programs through the administration and operation of numerous outpatient clinics, hospitals, medical centers, and long-term healthcare facilities. This sample far exceeds Cohen's (1992) recommended levels for adequate power.

Each employee was given the option to respond to the annual employee survey. To maximize response rates, employees were given the opportunity to complete the survey by phone, paper, or internet. Participation was voluntary and employees were encouraged to participate. Employees were told that survey participation was a way to provide input, make their voice heard, and help the organization improve. Employees were made aware that their responses were completely anonymous. In order to ensure anonymity, individual names were not provided and feedback was not provided to the individual’s workgroup supervisor unless the group response rate consisted of ten or more participants.

Measures

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured using the Job Satisfaction Index (JSI). The facets of the JSI have reliability estimates ranging from .60 to .76 with a mean minimum
reliability estimate of .66 (Nagy, 2002). For the purpose of analyzing the proposed hypotheses, this study focused on three facets: direct supervisor satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, and quality of work satisfaction, each of which was measured using one item. An example item was: “Compared to what you think it should be, how satisfied are you with the quality of work you provide to the organization?” This study also examined overall job satisfaction, which was also measured using one item. Higher scores on the job satisfaction measures indicated higher levels of satisfaction (see Appendix A).

**Supervisor support for WLB.** Supervisor support for employees’ work-life balance (WLB) was measured using one item pertaining to the employee’s perception of their supervisor’s understanding pertaining to family and personal life responsibilities. Employees were asked to indicate the level at which they agreed or disagreed to the statement using a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). In addition, the choice *don’t know* was also provided, but was considered to be a missing value if selected (see Appendix B).

**Intent to leave.** Intent to leave was measured using one item, and respondents were asked to report their intent to leave the organization utilizing a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). In addition, the choice *don’t know* was also provided, but was considered to be a missing value if selected (see Appendix C).

**Demographic variables.** Demographic information was collected with the annual employee survey. Specifically, gender, age group, race, length of employment for the organization, and the level of supervisory responsibility was collected (see Appendix D). For the purpose of this study, gender was the only demographic information utilized.
Procedure

Employees were given two weeks to participate in the survey and the results were collected by an independent vendor. As mentioned before, individual names were not collected and survey feedback was not provided to workgroups unless the workgroup consisted of ten or more participants.

Each healthcare system unit was assigned a survey coordinator who evaluated the structure of their unit and identified particular workgroups. Each workgroup was assigned a random number, and each employee was given an invitation to participate in the survey. Each invitation included the employee’s assigned group number. The employees were invited to choose the modality to take the survey: internet, interactive voice response (IVR), or paper and pencil.

Before beginning the survey each employee read a paragraph describing the importance of honesty and their protection of anonymity. To complete the survey online, employees were given an internet address. For the IVR, employees were instructed to call a toll free number and respond to survey questions by pressing a corresponding number on their telephone key pad. Employees who chose to complete a paper and pencil version of the survey were given instructions to ask their supervisor for a paper copy. Once employees completed the paper version of the survey, the participants were asked to mail their completed survey to the independent consultant responsible for the collection of the survey data. Results of a pilot study showed there were no differences between the modalities using this data collection approach (Nagy, Mohr, Warren, & Meterko, 2006).
Chapter IV

Results

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was conducted to evaluate the hypothesized relationships. All of the correlations are presented in Table 1. Additionally, given the large sample size, the effect size was also examined with respect for all of the hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for Work-Life Balance (WLB) would be positively related to overall job satisfaction. The results of the analysis were statistically significant, $r(180890) = .52, p < .001$. A correlation of .52 indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Hypothesis 2 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be positively related to work demand satisfaction. The results of the correlation were statistically significant, $r(181413) = .37, p < .001$. According to Cohen (1992), this value represents a medium effect size.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be positively related to quality of work satisfaction. The results of the correlation were statistically significant, $r(180695) = .28, p < .001$ and indicated a small ($r = .28$) effect size (although a medium effect size is $r = .30$ and above; Cohen, 1992).
Table 1

*Correlations between Perception of Supervisor Support for Work-Life Balance, Job Attitudes and Organizational Outcomes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Perceptions of Supervisor Support for WLB</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Overall Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Work Demand Satisfaction</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Quality of Work Satisfaction</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Direct Supervisor Satisfaction</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Intent to Leave</td>
<td>-.42**</td>
<td>-.61**</td>
<td>-.45**</td>
<td>-.28**</td>
<td>-.48**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Bolded items represent variables related to the criterion
Hypothesis 4 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be positively related to direct supervisor satisfaction. The results of the correlation were statistically significant, \( r(181044) = .59, p < .001 \). According to Cohen (1992), this value represents a large effect size.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that females would perceive their supervisors to support WLB more so than males. An independent-sample \( t \) test comparing the two groups was conducted to evaluate this hypothesis. The results of the analysis indicated that there was a significant difference between the average scores pertaining to perceptions of supervisor support for WLB, \( t(146970) = 4.189, p < .001 \), with males reporting a significantly higher perception of their supervisors supporting WLB \( (M = 3.90, SD = 1.15) \) than females \( (M = 3.88, SD = 1.19) \). This difference of .02 does not support Hypothesis 5, which suggested that women would perceive higher levels of supervisor support for WLB than men. Instead, these results suggest that men perceived their supervisors to support WLB more than women. However, when interpreting these differences it is important to consider the small effect size \( (d = .06, \eta^2 = .00009) \); Green & Salkind, 2008).

Hypothesis 6 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be negatively related to intent to leave. The results of the correlation were statistically significant, \( r(178166) = -.42, p < .001 \); and indicated a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992).

Hypothesis 7 proposed that gender would moderate the relationship between supervisor support of WLB and intent to leave, such that when females had higher perceptions of WLB support, their intent to leave would be lower than males. The results of the analysis were statistically significant, \( \Delta R^2 = .00, F(1,172014) = 57.07, p < .001 \). The results suggest that gender
moderates the relationship between supervisor support of WLB and intent to leave. However, a very small effect size ($f^2 = .03$; Green & Salkind, 2008) was found for Hypothesis 7.
Figure Caption

*Figure 1.* The Relationship between Supervisor Support of WLB and Intent to Leave, as Moderated by Gender.
Chapter V

Discussion

The quest to understand how employees' achieve a positive work-life balance (WLB), how WLB influences work and personal life domains, and the influence WLB has on job attitudes and organizational outcomes has been sought after since the beginning of the 1970's, when women were introduced into the professional workforce at an increasing rate changing the traditional roles men and women played in both domains. Since the 1970's, organizational efforts to promote and support WLB were found to enhance employee job attitudes and behaviors and reduce conflict between work and personal domains (Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Warner & Hausdorf, 2009). Research has also shown that employees whose supervisors supported their efforts to balance their work and personal life were less likely to experience work-life conflict (WLC; Thomas & Ganster, 1995) but little research has been conducted to identify the degree to which supervisor support for WLB has on job attitudes.

Hence, the current research focused on how employee perceptions of support for WLB from their supervisors related to a number of job attitudes (i.e., overall job satisfaction, intent to leave, supervisor satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, quality of work satisfaction). Also, this research examined whether gender had an influence on the relationship between feeling supported and a particular organizational outcome (i.e., intent to leave).

Hypothesis 1 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be positively related to overall job satisfaction. The results indicated that perceptions of supervisor
support for WLB was positively related to overall job satisfaction, with a large ($r = .52$) effect size (Cohen, 1992). These current research findings are consistent with Keene and Quadago’s (2004) research findings that employees who perceived a more supportive work-life culture were more satisfied with their jobs. In addition, Keene and Quadago (2004) found that employees who perceived a supportive supervisor also reported higher overall job satisfaction. Similarly, prior research indicated that less WLC was experienced when there was more supervisor support for WLB (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Hence, results from this study confirm previous research and may lend credence to previous assertions that the supervisor could be considered the obstacle or the catalyst when it comes to employees utilizing certain programs and benefits set aside by the company to provide more positive WLB. Considering these results indicated that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB accounted for approximately 27 percent of variance in an individual’s overall job satisfaction, future research may want to consider how perceptions of supervisor support for WLB may be increased on the part of employees.

Prior research also suggested that how employees perceive an organization’s support for WLB may be related to their perceptions of work demands (Thompson et al., 1999). Additional research suggested supervisors may engage in efforts to help their employees accommodate work demands so they do not interfere with personal demands (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). The results of this study indicated a positive relationship between employees perceiving their supervisor to support WLB and their satisfaction with their work demands, with a medium ($r = .37$) effect size (Cohen, 1992). These results also suggest that employees may look to their supervisor as having some control over their work load. It may be that supervisors who support their employees’ WLB also take into consideration their employees’ work demands and how the demands may
relate to WLB. However, that conclusion is beyond the design of this particular study and may be a topic for additional research.

Since prior research indicated those who perceived their organization to be supportive of WLB are more productive (Keene & Quadagno, 2004) the current research study predicted that employees who perceived their supervisor to support WLB would also perceive their own quality of work to be satisfactory. Results suggested perceptions of supervisor support for WLB were indeed positively related to quality of work satisfaction, with a small \( r = .28 \) effect size (although a medium effect size is \( r = .30 \) and above; Cohen, 1992). Given the somewhat small effect size, the current research findings suggests that the relationship between supervisor support for WLB and quality of work satisfaction may be somewhat muted. Perhaps a better measure of performance would yield a better understanding of this relationship.

Hence, future research may want to explore the employee’s actual performance, be it quality of work and/or quantity of work, and how that relates to the perception of supervisor support for WLB. Additional research could also consider whether employees are more satisfied with their quality of work due to supervisor support or due to the possible satisfaction of work demands.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be positively related to direct supervisor satisfaction. The results indicated that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB was positively related to direct supervisor satisfaction, with a large \( r = .59 \) effect size (Cohen, 1992). Although Kenexa (2008) found the more employees perceive a work-family culture the more they are satisfied with the organization, this research is unique in that it found that those who perceived their actual supervisors to be supportive of WLB were more satisfied with their supervisor. Considering this relationship accounted for approximately
35 percent of variance in an individual’s satisfaction with their direct supervisor, this finding suggests that organizations may want to place an emphasis on increasing perceptions of supervisor support for WLB. Doing so may not only pay off in terms of increased direct supervisor satisfaction, but it may also result in an increase in overall job satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, quality of work satisfaction, reduced intent to leave, as this study found a significant relationship with all of these variables. However, this benefit must be considered with caution, as the design of this study was correlational and does not allow causal statements to be made. Additionally, it is important to consider at which level each of the variables are measured. Supervisor satisfaction is measured at an individual level (the individual was asked on a scale of 1 to 5 how satisfied they are with their supervisor) and the item pertaining to perceptions of supervisor support for WLB was measured at a group level (the individual was asked to rate the level they thought their supervisor supported their “work groups” personal responsibilities). Thus, this difference may impact how the results are interpreted.

Consistent with prior research and theory (Thomas et al., 1999; Kenexa, 2008), the results of this study indicated that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB were negatively related to intent to leave, and that the effect size was at a medium ($r = -.42$) level (Cohen, 1992). Again, although this study used a correlational design, upon accounting for 18 percent of the variance this relationship suggests the possibility that if organizations placed emphasis on increasing perceptions of supervisor support for WLB they may see a decrease in intent to leave.

Although research indicates that women have higher levels of conflict between work and personal domains (Grandey et al., 2005), research also indicates that there has been a shift in women’s perceptions about WLB (Kenexa, 2010). Recent research indicates that women have a more positive perception of their organization’s efforts to support their WLB than men (Kenexa,
The results from this study, however, contradict these findings. In particular, the results of this study indicated that men had higher perceptions of supervisor support for WLB than women, although the effect size was very small ($d = .06$, $\eta^2 = .00009$; Green & Salkind, 2008). While it is important to note the small effect size, it is also important to note the importance of these findings. These results help advance WLB research in the sense that males ($M = 3.90$) and females ($M = 3.88$) have similar levels of perception of supervisor support for their WLB. Since the means are so similar, a difference of .02, a new thought process evolves to consider the evaluation of research findings and the support for both men and women in each personal and work roles.

Prior research suggests that working in an organization that does not support WLB has a significant and unfavorable impact on how male workers rate their pride in their organization, willingness to recommend it as a place to work and their overall job satisfaction (Kenexa, 2008). Additionally, those male employees who had unfavorable views of their company’s support for WLB stated a much higher intention to leave the organization than males who felt supported (Kenexa). Current research considered these findings along with the notion that supervisor support for WLB may be negatively correlated with intent to leave, and proposed that gender may moderate the relationship between supervisor support for WLB and intent to leave, such that men may have a higher intent to leave the organization. The results indicated that gender did moderate the relationship between perceptions of supervisor support for WLB and intent to leave. However, it is important to note the extremely small ($f^2 = .03$) effect size (Green & Salkind, 2008). With an effect size this small there is virtually no meaningful interaction, thus realistically the results suggest gender plays a very small role in the relationship between supervisor support for WLB and the intent to leave.
Limitations and Future Research Directions

A possible limitation of this study is the impact the supervisor’s gender may have had on the perceptions of supervisor support for WLB. Research suggests that females perceive their female supervisors to be more supportive than male supervisors whereas males perceive male supervisors to be more supportive than female supervisors (Foley, Linnehan, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2006). Hence, it is possible that the gender of the employee’s supervisor may have had some influence on the obtained results. Although this research was unable to distinguish supervisor’s gender, future research may want to consider the gender of the employee’s supervisor when investigating supervisor support for WLB.

Another possible limitation of this study is the lack of WLB items in the survey. WLB was measured with only one item, and there is a possibility that the supervisor support for WLB item may have not completely encompassed the construct or other variables surrounding the construct such as age of the supervisor or whether or not the supervisor reported having children. Indeed, the WLB item used in this study pertained to perceptions of supervisor support for personal life responsibilities only. Simply examining personal responsibilities and not the balance between work and life and how that impacts the employee may not have been sufficient. Ideally, if supervisors are truly supportive of WLB they should be considering not only their employees’ work “responsibilities” but also any personal responsibilities or activities of their employees.

An additional potential limitation in this study is not knowing the extent to which WLB initiatives were enacted within the actual organization. That is, this study did not, and could not, investigate if WLB initiatives have been carried out in the organization. It could be very
informative for future research to also measure WLB initiatives when considering perceptions of supervisor support for WLB and the exposure supervisors have to these initiatives.

It should also be noted that the government healthcare setting utilized in this study may be unique from many healthcare settings in such that most of the employees have a 9 to 5 work schedule. Most of the employees do not have direct contact with patients. Thus, these employees may not have the overall pressures of work interfering with personal responsibilities or activities. Additionally, this bureaucratic government structure may have an influence of the lack of difference in gender perceptions of supervisor support for WLB. The highly structured environment may have not have allowed for much of a difference in gender perceptions.

Yet another limitation of this study is the inability to infer causality due to the correlational design of this study. Although correlational designs provided enhanced understanding among the relationships between perceptions of supervisor support and job satisfaction, intent to leave, satisfaction of work demands, and supervisor satisfaction, one cannot assume that higher perceptions of any one of these variables directly cause a corresponding increase in another variable.

A final possible limitation to this study is the lack of control the researcher had over the collection of the data and the types of questions asked about WLB. Both of these are limitations when using an archival data set and a field study. On the other hand, this study was able to use data generated by actual employees in an actual organization, clearly benefitting the external validity of this study.

Conclusion

Research has shown that employees whose supervisors supported their efforts to balance their work and personal life were less likely to experience work-life conflict (WLC; Thomas &
Ganster, 1995) but little research has been conducted to identify the degree to which supervisor support for WLB has on job attitudes. Results of the current study provide a unique contribution to the WLB research in that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB was positively related to a number of job attitudes (i.e., overall job satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, quality of work satisfaction) and negatively related to intent to leave.

Given the correlational design of this study, it must be noted that causal conclusions cannot be definitely drawn. Still taking into consideration the relationship between supervisor support for their WLB and the variables within this study, there are several implications organizations may want to consider to increase perception of supportive supervisors. First and foremost, supervisors can be made aware of the importance of WLB to the employees and to the organization, as well as of the impact of WLB on their employees’ performance and satisfaction. These supervisors could be trained on how to help their employees manage their workload so the employee feels comfortable with their work demands. Ultimately, it may be important for supervisors to understand what is going on in their employees’ lives so they are better able to understand the demands from both the employees’ work and personal roles to be sensitive to these demands.

Results also indicated a significant gender differences in perceptions of supervisor support for WLB. Additionally, results indicated gender had an influence on the relationship between feeling supported and a particular job attitude (i.e., intent to leave). Although these results were significant, no realistic implication can be drawn from this particular finding due to the extremely small effect size. Overall, however, these results contribute to the WLB research with respect to the evolution of WLB for men and women and their perceptions of feeling supported.
Chapter VI

Summary

Perceptions of Supervisor Support for Work-Life Balance

The quest to understand the importance of the work and personal domains to individuals; how individuals balance their roles in each domain; and how balancing these separate roles affects individuals as people and as employees has been sought by Industrial Organizational Psychologists for several years. This quest increased in the mid 1970’s when there was a large shift in work participation from women (Broadbridge, 2009). During this time, women entered the workforce at an unusual rate creating several changes for both men and women in work and personal life domains (Broadbridge). Before this shift, women typically worked in the home and men typically worked outside the home. Since the 1970’s, men’s personal responsibilities/demands (e.g., caring for sick child and relatives, cleaning house) have doubled (Keene & Quadagno, 2004), but the family domain is still dominated by women, at least in terms of hours worked (Livingston & Judge, 2008). Including paid and unpaid work, American women work 5-7 hours more per week than men (Livingston & Judge). Once women entered into the workforce the traditional male/female roles needed to be re-evaluated and thus the line that separated the work and personal domains became blurred for both men and women.

Given the restructuring of men’s and women’s roles in our society it is important for organizations to reevaluate the expectations they place on employees to allow a well balanced work and personal life. Not only is it beneficial for employees to find this balance but it is also
beneficial for organizations to place importance on this balance (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Therefore, this study will focus on the importance of Work-Life Balance (WLB) and the influence a supportive work-life culture (i.e., supervisors support for WLB) within organizations can have on employees and organizations.

For the purpose of this research, I will refer to the construct as Work-Life (rather than Work-Family) Balance to emphasize the balance between work and personal life, including but not limited to “family”. Greenhaus and Allen (2006) define WLB as “the extent to which individuals are equally engaged in, and equally satisfied with, work and family roles” (p. 513). Greenhaus and Allen (2006) consider WLB to be the absence of WLC. Finding balance between work and personal life domains can be beneficial to both an organization and its employees; a lack of balance can negatively affect both. WLC has been shown to be negatively related to performance and satisfaction and positively related to turnover and absenteeism rates, increased tardiness, and levels of burnout (Boyar, Maertz, Mosley, & Carr, 2008; Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Organizational efforts to promote and support WLB were found to enhance employee job attitudes and behaviors and reduce conflict between work and personal domains (Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; Warner & Hausdorf, 2009). A large component that is crucial in how employees perceive and experience the efforts and support of WLB from an organization is how well a supervisor supports and respects their employees’ WLB (Thompson et al., 1999). Research has provided evidence that employees who perceived a more supportive work-life culture were more satisfied (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Supervisor support for WLB will be positively correlated with overall job satisfaction.
A significant portion of work-family culture that may influence how employees perceive an organization’s support for WLB is their perceptions of work demands (Thompson et al., 1999). Arguably, supervisors will engage in efforts to help their employees accommodate work demands so they do not interfere with personal demands (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Further, the more employees perceive their supervisor to support WLB the more satisfied they may be with their work demands. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Supervisor support for WLB will be positively correlated with the amount of work demands satisfaction.

Similar to supervisors, Keene and Quadagno (2004) suggest those who perceive their organization to be supportive of WLB are more productive. Likewise, it may be that employees who perceive their supervisor to support WLB may also perceive their own quality of work to be satisfactory. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Supervisor support for WLB will be positively correlated with quality of work satisfaction.

Research also suggests the more employees perceive a work-family culture the more they are satisfied with the organization (Kenexa, 2008). Similarly, it may be that those who perceive their supervisors to be supportive of WLB will be more satisfied with their supervisor. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Supervisor support for WLB will be positively correlated with supervisor satisfaction.

Although research indicates that women have higher levels of conflict between work and personal domains (Grandey et al., 2005), research also indicates that there has been a shift in women’s perceptions about WLB (Kenexa, 2010). In the past, women often found it more
difficult to maintain a balance between work and life due to the competing pressures at work and home. Additionally, men’s household responsibilities have doubled while many organizations may still operate with the understanding that there is a nonworking spouse to manage the home responsibilities (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Many organizations expect employees, men and women, to conform to the traditional male definitions of commitment (Broadbridge, 2009), which entails working late hours and sacrificing personal time to progress at work. Recent research indicates that women have a more positive perception of their organization’s efforts to support their WLB than men (Kenexa, 2010). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Women will have more positive perceptions of supervisor support of WLB than men.

Research also indicates supportive work-family cultures are positively related to organizational commitment and negatively related to intent to leave the organization (Thomas et al., 1999). Further, those who reported more favorability toward organizational efforts to support WLB also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization (Kenexa, 2008). Likewise, similar results may be true for supervisor support. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Supervisor support for WLB will be negatively correlated with intent to leave.

For male workers, working in an organization that does not support WLB has a significant and unfavorable impact on how these workers rate their pride in their organization, willingness to recommend it as a place to work and their overall job satisfaction (Kenexa, 2008). Additionally, those male employees who had unfavorable views of their company’s support for WLB stated a much higher intention to leave the organization than males who felt supported (Kenexa). When considered with the notion that supervisor support for WLB may be negatively
correlated with intent to leave, it may be that gender may moderate the relationship between supervisor support for WLB and intent to leave. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H7**: Gender moderates the relationship between supervisor support of WLB and intent to leave, such that when women have higher perceptions of WLB support, their intent to leave will be lower than men.

**Method**

**Participants**

This study evaluated an archival data set collected in April 2010. Data were collected from 161 healthcare system units (186,442 participants) throughout the United States. Participants worked in units implementing medical assistance programs through the administration and operation of outpatient clinics, hospitals, medical centers, and long-term healthcare facilities. This sample far exceeds Cohen’s (1992) recommended levels for adequate power.

Each employee was given the option to respond to the annual employee survey. To maximize response rates, employees were given the opportunity to complete the survey by phone, paper, or internet. Participation was voluntary and employees were encouraged to participate. Employees were told that survey participation was a way to provide input, make their voice heard, and help the organization improve. Employees were made aware that their responses were completely anonymous. To ensure anonymity, individual names were not provided and feedback was not provided to the individual’s workgroup supervisor unless the group response rate consisted of ten or more participants.
Measures

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured using the Job Satisfaction Index (JSI). The facets of the JSI have reliability estimates ranging from .60 to .76 with a mean minimum reliability estimate of .66 (Nagy, 2002). This study focused on three facets: direct supervisor satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, and quality of work satisfaction, each of which was measured using one item. An example item was: “Compared to what you think it should be, how satisfied are you with the quality of work you provide to the organization?” This study also examined overall job satisfaction, which was also measured using one item. Higher scores on the job satisfaction measures indicated higher levels of satisfaction (see Appendix A).

Supervisor support for WLB. Supervisor support for employees’ work-life balance (WLB) was measured using one item. Employees were asked to indicate the level at which they agreed or disagreed to the statement using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, the choice don’t know was also provided, but was considered to be a missing value if selected (see Appendix B).

Intent to leave. Intent to leave was measured using one item, and respondents were asked to report their intent to leave the organization utilizing a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, the choice don’t know was also provided, but was considered to be a missing value if selected (see Appendix C).

Demographic variables. Demographic information was collected with the annual employee survey. Specifically, gender, age group, race, length of employment for the organization, and the level of supervisory responsibility was collected (see Appendix D). For the purpose of this study, gender was the only demographic information utilized.
Procedure

Employees were given two weeks to participate in the survey and the results were collected by an independent vendor.

Each healthcare system unit was assigned a survey coordinator who evaluated the structure of their unit and identified particular workgroups. Each workgroup was assigned a random number, and each employee was given an invitation to participate in the survey that included the employee’s assigned group number. The employees were invited to choose the modality to take the survey: internet, interactive voice response (IVR), or paper and pencil.

Before beginning the survey each employee read a paragraph describing the importance of honesty and their protection of anonymity. To complete the survey online, employees were given an internet address. For the IVR, employees were instructed to call a toll free number and respond to survey questions by pressing a corresponding number on their telephone key pad. Employees who chose to complete a paper and pencil version of the survey were given instructions to ask their supervisor for a paper copy. Once employees completed the paper version of the survey, they were asked to mail their completed survey to the independent consultant responsible for the collection of the survey data. Results of a pilot study showed there were no differences between the modalities using this data collection approach (Nagy, Mohr, Warren, & Meterko, 2006).

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis 1 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be positively related to overall job satisfaction. A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was conducted to evaluate the hypothesized relationship. The results of the analysis were statistically significant, $r(180890) = .52, p < .001$ and indicated a large ($r = .52$) effect size (Cohen, 1992).
PERCEPTIONS OF SUPERVISOR SUPPORT FOR WLB

Results from this study confirm previous research (Keene & Quadagno, 2004) and considering these results indicated that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB accounted for approximately 27 percent of variance in an individual's overall job satisfaction, future research may want to consider how perceptions of supervisor support for WLB may be increased.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be positively related to work demand satisfaction. The results of the correlation were statistically significant, $r(181413) = .37, p < .001$ and indicated a medium ($r = .37$) effect size (Cohen, 1992). Future research may want to consider how employees may look to their supervisor as having some control over their work load. It may be that supervisors who support their employees’ WLB also take into consideration their employees’ work demands and how the demands may relate to WLB.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that employees who perceived their supervisor to support WLB would also perceive their own quality of work to be satisfactory. Consistent with prior research (Keen & Quadagno, 2004), the results of the correlation were statistically significant, $r(180695) = .28, p < .001$ and indicated a small ($r = .28$) effect size (although a medium effect size is $r = .30$ and above; Cohen, 1992). Given the somewhat small effect size, the current research findings suggests that this relationship may be somewhat muted. Perhaps a better measure of performance would yield a better understanding of this relationship. Hence, future research may want to explore the employee’s actual performance, be it quality of work and/or quantity of work, and how that relates to the perception of supervisor support for WLB.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be positively related to direct supervisor satisfaction. The results of the correlation were statistically significant, $r(181044) = .59, p < .001$ and indicated a large ($r = .59$) effect size (Cohen, 1992).
Although Kenexa (2008) found the more employees perceive a work-family culture the more they are satisfied with the organization, this research is unique in that it found that those who perceived their actual supervisors to be supportive of WLB were more satisfied with their supervisor. Considering this relationship accounted for approximately thirty-five percent of variance in an individual’s satisfaction with their direct supervisor, this find suggests that organizations may want to place an emphasis on increasing perceptions of supervisor support for WLB. Doing so may not only pay off in terms of increased direct supervisor satisfaction, but it may also result in an increase in overall job satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, quality of work satisfaction, reduced intent to leave, as this study found a significant relationship with all of these variables. It must be noted that causal conclusions cannot be definitely drawn.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that females would perceive their supervisors to support WLB more so than males. An independent-sample t test comparing the two groups was conducted to evaluate this hypothesis. The results of the analysis indicated that there was a significant difference between the average scores pertaining to perceptions of supervisor support for WLB, \( t(146970) = 4.189, p < .001 \), with males reporting a significantly higher perception of their supervisors to support WLB \( (M = 3.90, SD = 1.153) \) than females \( (M = 3.88, SD = 1.187) \). These results do not support Hypothesis 5. Instead, these results suggest that men perceive their supervisors to support WLB more than women. When interpreting these results it is important to consider the small effect size \( (d = .06, \eta^2 = .00009; \text{Green} \& \text{Salkind, 2008}) \), which indicates a small difference in the means between male and females scores on Supervisor Support for WLB. While it is important to note the small effect size, it is also important to note the importance of these findings. These results help advance WLB research in the sense that males \( (M = 3.90) \) and females \( (M = 3.88) \) have similar levels of perception of supervisor support for their WLB. Since
the means are so similar a new thought process evolves to consider the evaluation of research findings and the support for both men and women in each personal and work roles.

Hypothesis 6 proposed that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB would be negatively related to intent to leave. Consistent with prior research (Thomas et al., 1999; Kenexa, 2008), the results of the correlation were statistically significant, \( r(178166) = -0.42, p < .001 \) and indicated a medium \( (r = -.42) \) level (Cohen, 1992). Again, although this study used a correlational design, upon accounting for eighteen percent of the variance this relationship suggests the possibility that if organizations placed emphasis on increasing perceptions of supervisor support for WLB they may see a decrease in intent to leave.

Hypothesis 7 proposed that gender may moderate the relationship between supervisor support for WLB and intent to leave, such that men may have a higher intent to leave the organization. The results of the analysis were statistically significant, \( \Delta R^2 = .00, F(1,172014) = 57.07, p < .001 \). The results suggest that gender moderates the relationship between supervisor support of WLB and intent to leave. However, a very small effect size \( (f^2 = .03; \text{Green & Salkind, 2008}) \) was found for Hypothesis 7. With an effect size this small there is virtually no meaningful interaction, thus realistically the results suggest gender plays a very small role in the relationship between supervisor support for WLB and the intent to leave.

**Limitations and Future Research Directions**

A possible limitation of this study is the lack of WLB items in the survey. WLB was measure with only one item, and there is a possibility that the supervisor support for WLB item may have not completely encompassed the construct. Indeed, the WLB item used in this study pertained to perceptions of supervisor support for personal life responsibilities only. Simply
examining personal responsibilities and not the balance between work and life and how that impacts the employee may not have been sufficient.

An additional potential limitation in this study is not knowing the extent to which WLB initiatives were enacted within the actual organization. That is, this study did not, and could not, investigate if WLB initiatives have been carried out in the organization. It could be very informative for future research to also measure WLB initiatives when considering perceptions of supervisor support for WLB and the exposure supervisors have to these initiatives.

It should also be noted that the healthcare setting utilized in this study may be unique from many organizations in that it is not a traditional 9 to 5 work schedule. Moreover, being absent because of personal reasons may have greater consequences when working in a healthcare setting because healthcare is needed continuously (24/7). Moreover, the consequences of not providing that care could be severe injury or death. When taking this into consideration, it could be that healthcare employees understand there are higher expectations of them to be present physically and mentally at work. Thus, they may not place as much emphasis on the support they receive for their personal responsibilities. On the other hand, this group of professionals may need more support than usual due to the potential impact (e.g., literally life or death) of their jobs.

Yet another limitation of this study is the inability to infer causality due to the correlational design of this study. Although correlational designs provided enhanced understanding among the relationships between two variables, one cannot assume that higher perceptions of any one of these variables directly cause a corresponding increase in another variable.
A final possible limitation to this study is the lack of control the researcher had over the collection of the data and the types of questions asked about WLB. Both of these are limitations when using an archival data set and a field study. On the other hand, this study was able to use data generated by actual employees in an actual organization, clearly benefiting the external validity of this study.

**Conclusion**

Results of the current study provide a unique contribution to the WLB research in that perceptions of supervisor support for WLB was positively related to a number of job attitudes (i.e., overall job satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, work demand satisfaction, quality of work satisfaction) and negatively related to intent to leave.

It must be noted that causal conclusions cannot be definitely drawn. Still taking into consideration the relationship between supervisor support for their WLB and the variables within this study, there are several implications organizations may want to consider to increase perception of supportive supervisors. First, supervisors can be made aware of the importance of WLB, as well as of the impact of WLB performance and satisfaction. Supervisors could be trained on how to help employees manage their workload so employees feel comfortable with their work demands. Ultimately, it may be important for supervisors to understand what is going on in their employees’ lives so they are better able to understand the demands from both domains.

Results also indicated a significant gender differences in perceptions of supervisor support for WLB. Additionally, results indicated gender had an influence on the relationship between feeling supported and a particular job attitude (i.e., intent to leave). Although these results were significant, no realistic implication can be drawn from this particular finding due to
the extremely small effect size. These results do contribute to the overall WLB research in
respect to the evolution of WLB for men and women and their perceptions of feeling supported.
References


Appendix A

Job Satisfaction Index (JSI)

The Job Satisfaction Index (JSI) was published in:

Appendix B

Intent to Leave

The intent to leave item was presented in:

Appendix C

Perceptions of Supervisor Support for WLB

The perceptions of supervisor support for Work-Life Balance was presented in:

Appendix D

Demographic Information

What is your gender?

1 = Male

2 = Female
Appendix E

IRB Permission Letter

June 19, 2011

Aubree Schenkel
8390 Wooster Pike Apt 4
Cincinnati, OH 45227

Re: Protocol #1072, Perceptions of Supervisor Support for Work-Life Balance

Dear Ms. Schenkel:

The IRB has reviewed the materials regarding your study, referenced above, and has determined that it meets the criteria for the Exempt from Review category under Federal Regulation 45 CFR 46. Your protocol is approved as exempt research, and therefore requires no further oversight by the IRB. However, we will require a copy of the V.A.'s approval of your project for our files prior to the onset of data analysis. We appreciate your thorough treatment of the issue raised.

If you wish to modify your study, including the addition of data collection sites, it will be necessary to obtain IRB approval prior to implementing the modification. If any adverse events occur, please notify the IRB immediately.

Please contact our office if you have any questions. We wish you success with your project!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Morell E. Mullins, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Xavier University

MEMO

C. Mark Nagy, advisor
Appendix F

Data Use Agreement Letter

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL CENTER FOR ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT
11500 NORTHLAKE DRIVE, SUITE 230
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45249

To Whom It May Concern
Date: Dec 12, 2011
Re: VA All Employee Survey data access

This is to confirm that Mark Nagy, a contractor with NCOD, is allowed to have computer access to VA data of the All Employee Survey which is stored on the VA server behind the firewall, and that the data access privileges include the plans to access these data for the purpose of conducting data analyses on the research project titled “Perceptions of Supervisor Support for Work-Life Balance.” Using the All Employee Survey is contingent upon the IRB approval for this specific research project.

Katherine Osatuke, PhD
Supervisory Health Scientist / Research Director,
National Center for Organization Development

Sue R. Dyrenforth,
Director
National Center for Organization Development