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## PERSONALITY AS PREDICTOR OF LIFE BALANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN CORPORATE EMPLOYEES

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The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between personality traits and life balance amongst employees in the South African corporate sector (N = 175). Life balance is defined as the state that people reach when they experience contentment regarding their time involvement, emotional involvement and level of satisfaction achieved from each life role. This conceptualisation encompasses Super's five adult life roles, namely that of student, worker, citizen, leisurite and home and family person. Each participant completed a biographical questionnaire, the Basic Traits Inventory and a life balance questionnaire. Examination of the individual personality traits in relation to life balance indicated that Extroversion, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience had statistically significant positive relationships with life balance, while Neuroticism surrendered a statistically significant negative relationship with life balance. Conscientiousness was the only trait which yielded a meaningful relationship of > 0.30 with life balance. Results of a multiple regression analysis, which was employed to investigate the combined effect of personality traits, revealed a statistically significant predictive relationship between traits and life balance. Personality traits accounted for approximately 15% of the variance in life balance experience. The study has implications for organisations who attempt to contribute to positive life balance experiences of employees.

*Key phrases: Life balance, Work-life balance, Work-life conflict, Work-life facilitation, Five-factor model of personality, Big Five personality traits*

### INTRODUCTION

To facilitate an informed understanding of the demands of the modern, 21<sup>st</sup> century lifestyle, researchers are turning their attention to the concept of work-life balance. Until recently, two-parent households typically meant the male would be employed in the workforce and the female would be employed at home as a care-giver. Today, few families are structured in this way as it has become increasingly common that both partners in the couple work outside of the home. Furthermore, extended families are becoming progressively more geographically dispersed resulting in all the family needs having to be met by the working parents (Greenblatt 2002).

South Africa has undergone dramatic social change since 1994 that has made a significant impact on the South African workplace. Not only is the workforce now culturally diverse (Finestone & Snyman 2005), but it also has to adapt to being part of the global economy (Bezuidenhout 2005). As a result of this South African employees have been catapulted into a workplace fraught with tensions around global competition, global work standards, Affirmative Action and multicultural workforces. Furthermore, many South African businesses recognise that there is a shortage of highly skilled employees (Jinabhai 2005) with the result that remaining

highly skilled employees carry a heavy burden of work. To participate in the global economy, corporate employees have had to adapt to Western business standards while compensating for the shortage of skills by working intensely and for longer hours.

Working people today feel the harmful effects of working longer hours and working with increasing intensity, often to the point that the non-work areas of life are overwhelmed or neglected (Belkin 2007; Lewis *et al.* 2003; Mostert 2006). Although not always supporting work-life balance programmes (Sanichar 2004), employers are taking note of the fact that imbalance in the lives of their employees could have a negative impact on their organisational functioning (Koekemoer & Mostert 2007), from absenteeism and high staff turnover to rising healthcare costs resulting from stress (Hobson *et al.* 2001; Jackson 2006).

Based on the afore-mentioned, the interplay between work and family is receiving increasing research attention (Parasuraman & Greenhaus 2002). The radical changes of work and family responsibilities, the gender role transformations and the altering nature of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have all been catalysts for this interest. Much of the research focuses on the plight of formally employed women and their endeavours to balance the demands of life (Kinnunen *et al.* 2003). According to Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002) a dearth of research exists in the work-family arena which addresses the potential mitigating effects of individual differences and psychological characteristics as antecedents of conflict and stress. If the underlying processes in work-family dynamics are influenced by a complex combination of unique factors, it is reasonable to assume that personality could influence the degree and type of work-family conflict experienced by individuals (Noor 2002). Despite this assertion, little research has been conducted on the relationship between personality factors and work-family dynamics (Kinnunen *et al.* 2003). Researchers have reported on the relationship between personality and variables related to life balance, for example stress (Cooper & Payne 1998) and coping in relation to work-related burnout (Storm & Rothmann 2003). The findings, amongst others, would imply that the impact of personality on life balance is worth investigating.

In the paragraphs that follow, we present an overview of recent literature on the phenomenon of life balance, and propose a definition of life balance. Thereafter, an overview of research investigating the relation of personality to constructs associated with to life balance is given. Finally, the results of a study in which the relationship between personality traits and life balance in the South African corporate sector was explored, are discussed.

## LIFE BALANCE

Life balance is currently understood in many different ways, with definitions appearing to be concentrating largely on work juxtaposed to family roles. The competing demands of work and family are conceptualised from either a “balance” or a “conflict” perspective. “Balance” refers to the harmonious, side-by-side existence of work and family, while “conflict” refers to the clash between these domains. Terms such as work-family conflict, work-family balance, work-interfering-with-family, and family-interfering-with-work are most frequently used to explore life balance in the literature.

*Work-family conflict* refers to a situation where fulfilling the demands of one role interferes with one’s ability to fully engage in another role (Frone *et al.* 1997; Hammer *et al.* 2003). With increasing numbers of women, dual-earner couples and single parents in the workforce as well as an increase in the number of hours spent on work, the likelihood of individuals and families experiencing this type of conflict has significantly increased (Elloy & Smith 2004; Hill *et al.* 2001; Noor 2002). Many researchers (cf. Lee 1996; Mostert 2006; Wayne *et al.* 2004) suggest that attempting to balance work and family automatically results in inter-role conflict as the roles are incompatible with one another and resources to fulfil the demands of the roles are often not sufficient.

Literature distinguishes between *work-family conflict* and *family-work conflict*. These are understood as two distinct forms of conflict, originating in either the domain of work or the domain of family and negatively affecting the opposing domain (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran 2005). This distinction has led to the study of *work-interference-with-family* and *family-interference-with-work* (Carlson & Frone 2003; Elloy & Smith 2004; Noor 2002; Tausig & Fenwick 2001). Hammer *et al.* (2003) found that both these constructs can lead to organisational withdrawal behaviours such as work interruptions or absenteeism. Demerouti *et al.* (2005) note that negative work-to-family interference may lead to spillover or crossover effects. Spillover is defined as reactions experienced in the work domain being transferred to and interfering with the non-work domain (intra-individual). Crossover refers to the process by which stress experienced by individuals leads to stress being experienced by their spouses (inter-individual). In this regard Demerouti *et al.* (2005) found that husbands’ experience of life satisfaction was a strong predictor of wives’ life satisfaction, while husbands were not perceptibly affected by their wives’ degree of life satisfaction.

The positive effects of *work-family balance* have also been reported. Greenhaus *et al.* (2003:513) conceptualise work-family balance as the “extent to which an

individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role”. According to these authors work-family balance has three major components, namely, time balance, involvement balance and satisfaction balance. Work-life balance has also been described as the absence of unacceptable levels of conflict between work and non-work domains (Greenblatt 2002). This author alleges that work-life balance depends on achieving and maintaining sufficient resources to make life fulfilling.

Wayne *et al.* (2004) propose an alternative term to work-family balance, namely *work-family facilitation*, which occurs when each of an individual’s life roles enhances functioning in the others. In a similar vein Greenhaus and Powell (2006) define *work-family enrichment* as the extent to which participation in one role can actually improve the experience of participation in another role.

Although much of the literature on the interface between work and family has focused on conflict between the domains, it seems as if more recently, research is leaning towards the potentially positive outcomes of this interchange. However, studies in the arena of life balance seem to remain restricted to the domains of work and family. The question of whether the term work-life balance is adequate for describing the most issues faced by employees is frequently raised in literature. Backman (2004) argues that studies in this field concentrate too simplistically on only two domains of life - work opposed to the remainder of life. Similarly, Lewis *et al.* (2003:827) hold that the term work-life balance implies that work and life are in some way mutually exclusive and that it does not adequately represent the “skills transfer between the different aspects of life” that actually exists in an integrated person. Taking a more holistic view, Pillinger (2001) views the concept of work-life balance as the fine-tuning of patterns of work in such a way that all working people can find a rhythm that enables them to combine work and the other parts of their lives.

Since it was the aim of the present researchers to take a more comprehensive view of life balance by focusing on more life roles, the study of the interplay between work and family was regarded as too limited. Therefore, the term “life balance” refers to individuals’ experience of general life balance, not exclusively their experience of balance between work and home or work and family. In this regard, Donald Super’s theory of adult life roles (Super *et al.* 1995) was used to ensure that the definition of life balance encompasses a full spectrum of life roles. In summary, life balance is defined as “the state people reach when they perceive themselves to be experiencing contentment regarding their time involvement, emotional involvement and level of satisfaction achieved from each of their life roles” (Greenhaus *et al.*

2003:9), with life roles referring to that of student, worker, citizen, home and family person and leisurite (Super *et al.* 1995).

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND CONSTRUCTS ASSOCIATED WITH LIFE BALANCE**

It is evident from the literature that the concept of life balance, and its attendant sub-constructs, is influenced by various factors. Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002:300) note however that current literature displays a “disproportionate emphasis on environmental and situational factors” as antecedents of stress and conflict between work and family and urge that more attention be focused on individual differences. Although there seems to be a lack of knowledge about the interplay between personality and life balance specifically, the relationship between personality and areas related to some of the life roles has been investigated (Bozionelos 2004; Bruck & Allen 2003; Heller *et al.* 2002). In this regard the trait approach to personality has received much attention. Traits are regarded as general dispositions and are described as “an enduring, relatively stable personality characteristic” (Liebert & Spiegler 1998:178). According to McCrae and Costa (1995) traits are underlying tendencies that cause and explain patterns of behaviour, emotions and thoughts. The five-factor model of personality, representing the traits approach to personality, was also utilised in the present study as this model has been found to have empirical strength and has been widely used in research (Bower 1998; Carducci 1998; Larsen & Buss 2002). For the purpose of this study the five factors were labelled Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience (McCrae & Costa 1987).

In one of the few studies where the relationship between personality traits and individuals' *ability to manage the demands of work and family roles* was investigated, Wayne *et al.* (2004) conclude that Extroversion was positively related to the ability to facilitate a balance in meeting the demands of both work and family. Conscientiousness was negatively related to conflict and Neuroticism positively. In considering the relationship between the personality traits, negative affectivity, type A behaviour and work-family conflict, Bruck and Allen (2003) note that different features of work-family conflict (time-based, strain-based or behaviour-based) relate to different personality indicators. They found that negative affectivity (Neuroticism) was consistently and positively related to various types of conflict, with specific emphasis on strain-based conflict. An unexpected finding was that lower scores on Agreeableness were related to more time-based conflict, contrary to what the authors had predicted. They anticipated that individuals who scored high on Agreeableness

would display the greatest time-based conflict, due to their inherent propensity of wanting to please others.

The relationship between personality traits and *work or careers* has attracted much research interest since the advent of the boundaryless “Protean” career (Hall 1996). This approach concentrates more on the employee and the employee’s experience of work (Bozionelos 2004) with a significant interest surfacing in the relationship between personality and career success (Judge *et al.* 1999; Seibert *et al.* 2001). Bozionelos (2004) investigated the relationship of personality traits with career success and found a negative relationship between Neuroticism and both extrinsic (objective) and intrinsic (subjective) career evaluations. Agreeableness was found to have a negative relationship to extrinsic career prospects, yet a positive relationship to intrinsic career evaluations.

Judge *et al.* (1999) note that, in addition to Neuroticism, Extroversion and Conscientiousness also appear to be related to career success or job satisfaction. The authors report that individuals with high scores on Neuroticism were more likely to experience symptoms such as persistent negative moods and physical manifestations which could impair work success. People with high scores on Extroversion were more likely to experience positive emotions, take on leadership roles and blend into social situations which could enhance work success. Conscientiousness was found to be the most influential personality trait on career performance. High levels of Conscientiousness were related to positive outcomes in career success, most notably, achievement orientation, dependability and orderliness were predictors of good work performance (Judge *et al.* 1999). In sharp contrast to this, Bozionelos (2004) found Conscientiousness to be negatively associated with extrinsic career success.

Barrick and Mount’s (1991) meta-analysis indicated that Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience and Agreeableness predict success pertaining to work achievement. In another meta-analysis Salgado (2003) confirmed the relationship of Conscientiousness with work-related achievement and Neuroticism was also indicated as a predictor work achievement.

*Life satisfaction* and perceived *quality of life* are additional concepts which appear regularly in life balance literature. The influence of personality traits on *life contentment* has been the subject of review by a number of researchers, who broadly argue that differences in personality predispose people to different levels of satisfaction with various aspects of their lives (Brief *et al.* 1993). Evans (1997) found

that low Neuroticism scores, high self-esteem and a high level of dispositional optimism (Extroversion) contribute to a high level of perceived quality of life.

White *et al.* (2004) explored the relationship between personality traits and *close relationships*. While close relationship variables were not directly addressed in the present study, they could be construed to be part of Super's "home and family" life role, which forms part of the definition of life balance used in this study. The authors report a positive relationship between Extroversion and relationship satisfaction and intimacy. Similarly they found a positive relationship between Agreeableness and these variables. Conscientiousness was found to be positively related to intimacy for males.

Past research has often produced conflicting results when attempting to find a relationship between personality traits and the various components of life satisfaction (White *et al.* 2004). Whilst a dearth of literature exists on the precise relationship between personality and life balance what does appear to be consistent is the fact that high levels of Neuroticism always produce dissatisfaction with life, whether it is in the form of high levels of work-family conflict or a perception of a poorer quality of life. Furthermore, high levels of Extroversion appear to be related to an experience of a good quality of life, good work-family balance and a high level of relationship satisfaction.

## **AIM**

Although the evidence to date indicates that relationships do exist between certain personality traits and life balance, most studies have been conducted in the international arena. Therefore, whether the results are generalisable to the South African multi-cultural milieu, remains in doubt. The aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between personality traits and life balance amongst a sample of employees in the South African corporate sector. The growing attention that life balance has received in the media (Jackson 2006; Naidoo 2006) and research arenas were key motivations for this study.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

A survey design was used to achieve the aim of this research.

## Participants

A convenience sample of formally employed adults was drawn from the corporate sector in Gauteng and Cape Town ( $N = 175$ ), including both females ( $n = 101$ ) and males ( $n = 72$ ). Two participants did not indicate their gender. The sample consisted of a cross-racial representation of Black ( $n = 41$ ), Coloured ( $n = 25$ ), Indian ( $n = 16$ ) and White ( $n = 92$ ) participants. One participant did not indicate her or his racial group.

Most participants were from the Information Technology, Electronics and Telecommunications sector ( $n = 105$ ; 60%). The second largest group was from the Financial Services, Banking and Insurance sector ( $n = 52$ ; 29.7%). The remaining 18 (10.3%) was from the Education, Public Sector, Services, Wholesale and Retail sectors.

## Measures

Each participant completed three questionnaires, namely a *biographical questionnaire*, the *Basic Traits Inventory* (Taylor & De Bruin 2006) and a *life balance questionnaire*.

The *biographical questionnaire* contained questions about aspects of the participants' biographical and lifestyle status such as age, gender, employment sector and various lifestyle issues. The motivation for collecting this data was to provide descriptive information on the sample.

The *Basic Traits Inventory* was developed by Taylor and De Bruin (2006) and was based on the five-factor model of personality. The instrument consists of 193 items that measures personality in terms of Extroversion; Neuroticism; Openness to Experience; Agreeableness; and Conscientiousness. Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". Taylor and De Bruin (2006) performed factor analysis to ascertain whether a satisfactory fit could be found between the Basic Traits Inventory and the theoretical five-factor model. They report satisfactory results across different genders and cultural groups in South Africa.

The following Cronbach's coefficient alphas were reported by Taylor (2004) for a group of White and Black South Africans: Extroversion ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ), Neuroticism ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ), Openness to Experience ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ), Agreeableness ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ), and Conscientiousness ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ). The reliability coefficients found in the present



research can be regarded as acceptable, namely Extroversion ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ), Neuroticism ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ), Openness to Experience ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ), Agreeableness ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ), and Conscientiousness ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

*The life balance questionnaire:* In an effort to find an instrument which measures life balance, various pertinent psychometric instruments were investigated. A number of instruments and questionnaires were located which measure a variety of constructs that contribute to the phenomenon of life balance. (Cinamon & Rich 2002; Evans *et al.* 1985; Higgins *et al.* 1994; Rice *et al.* 1992). However, no instrument appeared available which addresses life balance in terms of time involvement, emotional involvement and level of satisfaction and which review individual levels of involvement and satisfaction in the five adult life roles. Therefore, the authors of this study developed a questionnaire on the basis of the operationalised definition of life balance which states that life balance refers to the state people reach when they perceive themselves to be experiencing contentment regarding their time involvement, emotional involvement and level of satisfaction achieved from each of their life roles (Greenhaus *et al.* 2003).

The questionnaire is divided into three sections to address the participants' perception of time involvement, emotional involvement, and satisfaction experienced. Questions were constructed around Super's five life roles, namely, those of student; worker; leisurite; home and family person; and citizen. The questionnaire consists of 45 items, rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree".

Prior to investigating the relationship between the two scales of measurement, the five factor structure of the life balance questionnaire was verified by means of confirmatory factor analysis. With the exception of a few items relating to the work as well as home and family domains, the item loadings confirmed the postulated model of five underlying second-order factors (based on Super's five adult life roles). The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each of the five life role subscales yielded satisfactory results, namely Study ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ), Work ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ), Community Service ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ), Home and Family ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ), Leisure ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ), and the total life balance score ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ).

## **Procedure**

The questionnaires were completed by the participants over a period of approximately one and a half years. The authors met with all of the participants, either individually or in small groups. These meetings took place in the participants'

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various work environments. Instructions for the completion of each of the questionnaires were provided and the voluntary, anonymous and confidential nature of the research was stressed. Participants received feedback on the results of their questionnaires by a registered psychologist during a subsequent work-life balance education programme.

### Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis of the data was undertaken with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 14). Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to specify the direction and strength of the relationship between the scores on each one of the personality traits and the overall life balance questionnaire score. The correlation coefficients were examined in accordance with Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) recommendation that coefficients greater than 0.30 may be regarded as practically meaningful. The levels of significance of the correlations were considered at the 95% ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) and 99% ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) confidence interval levels. In addition, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether personality could be viewed as a predictor of life balance or not.

## RESULTS

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were obtained for scores of each of the five personality traits, namely, Extroversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience and Agreeableness in relation to the overall life balance score. The results are presented in Table 1 for the entire group.

Table 1: Correlation coefficients of the five personality traits and life balance

	LB	A	E	N	C	O
LB	-	-	-	-	-	-
A	0.104	-	-	-	-	-
E	0.151*	0.203**	-	-	-	-
N	-0.192*	0.023	-0.308**	-	-	-
C	0.303**	0.261**	0.049	-0.078	-	-
O	0.204**	0.392**	0.482**	-0.230**	-0.002	-

Note: LB = Life balance; A = Agreeableness; E = Extroversion; N = Neuroticism; C = Conscientiousness; O = Openness to Experience

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Inspection of Table 1 reveals that Extroversion yielded a statistically significant positive correlation with life balance ( $r = 0.151$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Although statistically

significant, the relationship may not necessarily be regarded as practically meaningful, based on Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) recommendation that coefficients  $> 0.30$  may be regarded as meaningful. Conscientiousness also showed a statistically significant positive relationship with life balance ( $r = 0.303$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This relationship can be regarded as practically meaningful. Openness to Experience ( $r = 0.204$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) surrendered a statistically significant positive correlation with life balance. Although stronger than the relationship between Extroversion and life balance, this relationship may also not be regarded as salient ( $r < 0.30$ ). Neuroticism yielded a statistically significant negative correlation with life balance ( $r = -0.192$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). As suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) this correlation ( $r < 0.30$ ) may not necessarily represent a practically meaningful relationship. The only trait which did not yield a statistically significant relationship with life balance was Agreeableness ( $r = 0.104$ ;  $p > 0.01$ ).

The multiple regression analysis results are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2: Multiple regression analysis with life balance as criterion variable and the five personality traits as predictor variables**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Change Statistics				
				R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.393(a)	0.154	0.128	0.154	5.870	5	161	0.000

As presented in Table 2, the results showed a significant positive relationship between personality traits and life balance. With personality as the only predictor of life balance,  $R^2 = 0.154$ ,  $F(5, 161) = 5.870$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Personality traits explained 15.4% of the variance in life balance. The standardised regression weights,  $t$ -values,  $p$ -levels and semi-partial correlations of the predictor variables (personality traits) with life balance are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3: Regression weights,  $t$ -tests and effect sizes in the prediction of life balance**

Model		Standardised Coefficients	$t$	$p$	Correlations		
					$\beta$	Zero-order	Partial
1	Constant		4.143	0.000			
	E	0.022	0.260	0.795	0.153	0.020	0.019
	N	-0.120	-1.540	0.126	-0.196	-0.120	-0.112
	C	0.309	4.040	0.000	0.304	0.303	0.293
	O	0.189	2.105	0.037	0.206	0.164	0.153
	A	-0.051	-0.614	0.540	0.107	-0.048	-0.044

Note: A = Agreeableness; E = Extroversion; N = Neuroticism; C = Conscientiousness; O = Openness to Experience.

Inspection of Table 3 shows that only Conscientiousness ( $\beta = 0.309$ ,  $r = 0.293$ ,  $t = 4.040$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Openness to Experience ( $\beta = 0.189$ ,  $r = 0.153$ ,  $t = 2.105$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ) were significantly related to life balance in the presence of all the remaining personality traits. Although the results of the product-moment correlation have shown that there are also statistically significant relationships between Extroversion and life balance and Neuroticism and life balance, it seems as if they do not make a unique contribution to the explanation of life balance in the presence of the other traits. This finding appears to be somewhat contrary to the results regarding the correlations between the individual traits and life balance in this study as well as in previous studies. A possible explanation for this apparent contradiction may be that in the presence of all the traits, Extroversion and Neuroticism do not have a direct effect on life balance, but rather an indirect effect via their correlations with the other traits. Hence, although it seems as if Extroversion and Neuroticism as personality traits do not have a direct influence on life balance, the possible indirect influences cannot be ignored.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this study was to assess whether a relationship could be found between personality traits and life balance. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between Extroversion and life balance. This finding aligns with recent literature which holds that high scores on Extroversion predict a good quality of life, good work-family balance and high levels of relationship satisfaction. It may be possible that individuals who measure high on Extroversion have a positive life balance experience because of their innate positive affectivity or ability to "see the bright side of things", including life balance. Extroverted individuals also have a strong affinity for people and tend to be energised by interaction with others, thus it is possible that interaction with others in the workplace actually improves their life balance experience.

The results of the study also indicated a positive correlation between Conscientiousness and life balance. It may be argued that individuals scoring high on Conscientiousness have a positive life balance experience due to their orderly and disciplined approach to life. Applying order and discipline may result in a well-managed lifestyle where the demands of the various life roles are comfortably met. Similarly, being conscientious and realistic in meeting the expectations of work colleagues and family members may result in minimised conflict between the domains in life.

No literature was found which directly linked Openness to Experience to life balance, notwithstanding the fact that a reasonable correlation was found between these two constructs in this study. It may be possible that people with a high score on Openness to Experience have a positive life balance experience because of their willingness to try new activities and ways of thinking. The flexible approach to life that high scores on this trait imply, may mean that such people are prepared to make adjustments to the parts of life that do not feel balanced, resulting in a positive overall experience of life balance.

Neuroticism yielded a negative correlation with life balance, indicating that a high score on this trait would probably result in a poor life balance experience. Similarly, in the literature reviewed, high scores on Neuroticism correlated with work-family conflict. When taking into account the fact that a high score on Neuroticism potentially means high levels of anxiety, depression and affective instability, it is unsurprising that this trait has a negative correlation with life balance. High levels of anxiety might imply unnecessary worry and preoccupation with one domain of life while engaged in another, in other words, high levels of work-interfering-with-home or vice versa. Depression may imply a negative experience of life in general, inclusive of life balance. Affective instability points to an emotional volatility which could result in life being experienced as a “rollercoaster ride” of emotion, leaving life balance as a far-flung improbability.

The multiple regression analysis produced results which clearly signify that personality partially explains an individual's experience of life balance. Burger (2000) argues that personality has consistently been shown to account for approximately 10% of the variance in individuals' behaviour. The results of this study showed that personality accounted for approximately 15% of the variance in life balance. Furthermore, and somewhat contrary to previous findings, Extroversion and Neuroticism do not, in the presence of the other traits, contribute uniquely to an understanding of life balance. It is however possible that these traits may have an indirect effect on life balance, based on their relationships with the other traits.

This study has indicated that personality has an impact on individuals' ability to experience balance in their lives. It also yielded data on which personality traits are more inclined to lead to life balance. These insights may contribute to enabling human resource practitioners to steer corporate employees into creating balance in their lives, taking into account their personality trait differences when making lifestyle choices. The results suggest that individuals with high scores on Extroversion, Consciousness and Openness to Experience have a natural orientation towards a

positive life balance. Therefore, those individuals with low scores on these three traits would benefit from professional guidance in understanding their personality make-up and making appropriate choices to accommodate their way of being in the world. In a similar vein, high scores on the trait of Neuroticism suggest a predilection for a poor life balance, implying that these individuals may also benefit from professional guidance on how to minimise the negative effects of this trait on life balance.

When attempting to understand the needs of their workforce, the results of this study may be useful to the corporate employer, in so far as creating an awareness of the variety of impacts different personality styles can have on work performance and life balance. Understanding the workforce at an intrinsic level will facilitate the employer's ability to offer the appropriate support structures and interventions to facilitate balance in the lives of their employees. As mentioned before, increasing attention is being paid to the phenomenon of life balance by the business world, as businesses endeavour to harness the benefits of a healthy workforce.

## **LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

One of the limitations of this research is that extrinsic factors which may have a significant impact on life balance were not addressed. Furthermore, cultural differences were not accounted for, which potentially excluded the variables of cultural values and traditions in managing the demands of life. For example, one participant mentioned that, because the majority of Black South Africans were only afforded corporate job opportunities subsequent to 1994, much social pressure was placed on individuals to perform well if they were "lucky enough" to be employed in the corporate sector. She felt a great deal of collective responsibility in performing well in her job and was prepared to sacrifice her personal life in favour of work success. Similarly, the traditional roles that husbands, wives and partners play within a marriage or relationship vary from culture to culture and were not accounted for in this study.

The potential lack of generalisability of the results also represented a limitation. Because the participants were sourced predominantly from two industry sectors, the Information Technology, Electronics and Telecommunications sector and the Financial Services, Banking and Insurance sector, the question is raised as to whether the results are applicable across all South African business sectors.

These limitations give rise to a brief discourse on possible future directions of research in the arena of life balance. Although personality accounted for approximately 15% of the variance in life balance in this study, it is relevant to note

that the remaining 85% of life balance behaviour is not explained by personality and is attributable to constructs not explored. Further research would be necessary to establish the nature of the other determinants and explicate the importance of understanding the influence of those constructs. While conducting this research it became evident that electronic devices such as laptops, blackberry phones and cellular phones represent the convergence of technology on the modern lifestyle. The simplicity and wide availability of these devices means that corporate employees are accessible to their employers and colleagues virtually all the time. The implication of this is that people are struggling to shut off from work after working hours and have to exercise discipline to refrain from allowing work to infiltrate personal time. A potential research opportunity exists in this realm to gain an understanding of the impact of these communication devices on life balance.

Furthermore, the study employed only quantitative measures which, as Dyer (1995) notes, provide perhaps too limited a view of an individual. To gain a broader perspective of the contextual and extrinsic elements that may influence an individual's experience of life balance, qualitative research would allow participants to give their own points of view, rather than be restricted to a limited number of preconceived responses. Although Whitehead (2002) used a qualitative design to examine life balance, her study was limited to female participants.

## CONCLUSION

The goal of this research was to investigate the relationship between personality and life balance. While the results are subject to limitations, the findings bear evidence that personality has a significant relationship with life balance and that certain traits show a proclivity towards a positive life balance experience and others towards a negative life balance experience.

In conclusion, the findings of this study may provide a step towards understanding the factors which influence the phenomenon of life balance. This knowledge, in turn, could provide human resource professionals with tools to help them deliver an informed service to corporate employees who are having difficulties with creating balance in their lives.

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