

Master Thesis

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Work to live, don't live to work!

A cross-sectional study of the work-life balance of higher managers

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Abstract

The work-life balance is currently in vogue among governments, organizations as well as researchers. Higher managers in organizations all over the world are exposed to significant pressures in their jobs, which further influence the balance between their work and private lives, job satisfaction and overall well-being. In this thesis, we apply a different perspective on the topic of work-life balance than most of the previous scientific research. We have focused on the governmental, organizational and individual factors that affect the work-life balance of higher managers and the consequent influence on their job satisfaction and overall well-being.

The objective of this study is to contribute to the work-life balance research by exploring the fit between companies' human resource practices and higher managers' actual perceptions and needs. In order to gain different perspectives, our empirical research consists of a series of interviews with both HR managers and members of higher management.

The key findings in terms of the factors influencing higher managers are reported. They suggest that the individuals are influenced by several aspects. The responsibility for personal work-life balance does not only lie on individuals themselves, but the organizations and governments play an important role in treating this issue as well.

Keywords: work-life balance, higher managers, job satisfaction, well-being, HR policies

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Prologue

E-mail fragment from a senior consultant employed in a global management consulting company, April 25, 2007:

Basic philosophy in BIG 4:

Ernst & Young = Dead & Young

PriceWaterhouseCoopers = Prices are everything, no water, no house, cope with us, cause we don't care!

KPMG = Kill People More Gently

Deloitte & Touche = Delighted to kill our employees. Touché!

Romanian newspapers, April 25, 2007:

Romania, 21 April 2007. A 31 year old young woman was found dead in her apartment by her colleague.

*Raluca Stroescu was found **dead** last Saturday by her **Ernst & Young** manager - who dropped by her home because she neither showed up at work, nor answered her phone. While her company does a very poor job at managing the crisis, and her doctors assess her physical condition as a lot more complex, Stroescu's colleagues and family tell the world that she died because of **exhaustion**.*

Raluca Stroescu dies after working overtime on successive nights over an extended period. In the last 6 weeks, she lost about 6 kg. Her colleagues said that she only weights 40 kg in her last days. She was stressed and she didn't have time for anything else. She asked her boss for a two days holiday - pause - but she didn't get it. Just before she collapsed, because she was feeling kind of sick, the company took her to the company clinic when it was almost too late. The doctors treated her and sent her home to take some rest. That happened on Friday, 20 April 2007, and that was the last day anybody sees her alive.

Raluca Stroescu was a young, attractive, smart, career woman, but she worked herself to death, literally. She was a loner, who buried herself in her work, a workaholic if you will. And in search of what? Yes, she wanted to be good, she wanted to get a promotion, she wanted to have a successful career. Whatever she was looking for, she paid the price and was way overcharged.

This is what Japanese culture may say, a karoshi case, meaning "death from overwork". This is the first well-known case of "death from overwork" happened in Romania!

May she rest in peace!

I wish I could give you a source in English, but the news didn't spark the interest of the international media yet. Maybe now, with your help!

Romanian newspapers, April 26, 2007:

Romanian media on Thursday debates the death of Raluca Stroescu, a young manager for Ernst & Young Romania, whose passing was blamed by a newspaper earlier this week on

exhaustion at work. Raluca was buried at a cemetery in Ploiesti, north of Bucharest, in the presence of the family and hundreds of young people yesterday.

Experts could not provide clear information on the causes of her death on Tuesday and Wednesday and that the necessary data will be available within weeks, but told reporters that she might have died of heart failure.

The Evenimentul Zilei newspaper on Wednesday reported that the background cause of the death was physical exhaustion as she was working too much for a salary of a couple of thousand euros, which is a very good salary in Romania.

Gardianul on Thursday quotes Raluca's former colleagues who say that prior to her death she "was looking like a ghost. She was in a hurry. She had to put up a report". According to the newspaper, "Raluca had worked so hard to become somebody until she collapsed. Still, who is to blame?"

"Is it worth dying for a salary of 2,000 euro?," Evenimentul Zilei wonders in its edition today. The newspaper reports that Raluca's death has sparked a huge public response about the conditions of work Romanian employees have to cope with and whether is it a good thing to abandon personal life for the sake of money and career.

The issue of career opportunities and what one can do to seize them is very hot in Romania where economy has been booming for years and salaries are still low compared to other countries, prompting major companies abroad to relocate businesses here.

Gandul quotes a doctor who examined the woman's body, according to whom Raluca was underfed as she weighed less than 40 kilos. "She was not eating or she couldn't assimilate food" the doctor said, while others said she also had problems with her heart and hormones.

Raluca, 31, had been working for Ernst & Young Romania for two years and a half. She previously worked for Vodafone. E&Y's only manager that could be contacted by Cotidianul yesterday refused to comment the tragedy.

Some people might argue that this is an extreme, and that such things do not happen often. However, this case in Romania is surely not the only one; it is just the one of the few that has become public. This case of death from heavy workload, stress and exhaustion in Romania proves the significance of the topic of work-life balance of employees, and in particular those employed in managerial positions. Deeper debates and open discussions on this topic need to be pursued in order to prevent such cases from happening again and again. The awareness about the significance of the work-life balance issues has to be raised within the employers so that they are willing to care not only about economic effectiveness and profits, but in first place about their employee's job satisfaction and well-being (which will in turn help them in achieving sound results and performing better than average). Furthermore, they have to learn how to supervise their employees and in case the workers are not able to handle the imbalances and pressures themselves, offer them a helping hand. The following study aims at contributing to the discussion about this very current topic.

1 Introduction

“It’s all about quality of life and finding a happy balance between work and friends and family.”

Philip Green, British billionaire businessman

1.1 Background of the study

Our work impacts the quality of our life and the quality of our life impacts our work. Ever-changing working environments in organizations all over the world have to respond to global challenges faster than ever before. Increasing globalization, technological advancements and competitive rivalry are some of the factors that highlight the pressures put on employees and managers in particular. *“In the business world in ‘developed’ countries, and among many governments, the importance of paid work and the primacy of economic competitiveness, whatever the personal costs are, are almost accepted wisdom”* (Gambles, Lewis, Rapoport, 2006, p. 4). These factors have changed the nature and intensity of working life during the last decades and raised a new phenomenon experienced by the overloaded employees – the impaired balance between work and non-work activities. *“The nature and intensity of work itself has changed, and traditional spatial and temporal boundaries between home and work have become blurred”* (Woodward, 2007, p. 7). Furthermore, the impacts of globalization have rendered the national boundaries less important than earlier; the information and communication technology has compressed the distance and space (Lewis, 2003, p. 343) and better transport connections have offered mobility to operate on the world-wide business platform (Van der Vliet & Hellgren, 2002, p. 4).

As the pace of business life does not show any signs of becoming slower, organizations have to deal with and help their employees manage the pressures put on them. Both national governments and organizations play an important role in the process of developing different types of policies *“that aim to make it easier for people – particularly women – to combine paid work with the rest of life”* (Gambles et al., 2006, p.5). Undoubtedly, all organizations would like to have ‘ideal’ employees, i.e. those that are efficient and effective, show strong commitment and at the same time look happy, are never sick and are satisfied with their jobs. *“The ideal employee is able to do their job today, as well as adapt to the changes that may take place tomorrow”* (HRM Website). Moreover, Gambles et al. (2006) state that the assumption about ‘ideal’ workers is that they do not modify work for family reasons and in case of managers, ideal are those who demonstrate commitment in terms of long hours and exclusive dedication to the job. Therefore, the first thing that has to be done is a shift in perception of an ideal worker and second, a lot has to be done in addressing the issues of work-life balance and employees’ well-being on both governmental and organizational levels.

Many organizations have created various types of motivational, benefit and reward systems in order to encourage their employees to achieve better results and to increase their job satisfaction. However, Gambles et al. (2006) argue that temporary debates or policy initiatives promoting ‘work-life balance’ or ‘work-family reconciliation’ seem to only skim the surface of much deeper and more fundamental sets of challenges and constraints. In this thesis, we would like to break through this surface and introduce debate on the complex and profound issues faced by today’s managers and their employers in terms of work-life balance, job satisfaction and overall well-being.

1.2 The changing nature of work

The constant changes in business world reflect on a wide range of factors. These changes are due to external factors such as changing markets and technologies; changing demographic

structures of workforce; changes in organizational contexts of work as well as changes in the structure of work itself. “*Employment relationships in Europe and most of the industrialised world are changing as a consequence of fundamental shifts in the work setting and the nature of work*” (Isaksson, 2003, p. 3). All the above mentioned changes have made organizations to reorganize their employment contracts. The nature of need in terms of workforce is different than before and companies have created contracts which support their economy (Van der Vliet & Hellgren, 2002, p.4). Many organizations were forced to restructuring and downsizing their staff in order to reduce their costs and be able to remain competitive. Both public and private organizations and their employees had to find ways in order to quickly adjust variables affecting them. During the 1990’s, the public sector in Sweden underwent major restructuring, budget cutbacks and downsizing. However, downsizing has not occurred in public sector only, but also in private sector due to increasing competition that forced companies to reduce their staff (Johansson, 2002, p. 310). Similar patterns have occurred in the whole Europe, which in itself resulted in the increasing imbalance between workload and amount of leisure time among European employees. As an example we can cite Statistics Sweden (1997), according to which 60 percent of Swedish employees reported that the augmented workload has put higher time pressure on them.

1.3 Why is Sweden suitable for our study of work-life balance?

Sweden is a European welfare state, which was founded on the basis of social citizenship and values such as the right for education, health and social security are traditionally qualified as essential for social and economic well-being (Gambles et al., 2006, p. 24). During the 1960’s and 1970’s, Scandinavian countries took a lead in promoting the work-life balance issue, illustrated by work and organizational (W/O) psychologists’ efforts to create a solid base of empirical data about the benefits of promoting the quality of working-life that justified a call for policy and even legislative intervention (Guest, 2002, p. 276). However, research has shown that work-life balance issues among Swedish employees are significant. “*Probably the most important reason for public concern is that the return of insecurity and precarious employment represents a profound deviation from the development of the welfare state, which was a central goal in most European countries during the second part of the 20th century*” (Isaksson, 2003, p. 3).

1.3.1 Changes in the nature of sick-leaves

During the 1990’s, the research on Sweden has shown that the number of long-term sick leaves (sick leave longer than 90 days) has been rising. Accelerating costs of sick leaves have been gradually increasing during the 1990’s, in particular after 1997. A big change has been perceived between the years 1998 and 2000, when the costs doubled from 18 billion SEK to 38 billion SEK. The development of growth curve continues rising, which is becoming a problem for Swedish national economy. (Johansson, 2002, p. 304)

The existence of a link between the amount of work and its impact on work-life balance in Swedish labour force is reflected in the fact that employees have experienced a gradual increase of job-related strain in recent years (Bejerot and Aronsson, 2001 in Johansson, 2002, p. 307). It is also addressed that the nature of sick leaves has changed during the 1990’s. Whereas in the beginning of 1990’s the common reasons for sick leave concerned musculoskeletal disorders, the today’s causes deal mainly with depression, stress reactions and burn-out (Johansson, 2002, p. 304).

Moreover, research in 1990’s has shown, that an increasing number of both male and female workers agreed fully or partly that they have way too much to do at work, which suggests that both genders experience work overload in their jobs. In case of females, the increase of

positive answers is more significant than in case of men, which is in accordance with the fact that a majority of women were employed in the public sector where cutbacks have been most severe. (Johansson, 2002, p. 314)

Also, the frequency of working overtime, measured in terms of skipping the lunch and/or other breaks and/or bringing work home every week or more has increased. The numbers of employees that answered positively was steadily rising during the 1990's (Johansson, 2002, p. 307). More men than women reported bringing work home, which can be due to the fact that women had fewer opportunities to perform paid work at home because they had to perform unpaid home work (Johansson, 2002, p. 314). However, the percentage of both males and females that reported these facts has become more stable between 1995 and 1999, which could also be caused several facts: first, the awareness of employees about health issues has increased during 1990's and also the end of 1990's means a generation shift, when younger generations have entered the workforce (and/or higher positions in companies) not only in Sweden, but in the whole Europe.

These people have different values than the older generations; in particular they differ in the way they perceive and value their work and leisure time. Foley, Maxwell and McGillivray (1999) state, that changing perceptions of work is another labour market factor, which encourages the emergence of work-life balance. The most distinctive change in perceptions is arguably seen amongst the so-called Generation X, which represents those people born between 1961 and 1983. This generation is said to prefer a lifestyle that includes non-work time, irrespective of other responsibilities, hence actively may seek employers who offer work-life balance arrangements. Often, they put work-life balance above income and career advancements. This means opportunities for companies to introduce flex-time, part-time work, and telecommuting as benefits that are very appealing to them. These are generational traits that older leaders would do well to understand and incorporate into planning for their organizations' future (CIO). *"The general trend seems to be gravitation towards an accommodation of work rather than a primary focus on work"* (Maxwell, 2005, p.181).

Recently, new initiatives on both EU and Swedish national level have been introduced in order to improve the lives and work-life balance of employees. Close attention has been paid in particular to gender equality issues, parental leaves, or health and sick leaves issues.

1.3.2 Current initiatives on EU and Swedish national level

On the European level, several initiatives towards higher employment in the EU member states have been launched. In line with the Lisbon strategy, which aims to make the EU the most dynamic and competitive economy by 2010 (European Commission webpage), the overall employment rates need to be increased. In particular, the EU employment strategy concentrates mainly on increasing the employment rates for women (by extending of parental leave for fathers, increase of childcare facilities and care facilities for elderly and disabled) and older workers by implementing policies that would enable them to combine work with other aspects of life. In 1975, the European Council has established a special EU body – European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, which specializes on providing information, advice and expertise on living and working conditions and addresses themes such as employment and working conditions and work–life balance (European Foundation webpage). The European Council has also adopted a European Youth Pact in 2005, one of the aims of which is to enable young people to better combine work and family and private life. Moreover, in 2006, Gender Equality Pact, which aims to encourage better work-life balance as well, was adopted (The Swedish Reform Programme for Growth and Jobs 2006 to 2008, 2006, pp. 53-54). Moreover, an interesting fact is that Sweden chose to promote quality of working life and flexibility during its presidency of the European Union

in 2001. *“It raises the question of whether we have a solid body of social science knowledge about work-life balance that is sufficiently robust to feed into policy formulation and legislation”* (Guest, 2002, p. 276).

Among the employment policy goals for the year 2007, Swedish government mentions several measures that need to be addressed, e.g. to make it easier for young people to enter the labour market, to create equal conditions and opportunities for women and men to participate in working life or to reduce absences due to illness. Certain success has already been registered in the point mentioned last (The Swedish Reform Programme for Growth and Jobs 2006 to 2008, 2006, p. 45).

1.3.3 Gender equality

In 1950's the ideal concept of family was related to the idea that a man makes a living and his wife is 'employed' at home. *“The social status of a woman was defined primarily by the professional position and income of her husband”* (Kasper, Meyer, Schmidt, 2005, p. 441). Nowadays this role has shifted in most of the modern societies as more and more women have become active in paid work and the concept of a dual-earner family is nowadays more than common. Also, the views on partnership have changed during the past 50 years (Jacobs & Gerson, 2001; Kasper et al., 2005). *“As a result of these changing views on roles, the supporting activities of female partners can no longer be taken for granted”* (Kasper et al., 2005, p. 441).

Swedish women's active participation in working life, particularly among mothers of small children, is higher than in most other European countries. According to United Nations Gender-related development index, Sweden is 4th country in the world and 3rd in Europe with highest gender equality. However, it has been noticed that women and men still do not have equal opportunities. European Youth Pact, Gender Equality Pact and Swedish government state that both women and men should be able to combine family life and working life (The Swedish Reform Programme for Growth and Jobs 2006 to 2008, 2006, pp. 53-54). In 2007 Budget Bill, the Government introduces a new gender equality bonus in order to increase economic opportunities for families and to divide parental leave more equally (Jörgen Eklund, Head of Planning to Anders Borg, Ministry of Finance, 2007) and also lower taxes on domestic services to make it easier for women and men to combine work and family life (The Swedish Reform Programme for Growth and Jobs 2006 to 2008, 2006, p. 55).

From the above text, it could be implied that Sweden is a country where the government strives to support the work-life balance issues of employees. Moreover, the gender equality is one of the highest in the world. On one hand, high amount of women are represented on managerial positions in companies and institutions; on the other hand, men have the same possibilities to take care of children as women. Therefore, this study could benefit from these facts and help increase overall understanding of work-life balance issues and their impacts on overall well-being and job satisfaction.

1.4 Importance of study

Contribution of this study to the existing research can be perceived in the fact that it offers another perspective than that applied in most of the research papers so far. The issues of work-life balance are not being handled at the individual level of workers. In particular, this study focuses on the higher management level where the imbalance between the work and rest of the life are most significant and alarming. Moreover, neither in research, nor in practice high attention has been paid to factors influencing management levels in the company. Research works mainly deal with such topics as work-life balance of women managers, managers as guardians of employee well-being or about managers' role in work-life balance

policies and practices. However, one might ask who cares about the managers themselves in that sense? And what really matters to managers? Which factors influence higher managers' job satisfaction and well-being? From these 'smaller' questions, practical significance of this study becomes evident. The previous line of argumentation leads us to the research question for this study.

1.5 Research question

What are the factors influencing the work-life balance of higher managers and how do these factors further affect higher managers' overall well-being and job satisfaction?

1.6 Aim of the study

The contemporary situation in business world indicates the significance of work-life imbalances on individual's well-being. This study aims at contributing to the work-life balance research by exploring the fit between companies' human resource practices and higher managers' actual perceptions and needs.

1.7 Delimitation of the study

This study primarily focuses on the individuals and impacts of their demanding jobs on their work-life balance. Consequently, the fact that an individual might experience imbalances in terms of prevalence of non-work above work is not relevant for the purpose of this study and therefore not taken into account. This argument is also in line with Guest (2002), who states that "*all believe that work has become too dominant*" (p. 263). Moreover, impacts of imbalances between work and non-work systems might be studied on group level, e.g. by investigating whole families instead of individuals. This aspect also delimits this study.

1.8 Research strategy

The research strategy might be defined as an overall plan for the research undertaking (Remenyi, Williams, Money, Swartz, 1998, p. 102, Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 1997, p. 74). The direction of our research was set by the research question and objective. Throughout the whole study, this strategy was built and further developed as our understanding of the research subject increased (cf. Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 102). However, the main aspects of the research strategy had to be set as a starting point for this study. From the beginning, it seemed clear that this study adopts a non-positivist point of view (which is in more detail described in the research methodology section of this study). The empirical research strategy is qualitative and the scientific approach to the relationship between theory and research is deductive (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 25). However, the approach to the creation of the research question is inductive, because first, the research question was set and after, relevant theories were searched for. This research strategy is taken into account and mirrored in all parts of this study.

2 Research Methodology

Insight, untested and unsupported, is an insufficient guarantee of truth, in spite of the fact that much of the most important truth is first suggested by its means.

B. Russel, *Mysticism and Logic*, Unwin Books, London, 1970

2.1 Choice of subject

An interest in the area of Human Resources Management (HRM) is common to both of us (= the authors of this paper) and therefore served as a starting point for the topic search. Newspapers, magazines and HRM related websites as well as scholarly articles proved fruitful in the subject 'hunt'. The WLB has currently become an important field, which is crucial for companies' HR specialists to take into account when taking care of their employees. Moreover, managers are a specific part of the workforce that is affected the most by the lack of leisure, time for family and work-life imbalance.

We both have met people working on management positions that suffer from lack of leisure time, work overload and that are not satisfied with their jobs even though their salary is considerably high. Therefore, the salary is obviously not the only motivation tool that influences the job satisfaction and employees' well-being. Research in human resources management has proved that what employees value besides salary, are things such as having a meaningful job, working in a pleasant environment as well as receiving more tangible benefits in terms of meal tickets or discounts for sports and cultural events. *"Being rewarded quickly for good performance, having the option to work at home, and receiving continual training are a few things that employees want, and that HR should be poised to give"* (Bottos, 2006, p. 22).

Even though the WLB has frequently been discussed in books and research articles, there is little research on the work-life balance of managers and on the fit between the companies' WLB policies and the real needs of managers. So far, the research on WLB issues has mainly focused on females, however recently, the issue has started to extend its boundaries and focus on the whole workforce.

As mentioned in the introduction, Sweden is a suitable country for conducting a research on the WLB topic due to the Swedish national values of commitment to, and time with, family and community, combined with concern for a healthy environment (Maxwell, 2005, p. 184). Moreover, the gender equality contributes to the fact that both men and women have the better possibilities to actively participate in working as well as family life than in other European countries.

2.2 Preconceptions

Albert Einstein once said that *"it is easier to disintegrate an atom than one's prejudice"*. Preconceptions and prejudices are always present in researchers' mind even if researchers may try to get rid of them and claim that they do not have any. Our hereditary characteristics, previous life experience, education, as well as personal views about the world predetermine us to behave in a certain manner. However, one might argue that without any preconceptions, the research results would be less creative and less fruitful due to the fact that people with similar patterns of thought would lead their research in similar ways and therefore would come to similar conclusions. Therefore, we believe that a 'healthy' amount of a researcher's bias brings creativity and diversity into the research (especially in terms of the research topic definition). However, this does not mean that the results should not be objective. Based on merely what we think without theoretical and/or empirical evidence for it, we cannot make credible conclusions. In other words, we cannot exceed the boundary and get above the

'healthy' amount of a researcher's bias. According to Gould (1980b, in Remenyi, et al., 1998):

"Science is not an objective, truth directed machine, but a quintessentially human activity, affected by passion, hopes, and cultural biases. Cultural traditions of thought strongly influence scientific theories" (p. 28).

In the following text, the theoretical and empirical methodology of our research is described. It should be noted, that even though they are handled separately, they constitute an overall methodological approach and are intimately interconnected. *"It is not possible to be an empiricist without having a thorough understanding of the theoretical issues surrounding the subject which will be studied, and about which evidence will be collected"* (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 32)

2.3 Theoretical methodology

2.3.1 Research perspective

This study applies a managerial perspective of regarding situations, in particular the human resources management one. Awareness in the development of a perspective on the nature and scope of different research philosophies and approaches is apparent in the purpose of this study based on which further investigation is designed and conducted. If we look at the issue in more detail, two sub-perspectives, which are reflected in the objectives of this study, can be perceived. First, the organizational (human resources department) perspective and second, the perspective of individual higher managers is being identified throughout the theoretical as well as empirical data collection and applied in further analysis.

2.3.2 Research philosophy

"There are at least three philosophical questions that should be addressed at the outset of the research. These are: Why research? What to research? and How to research?" (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 23). The authors also add that two additional questions could be asked: Where to research? and When to research?. Although these questions are of lesser philosophical importance, they still deserve attention. (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 24)

The answer to the first question – why research? – is rather obvious. As students of a Master's programme in Management we are required to write a master thesis, which is a research undertaking that aims at adding something of value to the body of accumulated knowledge.

What to research? is a much more difficult question to answer. The management field of study and common interests of both authors in HRM predetermined the ground for the topic quest. The next steps are described in more detail in the rest of the research methodology chapter as well as throughout the whole thesis. To summarize how we came to the work-life balance topic in brief, we can say that through carefully observing the world surrounding us as well as reading, reading and again reading. It is necessary to mention, that the question Where to research? also influenced the choice of the research topic. The money and time constraints played a significant role in this matter. Therefore, due to the above mentioned limitations, we have decided to conduct our empirical research in Sweden, in particular within organizations settled in Umeå. Remenyi et al. (1998) suggest that:

"Since masters and doctoral students frequently have limited time and money, a relatively modest project should be undertaken. This does not detract from the notion that the research should deliver material value, resulting in a new way of looking at a problem. It is important for the newcomer to research to understand that a relatively small project can lead to rich insights and thus make a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge" (p.27).

Due to the fact that the topic researched should be contemporary and the research results should contribute to the body of knowledge, the answer to the question When to research? is self-evident and does not need to be further analyzed.

The most demanding is to find response to the last philosophical enquiry – How to research?. A researcher has to think about this issue not only before the actual research undertaking, but throughout the whole research process. “*It is sometimes described as a voyage of discovery during which the researcher learns much about the subject being researched, and may even learn something of him or herself*” (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 27). The answers to the How to research? question will be provided throughout the next parts of the methodology section, in particular in the following – research approach – one.

2.3.3 Research approach

“*The approach to phenomenology unfolds as the research proceeds*” (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 35). This is exactly the case of this study. In the beginning, it was not apparent which way we will ‘march’. Only when the final topic was agreed upon and narrowed down to final research question, the clear research approach has stood out. First of all, it should be noted that the terminology in phenomenology is ambiguous and that most of the researchers use different names and words when describing similar research strategies and approaches. Within the following text, the term phenomenology is used as interchangeable term with non-positivism, interpretivism as well as hermeneutics.

“Humans are not ‘objects’, and are subject to many influences on behaviour, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes that positivists would reject as irrelevant and belonging to the realms of metaphysics” (Crossan, 2003, p. 51). An underlying assumption of the positivistic approach is the assumption that the researcher is independent of and neither influences, nor is influenced by the subject of the research. Moreover, positivism emphasizes quantifiable observations that lend themselves to statistical analysis. It can also be argued that the positivists apply a reductionist approach that by its very nature leads to simplifications of the reality in which the researched objects exist and thus the most interesting factors may be excluded by this approach. (Remenyi et al., 1998)

In recent years, positivism has faced increasing critique because the data it yields only provide a superficial view of the examined phenomenon and often does not discover their meaning (see for example Crossan, 2003; Remenyi et al., 1998; Saunders et al., 1997). In this study, we might apply a phenomenological approach – which is in comparison to positivism holistic and focuses on the meanings that research subjects attach to social phenomena; an attempt by the researcher to understand what is happening and why it is happening. In the introductory part of our study we state that we would like to break through the surface and introduce debate on the complex and profound issues faced by today’s managers and their employers in terms of work-life balance, job satisfaction and overall well-being. In the 21st century, positivism, especially in the social sciences, is not regarded as an approach that will lead to interesting or profound insights into complex problems especially in the field of business and management studies (Remenyi et al. 1998, p. 33). We seek to explore and increase understanding about the factors that influence higher managers, i.e. our research question and objectives straight out irradiate the interpretivist approach (or in theological terms – hermeneutic approach) adopted in this study. This statement is further supported by Remenyi et al. who state that “*to cope with the problems of people and organizations it is necessary to go beyond positivism and use a phenomenological approach to research*” (p. 95).

Even though the phenomenological approach is often criticized for its inappropriateness to generalize, we could argue by referring to Remenyi et al. (1998) that both positivist and phenomenological studies need to be replicated before any generalizations can be made.

Nevertheless, we are aware that it is more difficult to replicate holistic studies than the ones undertaking positivist approach and therefore possibility to generalize them is seen as much more problematic (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 36). Moreover, we agree with Remenyi et al. (1998) that “*it is generally of little interest to the phenomenologist that his or her work will not lead to law-like generalizations in the same sense as that of the positivist*” (p. 35).

2.3.4 Information search

First, the search for published research on the topic of work-life balance, job satisfaction, well-being and related issues was conducted in order to gather solid base for our literature review. The articles for this review were determined through search in the following databases: *ProQuest*, *Business Source Premier*, *ScienceDirect*, and *Wiley InterScience*; e-journals publishers: *Emerald Fulltext*, *Oxford Journals*, *Sage Journal Online*; and search engines: *Google* and *Google Scholar*. We used the following keywords and collocations during the relevant literature search (in alphabetical order): benefits, free time, governmental factors, human resources, human resources management, individual factors, job satisfaction, leisure, leisure time, life satisfaction, managers, organizational factors, overall well-being, rewards, spare time, well-being, work-family balance, work-life balance, work-life issues, work-life balance theories. Various combinations of these words were also used in order to reveal the most relevant publications. Moreover, before the actual search we have identified several criteria for our search. We only sought for peer reviewed articles, available in full-text, published no earlier than 2000. However, we were forced to alter the last condition during the search as some of the publications that came out before 2000 were necessary to be used – either because there was not any more recent publications on the topic available or because they were highly appreciated by contemporary research and highly relevant for the purpose of our study. Also, we refer to several books in our study, which were found through Swedish library systems ALBUM and LIBRIS using the keywords. Some of the books and articles were also found in the reference lists of other publications and then sought for through some of the ways mentioned above.

We have found many publications dealing with the work-life balance issue in general – describing what it is who it concerns and what was the development over the past decade. Much of the literature handles the topic on the level of families, from the point of view of women or as cross-national comparisons. However, we have only found a handful of articles that would examine the issues facing the higher management.

2.3.5 Criticism of the secondary sources

In some parts of our study, we refer to websites. Most of the websites belong to academic or professional institutions such as universities, governmental and professional bodies, and well-known organizations. In case we use other websites, which could possibly contain unreliable information, we do so with awareness of that and always support this argumentation by another, more reliable resource(s). Furthermore, these so called unreliable information sources are not further used in later parts of the study; they have been applied in the theoretical framework as additional sources just to bring more angles to the matter in question. In one case, we used the Wikipedia.org website – this reference is supported by other, academic sources and thus verified. We would also like to mention that throughout the years of existence of this free Internet encyclopedia, its contents has rapidly improved and it has not been considered a forbidden source of information for academic studies anymore.

2.4 Empirical methodology

2.4.1 Collection of primary data

Our empirical material is based on qualitative data evidence. This decision was made by taking into consideration our research approach. As applying a hermeneutic point of view, which advocates understanding and explaining of human behaviour or business phenomena (Hair, Money, Samouel & Page 2007, p. 211), the use of a qualitative method appeared as the most suitable and beneficial option to conducting our research. Quantitative data collection would not have provided us with the same empirical findings that we achieved by using the qualitative approach.

“There are two broad approaches to qualitative data collection – observation and interviews” (Hair et al. 2007, p. 193). As the purpose of our research was to get a deeper understanding why something happens rather than to examine the behaviour of people or events, which is typical for observation, the appropriate approach for us was to interview people. (Hair et al. 2007, p. 193)

A basic framework of questionnaire and a possibility to ask additional, more accurate questions were set as the preconditions when selecting the interview method. Based on this, we experienced the semi-structured interview as an appropriate way to carry out our study; by choosing this method we made sure that the same, important questions for our research were asked from every interviewee, and that we had our freedom to exercise further following up questions. This method is commonly used in non-positivist research. (cf. Remenyi et al. 1998, p. 111; Hair et al., 2007, p. 197) Even though we chose to have a semi-structured questionnaire, we argue that our way of interviewing is leaning towards in-depth interviews. The questioning was carried out by stating mainly open questions, by which our purpose was to encourage the interviewees to talk freely and provide extensive and developmental answers. (Saunders et al., 1997, p. 226)

2.4.2 Selection Frame

“Ideally the research would like to collect data from all members of a population under investigation. This is known as census” (Hair et al. 2007, p. 170). However, census was not ideal or feasible in our case as the aim of our research was not strive for a large, general overview but instead, to get a better understanding of specific and carefully selected population, and focus on that information in a deeper manner.

We experienced Sweden, a European welfare state, as a great country to carry out our study in. The fact that both authors are studying at the Business School of Umeå influenced the decision of choosing the companies for the study inside the city of Umeå. Taking into consideration the differences between industries, we decided to choose the organizations from different fields. Even though our aim is not to compare the explored organizations, we chose them in order to capture as representative sample of the structure of businesses in Umeå as possible. Furthermore, in so doing we believed to gain information about possible differences or similarities in terms of working environment and conditions between industries and sectors.

By assessing what the companies do and what the employees think we can help other companies realize how the work-life balance issues could possibly be approached in their HR policies. Even though qualitative studies are often criticized due to their low generalizability, we believe that this thesis contributes to the researched matter by providing with a diversified view (2 public, 2 private, 4 HR managers, 8 managers of which 4 women and 4 men) on how work-life balance is approached by different quarters.

2.4.3 Sampling method

“Traditional sampling methods can be divided into two broad categories: probability and non-probability” (Hair et al. 2007, p. 174). We used non-probability sampling in our study as it is typical for qualitative research, and generally used in exploratory research. Furthermore, non-probability sampling is based on some sort of subjective assessment of the sample. (Remenyi et al. 1998, p. 193)

Our sampling technique consisted of elements of convenience -, judgement - and snowball sampling. In terms of convenience sampling, it was important for us, as students, to carry out the interviews in the city we currently live in order to minimize the costs. Convenience sampling was also chosen due to its speed. While selecting the companies (and two interviewees; explained below) for the study we used judgement sampling. (Remenyi et al. 1998, p. 193); as there are many organizations in Umeå that would have been potential for our study we used our own judgement in selecting the appropriate organizations. We narrowed our study to concern four organizations located in Umeå. We are aware that this sample is not statistically representative of the population; however, it represents a target population which has been selected with a specific purpose in mind and, which is important for our study. It is also important to point out that the organizations that became selected were our primary choices: every organization we called agreed to participate. We made a direct contact with the HR managers in every company. While choosing the members of higher management we used an informant (HR manager) in helping us to find an individual with useful information in the issue being researched. This is typical procedure for snowball sampling. (Remenyi et al. 1998, p. 193-194). In one organization we selected two interviewees ourselves by using our own judgement (referred above).

2.4.4 Participants

After the organizations were chosen we started selecting of individuals, who fulfil the requirements for our study. In every organization we chose one human resource manager and two members of higher management. The contact details of HR managers were received while visiting or calling to the organization for the first time. In terms of HR managers no further selection was needed to make.

With members of higher management we refer to the heads of the departments or comparable. These individuals were selected by the help of HR managers; HR managers provided us with the contact details of persons, who would fit to our study, after which we contacted them personally by an e-mail. In one case we chose the managers ourselves (as stated above). The gender equality was also taken into account while selecting the members of higher management. Concerning this matter our requirement was that one of the higher managers is woman and the other one is men; gender is closely related to the debate of work-life balance and we believed this procedure to provide us with important information about the differences, if any, between the genders.

As the aim of us was not to draw any general conclusions but rather gain knowledge by interviewing a sample of relevant individuals, we argue that four organizations with 12 interviewees are enough for our empirical material. All the companies and the participants are anonymous. To make it more agreeable for reader to follow our empirical and analysis parts, we have used code names for the participants instead of e.g. numbers.

2.4.5 Qualitative questionnaire design

We created two qualitative questionnaires, one for the interviews with the HR managers and the other one with the members of higher management. Both questionnaires were made out by basing them on research question and objectives as well as the theoretical framework.

The questionnaire for HR managers consists of questions about company's contemporary human resource policy, recent changes and future trends in terms of human resource issues. The issues concerning the reward and benefit system, work-life balance, well-being and job satisfaction were also handled (see the Appendix A). In case of members of higher management the questionnaire started with personal background information. The following questions concerned managers' general expectations towards working environment and conditions, and more specific work related questions in terms of their current position and employer. Also job satisfaction factors were included. Furthermore, some direct questions about work-life balance issue were stated (see the Appendix B).

We provided the questionnaires by having in mind the importance of the time that it would take to complete an interview. As we considered one hour to be a proper length for interview with HR managers we created a questionnaire with 12 questions. The questions were divided into different subject areas and in many cases one question included additional sub questions. With the members of higher management the time was limited to forty-five minutes. The questionnaire consists of the background information -questions (six brief questions) and 32 other questions, few of which had sub-questions.

The length of both questionnaires was planned so that in addition to ready-made questions it was possible to state some following up questions within the time which was reserved for interview.

2.4.6 Interview process

After we had been in contact with HR managers and agreed about their participation, we sent them an e-mail with further information. More closely, the purpose of the e-mail was to ensure that the respondents have understood the aim of our study and further, to provide them with information in terms of upcoming interview. The e-mail was also an initiative in setting up an interview time.

The interviews took place in the interviewee's office at his/her work place. We believe that by having the interview in the respondent's own office, more comfortable and relaxed atmosphere was created. (Hair et al. 2007, p. 196) The interview guide was not sent to the interviewee in advance; it was given at the interview moment. In so doing we wanted to make sure that the respondents are not able to prepare for the interview but will come up with spontaneous answers. By stating some overlapping questions we ensured that the interviewees adhere to their views. While interviews with HR managers took about one hour, the interviews with members of higher management varied from approximately thirty minutes to forty-five minutes. No disturbing moments occurred during the interviews. Every interview was recorded, and transcribed afterwards. We felt this procedure as necessary in order to get all the important information for further use. (Remenyi et al. 1998, p. 193-194) All the interviews were conducted in English, which was not the native language of either interviewers or interviewees. Nevertheless, the level of English knowledge was generally high and therefore none of the interviews needed to be rejected.

Besides the interviews, members of higher management were asked to fill out a job satisfaction -form (see the Appendix C), which was sent them afterwards by e-mail. The form consists of twenty-one job satisfaction factors which respondents were supposed to rank from one, most preferable, to twenty-one. The job satisfaction factors were taken from the article "*Find what workers want*" written by Pamela Babcock. We are aware that this job satisfaction factors form could be considered as quantitative data collection procedure. However, we assume it only as complementary to our interview guides and furthermore the information collected through them was not analyzed in a quantitative way. The form was not

sent to HR managers because we felt that they should know what their employees expect and the form would be suggestive.

2.4.7 Criticism of primary Sources

There is always a risk that respondents put themselves in a more favourable light. (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 229-230) However, we believe that in our case this risk was relative minimal. First of all, all the participants were aware of the interview process as whole and about the fact that we are going to hear the both sides, i.e. representative of employer and employees: HR managers were conscious that we will interview two members of higher managers and in contrary, the higher managers knew that an interview with the HR manager has taken place already in early base. In addition, by stating partly the same questions to HR managers and the members of higher management we ensure that if some distinctions between the respondents in the same organization occurred, we would notice them. Furthermore, the questions stated to members of higher management were mostly about the person's own working and living experiences and we would have observed if some hesitation in terms of answering had happened. The topic of our research is very up-to-date and as we see it, the interest towards the subject was genuine by respondents. In addition, all the organizations with the interviewees are anonymous, which further gave the respondents security to speak openly. Based on these statements, we believe that we received honest and reliable answers from all interviewees.

3 Theoretical framework

“A day’s work is a day’s work, neither more nor less, and the man who does it needs a day’s sustenance, a night’s repose and due leisure, whether he be painter or ploughman.”

George Bernard Shaw, Irish writer

3.1 What is work-life balance?

3.1.1 Work and leisure

The concepts of work and leisure are the key factors in discussion of work-life balance (WLB) issue. As boundaries between work and leisure have partly blurred during the last years, it has become more difficult to make a clear division between these two concepts. For example the Internet has made it possible to work at home or on the contrary to use it for leisure purposes at work. This means that work or leisure is no longer tied up with certain location. In many cases the level of motivation, intentions or feelings of satisfaction of an individual defines whether the activity is seen as work or leisure. (Lewis, 2003, p. 344)

Work can be paid or unpaid and it is often connected to obligate time. Leisure is defined as the exact opposite of work. It is non-obligate time, during which persons are free to make decisions about how to spend their spare time. (Lewis, 2003, p. 344) However, there is also a third factor, which has drawn up the discussion. It is called caring work and it is mainly related to women. (Perrons, 2000, p. 1) Women with family connections have often less free time than men with family ties as women need to take care of obligations in terms of children and household in general. *“Other definitions focus on psychological meanings and perspectives, for example, leisure activities are often defined in terms of state of mind, enjoyment and opportunities for self-expression”* (Lewis, 2003, p. 345). It is generally believed that more positive experiences are felt during the leisure time than work. Studies, which have been made concerning well-being and enjoyment, though give other results. They have shown that well-being and feelings of enjoyment are related to employment. (Lewis, 2003, p. 345) The above text suggests that the issue of work and leisure can be approached from many perspectives - the direction of the issue depends on the core words such as work, leisure, caring work, or psychological issues, which have been seen as central at the time.

3.1.2 Definition of work-life balance

“When shall we live if not now?”

“As a tale, so is life: not how long it is, but how good it is, is what matters.”

“That part of life that we really live is short.”

“Life, if thou knowest how to use it, is long enough.”

The above quotes of the Roman philosopher Seneca, light up the question behind the issue of WLB. They lead us to think about the fundamental questions of life. Albeit a bit philosophical, they are matters, which are playing a big role in an individual’s decisions while choosing the way of his/her living. The issue is not which components is your life constructed from, it is rather that how have you managed to organize the balance between these elements. (Bird, 2003)

Jim Bird (2003), the founder and CEO of WorkLifeBalance.com and a worldwide leader in effective time management has stated that the core factors for everybody in finding the WLB are daily achievement and enjoyment; where achievement means an action of accomplishing something (Lexical database for the English language) and enjoyment denotes, besides happiness, the feelings of pride, satisfaction, celebration, love and a sense of well-being.

These are concepts, which deal with questions of ‘why’ and make us to think about the reasons for our actions; why do I want to go to the work today, why do I want to find a new job, why do I want my children to have a good education, why have I decided to get a degree in management? (Bird, 2003)

To be able to understand the concept of WLB, it is reasonable to address the issues WLB is not about. First of all, “*work-life balance does not mean an equal balance*” (Bird, 2003). This means that the purpose of balancing your life is not about sharing the available daily hours in terms of equal number per activity. Furthermore, it should be understood that the best individual WLB is not solid. Quite the contrary, it changes over time depending on the life situation we are living in; today you may be single but in five years maybe a mother or father of two children. The situation is also different if you are starting your career path or planning to retire. Therefore it should be remembered that “*there is no perfect, one-size fits all, balance you should be striving for*” (Bird, 2003).

By the UK’s Department of Trade and Industry, WLB is defined as being “about adjusting working patterns regardless of age, race or gender, [so] everyone can find a rhythm to help them combine work with their other responsibilities or aspirations” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 179). This statement addresses that WLB issue today is concerning each and every of us and is not only limited to women like in the middle of the 1990’s. The issue has become universal. Also, the nature of WLB does not only concern working fewer hours, it has become more multi-faceted. It can be stated to include the following issues:

- how long people work (flexibility in the number of hours worked)
- when people work (flexibility in the arrangement of hours)
- where people work (flexibility in the place of work)
- developing people through training so that they can manage the balance better
- providing back-up support breaks from work (Maxwell, 2005, p. 181).

Moreover, Clark (2000) defines balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (p. 751).

3.1.3 Historical perspective on work-life balance

During the past decades the nature of WLB issue has changed. Initially the work-life issue was seen in terms of work and family. (Lewis, 2003, p. 345); in the 1960-70’s it was mainly conceived as a dilemma of working mothers who needed, besides their work, to take care of raising children. The 1980’s brought about changes: the value and contribution of female employees were acknowledged by some world-known companies, such as Deloitte & Touche, and IBM, and actions in terms of reforming workplace policies and procedures took place. Companies extended their policies to concern maternity leave but also offered possibilities on the areas of employee assistance policies, home-based work and child-care referral. Furthermore, flexitime was taken into question. By the end of the decade the issue of WLB was widened to concern men, families, organizations and their cultures. (Bird, 2006, p. 22)

In the 1990’s the WLB was recognized as an essential issue for everyone. There was no longer any classification: just as women, also men; parents and non-parents as well as singles and couples were all reflected by the same issue. The awareness concerning the work-life issue increased and the effects were perceived for example in job choice behaviour of people; upon job searching people were placing more emphasis on their own work-life issues and employers’ culture. (Bird, 2006, p. 22)

3.2 Approaches to work-life balance

Work and family are generally separate in terms of physical and time presence. Early researchers on WLB treated both systems as independent due to the fact that men traditionally assumed the role of breadwinners while women the role of housewives (see for example Parsons & Bales, 1955). However, during the 1970's, the open-systems theories (e.g. spillover theory, compensation theory) were developed, which hypothesized that events at work affected events at home and the reverse (Clark, 2000). *“These theories and the research evidence that supported them made an important point: work and family life influence each other, and so employers, societies and individuals cannot ignore one sphere without potential peril to the other”* (Clark, 2000, p. 748). Below, an overview of traditional as well as contemporary approaches to the WLB is provided.

3.2.1 Traditional approaches

Typically, five main models are used in order to explain the relationship between work and non-work activities (see e.g. Zedeck & Mosier, 1990; Guest, 2002). *“The models all focus on the individual rather than on the family unit”* (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990, p. 240), which is relevant for the purpose of this study on manager's (individual) WLB. However, Clark (2000) suggests that while most of the traditional approaches assert that the basic relationship between work and family is emotional, her new approach – border theory (see below) argues that this relationship is primarily human.

Spillover theory

A *spillover model* postulates that work micro-system can influence family micro-system in either positive or negative way. This approach presumes that there is a similarity between what occurs in work environment and what occurs in family environment, for example satisfaction or happiness in one area of life may influence satisfaction or happiness in other life domains such as family, leisure, social, health, financial, etc.; i.e. emotions spill-over between the work and non-work systems (see e. g. Hill, Ferris, Märtinson, 2003; Zedeck & Mosier, 1990; Guest, 2002; Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, Lee, 2001; Clark, 2000). *“Research documents that if work-family interactions are rigidly structured in time and space, then spillover in terms of time, energy and behaviour is generally negative. Research also supports the notion that work flexibility, which enables individuals to integrate and overlap work and family responsibilities in time and space, leads to positive spillover and is instrumental in achieving healthy work and family balance”* (Hill et al., 2003, p. 222). Moreover, Zedeck & Mosier (1990) state that job stresses can supplant the potential for positive family interactions while requiring family members to spend their personal resources on helping the worker to manage the stress. Two types of spillover exist: horizontal spillover and vertical spillover (Sirgy et al., 2001).

Horizontal spillover shows how one life domain influences a neighbouring domain. For example, job satisfaction may influence feelings of satisfaction in the family life domain, and vice versa. On the other hand, in order to understand the concept of *vertical spillover*, it is necessary to first understand the concept of domain hierarchy. Individuals rank the life domains in hierarchical order in their minds. At the top of the hierarchy is the most superordinate domain, namely overall life. Feelings in this domain reflect life satisfaction, personal happiness, or subjective well-being. The other important life domains such as family, job, leisure, community, etc. are subordinate to the most superordinate life domain. Satisfaction/dissatisfaction within any of the main life domains ‘spills over’ to the most superordinate domain, therefore influencing overall life satisfaction. Moreover, the vertical spillover can be either bottom-up or top-down. For example, job satisfaction spills over

vertically (bottom-up) affecting overall life satisfaction, whereas the vertical top-down spillover refers to the influence of life satisfaction on a subordinate life domain (e.g. job satisfaction).

However, Guest (2002) argues that even though, high amount of research on spillover exists, as a proposition it is specified in such a general way as to have little value and thus more detailed propositions about the nature, causes and consequences of spillover are needed.

Compensation theory

The second - compensation model - is related to the spillover theory. Compensation model refers to the relationship between/among the work domain and the other (non-work) life domains. This model “*proposes that what may be lacking in one sphere, in terms of demands or satisfactions can be made up in the other*” (Guest, 2002, p. 258). For example, a person may choose to overcome job dissatisfaction by enjoying active participation in community life, thus compensating dissatisfaction in one domain by being satisfied within another domain. This way, the satisfaction in one domain ‘compensates’ for the dissatisfaction in another as the life domains are being counterbalanced according to this theory. The compensation might be either supplemental or reactive. “*Supplemental compensation occurs when desirable experiences, behaviours, and psychological states that are insufficiently present in the work situation are pursued in family activities. Reactive compensation occurs because deprivations experienced in work are made up or compensated for in non-work activities. Resting from fatiguing work or seeking leisure activities after work are examples of this process*” (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990, p. 241).

Segmentation theory

Segmentation theory hypothesizes that every domain functions independently. Therefore, this theory is the antithesis of spillover theory. This theory postulates that work and family environments of an individual do not influence each other and in all cases operate separately. “*The separation in time, space, and function allows the individual to neatly compartmentalize his or her life. The family is seen as the realm of affectivity, intimacy, and significant ascribed relations, whereas the work world is viewed as impersonal, competitive, and instrumental rather than expressive*” (Piotrkowski, 1978 in Zedeck & Mosier, 1990, p. 241). For example, one’s feelings of dissatisfaction with one’s job may be segmented within the job domain, thus preventing these negative feelings from affecting other aspects of one’s personal life (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990, p. 241). Guest (2002) argues that this model appears to be offered as a theoretical possibility rather than one with empirical support.

Instrumental theory

The fourth - instrumental model – suggests that activities in one environment are means to facilitate obtaining things in other environment (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990; Guest, 2002). Guest (2002) cites a traditional example where a worker strives to maximize work outcomes, even at the price of working long hours, in order to be able to buy a car and thus improve family life (or own leisure time).

Conflict theory

The conflict model “proposes that with high levels of demand in all spheres of life, some difficult choices have to be made and some conflicts and possibly some significant overload on an individual occur” (Guest, 2002, p. 259), i.e. satisfaction in one environment entails sacrifices in the other due to the fact the these two environments are incompatible because each of them has own norms and requirements (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990, p. 241). The conflict

model has been recently given particular attention, especially in dual career families (Guest, 2002, p. 259).

All of these models have in common that they merely describe the WLB; however, they do not go deeper into exploring the nature, causes and consequences of balance or imbalance between work and the rest of life. A person must be satisfied with her/his job and feel well inside as well as outside the job in order to be able to harmonize her/his working and personal life. The right balance depends on every individual and is influenced by many factors. Guest (2002) suggests that it might be helpful to make a distinction between objective and subjective indicators. He adds that any objective indicators (e.g. working hours) reflect the subjective social values and that any use of subjective indicators may benefit from some kind of stakeholder analysis. *“In other words what may seem like balance to one individual may not do so to his or her partner or boss”* (Guest, 2002, p. 259). The factors influencing the individual WLB will be addressed in more detail in the following chapters.

3.2.2 Current views and contemporary approaches

“The demand for work-life-balance solutions by employees and managers is expanding at an unprecedented rate. As a result, work-life balance is an increasingly hot topic in boardrooms and government halls today” (Bird, 2006, p. 21). The hasty life style, which is a result of the fast changing world, has made a great amount of people to think the hindmost idea of life. People find themselves living in a world, where struggling between the obligations of work, family and leisure is daily life. The time pressure, which is continuously present, have caused feelings of stress and despair.

When looking at the dilemma of WLB as general, it must be stated that it is still often seen as a one-way approach. This means that companies experience the issue to be more a problem of individuals, which is then influencing organizations. The view that it would be an organizational issue with impacts on individuals has been less recognized. In many companies the amendment actions in terms of WLB have only concentrated on adopting organizational policies, benefits, and procedures. Even though this is helpful, the system is, however, one-sided and lacks the view of the whole problem. One of the core ideas of WLB is that it is a mutual cooperation between the organization and an individual. (Bird, 2006, p. 23) This can be addressed by the following questions: *“What can the organization Do to create a better work-life balance for the individual? What can individual employees and managers do for themselves to create their own best work-life balance?”* (Bird, 2006, p. 23). Below, some of the contemporary approaches to WLB are introduced.

Social identity theory

The social identity theory has not been explicitly used for explaining the issue of work-life balance in the literature so far; however, it is relevant to explain some of the phenomena of individual behaviour in terms of balance between work and private life by this theory. Moreover, many of the approaches to WLB seem to have their roots just in this theory. Social identity theory was developed by Tajfel & Turner in 1979. Even though this theory is not a new one in the psychological field of research, it has not been cited within the WLB field of research so far. However, social identity theory seems to be relevant and research in work-life (work-family) balance might be enriched by this theory. Different social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act on basis of his personal, family or national ‘level of self’ (Turner et al., 1987). Social identity theory is a theoretical perspective on the relationship between self-concept (individual level) and group behaviour (work, family, community, and friends). *“The basic idea of social identity theory is the social category within which one falls and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of defining characteristics of the category – a self-definition that is a part of the self-concept”* (Hogg &

Terry, 2001, p.3). Every individual has a variety of social identities and he/she alternates them based on where and with whom he is in a particular time. These identities are called multiple identities (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001, p. 31). Multiple identities can take different forms, from which the nested identities and cross-cutting identities are relevant for the research on work-life balance. These two concepts are analyzed in the following text.

Nested identities in work-life balance context

Personal identity – the portable self, refers to self-knowledge that derives from the individual's unique attributes. Personal identity, which is salient under every condition, is a lowest level identity in the nested identities hierarchy ladder (e.g. Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). “*Certain identities are nested or embedded within others*” (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001, p. 32). Lower level nested identities differ from higher level nested identities in terms of their relative higher salience (i.e. greater subjective importance and situational relevance), exclusivity, concreteness and relevance. Depending on the context, besides the personal identity, other – higher level – identities become salient. For example, in work settings, the sequence of embedded identities may be as follows (see Ashforth & Johnson for further reference):

Personal identity → Job → Workgroup → Department → Division → Organization

Similarly, in non-work settings, higher order identities include the lower order ones. Such as in work settings, some individuals never experience salience of the higher order identities – one's thinking might be limited and therefore just as commitment of an employee to the whole organization is difficult to achieve, it is not easy to enact the community level identity of individual. The possible order of non-work identities might be as follows:

Personal identity → Family → Relatives and friends → Interest groups → Community

Within the family identity, several other identities are embedded due to the fact that different identity exists between every family member. Also, the order of non-work identities is highly personalized and differs from individual to individual, which is compliant with Ashforth & Johnson's (2001) argument that organizational nested identities vary in organization-specificity.

The salience of particular identities depends on individual and organizational contexts, and also on subjective importance of an identity for individuals. In case an identity is perceived to be extremely subjectively important, it is likely that it will remain chronically salient, which will make the salience shifts infrequent (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001, p. 38). For example, a manager that has family problems is likely to invoke the family identity during the work, even at meetings, i.e. at socially inappropriate times (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001, p. 38).

Cross-cutting identities in work-life balance context

Ashforth & Johnson (2001) argue that nested identities are connected to formal social categories, whereas the cross-cutting identities are attached to categories that are either formal or informal. Also, cross-cutting identities are similar to lower order identities in that they to be relatively exclusive, concrete and proximal. In the work ↔ non-work settings, the work related nested identities could be considered cross-cutting non-work identities and vice versa.

“Shifts in salience between social identities, whether nested or cross-cutting, are facilitated by overlap in identity content, generalization of identification, and transition scripts” (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001, p. 47). However, in contemporary organizational environments, which become more and more complex and organic, identities may be salient simultaneously. The simultaneous existence of multiple identities may lead to conflicting situations between them and depending on which identity will prevail in individual's mind, it may influence his/her

overall well-being. However, it is likely that depending on the actual environment, the contextually irrelevant social identity will become more salient. As an example, we can use a manager that is overloaded with work tasks, and therefore has not enough time to spend time with his partner and family. At home, he thinks about work and on the other hand, at work, his thoughts are running away from work tasks and the family identity prevails. This situation, in which multiple conflicting identities are salient, does not bring any good to any of the parties concerned. This further influences his/her job satisfaction as well as personal well-being. This stage could be possibly called a vicious circle of work-life balance.

Border theory

The border theory is a new approach to WLB issues. Clark (2000) argues that even though the work and family system differ from each other, they are interconnected and individuals often manage to integrate them to certain degree. People shape their environments, and in turn, they are shaped by them; *“it is this very contradiction of determining and being determined by our work and home environments that makes work/family balance one of the most challenging concepts in the study of work and the study of families”* (Clark, 2000, p. 748). The author of border theory, Sue Campbell Clark, states that work-family border theory attempts to explain a complex interaction between border-crossers and their work and family lives, to predict when conflict will occur, and give a framework for attaining balance. This theory opens up an interesting analysis of the nature of borders, their permeability, the ease with which they can be managed or moved and so on (Guest, 2002, p. 259). Also, it brings new insights about the existence of borders for those utilising modern forms of work such as the use of new technologies in order to work from home rather than in the traditional office. According to Clark (2000), traditional spillover and compensation theories do not explain under what conditions spillover or compensation would function and therefore she developed the border theory in order to overcome the limitations in current approaches to work-life balance. *“Unlike spillover and compensation theories, which focus on the emotional linkages at the work-family boundary, Clark’s theory addresses how these boundaries divide the times, places, and people that are associated with work versus family”* (Desrochers, Hilton & Larwood, 2005, p. 444).

Borders are referred to as *“lines of demarcation between domains, defining the point at which domain-relevant behaviour begins or ends.”* (Clark, 2000, p. 756). The borders can be physical (e. g. walls, define *where* domain-relevant behaviour takes place), temporal (e.g. work hours, divide *when* work is done from when family responsibilities can be pursued), or psychological (rules created by individuals that dictate when thinking patterns, behaviour patterns and emotions are appropriate for one domain but not the other). Three attributes characterize the borders: permeability (the degree to which elements from other domains may enter a domain), flexibility (the extent to which a border may contract or expand, depending on the demands of one domain or the other) and blending (occurs when high degree of permeability and flexibility is present near the border; means ‘mixing’ of the domains borders). These three border qualities combine and thus indicate the border strength. Strong borders are characterized by high impermeability, high inflexibility and by not permitting blending. (Clark, 2000) On the other hand, borders that enable permeations, are flexible and facilitate blending are weak. Depending on the border strength, Clark proposes that the WLB is facilitated either, when domains are similar and borders weak or, when domains are different and borders strong. Below, the attributes of individuals who cross the border between domains are dealt with.

“People are border-crossers who make daily transitions between two worlds – the world of work and the world of family” (Clark, 2001, p. 748). The border-crossers are defined by border theory according to their peripherality or centrality in work and/or family domain. The

central border-crossers are determined in terms of two key elements: influence and identification. Influence, which is indicated by their competence, affiliation with other central members and internalization of the domain's culture and values, gives them power to negotiate and make changes to the domain and its borders. Clark (2000) suggests that *"if being a central participant gives a person more choices, then balance between work and home is more easily attained"* (p. 759). The second dimension of central participants is identification with domain responsibilities. *"When individuals internalize domain values and when their identity is closely tied with their membership in the domain, their motivation to manage borders and domains increases"* (Clark, 2000, p. 760). According to Clark (2000) identification could be defined as *"whether individuals find meaning in their responsibilities and find that their responsibilities mesh with their self-concept"* (p. 760), which makes it clear that *"identification and meaning creation at work and at home can add to, rather than detract from, individuals' attempts to improve balance"* (p. 760). Moreover, Clark states that examples of lack of identification with family and work and their fatal effects on balance between work and family are all too common (e.g. lack of job identification, strain to find meaning in marriage etc.).

The border theory can give a theoretical framework that is missing from most research on work-family balance by identifying both why conflict exists and providing a framework for individuals and organizations to encourage better balance between work and families. This can be done by organizations as well as individuals. *"According to the theory, a more flexible workplace should be more like employees' homes in terms of values and purpose"* (Clark, 2000, p. 765). Many of the WLB policies, flexible working arrangements and other tools supporting the WLB issue have not managed to facilitate the balance of employees, due to the fact *"that many organizations have created flexible work policies to serve their own interests, and not those of employees and families"* (Clark, 2000, p. 765). In order to succeed, the organizational values and cultures need to be changed as well according to Clark (2000). Besides the companies, there are individual tools such as communication and central participation that can be used to improve the WLB.

Psychology of individual differences

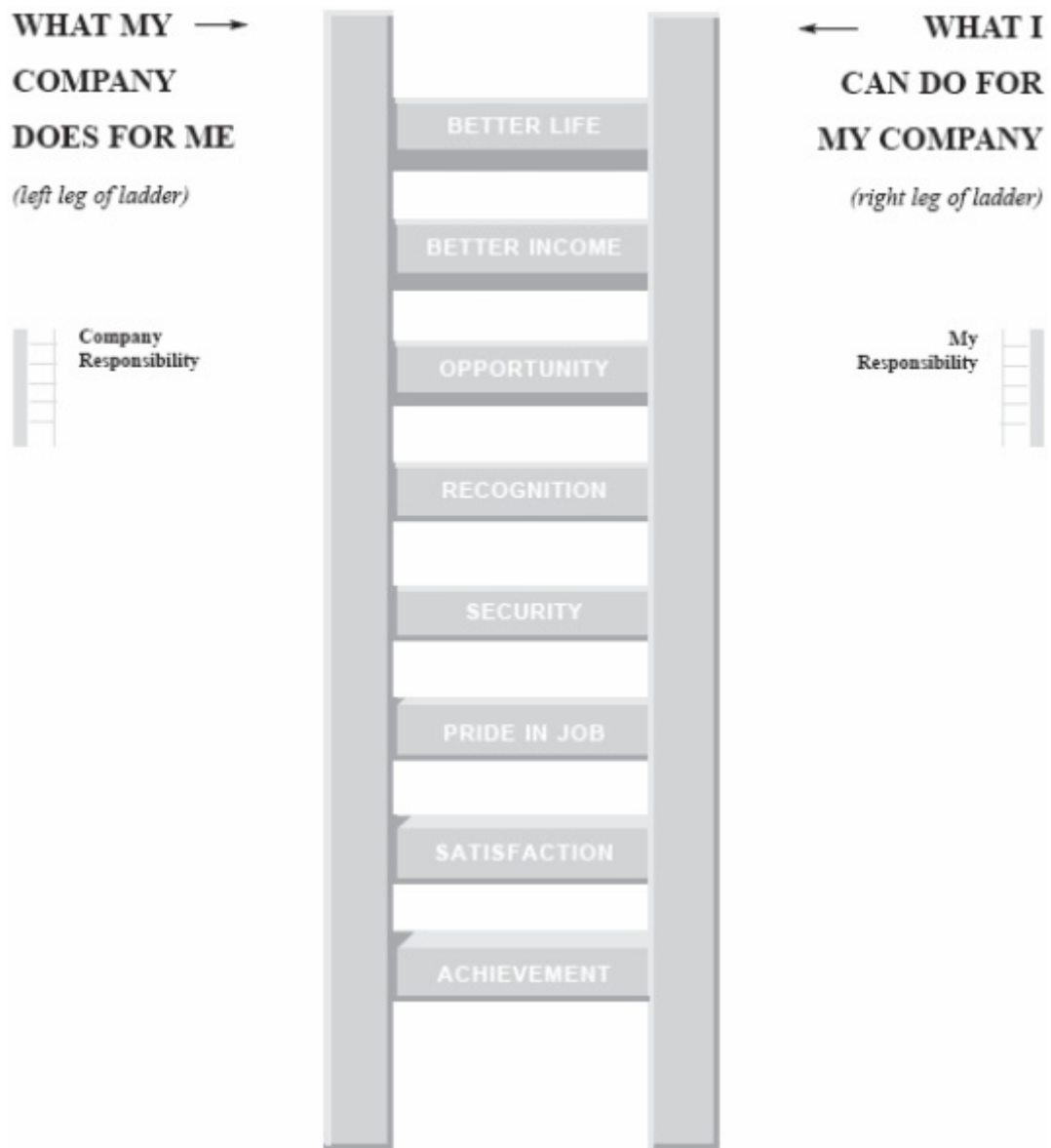
This approach may be also fruitful for research of WLB due to the fact that studying aspects of different personality types can *"enhance our understanding of perceptions of balance"* (Guest, 2002, p. 260). However, the research has only reached its groundwork so far. Guest (2002) suggests that even though this area of research has to be developed considerably, it stresses the importance of taking into account individual differences in establishing what is actually meant by balance.

Work-life balance ladder

Last, the work-life balance ladder developed by Bird (2006), which is the most 'practically' oriented approach to WLB from the above mentioned ones, is introduced.

It is said that there are two sides for every story; same goes for WLB. The Figure 1 below addresses what is meant by the two legs of WLB ladder. The left leg of ladder deals with the issues concerning the organization's point of view: what is an organization providing for its employees and what are the responsibilities of a company in terms of this matter. The right leg of the ladder concerns individual's responsibilities; what an individual does for him/herself and for the company he/she is working for. Both legs are necessary for the work-life balance and will be further handled below.

Figure 1: Driving Performance Through Personal Accountability & Commitment



Source: Bird, 2006

The left leg of ladder shows the issues that companies should take into account in their policies in terms of WLB. As mentioned above, the WLB has gained much momentum in recent years and therefore caused to companies new areas to deal with. By providing WLB supportive policies and benefits, companies ensure that the external issues directing at their workforce are made more manageable; on that account employees can also better concentrate on their jobs, and furthermore enjoy a pleasant working environment and conditions. The extent to which companies provide WLB initiatives depends much on their operational and budget requirements. While some companies need to carefully select what they can provide for their employees, some of the organizations offer the whole range of benefits such as flexible working hours, teleworking at home, child- and/or elder-care, employee assistance policies, job-sharing, in-house stores/services, gym subsidies etc. Companies obtaining work-life balance issues support their workforce, as individuals, to do a good job while they also encourage them to have a balanced life. (Bird, 2006)

On the right side of the ladder, the individual's issues are faced. As work-life balance is different for every human being, it should also be everybody's own responsibility to foster the balance of his/her life. However, to be able to do this, companies need to contribute the matter by providing for example training and education. By doing this, they ensure that their employees have the right tools and knowledge to deal with in terms of creating more value and balance for themselves every day, and also accountability for their performance and output. Also, if the job satisfaction level of employees is sufficient, the commitment and productivity of individuals will most probably reach more desirable extensions. (Bird, 2006)

3.3 Factors influencing work-life balance of an individual

Every individual is different and therefore it depends on individual factors and one's feelings, attitudes and personality what kind of impacts and to what extent will one's work life have on one's private life. Moreover, organizational factors have a big impact on individuals as well. In Table 1, we present a model taken from Guest (2002) that lists nature, causes and consequences of work-life balance. We take this model as default point for our further research, however, in our approach; the governmental factors are included as well as they significantly influence both organizations and individual in terms of the extent to which they support the WLB issues.

Figure 2: The nature, causes and consequences of work-life imbalances

<i>Determinants</i>	<i>Nature of the balance</i>	<i>Consequences/impact</i>
Organizational factors	Subjective indicators	
Demands of work	Balance – emphasis	Work satisfaction
Culture of work	equally on home and work	Life satisfaction
Demands of home	Balance – home central	Mental health/well-being
Culture of home	Balance – work central	Stress/illness
Individual factors	Spillover and/or	Behaviour/performance at work
Work orientation	interference of work	Behaviour/performance at home
Personality	to home	
Energy	Spillover and/or	
Personal control and coping	interference of home	Impact on others at work
Gender	to work	Impact on others at home
Age	Objective indicators	
Life and career stage	Hours of work	
	“Free” time	
	Family roles	

Source: Guest, 2002

On the individual level, several factors determine the nature of balance and consequences of imbalances. Variety of factors influences what is most beneficial for an individual in terms of either division or integration of work and life domains. A person must be satisfied with her/his job and feel well inside as well as outside the job in order to be able to harmonize her/his working and personal life. However, the right balance depends on every individual who is influenced by many factors, which are described in more detailed way below.

3.3.1 Individual factors

- age and life and career stage, energy; personality type; ability to self-control, self-discipline and time management skills; gender

Age and life and career stage

With increasing age, the skills of people in terms of balancing work and private life issues improve. This might be due to the fact that people learn how to managing their time more effectively. Also, their time dedicated to work is decreasing with increasing age. Older employees are better able to set boundaries between work and non-work activities and to stop thinking about their work when they come home. However, younger workers might have problems in the rest of the factors, due to their age and lack of skills to make a division between work and non-work.

Energy

Overtired and unproductive employees are not desirable for any employers. In terms of competitiveness, employers need to have a workforce which is energetic, satisfied and willing

to pursue for common goals. According to Guest (2003), “*energy levels are often ignored but in the context of high demand need to be taken explicitly into account. They maybe linked to issues of personal control, including locus of control and capacity for coping with pressures of competing demands*” (p. 266). Bird (2006, p. 21) has stated that “*commitment to the organization’s objectives and clients’ needs rises in direct proportion to the perception that the organization is committed to both the work and life success of each individual*”. This can also be interpreted in a way that the level of which employer shows understanding and respect for employees’ private life is seen highly important by employees. Based on the study of the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warfick and IFF Research Ltd. (Hogarth et al. 2001, in Torrington, Hall and Taylor, 2005, p. 745), 91 per cent of employees and 96 per cent of employees felt that people work better when they can balance their work with other aspects of their lives. Even though individuals need a job to keep their self-esteem high, stimulates from other parts of the life are needed as well. Kodz et al. (2002, in Torrington 2005, p. 745) has stressed that satisfaction outside work may enhance employees’ contribution to work.

Personality

The extent to which family or work is a central life interest influences the perceptions of balance of every individual. Aspects of personality including the need for achievement and propensity for work involvement belong among important individual factors (Guest, 2002, p. 266).

Self-discipline, personal control, time management skills

Globalization has also dispersed the division of work and life. The business platform which allows working around the clock has direct impact on one’s work and personal life. On the other hand, it provides a great amount of new possibilities for workers, especially for highly educated workforce. However, in many cases it has negative consequences on workers’ time and space by stifling the prior flexibility. It has been argued that some people, who very much enjoy their work, spend their time working because they experience the work as leisure time. Though, a great number of working tasks might cause feelings of depression and tiredness, which further reduces the energy level of workers. It is widely acknowledged that long working hours have negative effects on employees’ productivity but so have they on employees’ well-being. (Lewis, 2003, p. 343-44)

Gender

The gap between men and women has always existed. In many cases the possibilities for women to participate in working life has been/is difficult due to women’s’ main responsibilities for children. However, over the recent decades some positive changes in order to diminish this gap have happened. In several countries the law now requires employers to take into account in their human resource policies issues such as parental leave, the right to time off for family emergencies, the right to request flexible working etc. In terms of managers, the majority of management positions tend still to be held by men even though an increase in the number of female managers can be addressed as well – this increasing trend in the number of woman managers is more likely to be continuing in the future. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 85) Concerning the differentials of salary between men and women, there are many barriers to overcome. Even though some progress has been made, there is still quite a long way to the equal pay. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 531)

3.3.2 Factors influencing individuals in higher management positions

Hochschild (1997) states that the myth of the two worlds of work and home as spatially and temporally dislocated worlds is crumbling too: the boundaries are being eroded, especially

home has become porous as work-life seeps into it. “[And] *this is the case particularly for managerial groups*” (Kasper et al., 2005, p. 441).

“*Prior research on the issue shows partly controversial and rather fragmentary findings*” (Kasper et al., 2005, p. 441). As mentioned previously, the research has mainly focused on women and consequences of their increasing presence in professional life so far. Within the topic of work-life balance (also called work-family life or work-family conflict in literature) the issues facing by women in combining family life and successful work is very popular. Most of the previous research emphasizes the impact of imbalance between work and private life on the emotional and physical condition of an individual, which further causes disadvantages to companies due to absenteeism and lower productivity (Cooper & Williams, 1994 in Kasper et al., 2005, p. 442). This study, in line with many of the previous studies, considers balance between work and life to be “*a personal construct loaded with individual meaning, which has been discussed thoroughly, and in connection with its impact on individual satisfaction and well-being*” (Kasper et al., 2005, p. 441). However, there has been only little research on managers, apart from the investigation in the issue of workaholism. Workaholism is one the ways in which working life of managers can have negative effects on private life. “*‘Workaholism’ is one type of overwork. The word, with its connotation rooted in ‘alcoholism’, implies escape or avoidance of problems through a drug, in this case, work*” (Bartolomé, 1983, p. 68). Bartolomé (1983) also argues that in some cases work may be the cause of family problems, but in many others executives use it as alibi in order to cover up much more important factors and that in fact, they spend only half of their available time working. In their study of managers, Bartolomé and Evans concluded (1980) that “*the major determinant of work’s impact on private life is whether negative emotional feelings aroused at work spill over into family and leisure time*”.

Guest’s model of nature, causes and consequences of work-life balance presented in Table 1 has been extended for the purpose of this study. It is important to say, that this model strives to employ an integrated view on factors influencing the higher managers’ work-life balance, while Guest does not include governmental factors as well as some of the other influences on the organizational and individual level of analysis.

3.3.3 Governmental and organizational factors

The national governments set frames for organizations in terms of minimum requirements on them in many aspects, one of which are the WLB policies. It is relevant to examine work-life (work-family) balance issues in the national context due to the fact that national policies and programs can support companies in pursuing those (Lynnes & Kropf, 2005, p. 34). Moreover, they also impact individuals – either directly or indirectly through the above mentioned claims on and supports of organizations.

Among organizational factors, we consider the following human resource management practices: the reward and benefit systems, working hours and arrangements. These factors further play a big role in how employees experience the organizational values and culture as a whole, and how the level of understanding and social support provided by supervisors and co-workers is perceived.

Human Resource Management practices

Organization has been made up of people; people who make the strategies, set the goals, produce good and services, take care of other resources in-house etc. Human beings are the human resource of an organization, or in other words the human capital. They differ much from the other organizational resources due to their capabilities: they provide abilities for

organizations, such as intelligence, tacit knowledge, skills and aptitudes. Furthermore, they have an ability to assess and to call management actions into question. (Bratton, 2003, p. 8)

Human resource management (HRM) is a strategic approach to managing employment relations which emphasizes that leveraging people's capabilities is critical to achieving sustainable competitive advantage, this being achieved through a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programmes and practices (Bratton, 2003, p. 6). HRM is about management of resourceful humans. It is the basis of all management activity. Despite of the nature of business, there is a mutual need for organisations to keep their human resources managed. (Bratton, 2003, p. 7) There are basically four key objectives the human resource function deals with: staffing, performance, change management and administration objectives. One of the most important tasks of human resource management is to strive for compliance, commitment and productive cooperation. Furthermore, the aim of HRM is to meet the human aspirations of the people and ensure that the strategic and financial needs of the business are being achieved. HR people can be seen as a link between business strategy and HR strategy, and furthermore as a connector between business strategy and human resource. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 4-8)

Due to market imperatives such as internationalization of technology, productivity of labour and global competition the role of human resources has become more important (Bratton, 2003, p. 3-4). There have been major debates concerning developing trends in the surrounding business environment. The discussions have been versatile but they have mainly concerned issues such as current ways of managing people and recent changes in approaches of companies in comparison to their prior practises. The activities of HR managers, 'what they should do –issues', have also received much attention. In addition it has been asked whether there is a need for new changes in a policy and practice, and whether these debates of HRM apply equally to every industry. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 15) Furthermore, the debates have touched upon longer-term future developments. Business environment has always experienced changes; the changes which have happened hundreds years ago can be seen as significant as the ones which we are facing today, and the changes which will emerge in the future decades differ in a great extent from the current situation. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 15). These statements address that a lot of pressure has been put on human resource department in terms of keeping up with the changes of external environment and labour preferences.

Referring to the prior sentences, it could be said that the organisations that has an ability to see the future clear and adjust their activities according to future trends, will gain the most. (Bratton, 2003, p. 4) In other words, regular updating of aspects, tools and practises are needed for to be able to get the best potential from workers and create attitudes and behaviour that are seen essential for competitive advantage. We also believe that as people in today's working life are more aware of the rights they are entitled to and are more demanding in terms of work and working environment, there has been an increasing need for companies to take care of these issues; work-life balance is one of these issues. Torrington et al. (2005) address that it has become important for companies to also pay attention to their image in order to be attractive to employees and job seekers. Nowadays people have more possibilities to choose where they want to work and they are not force to put up with a working environment they are not appreciating. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 17). Indeed, it has been addressed that during the past years there have occurred changes concerning the value of work. More often than before the focus of employees is directed at balance between work and private life; an increasing amount of efforts have been put on finding an employer who can fulfil these needs. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 17, 736)

By implementing a well-planned work-life strategy, companies can benefit from a great range of assets. Employees, who feel well, enjoy their work and experience the surrounding working environment and conditions in a positive way, are more motivated and efficient in terms of their work tasks. This further reduces *the real and perceived overwork and out-of-balance pressures* (Bird, 2006, p. 21). Furthermore, companies that are proactively working on health care of employees may save significantly in organizational costs of health care. Below we will take a closer look at reward and benefit systems as well as working hours which, while right applied, can provide a company and its employees with great benefits.

Reward and benefit systems

Reward and benefits systems vary between companies. This is understandable when taking into consideration the differences of industries and complex nature of human beings; there are many factors influencing what, when and how people carry out their tasks. (Wilson, 2003, p. 29)

The ultimate purpose of a reward system is to provide a systematic way to deliver positive consequences (Wilson, 2003, p. 29). This is that companies try to affect the performance of employees by encouraging them with different kinds of rewards. Despite the fact that the debate about rewards has been controversial in nature, it is often agreed that the primary purpose of them is to align the payment arrangements of the company with its business objectives. (Torrington et. al, 2005, p. 595). Even though this sounds relatively easy, the reality is not that straight-forward due to the fact that organizations need to compete for their skilled workforce as well as for customers. *The extent to which organizations can impose payment arrangements which serve their business objectives is thus limited by the equally important need to recruit, retain and motivate staff to carry out the work.* This is that while developing payment strategies, it is essential to pay attention in balancing the objectives of employers and employees. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 595). In other words, there should be as many developing payment strategies as there are organizations. There is no need for a company to implement a strategy, which has been recognized as good in another company, as there is no guarantee that the results would be the same - most of them would probably not. In order to have a successful strategy, it is essential for a company to find its own way based on its own work environment, conditions and workforce.

A salary is one common form of reward and it is typical for every company in terms of 'normal' employment relationship. The size of the salary depends on nature of position, level of responsibilities and skills and capabilities that a person possesses. There are also differences between the industries whereas oil, gas and pharmaceutical industries are often the best paid. (Wilson, 2003, p. 9) Besides money-related rewards, so-called external consequences can be further divided into categories such as verbal/social, tangible/symbolic and work-related. Whereas verbal/social category includes commendation letters, specific compliments and awards dinners, tangible/symbolic category consists of trips, tickets, special achievement clubs and trophies. Special development programs, promotions, increased decision authority and control over resources are examples of work-related category. (Wilson, 2003, p. 30-31)

On top of rewards, companies can provide their employees with different kinds of benefits. These are for example insurance programs such as health care, life or disability; occupational pensions; discounts on the own products and services of employer; company cars and mobile phones etc. (Taylor, in Thorpe & Homan, 2000, p. 11). These benefits and programs vary between organizations. Unfortunately, in most cases the programs are designed by basing them on some other initiatives than what employees want and need, for example the cost of program, the procedures of other companies, laws etc. It should be remembered that, likewise

with reward systems, the best result will be reached when the programs are seen valuable by employees. In these cases also the company benefits the most. (Wilson, 2003, p. 14)

Wilson (2003) has clarified the definition by several key elements. First of all, a systematic process means that accomplishment of specific outcomes are influenced by many elements, which through their purpose, structure, and delivery strive for mutual, optimum results and company goals. Second, *there is a direct alignment between success of the organization And actions that are encouraged and rewarded* (Wilson, 2003, p. 29). This is that employees are expected to show some results, and based on those outcomes they are recognized. Furthermore, *the consequences are perceived as positive to the individual* (Wilson, 2003, p. 29). This has been supported by the fact that *the person defines the value, not the organization, and ideally, the person is left with the desire to do more. The effective consequences have the desired impact on the individual. They leave the person feeling good and valued for something he or she has accomplished* (Wilson, 2003, p. 29). We believe that this is one of the main points of the idea of reward system. People need information whether they are performing in a manner, which is required for success. The best way for companies to show appreciation about the good work done is to give some certain feedback about it. This motivates employees and makes them want to reach new goals. As stated earlier, according to Bird (2003), to experience feelings of achievement, an individual needs to feel pleasure of accomplishing something. Wilson (2003) has further emphasized that *when rewards ultimately lose their link between performance or action, they rightly become an expected part of employment (e.g. entitlement)*. In our opinion, that kind of work environment might raise up feelings of unclearness and confusion, which in a long run is more likely to lead up to dissatisfaction.

Working hours

Working time has always been one of the key dimensions defining the quality of the employment relationship. Ever since the early days of industrialization, the organization And control of working time has been central to innovations in the production process as well as lying at the heart of collective bargaining and labour regulation (Fagan & Lallement, in O'Reilly et al., 2000, p. 25). Due to economic uncertainty, organisational restructuring and increase in business competition, organizations have needed to rethink their conditions; the overtime working has occurred as organizations have demanded they employees to show higher performance and commitment and expect them to work longer hours under inflexible work schedules. (Hughes and Bozionelos, 2007, p. 145). There is always a conflict between employer and employees; employer pushing towards better performance and employees trying to protect themselves from the hazards of the workplace. In the mid 1990's these tensions have been said to centre mainly on the long working hours and heavy physical demands, and even though there have been slightly alterations after turning into twenty-first century, the concern about them, expressed by employers, employees, trade unions, government agencies and campaign groups, have still remained significant. (Torrington, 2005, p. 489)

There are undoubtedly links between working-time patterns and labour market transitions (O'Reilly et al., 2000, p. 279). It is argued that while investigating the transitions over time, it is needed, besides working time, also take a closer look at the whole set of social times that structure lifestyles. (O'Reilly et al., 2000, p. 279) The priorities which are determining how people are organizing their lives have changed. Also changes in the structure of families and the organization And composition of paid work have taken place. (Perrons et al, 2006, p.1). Information and communication technologies have a big role to play in this as they have extended communication possibilities both between people and between states: they have expanded temporal and spatial boundaries of work. Also, as interrelations between shifting

economic and political context, e.g. moving towards global economic environment, has changed, so have live style preferences with regard to living and working arrangements. (Perrons et al, 2006, p.1, 75) *As consumers, we witness the movement toward a 24/7 economy.* This can be seen e.g. by stores being increasingly open evenings and nights. Furthermore, our expectations have changed and more often than before we assume services to be available for us all the time. It has argued that 24/7 is a new phrase meaning around-the-clock availability. (Presser, in Perrons et al, 2006, p.35)

If we take a short look at the facts about contemporary average working hours and holidays on international basis, we can see how the working patterns differ between the countries: *The average employed American works 46.2 weeks per year; the average French, 40.5; the average Swede, 35.4. While Americans work today just about as much as in 1970, Europeans work much less* (Alesina et al., 2005, p.1). The statutory minimum for paid leave in Sweden is 25 days per year, however the agreed upon minimum is 33 days, which makes Sweden a country with highest amount of holiday days in Europe. (EIRO, „Working Time Developments – 2003,“ 2004) Europeans seem to be happy to work less and less, which can be caused among other things by the policies of the unions during from 1970's until 1990's, because of labour market regulations or marginal tax rates, in particular for women's labour market participation. (Alesina et al., 2005, p. 55) However, the figures above are average numbers and in that sense, do not give us a realistic view about the working hours of members of higher management; but they show an overall trend in particular countries. Furthermore, the paid leaves apply also to persons in executive positions, and in many cases these persons are enjoying the longest holiday periods.

According to Swedish Labour Law (2007), and The Working Hours Act (Arbetsstidslagen/ABL), *the general rule is that the normal working hours for a full-time job may total a maximum of 40 hours per week.* Based on the same law, the persons in executive positions are, however, exempt from the provisions of the Working Hours Act. (Englund, 2007, p. 18) This means that the members of higher managers are not, in the same extent, protected by Labour Law in terms of working hours. In other words, it leaves much of responsibility and consideration of appropriate working hours, or should we say overtime hours, for employees themselves. However, a great percentage of responsibility of that is also on employers who are responsible for offering good working conditions and environment, and furthermore for taking care of the health of their employees.

Gender is closely related to debate of working time. *This is particularly because women's time falls outside of the commodified time systems that operate in the paid workplace* (Morris and Pillinger, in Perrons et al, 2006, p. 209). Research on gender patterns in working time shows differences between the genders; it is shown that men employees who have a family are working longer hours than men in general and furthermore, their wives or partners work less regardless of whether they are full-time employed or not. However, studies also state that if paid work and caring work are combined, then women on average work longer hours than men. Furthermore, in most of the cases women make the compromises, which are necessary in terms of fitting paid work around the family, and for this reason also experience the anxiety and stress of combining these roles. Even though there are differences between the countries concerning the details of this picture, the broad trends are consistent. (Perrons et al, 2006, p 7-8) However, it should also be pointed out that the impacts of changing working times and especially longer working hours concern not only persons with children or other caring responsibilities, they comprise all social groups. (Perrons et al, 2006, p.17, 75)

Due to above mentioned issues; flexible working has received much attention during the recent years. The need for flexitime has recognized both from employer and employee sides. *Rethinking the organization of time in relation to work and personal lives throughout working*

life is central to new thinking on work and time (Morris and Pillinger, in Perrons et al, 2006, p. 207) An article *time, lifestyles and transitions in France and Sweden* shows interesting facts about reorganizations and/or reductions of working time in order to improve operating time, reduce labour costs and increase productivity. However, there are also other objectives related to the new working-time patterns; while in France the changes in working time are related to employment protection and job-creation issues, the changes in Sweden are closely linked to quality of life and gender equality issues. (Anxo et al., in O'Reilly et al., 2000, p. 269) The statement related to Sweden makes it interesting for our study to see whether there are patterns in use, which are promoting the quality of life in terms of working-time.

Flexible working hours help to deal with longer operating hours and unpredictable workloads. The flexible system ensures that there is no overbooked workforce present when there is no need for that. While the system is beneficial for employers it also offers a great amount of advantages for employees. In addition to that it offers for many people a possibility to enter employment or through the working-time adjustment remain in employment, it also facilitate employees' organization of working hours on daily basis. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 105) Here, however, we are only presenting the last mentioned further as it is relevant for our study.

One of the benefits of a flex-time system is that it allows employees to start and finish the working day at different times. Often the employer states certain core hours when everyone has to be present but permit flexibility outside those hours. This allows employees to plan for themselves the course of the day; when they start and finish each day, how long lunch break they are going to have etc. It is also possible to take a half-day or full day off from time to time if the employee has built up a sufficient bank of hours. The system allows considerable control over employee's own hours of work. For example, it helps in maximizing the amount of time spent with families, and in reducing the amount of time 'wasted' at work. (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 106) It is also stated that *the system encourage employees to work longer hours at busy times and in exchange to get free time during slack hours* (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 106) This is often the case in many companies, mainly due to periodical nature of the peaks in business. In these occasions the flexible working time might motivate employees to get through the busy time because they know that the overtime hours can be compensated as day offs later during more peaceful period.

3.4 Relationship between work-life balance, job satisfaction and well-being

3.4.1 Job satisfaction

In a research carried out by a team of economists at the University of Aberdeen concluded that "European workers are becoming more stressed by time constraints and deadlines and since work is an overwhelmingly important part of most of our lives, the satisfaction we derive from our jobs is a major factor in how happy we are as individuals; job satisfaction is the top factor in employees' overall life satisfaction. This is over and above satisfaction with family, leisure time, health, finance, and social life" (Physorg.com).

Rhodes and Steers (1990, in Torrington et al., 2005, p. 321) suggest that job satisfaction is determined by the job situation and moderated by employee values and job expectations. Job scope, freedom in decision making and the extent of responsibility are seen as issues related to this matter. Also factors in terms of nature of work such as work over-/under-load, working conditions and hours, leadership style of immediate manager, relationships at work and opportunity for promotion are linked to job situation. Employee values and expectations, which impact on how an individual experiences the level of job satisfaction, are shaped by "*both personality and personal characteristics and life experiences*" (Torrington et al., 2005,

p. 321). The more expectations and values match up with the job, the higher level of job satisfaction is reached (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 321). Van der Vliet & Hellgren (2002) have emphasized that the factors known as proximal factors are directly linked to employee's work situation, e.g. feedback and versatile and challenging working environment. These have more significant affect on perceived working situation of individuals than for example size of organization, which belongs among distal factors. These distal factors are more complex in nature and believed to have more indirect impact in terms of employees' work experiences. (Van der Vliet & Hellgren, 2002, p. 6)

Related to previous, Herzberg and his colleagues (in Savery, 1996, p. 18) state that there are two types of factors contributing to one's job satisfaction; intrinsic and extrinsic. They suggest that intrinsic factors, as so-called satisfiers, act as major motivators for employees while extrinsic factors, also named as hygiene factors, might lead to dissatisfaction if not appear in certain extent. A view by other researchers in the same article, based on empirical studies, addresses that there are seven working conditions positively associated with job satisfaction. These are as follows:

1. Mentally challenging work with which the individual can cope successfully;
2. Personal interest in the work itself;
3. Work which is not too tiring physically;
4. Rewards for performance in line with personal aspirations that are just and understood;
5. Working conditions which are compatible with the individual's physical needs and work goals;
6. High self-esteem on the part of the employee;
7. Help in attaining interesting work, pay and promotions and in minimizing role conflict and ambiguity (Herzberg et al. in Savery, 1996, p. 18).

The factors above support the fact that employees put more value on intrinsic factors than extrinsic factors; it was shown that employers made a better influence on their employees by giving them recognition for good performance than for example raising their salaries. The feelings of achievement and interesting and challenging work were ranked in top of the motivators. (Savery, 1996, p. 23, 26) Also in the case of the members of higher management the results addressed that the managers put more value on intrinsic aspects of their work. This clearly shows that it is highly important for companies to provide their managers with "*an opportunity to experience such potentially rewarding features of their job,*" for example by offering greater level of autonomy of action rather than a myriad subtasks (Kirkcaldy, Trimpop, Fischer, Furnham, 1997, p. 402). Intrinsic motivation can also be promoted by factors such as challenge, control, competition, cooperation, recognition etc. ([Intrinsic motivation website](#)).

Even though salary is often not stated as a main factor in terms of job satisfaction, it still has an important weight. This was proved for example in a Europe-wide research project made by University of Aberdeen. The study revealed that "*wages are generally considered to have a positive impact on job satisfaction... and a higher wage has a significantly positive effect on job satisfaction*" (Physorg.com). We believe that the salary has value to the certain point of level and after crossing that level, there are other issues, which will be experienced more important; these are the intrinsic motivation factors. However, how the 'crossing level' is perceived by employees depends on every individual.

Based on above mentioned, it can be stated that job satisfaction has versatile effects on individuals' lives. As having such a great impact on overall well-being of people, we believe that company would benefit in a great extent by better examining, and further understanding the factors that create job satisfaction. If employees are satisfied with their jobs, also attitudes toward the work are more positive. We suggest that job satisfaction is one of the most important factors in terms of work-life balance; having a balance at work is directly related to balance between work and private life. If the workload at work crosses the level of convenience, employees are most probably forced to work overtime or take work home, which then interfaces persons' private lives by shaking the work-life balance.

3.4.2 Well-being

Many efforts have been made to describe well-being. By starting with overall statements, well-being can be formulated as follows: "*a state of being or doing well in life*" (Glosary of terms): *well-being/welfare is a contented state of being happy and healthy and prosperous* (Lexical database for the English language). In support of these definitions, there are many components, which further describe well-being of individuals. Many of them are related to standard of living and concern for example wealth of an individual including the financial matters and the level of access to good and services. While these matters are easy to examine, others like "*freedom, happiness, art, environmental health, and innovation are far harder to measure*" (Wikipedia.org).

Torrington et al. (2005, p. 504) describe that "occupational welfare is the 'well-being' of people at work, encompassing occupational health and safety. They further state that the dictionary defines 'welfare' as 'well-being', so health and safety are strictly aspects of employee welfare, which have been separately identified as being significant areas of welfare provision for some time" (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 489). There are two primary areas from the provision of welfare, which affect individuals; these are physical benefits and emotional/psychological benefits. While physical benefits are made up from improvements to health and safety, including benefits such as paid holidays, reduced working hours etc., emotional welfare is related to amendments in terms of mental health, such as "counselling, improved communication or anything involving the 'human relations' needs of people at work" (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 489). Due to highly integrated nature of these benefits, in many cases welfare activities include both physical and emotional factors. (Torrington, 2005, p. 489)

It has been addressed previously that many actions offered by employer can have essential impacts on employees' well-being; these actions are not always expensive and related to money, often employees value more distinction and good relationship with co-workers. A survey made by CIPD (2003), The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, shows that the key in improving employees' health is good workplace relationships; 39 per cent of 1000 employees claim that good relationships at work have the most beneficial effect on their well-being. Also Beauregard (2006) in her study states that "*an organizational culture supportive of work-home issues can help to directly reduce strain experienced by employees through the provision of helpful managers, sympathetic colleagues, and reasonable expectations concerning employees' work hours and priorities*" (Beauregard, p. 1). It is thought that perceived organizational support reduces strain by indicating to employees that material aid and emotional support are available when needed to cope with high demands at work. (Beauregard, 2006, p. 1) Also Burke (2002) has addressed that organizational values that are supporting individual's work-life balance have great effects on both work and personal issues. Based on his study, it was seen that employees who experienced the organizational values supportive, also felt greater career and job satisfaction, greater family satisfaction, less work stress, fewer psychosomatic symptoms and more emotional well-being.

“The workplace stress is the welfare topic which has received the most coverage in recent years” (Torrington et al., 2005, p. 489). Johannsson (2002) has suggested that there is a link between the amount of stress each employee is subjected to and their job satisfaction. Taking into consideration that stress is becoming one of a regular vocabulary of managers, this is not promising any good; it is generally known what kinds of impacts stress has on employees’ physical and mental well-being (Bratton & Gold, 2003, p. 164-166). Symptoms of stress occur when *“the individual experiences a mismatch between perceived demands and the perception of his capability to meet the demands”* (Van der Vliet & Hellgren, 2002, p. 9). Crossing of the capacity mobilizes the mental, behavioural and physiological resources, and if experienced frequently, stress reactions may become chronic (Van der Vliet & Hellgren, 2002, p. 9). If these experiences are continuous, this might lead to *“burnout, which is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishments”* (Johansson, 2002, p. 307). Laschinger et al. (2001, in Bhanugopan, 2006) has further indicated that *“burnout is a phenomenon commonly associated with work conditions at lower levels of autonomy, lack of control over work practices, non-existent collaborative working relationships and a lack of organisational trust”* (p. 451).

All the above mentioned facts emphasize the importance of a healthy, balanced and motivating work environment as employees’ attitudes - motivation, performance, and well-being - are affected by perceived working atmosphere (Van der Vliet & Hellgren, 2002, p. 6). Based on this, it would be advantageous from employer’s point of view to survey more carefully its employees’ personal motivation factors in terms of reaching higher level of productivity. As every individual is unique, it is understandable that every person perceives the motivation factors, which further influence job satisfaction, differently. (Lee, 2007, p. 32-35) Our view is that motivation is on the input side of a process which goes on in individuals’ minds and the job satisfaction and well-being are on the output side.

Even though it has been stressed here that healthy work environment is essential in terms of employees’ welfare, it should be emphasized that it is also vital for organizations as whole. Employers should understand that the efforts put on work-life balance do not only contribute the well-being of employees, they also reach their positive impacts further into overall performance of organization. (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007, p. 152)

4 Empirical findings

“He, who is everywhere, is nowhere.”

Seneca, the Roman philosopher

4.1 ORGANIZATION A

4.1.1 HR manager

General information about organization A

Organization A is a very large size public company. The fact that operations are not only concentrated on one area makes it more difficult to describe this organization with one word. However, HR manager experiences Organization A as an attractive employer and as a good place to work. According to HR manager a significant downsizing did not take place during the 1990's in the organization. However, recently, downsizing has taken place because of the privatization of some fields, which has further impacted the working conditions in the Organization A. In general, the situation in the organization A is fairly good due to a good economy balance.

HR policy

Organization A's HR policy is reconsidered once a year. The issue in terms of balance between work and private life has been handled, e.g. by taking into account the directions about the equality between men and women in Swedish law. At the moment the ratio between men and women is 25% of men and 75% of women. Even though women constitute the majority of workforce as a whole, the equality between genders has been better reached on management level. Also flexibility in terms of family and health issues is included. Openness to speak to close-by manager, when feelings of tiredness etc. occur, is emphasized.

Reward and benefit system

In terms of rewards and benefits organization offers, first of all, a good salary. HR manager points out that even though everyone does not experience it as sufficient, much effort has been made by organization in order to improve the salary at all levels. HR manager states that in addition to providing employees with good working environment and working conditions, they have worked a lot on health promotion issues; there are many employees having challenging jobs and making difficult decisions, which is why the health promotion issues have been seen as very important. Organization supports also employees' sport activities by offering discounts in a sport centre in the city area. Furthermore, flex system is one of the benefits.

The decisions in terms of rewards and benefits are made both on individual and organizational levels. Rewards and benefits are mainly based on the annual talk with employee's own manager. At the same time than the plan for next year is made also the benefits, such as training etc. are handled. Salary is dealt separately, and it is related to activities of labour unions. Furthermore, *“every workplace makes their own programs and decisions in terms of social activities including recreation days etc.”*

Compared to other employees, HR manager does not see big differences in expectations of members of higher management, regarding the structure of bonuses and benefits. *“Salary is naturally higher because of the responsibility”*, she points out. *“There are also some special training programs available for leaders but otherwise expectations are rather the same,”* she adds.

WLB in HR policy

The latest changes concerning WLB have been made on the subject area of sick leaves. The number of sick leaves has been high and the aim to decrease the numbers has been a goal for 2 years. The process is going to continue as the goal has not been reached yet. However, on the contrary, the number of persons who have not had any sick leave days has been recently increasing; this is due to the health promotion. In terms of the future development of WLB, HR manager states that there is a need to continue discussing about health as a big issue. *“We’ve been talking a lot about education and skills of our employees but I think we should talk about health as a big issue; what kinds of conditions are supportive so that people can achieve their best and make good results.”*

According to HR manager, Swedish government has tried to make several efforts in terms of WLB; there seems to be understanding towards this issue. HR manager states that it can be seen e.g. in newspapers that Swedish top politicians are aware of the matter of work-life balance; it is a current topic in the whole Europe. Changes related to WLB have concerned e.g. the number of sick-leave days.

HR manager does not see any specific differences between young and older people in terms of WLB. “Everyone wants to have a good leader, get feedback, wants to be noticed when they are at work, hear when they have done good work; those are the main things and don’t have anything to do with age.” Also the annual questionnaires have stated no differences in terms of age groups.

Managers

Working patterns

Based on HR manager’s experience members of higher management work 45-50 hours per week. “We try, however, to teach leaders to learn themselves; sometimes they have to work 50 hours per week but sometimes they should take some days off,” she points out. This is due to the peaks of workload which are periodical. Managers are not totally free to choose their working time. As organization A is an open organization they have standard hours from 8:00 to 17:00. However, there is flexibility in the mornings and in the evenings. Also, the need for travelling of managers influences the time spent present at work place, and is naturally an exception from normal standard hours. Generally speaking, HR manager stresses that “you must perform in a way that you want your colleagues to work.”

She agrees that the higher managers need to take work home, skip lunch or other breaks because of the overload in work tasks. She states that even though the aim is to have lunch every day there might be some exceptions; in many cases there might be a lunch meeting. However, she points out that Swedish people are known for their coffee breaks and continues that *“we are good in having them.”*

Higher managers need to work on weekends but some changes in frequency in this matter can be perceived. Some years ago it was common that people worked e.g. on Sundays, checking their e-mails and the agenda for next week; this is one way to decrease the amount of work tasks on Monday. However, more often than before it can be heard that managers are saying ‘no’ for weekend working; weekend working is only in very necessary cases. Also the number of holiday days taken tends to be increasing. *“The awareness of balance is higher now,”* HR manager states. *“Managers know that they have to be efficient in a long run, not just on weekly basis,”* she continues.

Higher manager is not obliged to be available constantly. She addresses that “every manager must be able to manage themselves first, how to deal with e-mail, with personal phone and working hours; organization cannot make rules for everyone.” Even though there are no rules concerning the use of the mobile phone, “people should be able to reach us,” she emphasizes.

She continues that it is essential to know when not to have the phone on in terms of being able to concentrate on what is important at a time.

Flexible and part-time working

As stated above, flexible working system is in use in the Organization A; it is considered important and it applies to everyone based on their personal matters. Also working part-time is possible; *“having children is no problem, it is just good and just a short time in managers’ life and when it comes so we deal with that.”* However, whether it is possible to have same responsibilities as a full-time employed, needs always to be checked separately.

Workload, pressure and the amount of stress

HR manager states that the pressure exposed to the higher management is mainly due to goals and *‘economy in balance’*, which are to be achieved. As a public company the target is not to make profit, it is to provide better services. *“So how can we get more with the money we have, this is a pressure,”* she adds. Furthermore, the pressure is also to be a good leader; to offer good working conditions to subordinates. In sum, *“it is about goals and economy, and it is about employees.”* She also addresses the difference between the private and public company by pointing out the fact that in private company you can be *“rather closed,”* you do not see what is happening inside of factory or in offices. Instead, in public organization, it is possible to read in newspapers next day what has happened; *“Media can be pressure as we want to be an open organization,”* she claims.

HR manager addresses that the workload, which is put on managers, has increased e.g. due to computers. She emphasizes that it is very easy to get stuck by the computer for the whole day to read and answer the e-mails, after which there is no time left e.g. to speak with subordinates. She reminds that as leaders, people should have discipline in ways of handling time spent by working on computers.

Expectations of managers and recent changes in attitudes

Managers’ expectations are examined every year. However, there might be employees who do not make it as they think it is too much work to go through annually. We do it every year as we want to find out that our employees are satisfied at work. The questions are related to the following areas, *“how satisfied they are with the working conditions; if they can participate in decisions; if they think they receive good information about work, about budget, about economy; what they think about their manager; do they have annual talk with their boss or annual written plan for next year; salary.”* Also balance between home and work life and furthermore, health issues including sleeping problems, worries, exhaustion etc. have been examined. *“The biggest question is how can I participate in my work, and how can I make good performances, and how can I be a good member in my group which everybody wants to be,”* she continues. Questionnaire has about 40 questions. Results are given out to every department and group separately; also the overall results are delivered. Results have been positive; *“most of the employees state that they have good meaning in their work, they are satisfied with co-workers and with the leaders”*. However, HR manager adds that *“work is rather tough as we are working with people”, “employees are satisfied with working conditions but they are tired sometimes”*. Tiredness is due to workload. *“So how I can feel satisfied with what I have done, and not to be unsatisfied about what I haven’t done. That’s a big question”*, she points out. This is why it is important to have training about what are the goals on yearly basis so that employee can focus on them in a right way. The results have also shown that the managers are a little bit more satisfied in general because of the bigger amount of information, training and education. However, they have also higher level of responsibility

which turns easily into tiredness. *“This is the common phenomenon all over the world”*, HR manager states.

Higher managers get their feedback and support from their chiefs in the annual conversation. The feedback is also given by official annual report where it can be seen all the performance and results that have been made; it shows e.g. whether the budget you are responsible has been in balance. They can also get their feedback via the annual questionnaire. HR manager feels that top managers receive feedback in many ways. However, she points out that it is important to remember that managers are just human beings who also want to have personal feedback. This should be provided at least once per month. HR manager experiences that there is a need for managers to ask some feedback e.g. from their employees; she continues that lower managers are often rather polite and not willing to give feedback to their managers if not directly asked. *“I think if you are higher manager you must be open and say that it is important to me to do good work and that I can only do good work if you tell me”*.

Organization offers training course about self-balance. The course handles issues such as balance in life: “how can they deal with their work, how can they deal with the free time outside the work, how they deal with their health or exercise or balance and so”. The course has been appreciated by managers; they have felt it easier to manage their time after the course. The course is voluntary; some leaders want to rather have another leader - so called mentor - outside the organization to talk with.

As a consequence of a generation shift it can be seen that women are as ready as men for promotions, which means that today it is no problem for women to have their career on the top level.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Sick leaves

At the moment there are some managers on long-term sick leave, both due to difficult work and age related issues. However, issues related to difficult work such as tiredness, lack of focus, irritation etc. have been strived to be noticed before they become more serious; by the organizational support the need for long term sick leaves might have been avoided. HR manager admits that the reason for long-term sick leaves, in addition to sicknesses such as cancer, have been recently more stress-related. However, she points out that *“we have been better now to focus and notice them in advance than before”*. As the organization strives for being a ‘healthy’ organization, HR manager hopes that numbers in terms of stress-related sick leaves will decrease.

Job satisfaction factors

According to HR manager the five most important job satisfaction factors for managers are: to be a good manager, to pursue challenging tasks, to have a possibility for participation in terms of developmental issues, freedom to decide, and to receive feedback and performance evaluation.

4.1.2 Adam

General background

Adam is 54 year-old, married and father of two children living at home. He has been employed in the Organization A for twenty years. On the current position he has been working for eight years. Adam likes his job even though he addresses that eight years in the same position with the same people is quite a long time. *“You know what they are going to say before they say it”*, he says. He especially likes the changing nature of his work; the

possibility to find and get new solutions and ways to do things makes the job enjoyable. However, he would not state the current job as his dream job.

When speaking about a work in general, Adam emphasizes following matters: “I want the work be interesting, it has to have a meaning. And that it changes; you always can do new things. And I like to have a little bit of freedom. So I don’t like managers to tell me what to do - they can tell what they want to gain instead”. Adam experiences the current work place as a good place to work. Due to the organization’s economic balance it is possible to get more money and have more power in terms of developmental issues. He feels that it is a very important factor according to his job. The working environment and conditions Adam states good even though not perfect, this is mostly due to the big size of the organization.

Work and working patterns

At the moment Adam spends on average 45 hours per week at work. The working hours vary depending on how much work it is to do or e.g. work trips but usually the working day is from 8:00 to 17:00. Also breaks depend on the schedule of the day; in many cases lunch is alias meeting and coffee break is often “*a working break - you just pick up a cup of coffee and go back to your room*”. Adam is, however, free to choose his own working hours. Even though he is not forced to be at work place daily, he is there almost every day due to a meeting etc. Adam often uses the freedom in terms of flexible working hours to do sport; he can e.g. exercise in the mornings or during the lunch breaks. Sometimes he goes home a couple of hours earlier than normally.

Adam is satisfied with his work time and does not feel a need to spend less time at work. If he works at home it is because he feels it is convenient. However, he does not work at home after the normal working hours; he might start earlier in the morning while waiting for the children to get ready for the school. He admits to be thinking about work after the work day rather often, the frequency depends on what is happening at the work at that moment. On weekends he is usually off; on Sundays he goes through his mail to avoid to do it on Mondays at work instead; checking e-mails on Sundays does not disturb him. He also adds that “*while working out in the garden on weekends, I make some great decisions*”.

Adam has a work mobile phone which he carries all the time. This is because of his responsibility to be available in ‘emergencies’ around the whole year; he states that those calls happen very seldom. He also has the mobile phone with him on holidays, during which he just checks the messages. However, he emphasizes that before he leaves for holidays the issues of contacting him during the holiday is handled. This means that co-workers know in which cases they can call. Adam checks e-mail on holidays approximately once in week.

Adam gets feedback on his work result sometimes, both from his boss and employees. However, as he does not have any boss close by, the feedback is often given by his employees. Adam hesitates to answer whether he is efficient or not at his work but then answers as follows: “*I don’t know, I try to be.*”

Employers’ actions

According to Adam it is not a tradition to get benefits in the organization he currently works for. He states the salary as a main benefit but points out also gym cards, which are available for use. He experiences the large amount of freedom in terms of working hours to be one of his personal benefits in the current position. He agrees that the salary is in balance with the amount of work he does; he works 40-45 hours per week. He states that 60 working hours per week is too much.

In terms of describing feelings about the job and working environment, asked by the employer, Adam states to be interviewed once in year; it is when the annual conversation takes place. The conversation is based on a formula which handles issues such as *“health, how am I feeling, how do I want to develop myself etc.”* However, Adam feels that it is up to himself to do something if something is wrong; he does not expect somebody to come and ask him. He continues that if there is a very important thing to talk about, one should not wait for an annual meeting. If the feedback of his, given in the annual conversation, has some impact Adam does not know. He strongly believes that as it is his life, it is his own job to do something about it if there is a need. *“I think that to most things you can do something by yourself if you don’t like them”*. In the case there is something that he needs to take up, something related to wishes or problems at work, he goes to his boss. He also has a personal network around him which to turn to if needed. The nature of the issue prescribes whom to consult.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Adam admits that to skip lunch or other breaks is a problem as often the lunch time is the only possibility to meet clients. He sometimes feels tired during or after work. However, he addresses that *“you have your work, your family, your interests... three strong legs to stand on. If it doesn’t work at work, maybe the other two work, so you are not depending on too much of any of these”*.

Adam states that the pressure put on his at work is very high at the moment due to the many changes in environment. In addition, he admits often to feel overload of work; he addresses that in his work there are no limits. This is why he needs to decide by himself what the limits are. *“And realize that you can’t do everything because we all have 24 hours”*, he continues. He also states that he tries to look at his work and decide what he has to do; he feels that it is easier to do the right things now than e.g. ten years ago. Furthermore, he points out that one should remember that there are other people at work as well; *“You are not the solution for every problem, you need to trust to your co-workers”*. Adam feels stressed at work, depending on situation though. The biggest amount of stress occurs when the pressure is aimed directly at him; when he needs to find some solutions for a large amount of people for example. Adam has not been on a stress-related sick leave recently.

In terms of job satisfaction factors Adam feels important to have a possibility to make good solutions for employees and clients on his special field. He wants to work with developmental tasks. He states that with too much administrative responsibilities work can easily turn to be boring as it is not what he wants to do.

WLB

Adam experiences that the time to spend with his family, friends, hobbies, sports etc. could always be better but adds that it is much better now than over ten years ago. However, during that time he has a lot of other duties outside of work as well. Even though organization offers possibilities for training etc. in terms of balancing work and leisure time Adam feels that he needs to organize his work himself, it is not the organisation that can help him to say no; *“I think it is up to me. You have to learn to say no and you have to learn what goals you want to achieve”*. However, he admits that it is easier now; *“the phase of your life when you get married, get family, you have started a new work and you have to prove much in terms of your career... that is a tough time”*. In order to improve his WLB, Adam waits for finishing and implementing a quality program, which is currently under the process. The program strives for dealing with routines more efficiently and should ease his future work to a great extent.

4.1.3 Alice

General background

Alice, 49 years, is mother of 4 children; two of them live still at home. She is married. In total she has worked for the Organization A six and half years but on the current position she has been since year 2003.

Alice likes her job a lot and states that in some respects it is her dream job. She adds that she is not quite sure what her dream job would be. In general, Alice expects from a company she works for that *“you are respected; people listen to your ideas”*. She continues that it is important *“to be able to fulfil your ideas; otherwise it is impossible to work there”*. She feels that the Organization A is a very good working place; *“It is a very human working place where you try to make people to be able to have social life, family life; I think it is easier to combine them here”*. She adds that *“we really do encourage young parents to go for parental leave, also the men, which I know that is not that common in private companies”*.

Work and working patterns

The amount of hours Alice spends at work is very much depending on the week. *“I never count my hours. I’m more or less working constantly; I mean I think work a lot at home also”*. She addresses that in some weeks, she might be able to keep the working hours down in 40 but in some weeks it is needed to work roughly 60 hours as there is so much to do. She continues that often it is more than 40 hours per week; a week with 60 hours is more unusual. Alice comes to work mostly around 8:00 and tries to go home between 17:30-18:00. However, she adds that also these times vary; sometimes she works at home. Alice points out that they have the flex system, which gives her freedom not to come at a given time in the mornings and the afternoons: she stresses that naturally there is a need to be at work when the most of the people are present; *“it is the most convenient if you try to be here between 8 and 17”*. Alice uses the flex system by taking a free day if she needs it; she does not put the worked hours down but knows when she has been working a lot and it is fine to take a day off.

Sometimes, Alice thinks about work after the working day as well. She states that if she is walking or biking home she does it often; she addresses that when it is about solving problems or matters, *“it is a very nice way of working”*. She works sometimes in the evenings and weekends at home. Weekend working happens on weekly basis but is never a full day working. She clarifies that sometimes she just spends 30 minutes on checking e-mails or even other work; she does not experience that to be too much work. However, she adds that *“there is always some kind of work-related action what ever it is”*.

Alice has her work mobile phone on all the time as she needs to be stand-by 24/7 if something happens, mostly due to media. However, it is quite seldom that somebody calls her in the evenings or nights. Phone is also with her on holidays. Furthermore, Alice checks her e-mails during the holidays even though she admits that it is a bad habit; *“I prefer to do that rather than have hundreds of e-mails when I come back”*.

Alice answers ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the question about satisfaction in terms of work time. She addresses that she tries to keep the hours down at 40 as she has family but adds that it is hard even though she is getting better and better in that all the time. She admits that sometimes she would like to spend less time at work because of her family and children but continues that *“not less time at work but more time at home, maybe”*.

Alice claims to get feedback quite often. Mostly from people around her; *“the nature of work is so that you get response all the time”*. She considers herself very efficient in her work.

Employers' actions

Alice states to receive from Organization A benefits such as salary, training card to a sport centre, and for her the benefit is also very nice working environment and people she works with. She does not think that the salary is in balance with the amount of work she does; *"It is not bad but if you compare it to private business we have lower salaries. We have as much work and responsibilities as they have; but that is the way it is,"* she continues.

Alice has a development talk with her boss once a year as all other managers. She has a very good relationship with her manager and knows that she can rely on her help. Alice also experiences that her feedback has impact. She has basically two bosses to go to if she has further wishes or problems related to work. The nature of the matter decides, whom she will turn to. If the matter is purely work-related and not personal, she can also talk about it with her own staff.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Alice has always her lunch break during the working day. She has a possibility to go for a coffee in the morning and afternoon but sometimes she skips the afternoon break. She states that in some days she needs to skip lunch or other breaks but does not experience this to be a problem.

Alice admits that she feels tired sometimes after the work. The amount of pressure put on Alice at work varies. She addresses that *"there is always pressure due to her position; you have your own employees and you have your own bosses and their expectations"*. Dealing with the issues such as creating agenda, deciding and inventing something new, developing the office etc. keeps the pressure quite high; *"you also get used to it,"* she claims. *"If you have asked that when I was new in this position I maybe would have said that it is very, very high but now I don't realize it, maybe"*, she adds. Alice also states that she has a constant feeling of overload due to the amount of work. But she continues that *"it is not very heavy overload all the time, you get used to that too"*.

Alice states that feelings of stress occur continuously and she continues that you just have to deal with it. She addresses that at least once per week she feels really stressed due to work. Alice has not been on sick leave because of stress-related sickness.

Alice lists job satisfaction factors which she experiences the most important as follows: *"the feeling of being able to do things that you feel are important, that you get your ideas through; the people you work with; own boss; reasonable working hours and expectations"*.

WLB

Alice admits that there is not enough time to spend with family, friends, hobbies and sports and would like to have more time. She states that one nice way of company to help her in balancing her work and leisure is to offer training card in a sport centre; she thinks it is important to do some kind of exercising. She also addresses that the attitude of the company is good; *"Even if I work a lot, the attitude is that you should try to keep it down"*. Alice also points out, even though she has never needed to try that by herself, that there is a service available for employees – they can call if they feel themselves desperate and need a help of psychologist. The number is available in all matters; the problems need not to be work-related. If the psychologist experiences that the caller needs further help, he/she is asked for a free face-to-face meeting with a psychologist. Alice experiences the support offered by the Organization A in terms of WLB sufficient. If she could change something in her work conditions in order to improve her work-life balance she would like to have a little bit more

staff; this would enable her to focus more on strategic plans. She continues that *“there are many things we like to do, and there are many expectations from other people”*.

4.2 ORGANIZATION B

4.2.1 HR manager

General information about Organization B

Organization B is a middle-size private company, located in Umeå, and a part of a global corporation. Even though HR manager has not been employed there more than three months she was already familiar with the organization Due to her previous work. HR manager addresses that she has always thought the organization B is a very good company to work for; it is the outcome of environment, people as well as products. HR manager states that downsizing took place during the 1990's, rather dramatic one. Also, recently some downsizing has happened due to projects which have aimed at producing more with less personnel in order to make the plant more efficient.

HR policy

There have not been many changes in HR policy this far but HR manager states that it is one of her tasks in her current position to reconsider all company's policies regarding HR issues; *“I'm sure we are going to change some of them in the future”*, she addresses.

In some companies it is considered as good to work a lot. In organization B, except some seasonal overtimes, employees are not encouraged to work overtime; instead they are encouraged to go home in time. HR manager also points out that they have a flex system which provides the employees with a possibility to moderate their working hours a bit as well. She adds that the company promotes fathers to take a parental leave etc. HR manager admits that the gender equality is a problem. This is because of the nature of industry and the fact that it has historically associated as men's branch. At the moment there are 380 employees from which around 25 are women. She continues that this will be an area they need to work on; *“in our recruitments in the future, when we have equally qualified people, we choose a woman”*.

Reward and benefit system

In the Organization B they have already had a reward/bonus system for several years. This system is based on a profit-related mathematic formula. If a stated goal has been achieved, a bonus will be given out to every employee; *“there is no differences between managers or other people, blue/white collar workers”*. However, the future of the system will be reconsidered by the top managers, which means that the continuation of the system is not sure. Furthermore, the company supports physical training by providing sport cards and also by paying entry fees of sport events, e.g. Wasaloppet. There is no difference between the employees in terms of giving out rewards/benefits. HR manager addresses that managers' expectations might differ from other employee's expectations but continues that this has not come to her knowledge, at least not yet. The reward and benefit systems have not been reconsidered recently but the agenda of this year is to focus on physical well-being and issues related to it that will be handled.

WLB in HR policy

HR manager does not recall what was the latest change in terms of WLB. However, recently an employee survey has started. The purpose of the survey is to find out how do the employees feel at work, both regarding issues related to work and well-being; *“I think it will give us a great material to work with”*. The survey will be for everybody, including managers. It consists of 58 questions which are divided into different areas. These areas are:

cooperation, goals, working environment, competence and involvement, information, organization and relationship towards the closest managers. So far, the managers have not usually had their yearly development talks. Therefore, she stated that it will be interesting to see the result of the survey.

HR manager states that there are many things that Swedish government could do and have done; during the last years e.g. the parental leaves for fathers have been promoted by them. She continues that a great number of negotiations have been made with the local union and states that these negotiations can bring up many positive results. HR manager also emphasizes that *“it is important how we as a company promote our employees and encourage them; I think a lot of responsibilities are on our table”*.

Managers

Working patterns

HR manager states that members of higher management work 50-60 hours per week. She continues that several of them work also on weekends, approximately one weekend per month. Furthermore, in many cases managers take work home or skip breaks because of the work overload. Even though the members of higher management are not obliged to be available constantly, many of them are.

Flexible and part-time working

The managers can to some extent to choose their working time. Also the part-time working is included in the HR policy, *“one of our managers works two days in week at home (quite far away) due to her small children,”* the HR manager adds.

Workload, pressure and the amount of stress

Delivering results is one kind of the pressure managers have on their shoulders. The fact that company has a foreign owner also brings pressure because of cultural differences; there are e.g. many reports to do. Furthermore working hours, a large number of meetings and projects can be seen as pressure. In total, the pressure arises from a great number of issues that managers need to take care of; sometimes it is hard to prioritize them. HR manager admits that people are not sufficiently trained to prioritizing their tasks. She adds that they are presently searching for an education programme, which is planned to start this autumn. She believes that this kind of education program is needed as there are many persons who are new in their roles, feeling slightly insecure and would need support.

Expectations of managers and recent changes in attitudes

The expectation of managers in terms of WLB has not been examined. However, the HR manager addresses that in general their managers work too much; that is a problem among several our managers. *“They are often in that age that they have career, small children etc.; it is hard to be a manager and be enough, both at work and home”*, she continues.

It is typical for Organization B that people work there many years; *“we have many persons who have worked 25-35 years.”* HR manager states that she has observed some differences between generations. First of all, *“some of the older managers have become managers because of their long experience, not because of their leadership skills. And the new persons that we recruit, we recruit because of their leadership skills”*. HR managers also points out a difference in attitudes of generations; while younger manager tend to be more willing to change things, many older managers experience it beneficial to keep things like they were.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Sick-leaves

At the moment there are no managers who are long-term sick leave; one manager is on a part-time sick leave because of stress-related issues. HR manager addresses that the statistics show that during the past years, the numbers regarding both short and long term sick leaves, has been decreasing. She believes that one reason for decrease in number of long-term sick leaves is due to their ability to take better care of the persons who need rehabilitation. In terms of short-term sick leaves HR manager is not quite sure but hopes that the decrease is because of the good cooperation with Umeå Hälsan (the health service).

Job satisfaction factors

HR manager experiences that job satisfaction factors that managers appreciate the most are: “Content of the work; the possibility to be one of those who involve the company; possibility to combine the work with the family; possibility for career; cooperation, the management team – how do we work; salary in some extent.”

The survey, which is going to be carried out during the next months (mentioned above), will also handle the job satisfaction of employees. It consists of 35 different groups, and the results can be combined to address e.g. a group of managers.

4.2.2 Brian

General background

Brian is married and father of three children who all live still at home. Brian is 37 year-old. In the current position Brian has been for one year, and altogether he has been employed in the Organization B for two and half years. Brian likes his job very much. At this point of life he would state the current job as his dream job. *“I have been building my profile during my life from the beginning of the 90’s, taking new positions and educate myself. So with the knowledge I have, I think this is a good challenge to me”*. However, Brian has new targets in mind in terms of next positions: they will become relevant as the level of his knowledge increases. In general, Brian expects a company to have a convenient culture. Also, clear focus on future targets is important. He experiences Organization B as a very good company to work for. He emphasizes the culture of the company and the fact that there is always a plan for an employee where they are supposed to go next. *“When I’m recruiting a guy under me I’m always told to recruit the guy who could take my place in the future”*, he explains. *“In this company you need to show that you want to move on; in that case they will put a lot of effort and focus on you, and give you a lot of chances”*, he continues.

Work and working patterns

Brian is pretty much satisfied with his working time. He works on average 55 hours per week. *“I have weeks with 30 and weeks with 75 hours”*, he adds. The amount of hours depends on projects, reporting etc. Usually he starts at 7:00 and finishes at 17:00. However, it is quite free to adjust the working hours and Brian would not like to have any other way. He states that in normal month, without any heavy projects etc., he can e.g. have a lunch at home with his family. This is one way Brian uses the flex system of company.

Brian states that in general, when he is at home he does not think about work. However, if he leaves work right after an important meeting, it might take a while to speed down. *“Sometimes might some ideas pop up at home as well,”* he continues. Brian does not work at home; *“we should perform during the day when we are here at work. At home we should be with family because this is a job, family is more important,”* he emphasizes. This rule applies also to weekends; *“I would say that the only time I’m working on weekends is the time when I’m out travelling. It is maybe once per month,”* he states.

Brian has his mobile phone on all the time, also on holidays. “But that is also one thing what I am working on with my management team; it is how do you educate the people around you”, he continues. “At home I have one rule, if they leave a voice mail, I take it, otherwise I’ll listen to it in the morning and call back,” he adds. Brian always has his phone on due to possible fire and other accidents at work. Brian checks his e-mails on holidays but points out that he has his discipline in a way of doing that.

Employers’ actions

In terms of rewards and benefits Brian addresses that the company provides him with a salary, a company car and a training card. Brian states that by taking into account the experience he possesses and his current position, he is satisfied with his salary. However, he admits that naturally, higher salary always attracts.

Brian does not have yearly meetings with his boss. The procedure of their meetings is more informal and goes on monthly basis. “I meet with my employer and then we discuss about the things I would like to discuss, and they come up with issues they’d like to discuss with me. And they can be both, soft and hard issues,” he explains. In generally speaking he claims that feedback is focusing often too much on negative aspects. Brian stresses that he would like to strive for more positive way of giving feedback. He states that “on the scale from 1 to 10, I think we are on 6. And I would like to strive for 9 or 10”. Brian thinks he is efficient at his work.

Brian strongly believes that his feedback to employer has impact. If he faces some kinds of problems or has wishes related to work, he turns primarily to his management team. He has also a possibility to choose a manager from the top level to talk with but often he first tries to solve the issue with his own manager.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Brian states that he has too few breaks during the working day. “*I think you should have one coffee break in the morning and one in the afternoon but it also depends*”. In Brian’s position the days fill out by meetings where the coffee is served all the time. He continues that “*a break for me could just be my room, and 15 minutes alone, without coffee*”. Brian emphasizes that it would be good to have a routine in lunch and coffee breaks. In terms of work duties, Brian is not forced to take work home, skip lunch or other breaks. However, he sometimes skips the lunch in the company’s canteen and instead of that has some sandwiches in his room and spends 45 minutes alone there.

Brian says that he does not often feel tired during or after work day. However, he adds that “*I can see the cause of it due to a project or heavy workload*”. The pressure put on Brian’s work is quite high. “*On the scale 1-10, in normal, it would be 8 maybe*”, he clarifies. The overload of the work is getting back to balance but Brian states that due to an organizational change the overload has been too high almost one year. “*There are peaks during several months and then it is getting down; that is how it is,*” he adds. Brian also stresses that it is important to listen the own body and act when some symptoms of tiredness appear. “*I think that at least for managers, it is too easy to go a couple of more weeks, even one-two months, and then it is too late*”, he points out. The feelings of stress vary depending on time. Brian addresses that last autumn was stressful due to settings of new organization. In general, Brian tries to keep a balance so that feelings of stress would not occur. However, often Brian feels stressed during the monthly review due to putting all data together. Brian has not been on stress-related sick leave.

The most important factors in terms of job satisfaction to Brian are acknowledgement and salary. Brian explains the factors as follows: “*I think the first one, acknowledgement, is*

connected to that you receive credit for the work we do here together, and that is more important than the salary; but then of course the salary because it is pretty much related to your family. If you are putting quite a lot of hours to the company, the family must see the benefit of your work". He continues that it is important that there are possibilities to develop oneself as a manager and a human being through new positions and programmes.

WLB

At the moment Brian does not see a need for spending less time at work. He thinks that he has a balance between time spent with his family, friends, hobbies and sports. In general speaking, Brian experiences that on management level, it is everybody's own responsibility to take care of the balance between work and family. Brian states that he has made his opinion clear to his own management team in terms of this balance. *"They see me going home, and that I am not here in the evenings and weekends, and that I have my computer always in the room when I go home. And when they are looking me and I am having that behaviour, they use the same behaviour"*. Brian does not get the same kind of support from his boss that he provides to his own management team.

If Brian could change something to improve his work-life balance he would like to have a better salary. He clarifies his answer as follows: *"of course I could say that I'd like to have more time to spend home with my family but since you don't have time you need for vacations etc. the salary, a good income would give to you and to your family a possibility to do better things when having a holiday"*.

4.2.3 Bridget

General background

Bridget is 47 years old. She is single and lives with her children. She has been working for the company B for 30 years. In the current position she has been since last September.

Bridget likes her job but does not know whether it is her dream job. In general Bridget expects to have some clear guidelines from a company she work for. The employer should trust the employees and furthermore, to offer support when necessary. Bridget perceives the organization B as a very good company to work, which also the employment years in the company states.

Work and working patterns

Bridget is satisfied with her working hours. She spends cca. 50 hours per week at work. Often she comes to work at 6 o'clock and leaves the work between 16.00 and 18.00. During the working day Bridget addresses to have lunch break and coffee breaks in the morning and in the afternoon. Usually she goes for coffee in the morning but might skip the afternoon coffee. Bridget uses the flexible working system the company offers; usually she starts the day at the same time but finishing time might differ. She has also a possibility to save her overtime hours which she uses e.g. by leaving sometimes home around lunch time.

Bridget stops thinking about work when she leaves the office. She does not work at home that often either. Bridget works very seldom on weekends; she only comes to the workplace if it is something special which need to be done. She owns a work mobile phone which she have on all the time. However, she claims that she does not receive many calls out of official working hours. Bridget does not check her e-mail regularly on holidays. *"I'm very good in leaving job when I'm not working,"* she states. She hopes that she is efficient in terms of working tasks she performs.

Employers' actions

One of the benefits Bridget receives from the employer is reduced costs in sport activities. She also addresses that many benefits are kind that you do not necessary consider them as benefits as you have so used them. These are e.g. free parking place, Christmas gifts, reduced prices in organization Canteen. Bridget experiences the salary to be in balance with the amount of work she does.

Feedback on Bridget's work results has been provided monthly by her manager. Bridget addresses that the employer also asks her to describe feelings about her job and working environment sometimes. These meetings take place at least twice in month and are more informal in nature. The purpose of them is to make sure that employees are feeling fine.

Bridget believes that the feedback she gives to her employer has impacts. However, she continues that often the issues being discussed are not that such big matters but addresses them to be good conversations. If Bridget has any wishes or problems related to work she talks with her boss.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Bridget is not forced to skip lunch or other breaks due to workload. She never skips lunch but might occasionally not go for afternoon coffee because of work.

Bridget does not feel herself tired during or after work. She states that the pressure put on her appears mainly in the beginning of months while there are a large number of reports to do. Sometimes, Bridget feels overload of work. She points out that due to starting up of a new organization, which took place ca. half a year ago, the workload was high. However, she continues that *"when the organization is set, the work will be more normal so to say"*. It also happens that Bridget feels stressed at work. *"Now it has been quite stressful as we have this new organization"*. The monthly reports and travelling brings also own challenges with the feelings of stress. After e.g. week of travelling there are usually much to do. Bridget has not been on sick leave due to stress-related issues.

Bridget states friends at work, the content of the job, environment and good manager as the most important job satisfaction factors to her.

WLB

Bridget states that of course she would like to spend less time at work sometimes but adds that *"I like my job so it is not a problem for me"*. She also points out that the fact that the work is very flexible makes it possible to her to go home if she wants to. Bridget feels that she has enough time to spend with her family and leisure activities.

Bridget does not feel that it is company's responsibility to take care of the balance with her work and leisure. *"If I have a problem with that, the work takes too much time, I have to talk to my boss but I don't think it is a problem,"* she continues. In terms of WLB Bridget experience flexible working hours system as a good support from company's side. This enables to control the job in great extent. *"If I need to go somewhere with my children during the day so then I do it. And they understand it and they say it is okay,"* she adds. Bridget do not see any improvements she would like to implement to receive more balancing work-life. She addresses working environment is very flexible.

4.3 ORGANIZATION C

4.3.1 HR manager

General information about organization C

Organization C is a large size public company. The HR manager perceives the organization C as a very nice place to work. However, he adds that sometimes it is very tough, especially now, when it is hard to get money for some activities; also the number of 'customers' is not as high as desired at the moment. In the recent survey conducted among same type of public organizations in Sweden, Organization C was ranked high in terms of employees' perceptions of the workplace. Right now the Organization C is undergoing significant downsizing in several departments, because of the financial problems mentioned above. The HR manager says: *"We are trying to work more effectively and try to save money where it is possible"*. Nevertheless, he adds that at this stage, they are trying not to reduce the amount of services they offer. *"But tomorrow you never know. The trends are going up and down."* It is difficult to handle this situation due to the fact that people have never faced it before and they have not been trained to deal with it.

HR policy

Organization C has started to handle gender related topics in the early 1990's. Nowadays they have many programmes supporting gender equality – for example they create maps in order to observe the differences in wages between men and women; a committee and employees on all organizational level that deal with the gender questions. *"It is not allowed to be unfair"*, he says and adds that a recent check by authority has proved that they are doing well in this matter. The HR manager thinks that they were ahead in this issue compared to other public organizations of the same type. In organization C, there are more women than men nowadays – the ratio is approximately 60:40. However, the HR manager adds that the problem is that it is not easy to recruit women to leading positions. *"If we don't have enough women on leading positions, it will spill over to other areas at work. So, we do a lot of work around that."* For example, he mentions a special programme for women that want to become managers (heads of departments). *"One of the important issues is what the children and husband should think about it, what should she say to her husband – he has to work more at home. It works very well in fact."*

Reward and benefit system

We have not so developed reward and benefit system compared with how it works on private side. Besides salaries, Organization C offers discounts to sport activities and cultural events. The system also includes one hour per week when the employees are allowed to go exercise or to do other activities. *"We are not so good to find new solutions, new ways to give benefits to our employees."* No one in the organization C has a company car. *"It has never been so."* At the moment, there are not any reconsiderations going on. *"We have discussed a bit the pension systems, so we can change from salaries to pension fees – but it is not so popular for the moment."*

When answering the question concerning how does the Organization C decide which employee receives which reward/benefit and whether he can see any differences between managers and the rest of the workforce, he answers: *"We try to handle all the people the same way. Managers' expectations in terms of bonuses and rewards do not differ from those of other employees."*

WLB in HR policy

Organization C is very eager to stimulate people who have small children. For example, they can participate on the corporate planning for the next year even though they are on parental leave; this way they can say what they want for the future. Also, it is possible for some people to work at home; *"we try to facilitate the working conditions depending on where they are in life"*. According to HR manager, this is most important for them when they have small

children. Furthermore, a WLB arrangement offered in Organization C are flexible working hours and part-time working hours. Concerning the governmental support of WLB policies, HR manager states that although officially the government supports them, in practice he does not know how.

Managers

Working patterns

Managers in organization C do not have a limited working time; they have to do their job and are paid for it rather than for overtime work, “*the salary of all managers is based on achievements and not on hours worked*”. Their working hours are flexible and they have to make notes every day in order to control if they worked more or less than 40 hours per week. However, the HR manager admits that they have gentlemen agreements and therefore the hours worked are almost never controlled. In case they worked more than 40 hours per week, they can transfer them to their free time; however the situation in higher management is more complicated – there is no possibility to control them. “*Basically it is their own responsibility.*”

The HR manager states that the managers have to work during the weekends very often. Moreover, he is aware that it is not easy to sit in the office and write and think, so it is often the case that managers do it during the weekends instead. “*I think for most of the people it is not so frustrating, it is a good way to organize your working time,*” says the HR manager and adds that the good thing about it is that one might compensate the time worked by taking more holidays in summer or autumn. But he continues that it might be frustrating if one has a family.

He agrees that the higher managers need to take work home, skip lunch or other breaks because of the overload in work tasks from time to time and in his opinion they work very flexibly with it. “*We also have meetings during the lunch time because it is so difficult to find free time to make meetings.*” He does not think it is frustrating either because if one works during lunch time, he/she can go home a bit earlier.

Higher managers do not have to be available constantly on their mobile phones. But whether they have a mobile phone on all the time is very individual. “*Some of us have a mobile phone on all the time. I don’t think this is a good thing.*” He says that this is a negative thing about mobile phones because it is so easy to have them all the time on and some people even like to be reachable.

Flexible and part-time working

The higher managers from organization C can use both flexible and part-time arrangements.

Workload, pressure and the amount of stress

The HR manager states that what people are a mostly stressed about is that they think they have got more responsibility in their jobs - they have to look at how shall we get in enough money and who is doing better. He thinks that when the economy will be less good, then it will be very hard and very stressing for some managers. Earlier, some of the managers did not master the responsibility and either left the managerial positions to other ones or they also got ill.

Also, the number of issues they have to manage is what is pressing people very hard just now. So when we are asking in the survey, one of the significant findings is that they perceive that it has been much tougher to work in organization C now than only 5 years ago. “*What we are trying to do by that is that we try to give them more support and tell them not to try to do everything themselves, be better in delegating.*” He adds that their higher managers are not

professional managers and leaders and have no further experience in leading other people or handling the managerial tasks. This can be a very tough situation for them – they all want to do good work but they can see that they cannot handle this. Also, when we are dealing with downsizing then we are trying to build in more competence in administrative leadership. And these people must come from other parts than the academic stuff. Now the heads of the departments are not professionals on leadership.

Managers' expectations and recent changes in attitudes

Organization C explores the WLB expectations of employees in two ways. First, every manager has to talk with their employees at least once a year in so called development talks concerning how they would like to work in the next year and what are their wishes. HR manager thinks that it is very important to have these discussions. Second, surveys about the working conditions are executed every other year. Answers from these surveys are not analyzed on individual level, but rather on the level of institutions.

The workforce has become younger and a certain shift in their preferences can be perceived. *“They prefer to spend more time at home than at work and they are less committed”*. He compares today's managers with older generations and thinks that earlier the work was also a hobby for more people than today. *“Young people want to have balance between their private life and working life”*. As an example, he cites younger managers who protest against being away from home for 2 days. They prefer to go home every day and drive back a forth.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Sick-leaves

Currently, there are few persons on long-term sick-leave. Organization C works a lot with this issue. A special project has been introduced recently, one part of which deals with the long term sick-leaves. Nowadays, the nature of sick-leaves is less stress-related than 5 or 10 years ago. The HR manager thinks that this has improved due to the fact that today, people are much more aware of the risk of becoming long-term sick and also more opened to talk about their problems; they are in contact with their managers and also with doctors and therefore they can handle it earlier than it is too late. These are according to the HR manager the main reasons for rapid decrease in long-term sick-leaves.

We are looking at how the circumstances how it is to be a manager in teaching department and in research department. Another thing we work with is try to help departments to be better in planning the work in advance. Departments are not so good at planning. We also try to focus on which things we are using to increase salary – responsibility, good performance, a lot of good research, if students think you are a good teacher.

Job satisfaction factors

According to HR manager, the most important job satisfaction factors for higher managers is a job security and salary which is relatively high. Also, he said that the questionnaires revealed that they like the managing job even though it is very tough and they are not so well trained to execute it and therefore they need support. Also, training is an important part of their jobs – every head of department has to attend this programme and learn about laws and regulations as well as what kind of persons they are.

4.3.2 Chris

General background

Chris's age is 50 years. He is married and has one child who does not live at home any more. He has been employed at organization C for 12 years. He works on the current position since

2005. He says that he really likes his job, but he cannot say whether it is his dream job or not. A company he works for should offer him “*a meaningful work that can be laced into the whole company work*”. An important aspect for him is the match between individual needs and organizational needs and finding their right combination and fit. He likes a lot to work at organization C, because it is not too big and not too small either, which suits him. Also, he appreciates that his organization is known internationally, which is important for his work.

Work and working patterns

When asking him about his working hours per week, his first reaction is: “*Oh, I cannot count!*” After thinking for a moment, he answers that he has a freedom in working hours and it is his own responsibility to determine when to work. The independence he experiences in his job often leads to long working hours. In average, he works 50 hours per week. However, for example now he needs to prepare for a conference and works much more than usual. Normally, Chris comes to his office at around 8 o’clock in the morning and works “*in some sense of office hours.*” But often he also works in the afternoons and nights. When we asked if he is satisfied with his working hours, he answered: “*The problem in this work is that you really like to work with these issues and it can be a tricky issue to draw boundaries and do not go too far in different directions. I often say, that the trickiest issue is when you cannot sleep at night. Then you begin to promise. You need to sleep good every night - that is very important.*”

Chris can choose his working hours - that is why it is difficult for him to say when he comes and leaves work because he often also works at home, even though less than earlier. “*Even if you try to limit it, it is of course so that you can for example check e-mails and send them from home,*” he says. He is aware that it is necessary to draw the line between work and home. He works during the weekends especially on Sunday afternoons in order to be prepared for the next week. This can be up to two times per month. He does not have a work mobile phone and uses his private phone for work purposes only exceptionally. On holidays, he regularly checks e-mail, but nowadays he tries to reduce it.

Employer’s actions

Among the benefits Chris receives from organization C, he names support from his employer and receiving feedback. He does not think that his salary is in balance with the amount of work he does, but he is aware that positions in public organizations are less paid compared to private businesses. He adds that he does many extra activities and he does not receive money for them.

Once per year, Chris has a so called ‘Development talk’ with his employer during which different topics related to work are being handled. “*In some sense it is a SWOT analysis of your activities,*” he says. Chris thinks that others evaluate if he is efficient or not, however, he can say that over time he has learned to organize himself and better and better. He believes that the yearly discussions are more fruitful if one stresses few specific aspects than if it is just a general discussion. Even though both types of discussion can be worthwhile, his experience is that it is easier to get immediate response if he has a specific topic that he can highlight. Chris mentions that he receives feedback from his supervisor on monthly basis. Also, when he has any problems or wishes related to work, he usually talks to his supervisor.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Concerning the amount of breaks during work, he answers that the normal procedure is coffee breaks 2 times a day and lunch. However, he answers positively to our question whether he is forced to skip lunch or other breaks due to the work duties, but takes lunch some time later. Again, he mentions that two things are important – to sleep and to take breaks. “*Of course,*

you can adjust in some sense but not too much. It is impossible to work otherwise.” He adds that he often exercises and takes a walk. *“You need to do that in order to survive.”*

The pressure put on Chris at work is sometimes very intense. The intensity depends on the period in year – the trend is going up and down. For him, a very intensive period comes in January and continues until March. Also, he experiences high pressure which is related to uncertainty involved in his work. On the other hand the achievements are the most stimulating part of his work. Sometimes, it happens that he feels tired after work. He thinks that travelling all over the world is tiring and often also stressful. Chris has not been on stress-related sick-leave.

He hesitates with answering when we ask whether he would like to spend less time at work. After a while he answers: “I have in fact tried to work now with the agenda, in order to provide space for different activities - not only the work activities, but also the activities for free time.”

WLB

He does not think he has enough time to spend with family and friends. *“We try to combine in fact.”* In his opinion, it is important to find connections between work and private life in some sense. If his wife is interested in his work, it contributes to finding the right balance. He mentions that one way to make the WLB aspects visible is the survey that is sent out to employees. *“I think they do it regularly at least not each year, but we compared now how we were evaluated. Maybe it was 3 years when it was done last time.”*

He thinks that organization A at least tries to help him in balancing his work and private life. *“But many of these issues are of course difficult to handle in a general way. You need to customize, but that is not so easy of course either. Many issues in the combination between work and private life is in some way very different between different departments within one organization. It is maybe the trickiest part because it is difficult for them to customize, because they do not know really what the specific conditions at each department are.”* He adds (smiling) that more resources are needed to enable this.

If Chris could change something in his work conditions in order to improve his WLB, he would improve the agenda. The individual agenda could be better synchronized to the agenda for the whole department and for the whole organization. *“If you can synchronize, in fact customize, this agenda, it would be much easier to plan the WLB.”* It is important for him to plan not only the work activities but also the private life. In order to do that he thinks it is necessary to introduce a more transparent planning system than exists nowadays.

4.3.3 Carol

General background

Carol is 48 years old and she is not married. She has one child that lives at home. She is employed at organization C from 1986 and on the current position she has been working for 4 years. She says she likes part of her work more and part less. She definitely refuses that this could be her dream job. From a company where she works, she does not expect that much. *“Possibility to develop and some space for own development.”* She says that it is ok to work for Organization C, but she cannot be as independent as she would like to. *“Also, it is a bureaucratic organization. Sometimes you would like to do things differently, but all the rules and regulations hinder that type of more dynamic action.”*

Right now, organization C has expanded and therefore the workload is really tough, not only for her but also for others in the organization. She is now responsible for handling persons and it is too much. *You cannot take the responsibility and see to the personnel if you have as many*

as 100 persons. You need to divide the organization into smaller units that take not more than 25.” All the problems connected to expansion affect the working environment.

Work and working patterns

Carol does not know how many hours per week she spends at work. She is used to wake up at 4 o'clock and start to work a couple of hours (not each day) before she comes to work, and then she works the day in her office. She arrives at work between 8 – 8:15 and leaves at 16:30, 17:00, or even 17:30 – depending on the workload. In the evening she does not do anything related to work. Sometimes she works also on Saturdays and Sundays, but she tries to keep them free. *“But it depends; sometimes there are things that you must do.”* She works during the weekend approximately once per month. She tries to reduce her weekend work hours.

Carol can use flexible working hours at her job. She states that it is more the workload that makes the decisions on how to use them for her. *“If I have to have a meeting with the personnel then I have to do it. When I have done what is needed, I finish and go home earlier.”* She is not satisfied with her working hours because she feels it is a bit too much now. She works at home almost every day. *“Maybe not Saturdays and Sundays, it depends if I have something to do or not. But usually in the morning I work before coming. Because when I am here I cannot do anything – because people are asking me all the time questions. All the time people are coming and knocking on door. So it is impossible to sit down and do anything.”*

Carol's work mobile phone is always on, even on holidays, because she uses it as both private and working phone. People from work only call her if an important problem occurs. She has so many e-mails in her mailbox that she does not have time to go through all of them. *“It would take me 2 hours each day to go through the emails. I have now 3500 emails in my inbox. It is very much by a chance who I am answering and not. I go through the subject and see this seems to be important and then I open the emails that I think are more important than other,”* she says.

Employers' actions

Carol does not receive any rewards and benefits from organization C. Her current position is kind of a duty and it is not very rewarding in the salary or in her career, even though it should be awarded in salary increase. During her 4 years spent on this position, organization C has raised her salary the percentage that is average for everyone. *“I can't see any reward that way and not other ways either.”* She states that her salary does not at all correspond to the amount of work she does.

Carol says that she only had one discussion with her boss about her job. And this discussion was not related to her job satisfaction or WLB. *“It doesn't exist that type of discussions.”* She also mentions that she does not receive any feedback. She does not have that type of relation with her boss. *“He has 14 departments and a couple of other units and I do not think he works close to them in any sense.”* She believes she is not efficient because she has to work under pressure and fulfil tasks within too short time periods.

If Carol has any problems or wishes related to work, she talks to several persons depending on type of problem. She receives mainly help from support units at the organizational level, if she does not know how to handle. She states that other things are up to her to deal with them.

Job satisfaction and well-being

During the day, she takes a lot of smoking breaks. She seldom takes a coffee in the coffee room, and she usually forgets to eat lunch. She addresses that it could be a habit because she

seldom eats breakfast also. *“I just forget it to go and eat.”* She adds that it is probably due to the workload. *“At 3 o’clock I feel that I am hungry. Very seldom I sit and eat lunch. I can buy it and bring it with me.”*

Carol feels all the time overloaded with work. After work, when she comes home, she feels tired. Earlier, she used to work a lot in the evenings and stay awake very late and work. *“Nowadays I don’t have the strength to work in the evening; instead I go to bed and wake up in the morning.”* The pressure put on Carol at work is intense. The organization has fewer resources and moreover it expanded. She feels almost all the time stressed at work. However, she does not bring it with her home; she can relax when she comes home. *“I am not thinking about all the things during the evening, wake up in the middle of the night. I did it during the first 2 years, but now I can leave it behind and it doesn’t bother me when I am at home.”* Carol has not been on stress-related sick-leave recently.

Even though she likes to work, she would like to change the structure of her work. She would like to work more with strategic things, but seldom has she time to work with them. Rather, she has to prioritize the important things that have to be done right now. *“It would be much better to have the possibility to work with other things and plan for the organization on a more strategic level. Because the time isn’t enough, so I got to do such things during the weekend.”*

WLB

Carol has enough time for her family, but not at all for any hobbies and friends. In her opinion, the organization C does not support her at all in her WLB. *“Rather they put a lot of demands - you have to do this and that before that date...”* She remembers that the systems they provide the employees with to make the work more efficient could be one kind of support. There are no surveys for managers according to Carol. *“They have done a questionnaire for the personnel to measure the working environment, but not for the managers.”* She thinks that she can improve her WLB herself.

She names a possibility to create something and competing with others as very satisfying aspects of her job.

4.4 ORGANIZATION D

4.4.1 HR manager

General information about Organization D

Organization D is a middle-size private company, located in Umeå. According to HR manager, it is *“a well equipped company with a nice working environment. Both the physical and psychical environments are very good.”* He thinks that the employees feel well there. Downsizing took place in 2006 (25 employees). After that almost everyone got a new job description. The work was rationalized and the workload has not shifted on other employees.

HR policy

In terms of gender equality, the HR manager addresses that currently there are two women in the Board; in the management, there are about 38% women.

Reward and benefit systems

Organization D does not have any bonus programmes. Besides the salary, they offer employees possibilities to develop and educate themselves. *“We do not believe in bonus programmes.”*

The managers differ from the rest of the workforce in their needs concerning the work scheduling. Due to the fact that most of the employees work in a factory, they have to work on shifts and therefore cannot use the flexible working time. Moreover, the company has 2 types of managers. The first type works in the company factory – these managers have to be present at work at a given time. Only the managers in the administrative department are offered the flexible and part-time working arrangements.

WLB in HR policy

It is very important for organization D to keep balance between work and private life. They offer their employees to exercise in the job and to meet in the company restaurant. They believe that employees' need to be healthy and do not allow working much overtime, not even to the managers. It is very important that they keep the relationship with their family and friends. *"We don't want them to die in the job."* If they follow this approach, it will increase their ability to work well and therefore we try to influence them this way. *"So we try to achieve people to work 40 hours per week. If they work more, it is not good for us."*

They do not change the HR policy often. *"We have values that we believe in and we do not change them."* The HR manager explains that those values have an influence on the behavior of their employees. *"Our mission is reflected in our values, which influence our behavior. The job itself is not the most important thing, there has to be a balance."*

He thinks that the Swedish government is supportive in WLB issues. But they could do even more, for example facilitate the companies to care about the health of employees by reducing the burden posed on them.

Managers

Working patterns

"Generally speaking, what counts, are the results," the HR managers states. The important for the company are the individual achievements, no overtime payments exist. As mentioned above, the company does not encourage the employees to work long hours. *"We want to help them be efficient. Once, a woman was working long hours, often on weekends. When I met her on Saturday once, I told her that we needed to reorganize her work in another way."* Sometimes the managers work during the weekends, but *"it should not be so every weekend. For instance, my previous boss used to always tell me 'now you have to go home' to remind me that I should keep my work-life balance."*

The company does not require managers to be available all the time on their phones. *"They usually do, but I do not misuse it. If I call them, it has to be really urgent and important."*

Flexible and part-time working hours

In the offices managers do not work based on a rigid schedule, they can start working whenever they want. Flexible working hours are used in the morning, during the breaks and at the end. Some of the managers do not have any schedule at all – they can come and leave any time and nobody control them. They do not have to fill any papers about their arrivals and departures. The HR manager says that it might happen that they work 7 days per week, but it is not required. *"You have to have check-up."*

Workload, pressure and the amount of stress

Managers can be stressed, but the organization D works a lot around this question. They have introduced a special development programme and also, they use a special book in order to support the managers.

The managers are sometimes under high pressure, but the HR manager claims that it is themselves who decide about the amount of stress they can and want to handle. *“We let them decide, it is not the company who would dictate. Sometimes, important things are not urgent. Important and urgent is not the same. We want our employees to work on urgent and important things first.”* They have to prioritize in order to remain efficient and to create a situation where stress is less dangerous. *“Once you end up working with things that are urgent but not important, it is very hazardous because eventually you may end up in losing your partner, having a bad relationship with your children and so on.”*

Expectations of managers and recent changes in attitudes

Once a year the company does an employee survey and also a development talk with every individual. The CEO of the company talks to the higher management of the company. They ask what the managers need in order to improve their job, what kind of training they need to improve their skills and also suggest how they should develop. Also, they discuss how to help each other - what do they want from the company and how can they help the company. The results are analyzed during the next meeting based on a written report from the previous meeting, where the boss asks and checks whether the employee has carried out what they had agreed upon.

The HR manager states that younger people have different values than the older ones. *“They are not so keen to build a career. They are also not so sure about what they want to achieve in terms of their career. The younger ones are keen on travelling and exploring life.”* But according to the HR manager they are not less committed. Even though the global trend is that young people change jobs and companies more often than the older generations, the HR managers claims that they do not seek for other jobs, they stay in the company.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Sick-leaves

The organization D does not have any manager on long-term sick leave nowadays. *“We have about 3-4% sick leaves, but in vast majority of the cases are not caused by work.”*

Job satisfaction factors

The HR manager thinks that *“everyone wants to be seen and heard.”* Appreciation at work, recognition and people who listen to what one says are important job satisfaction factors. Meaningfulness of the job one does – managers need to feel that they contribute to the overall company performance. *“This is more important than the salary.”*

4.4.2 David

General background

David is a 60-year-old married man. His sons are already grown up and they live outside home. He has been employed in organization D since 1982. He works on the current position since 1991.

To our first question – whether he likes his job - he replies: *“Yes”*. He says he likes his job very much and it could possibly be even his dream job. From a company where he works, he expects having a nice job, receiving a good salary and also working in a pleasant environment. Good relationship with his colleagues is important for him as well. He believes that Organization D is a very good place to work for.

Work and working patterns

When we ask about the amount of working hours per week, he replies: *“Officially forty, in practice about 50. I used to work even more but now it is rather ok. Sometimes even 35 hours a week.”* He comes to work between 7 – 7:30 every morning and leaves at around 17.

David can use the flexible working arrangements. However, even though he can arrange his working hours, he often he works the same time. His job is relatively free and there is something to do all the time. He lives very close to his workplace and therefore it is easy for him to come to his office whenever he wants. He prefers to work in his office. *“When there is more to do, it is better for me to go to the office on Sunday and work a little.”*

He is available on his mobile phone all the time, even during the holidays. *“I have to be reachable and therefore it is on all the time. Mostly it is rather simple to answer. A month ago, a supplier called me at 2:30 AM. That was a bit extraordinary.”* He checks his e-mail in his free time only when he is expecting an important message.

Sometimes, he works during the weekend. *“Perhaps, one Saturday and one Sunday per month. Even more seldom during holidays,”* he declares. He is very satisfied with his working hours. However, he adds that sometimes he would like to spend a bit less time at work.

Employers’ actions

David said that he does not receive any benefits from organization D besides the salary. Later, he added that he can buy company products for discounted price. When we asked whether his salary is in balance with the amount of work he does, he replied: *“I think you always want more but I think it is relatively fair.”*

His employer does not ask him about his feelings at work very often. *“We talk about it in an organized way once or twice a year.”* The discussions are individual and are usually related to David’s salary and whether he does not have any problems at work. According to him the discussions are fruitful and he can perceive visible changes in the future. He often receives feedback on his work results. *“Whenever we manage to do something, then it is good to encourage each other.”* He think he is quite efficient at work, but he thinks that sometimes he could do even more.

When he has problems related to work, he can talk to several persons. *“I talk to my boss, sometimes to myself, sometimes to my wife. It depends on the task. Sometimes, I need to talk to people who have the knowledge in that area.”*

Job satisfaction and well-being

David always takes a lunch brake, at least half an hour, often even more. His coffee breaks are rather short according to him. He is not at all forced to skip lunch or other breaks due to the work duties. *“It is my own decision. It is better to stay at office one or two hours more than take work home. Sometimes I come on Saturday or Sunday,”* he claims.

Sometimes he feels overloaded with work, but he states that before the workload used to be much bigger. When he comes home, he does not think about work. *“I think that if you think about work when you are at home, it is better to go to the office and work.”*

From time to time, the pressure put on him at work is very high. Sometimes even in association with difficult tasks. He seldom feels stressed at work *“Only when there is a difficult decision to make.”* He has not been on stress related sick leave.

WLB

David believes that he has enough time to spend with his family as well as on hobbies and with friends. *“We used to have time when we had too much work but it is not possible. One has to take care of family, friends and hobbies as well. When there was too much work, we*

went to the boss and told him that we need to fix it and we did.” Sometimes at the end of the week he is tired after work. *“It is more often now than before. It is associated with the age as well.”* He does not long to change anything at his work. *“I am quite happy right now, of course there are things that could be better but it is very good now.”*

Among the 5 job satisfaction factors that are most important for hi, he names: “For me it is quite important to keep suppliers happy. Then for me it is a nice job and I think I am doing it well. Nice people to work with are very important. It is fun to work here. I also earn relatively nice living.

4.4.3 Diana

General background

54 year-old Diana is married and a mother of children who are already moved away. She has been employed in the organization D since 2001. She was hired to her current position.

Diana likes her job very much but experiences it a bit difficult to say whether it is her dream job or not. Her aim was not to work in economics even though she does not regret her decision. *“I take an opportunity to make all the other things in my leisure time,”* she states. Diana expects respect, responsibilities and possibilities in decision making from a company she works for. She also stresses the importance of good relationships with co-workers and a possibility to laugh at work. She is happy with her current work place and experiences the working environment as good. She addresses that the size of the company is convenient; *“you feel that you are important,”* she points out.

Work and working patterns

Diana spends ca. 50 hours per week at work but works often at home as well. She addresses to be a slow starter which means that she usually arrives at work place at 8.30. She leaves home mostly around 17.-18.00. During the day Diana has lunch and two coffee breaks but she points out that they are free to have breaks now and then. The lunch break is possible to have between 11.00 and 13.30; everybody decides themselves when they want to have it and how long they want to stay. However, it is necessary to have at least 30 minutes break. Some employees also use the possibility to go and exercise during the lunch break.

Diana can choose her working hours quite freely. As there is no overtime payment for employees on management level Diana gets the overtime hours as free time instead. *“Today I can work very late as there is a lot to do but tomorrow as I don’t have any meetings etc. I can go home already around 12 o’clock,”* she clarifies. Because of the overtime hours, managers are also provided with one additional holiday week.

Diana is satisfied with her working time. Even though she feels that sometimes it would be nice to spend less time at work, many times she is very inspired by work and has “the drive” to do many things. Then she prefers to stay at work instead of going home and think the issues there. Most of the time Diana manages to leave work behind while going home; she prefer not to take work home. Usually Diana is not off on weekends; often she works a couple of hours on Sunday afternoon and/or evenings. She plans the upcoming week and goes through her notes in case there is something necessary which need to be prepared.

Diana does not have a work mobile phone. Despite of this, she points out that when she is on holidays people at work always know from where to reach her. However, she stresses the respect which they have towards people on holidays or sick leaves; *“When people go for holidays, or are on sick leaves, we are not going to disturb”*.

Diana is a person who wants continuously to see some results, that is why she hesitates a bit when describing whether she is efficient or not. She addresses that it is sometimes difficult to see results as there is only papers around you. She would like to have more time for planning, to do more strategies etc. She receives feedback on her work results quite often both from board (at least every second month) and regularly from her own boss. Even though she admits that it is nice to get positive feedback she continues *“I work and I feel that I do good job. That is the best; I don’t need so much from others. The most important thing is that I’m happy with my results myself.”*

Employers’ actions

The benefits Diana receives from the company D are such as salary, 1000kr monetary support for health promotion and many activities (movie, dinner). Every second or third year the organization Arranges a big event for the whole staff. Furthermore, Diana stresses the open-minded atmosphere in the organization; it is easy to talk and express yourself there. Diana experiences the salary as good when taking into account the work and its responsibilities. She also points out that the salary is not the most important factor for her; *“I feel that even if I had a very, very high salary but I would not be happy with the work, I would quit.”*

As the organization D is not such a large company the feelings about the job and working environment are discussed now and then. Diana also has a development talk with her boss once a year where work issues concerning past, present and future is handled. Diana feels it as important that she has a possibility to see her boss regularly; *“I feel that is the most important thing that we have an open climate and a possibility to discuss.”* If Diana faces with a problem or has a wish to suggest she goes to her boss. If the issue concerns something more specific she turns to a person who is the best on that area.

Well-being and job satisfaction

Diana is seldom forced to skip lunch or other breaks, only when there are very busy times. She prefers not to skip lunch as knows then being hungry later in the afternoon; she experiences having regular breaks to be more efficient. She never feels herself tired.

The pressure put on Diana at work depends on the period of time; *“We have times when you have to make results and so forth and then it can be rather high”*. However, Diana addresses that these times never surprise her as she knows when they come and is familiar with the situations; *“they are kind of planned”*, she adds. Diana admits that the overload of work can be sometimes high as well but points out that they are connected to the time periods mentioned above; *“it is like climbing a mountain, and the mountain will end some time”*. The overload is during the annual reports and then there is a lot of work to do ca. two, three months. She stresses that it is important not to have too much work all the time if want to avoid the risk of dissatisfaction. Diana claims that she does never feel stressed; *“other people might say that I’m stressed because I’m walking fast, talking fast, but I am not stressed”*. She addresses that she does one thing at time and points out that *“it does not go any faster if I feel that I have to, I have to...”* Diana has not have had need for stress-related sick leaves, or sick leaves in general.

Diana states that she puts up a lot of requirements on herself, and every time when she fulfils one that is satisfaction for her; she experiences it even better if somebody else acknowledges her doing good job. *“Job satisfaction for me is when I’ve finished one issue, and I start with something new,”* she addresses. Diana also likes very much to find out new ways to do things; when she manages to find a new solution, sell it to managers above her, and see they implementing it, that is a satisfaction as well.

WLB

Diana experiences to have enough time for her family and other leisure activities, except during the busy three months. According to Diana the company can help employees in balancing their work and leisure by controlling that the staff does not work too much. If it is seen that employees work too much, some organizational changes should take place; the rechecking of working tasks and their importance should be made. She believes that also her feedback in terms of this matter has value.

In terms of WLB Diana experiences the support provided from the company as sufficient. Diana states that one essential factor in order to improve her work-life balance, and others as well, is to get rid of old things when implementing new things; otherwise the workload will increase too much.

5 Analysis

“It is an extraordinary era in which we live. It is altogether new. The world has seen nothing like it before. I will not pretend, nobody can pretend, to discern the end. But everyone knows that the age is remarkable for scientific research... The ancients saw nothing like it. The moderns have seen nothing like it till the present generation.”

Daniel Webster, 1847, cited in J. Davidson and W. Rees-Mogg, *The Great Reckoning*, 1993

In this chapter, we are going to analyze our empirical findings and compare the existing research in the relevant areas to them.

One issue, which has been changing and improving over the past decades, is the gender equality. As stated in our theoretical part, some 50 years ago the common view on relations between men and women was that men ‘bring the bread to house’ while women take care of children at home. Nowadays, in modern societies, the active participation of women in paid work has reached new dimensions: Sweden, as one of those countries, is a brilliant scene to conduct our study in, and to observe closer the current differences between the genders. This issue is seen important to take up in our study as it is tight related to our WLB topic; WLB is defined as being *“about adjusting working patterns regardless of age, race or gender, [so] everyone can find a rhythm to help them combine work with their other responsibilities or aspirations”* (Maxwell, 2005, p. 179).

The findings of our study showed that gender issue is topical. Even though there are big differences between the organizations and the nature of their workforce in terms of gender equality, one thing which was found common is the increasing interest to focus on reaching the balance between the genders. The reasons, which were seen as the main factors interfering with the equality between the genders in researched organizations, were the nature of the industry and the work tasks; still some of the industries are associated more as men or women fields, and same applies to work tasks. This makes it more difficult to attract the opposite gender than the ‘traditional’ one for a particular industry. However, it was mentioned that nowadays more focus is increasingly paid on the gender issue, for example during the recruitment process. The HR manager of the organization B addresses that *“in our recruitments in the future, when we have equally qualified people, we choose a woman.”*; the industry is obviously typically associated with men. In organization C, programmes, which support the gender equality, have been created. The purpose of these programmes is to reach the equality between genders on all the subject areas; *“it is not allowed to be unfair”*. However, the HR manager of organization C also pointed out that even though they offer a special programme for women that want to become managers, it is still more difficult to recruit women to leading positions; some women still intend to conceive their role, more or less, in the family as the main person in terms of caring work. On the contrary, HR manager from organization D claimed that today’s women are as ready as men for promotions, which means that today it is no problem for women to have their career on the top level. This might be a consequence of the generation shifts and changes in attitudes of younger workforce.

During our empirical study, we have interviewed people whose age falls within the range from 37 to 60 years. The fact that the youngest generation, i.e. people who are between 25 – 30 years old nowadays, are not represented in the respondents is caused by our primary focus on higher management in organizations and young people have not yet gained enough experience to pursue these jobs. However, the views of all four HR managers that we interviewed might correspond to the claim that the attitudes and expectations of younger workforce are shifting towards a more balanced life. It is typical for organization B that people work there many years; *“we have many persons who have worked here 25-35 years.”*

The younger managers who work there have different attitudes than the older ones - they tend to be more willing to change things, while many older managers experience it beneficial to keep things like they were. In organization B the workforce has become younger and a certain shift in their preferences can also be perceived. The HR manager claims that *“they prefer to spend more time at home than at work and they are less committed”* and *“young people want to have balance between their private life and working life”* corresponds to Maxwell (2005) who stated that *“the general trend seems to be gravitation towards an accommodation of work rather than a primary focus on work”* (p. 181). Moreover, the HR manager in organization D answered that *“they [younger managers] are not so keen to build a career. They are also not so sure about what they want to achieve in terms of their career. The younger ones are keen on travelling and exploring life.”* He added that often, they put work-life balance above income and career advancements. Our findings did not prove his claim, as Brian, 37, has ranked the income and career advancements as the most important job satisfaction factors for him.

Three out of four HR managers answered that they do not see any differences in terms of varying expectations of the higher management and the rest of the workforce. The pressure the higher management is exposed to is naturally higher than that of the rest of the employees due to their responsibilities. Consequently, the psychological pressures are greater in case of higher managers as well. This should be visible not only in the salaries but in overall approach to higher managers and higher awareness and responsibility from the employers side. Only one HR manager (private organization) answered that the managers differ from the rest of the workforce in their needs – however, she could not state any specific reason for that. Otherwise, the private companies still talk about profits and lowering costs – which suggests that the assumption about ideal workers who show their commitment in terms of working long hours and are exclusively dedicated to the job has not changed yet (see Gambles et al., 2006 for further reference) in the researched organizations. Moreover, according to Gambles et al. (2006) a lot has to be done in addressing the issues of work-life balance and employees’ well-being on both governmental and organizational levels. Below, we are going to carry out an analysis of our findings in terms of governmental and organizational attitudes to the issue of work-life balance. These issues will be followed by individual factors.

5.1 Governmental and organizational factors influencing the higher managers

The issue of WLB has become universal; it is related to all of us without any limitations. In the same way, WLB is not only concerning working fewer hours, it is multi-faceted and consists of many elements. The important aspects to take into consideration are *“how long people work, when people work, where people work”*. Essential is also to take care of *“developing people through training so that they can manage the balance better”*, and furthermore, *“providing back-up support breaks from work”* (Maxwell, 2005, p. 181).

Even though it was generally stated by the HR managers that Swedish government has acknowledged the issue of WLB and furthermore, they have made several efforts in contributing to the issue, it appeared to be difficult to point out any concrete examples. Some of the issues promoted by the government were addressed to be the parental leaves of fathers and the number of sick-leave days. However, rest of the statements were on general level. The HR manager of organization D stressed that *“although officially the government supports them, in practice he does not know how”*. This might be the case; the visible role of the top politicians and all the discussion of them about the importance of WLB may lead to an understanding that more has been done than actually is in reality. The HR manager of organization B stated that many negotiations take also place with the local union and these

meetings have traditionally brought about positive results. Lastly, the organization B's HR manager emphasizes that *"it is important how we as a company promote our employees and encourage them; I think a lot of responsibilities are on our table"*.

In this fast changing business world everything is possible; *"the trends are going up and down."* Currently, more profit at lower costs is the aim the companies are eagerly striving for. To be able to achieve this goal, some organizational rearrangements are usually needed. According to Johansson (2002) the public sector in Sweden underwent major restructuring, budget cutbacks and downsizing during the 1990's. Based on our findings a significant downsizing did not take place in public organizations during 1990's but instead, it is occurring at the moment; in both public organizations the downsizing is presently undergoing. The reason for this is simply due to financial problems: *"We are trying to work more effectively and try to save money where it is possible"*. The other reason which was addressed is the privatization; many private companies have been set up and this has brought a new wave of competitors. On the private sector side, in one of the participating organizations rather dramatic downsizing took place during the 1990's. Furthermore, the same organization is also just now going through downsizing due to an aim of producing more with fewer personnel. As the efficiency appears to be the key word for many organizations today, it is understandable that all the efforts in achieving the best productivity have been made. How is this in line with WLB? The answer appears to be that it is most probably not.

Another observation which came up based on the interviews, suggests that the phase of organization influences to a great extent the well-being of managers. Setting up of a new organization means a lot of additional work and the level of workload put on managers can arise to be very high; an organizational change reflects its impact to the amount of workload, pressure on employees and consequently, the level of stress experienced by employees. The higher manager of the organization B addressed that *"now it has been quite stressful as we have this new organization"*. However, she continues that *"when the organization is set, the work will be more normal so to say"*. In the organization C, despite the current downsizing, some of its divisions are expanding their services which further reinforces the negative impacts. *"You cannot take the responsibility and see to the personnel if you have as many as 100 persons. You need to divide the organization into smaller units that take not more than 25,"* claims Carol.

In general, every organization has its 'peaks' under which the workload is higher than normally; *"there are peaks during several months and then it is getting down; that is how it is."* Usually these peaks are already known in advance, and the managers who have experienced them in previous years do not see them as a problem as they are more or less planned; they have had a possibility to prepare themselves for them. It can be said that the lengths of such peaks are in their common knowledge. *"It is like climbing a mountain, and the mountain will end some time."*

As stated in our theoretical framework, the issue of WLB concerns each and every of us; it is not limited only e.g. to working mothers. In the studied organizations, the issues related to WLB, which have been taken into account in their HR policies vary rather slightly. Below, a short view of the companies' situation has been provided:

In the organization A the issue has been handled, first of all, by taking into account the equality between men and women. Even though the ratio between the genders still varies in total, the equality is better reached on the management level. Also, flexibility has been taken into consideration by connecting it to family and health issues. Furthermore, they encourage employees to speak if they are feeling themselves tired etc. The organization A has focused on health promotion, e.g. decreasing the numbers of sick leaves.

The organization B does not encourage their employees to overtime working. By a flex system, which has applied to every employee, organization provides its employees with a possibility to moderate their own working hours to some extent. Furthermore, a parental leave for fathers has been promoted. The employee survey, which is currently ongoing, will be used to find out issues related to work and well-being.

In the organization C, the gender related topics have been in focus since the early 1990's; they have e.g. many programmes supporting gender equality. Also, it is stated that the managers are supported "*depending where they are at life.*" Employees have a possibility to participate on the corporate planning for the next year even though they are on parental leave, or work from home. However, the HR manager adds that it is most important for people who have small children.

The HR manager of the organization D stresses the importance to keep balance between work and private life. They have proceeded their employees e.g. with possibility to exercise during the working day. Also the company restaurant is a good place to gather and meet colleagues. Overtime is not supported, not even to the managers; employees should have time with their family and friends as well. Furthermore, the health issues are seen as vital.

Based on the above, the WLB issues which are commonly handled in the HR company policies are the gender equality, flexibility, parental leaves, and health promotion.

5.1.1 How people work

As stated previously by Fagan et al. (2000), working time has always been one of the key dimensions defining the quality of the employment relationship. Hughes & Bozionelos (2007) further addressed that besides organisational restructuring, economic uncertainty and increase in business competition have caused longer working hours, and many times under inflexible work schedules. Employees are required to show higher performance and commitment. In our studied organizations, the satisfaction with working hours was mainly high. However, longer working hours and irregular week schedules were common. The managers in every organization stated that the amount of working hours is very much depending on a week; sometimes it is possible to finish the week with 40 hours but often hours spent at work are more. On average, the managers do not work less than 50 hours per week; during some periods, they can work up to 75 hours.

5.1.2 When people work

Over the recent years flexible working has become more common. As Morris and Pillinger (in Perrons et al., 2006) have stated, "*rethinking the organization of time in relation to work and personal lives throughout working life is central to new thinking on work and time.*" The flex system was applied in every researched organization. One of the benefits of a flexitime system is that it allows employees to start and finish the working day at different times. Often the employer states certain core hours when everyone has to be present but permit flexibility outside those hours. However, in some of the organizations managers are totally free to decide when to work.

The starting and finishing time of managers depends on the day and its content, e.g. the number of meetings or the need for travelling etc. On normal working day the time span stretches from 6:00 to 18:00. Some of the managers want to start early to be able to go home a bit earlier; the other ones prefer later start. Employees are satisfied with this flex system. Satisfaction towards the amount of working hours as general is mostly positive.

Johansson (2002) has stated in her study that bringing work home or skipping lunch or other breaks was increasing during the 1990's but that have shown more stable levels between

1995-1999. In our study, the results were controversial. Some of the employees stated the need to skip at least one of the coffee breaks per day (usually they have two of them) due to workload. Also lunch breaks were addressed to be skipped because of the work or work-related meetings sometimes. However, in many cases it was stated that skipping the lunch break is not an option; lunch was seen important to have energy to work the whole day. In general, managers seem to be flexible in skipping breaks every now and then but this should be seen more as an exception than every day rule. Bringing work home appeared to be more common procedure among managers even though many of them stated to decrease frequency of this; they addressed rather stay at work a bit longer. It was also pointed out by one manager that *“we should perform during the day when we are here at work. At home we should be with family because this is a job, family is more important.”*

5.1.3 Where people work

Flexibility also provides managers with a possibility to decide where to work. The view of managers towards this seemed to vary a bit. On the other hand it was seen the most convenient to be at work place during the core hours as it is when all the people are there. On the other hand, some managers experienced it sometimes difficult to concentrate on their work in their own offices due to frequent interference e.g. by colleagues.

Alesina (2005) has stated that working less and less has become a common phenomenon among the Europeans. As it is difficult to define how much is “less” for example in working hours, it is also difficult to say whether our findings are in line with the statement of Alesina. However, managers are still working overtime hours, sometimes a great number over 40 which is a total maximum of working hours per week (stated by Swedish Labour Law, 2007).

5.1.4 Rewards and benefits

According to Wilson (2003) *“the ultimate purpose of a reward system is to provide a systematic way to deliver positive consequences.* Based on our findings, the significance of reward and benefit systems in the studied organization is not very high. Organization D e.g. stated that *“We do not believe in bonus programmes.”*

Naturally every organization provides their managers with a salary but generally, the amount of the rewards and benefits offered is quite low. Wilson also states that *“there is a direct alignment between success of the organization and actions that are encouraged and rewarded”*. Naturally salary can be seen as a reward which is provided due to work done but basically it has not anything to do with success of the organization. Only organization B addressed to have a reward system which is actually related to the company’s profit. Organization B also differed from others by providing a company car (to one of the managers). Otherwise no big differences between the companies were noticed. Besides the salary, all the companies offer a benefit in terms of sport activities; this can be seen as one way to support employees’ health. Other benefits which were mentioned are such as, additional movie tickets and dinners, free parking place, Christmas gifts, reduced prices in organization’s, canteen etc.

5.2 Individual factors influencing higher managers

The findings of our study suggest that the boundaries between work and free time have blurred more than partly during the last years (see for example Lewis, 2003), which might be mainly caused by the technological advancements in form of personal computers, laptops, and mobile phones combined with the widespread use on Internet, which makes it possible to reach anyone, anywhere at any time. This is related to the high levels of interference between the two work, family and leisure domains. Moreover, this means that work or leisure is no longer tied up with certain location. As mentioned above, all the companies offer flexible and

part-time working hours and some also the possibility to work from home (e.g. Organization B). The physical presence at workplace is not an essential component of work, rather the achievements and performance are what counts. In organization D, managers do not work based on a rigid schedule, they can start working whenever they want and nobody controls them. The same applies to organization C: *“the salary of all managers is based on achievements and not on hours worked.”* From our point of view, the companies should be better aware of the risks related to lack of control whether their management does not work too much. Certainly, the responsibility is mainly up to the individuals, nevertheless the further consequences of work overload can have significant impacts on the whole organization: increased number of sick-leaves, low performing, tired managers, worsening of working environment to name just a few. The issue is not, which components is your life constructed from, it is rather that how have you managed to organize the balance between these elements (Bird, 2003) and we perceive the organizations’ role in this as that of facilitator, controller, and transmitter of governmental WLB policies into practice.

5.2.1 Life and career stage

It should be remembered that *“there is no perfect, one-size fits all, balance you should be striving for”* (Bird, 2003). The results suggest that with raising age and the approach to the end of career, managers start to be more aware of the value of their time and also to organize it in a better way than earlier. For example Adam (54) is aware that he needs to decide by himself what the limits are. *“And realize that you can’t do everything because we all have 24 hours.”* It should be understood that the best individual WLB is not solid. Quite the contrary, it changes over time depending on the life situation we are living in; today you may be single but in five years maybe a mother or father of two children (Bird, 2003). The situation is also different if you are starting your career path or planning to retire. On the examples given below, we are going to point out some of the age-related aspects in the answers of some of the respondents.

Adam (54) experiences that the time to spend with his family, friends, hobbies, sports etc. could always be better but adds that it is much better now than over ten years ago. However, he admits that it is easier now; *“the phase of your life when you get married, get family, you have started a new work and you have to prove much in terms of your career... that is a tough time.”*

David (60) states: *“We used to experience times when we had too much work, but it is not possible. One has to take care of family, friends and hobbies as well.”*

On the contrary, Alice (49) and Carol (48) feel overloaded all the time, either of them has enough leisure time. Carol has just enough time for her family, but not at all for any hobbies and friends. In her opinion, the organization C does not support her at all in her WLB. Alice says that she is overloaded with work all the time and adds that one gets used to it.

Brian (37), the youngest higher manager, seems to be highly aware of the issues related to his WLB and he obviously belongs to previously described generation X – *“At home we should be with family because this is a job, family is more important,”* he emphasizes. He thinks that he has a balance between time spent with his family, friends, hobbies and sports.

Age is an important factor in the WLB arrangements as the stage (both life and career), where an individual falls, co-determines his/her needs in terms of WLB. Also the above mentioned recent changes in attitudes towards work have to be taken into account by organizations.

5.2.2 Self-discipline, personal control and time management

Closely related to age and gender matters, the ability of an individual to organize and manage his/her time efficiently is undoubtedly one of the key determinants of finding the right balance between the work and non-work time. Our findings suggest that the individual time management skills improve with increasing age. Only in case of Brian, it seems that despite being only 37 years old, the level of his time management is considerably high. This might be due to other factors influencing his behaviour and values – such as paternity and also the fact that he has been building his career since the beginning of 1990's and during this time he could have already learnt how to manage his time. Also, another point that could be inferred from our exploration is that men are more competent in self-discipline and self-control than women. All of the interviewed women reported that they sometimes feel overloaded with work, and two of them reported to be overloaded constantly. Even though men also reported work overload, we could observe that they are able to handle it more easily. Research in 1990's in Sweden executed by Johansson has shown that an increasing number of both male and female workers agreed fully or partly that they have way too much to do at work, which in case of females was more significant. For example, Brian and Chris use planning tools and they have own methods to deal with their time in an efficient way. The gender differences are further looked upon in the section 5.2.3.

In order to improve the time management skills and ability to self-control, it is favourable to offer employees education within this area. For example, the organization A offers training course about self-balance to their managers, which covers the issues related to WLB and efficient usage of their time. According to the HR manager this course is highly appreciated by their managers as they feel that they can manage their time better after absolving it. However, the programme is voluntary and therefore some of the managers do not attend it. Maxwell (2005) suggests that WLB from the organizational point of view should cover the developmental training in their HR policies so that people can manage the balance better. The other three organizations do not offer any type of such programmes. HR manager in organization B admits that people in their company are not sufficiently trained to prioritizing their tasks and adds that they are presently searching for an education programme which is planned to start this autumn. Furthermore, from the answers of managers in organizations A, B and C, we could perceive that they often do not even expect organizations to support them in WLB issues. The prevailing opinion among all the interviewed managers seems to be that it is their own responsibility to learn how to organize their time. Few examples follow:

Adam feels that he needs to organize his work himself, it is not the organisation that can help him to say no; *“I think it is up to me. You have to learn to say no and you have to learn what goals you want to achieve”*.

Brian experiences that on management level, it is everybody's own responsibility to take care of the balance between work and family. Brian gives a good example to his subordinates in the management team, but he does not perceive the same support from his boss.

Bridget does not feel that it is company's responsibility to take care of the balance with her work and leisure.

Our findings are in accordance with Bird (2006) who asserts that the dilemma of WLB is still often seen as a one-way approach, which means that companies experience the issue to be more a problem of individuals with further impacts on organizations. The view that it would be an organizational issue with impacts on individuals has been less recognized. Our standpoint corresponds to that of Bird in that sense that we could perceive that in even though all the researched organizations offer some kinds of WLB arrangements in their HR policies; in many cases we felt that they do not always use them with awareness about what their

managers really need. Chris has provided us with an apt description of how the organization could help him balancing his work and private life:

“[But] many of these [i.e. WLB, authors’ remark] issues are of course difficult to handle in a general way. You need to customize, but that is not so easy of course either. Many issues in the combination between work and private life is in some way very different between different departments within one organization. It is maybe the trickiest part because it is difficult for them to customize, because they do not know really what the specific conditions at each department are.”

Moreover, he added that the individual agenda could be better synchronized to the agenda for the whole department and for the whole organization. *“If you can synchronize, in fact customize, this agenda, it would be much easier to plan the WLB.”*

His statements hit off the very base on which the contemporary WLB policies should be build in our opinion and it also corresponds to the perception of Bird - according to him one of the core ideas of WLB is that it is a mutual cooperation between the organization and an individual (Bird, 2006, p. 23).

5.2.3 Gender

As stated above, the results of our empirical study suggest that women are less skilled in terms of organizing their time and as a consequence they report higher amount of pressures posed on them. This might be in line with Perrons et al. who state that in most of the cases women make the compromises, which are necessary in terms of fitting paid work around the family, and for this reason also experience the anxiety and stress of combining these roles. It has been previously indicated that the transitioning between work and family was experienced stronger by women (Van der Vliet & Hellgren, 2002).

It also seems to us that the women are more concerned about their work while men are capable to keep the distance from work. But the findings in this sense are not significant and need to be further studied. However, it seems like the gender equality is rather high in Swedish companies (which was one of the primary reasons why we chose to conduct this research in Sweden) and therefore men and women have quite the same possibilities to establish themselves on management levels in the organizations. This finding is also in line with Van der Vliet & Hellgren (2002) who state that few Swedish studies, which have been made about impacts of modern working life on work-life imbalance, have not found any differences between men and women.

5.2.4 Personality

The approach to WLB based on the psychology of individual differences may be very helpful in explaining the individual WLB issues. During the interviews, we could make a certain picture about the personalities of the interviewees and we may suggest that this approach may lead to enhancement of our understanding of perceptions of balance (Guest, 2002, p. 260). Guest (2002) suggests that even though this area of research has to be developed considerably, it stresses the importance of taking into account individual differences in establishing what is actually meant by balance. We would like to encourage the research in this area as it may lead to invaluable findings about the deep nature of what influences the work-life balance as well as the well-being and overall satisfaction of an individual.

5.2.5 Energy (workload, pressures, stress)

As the overtired and unproductive employees are not desirable for any employers and employers want to have a workforce which is energetic, satisfied and willing to pursue common goals, the organizations should strive to reveal how to preserve high energy levels of

their managers and be able to identify the factors that influence these levels. According to Guest (2002), the energy levels are often ignored in organizations.

The HR managers perceive the pressures posed on higher managers mainly in terms of high responsibility and necessity to deliver sound results in their jobs. For example, earlier in organization C, some of the managers did not master the responsibility and either left the managerial positions to other ones or they also got ill, reported the HR manager. The highest awareness about the link between the amount of stress and pressures and the energy levels is obviously in organization D. The HR manager states that they work a lot around this question. The managers are sometimes under high pressure, but the HR manager claims that the company wants that the employees primarily concentrate *“on urgent and important things. Once you end up working with things that are urgent but not important, it is very hazardous because eventually you may end up in losing your partner, having a bad relationship with your children and so on.”* This is related to the self-control and time management skills reported earlier.

Most of the individual managers reported to us that they feel stressed and overloaded of work especially during certain periods of the year when the work accumulates. In the theoretical chapter, we state that if the workload at work crosses the level of convenience, employees are most probably forced to work overtime or take work home, which then interfaces persons' private lives by shaking the work-life balance. Five respondents out of eight have reported that they would like to spend less time at work from time to time. Among these respondents only one man and all four women were present. These findings support Guest (2002), who argues that the energy levels may be linked *“to issues of personal control, including locus of control and capacity for coping with pressures of competing demands. Finally, gender will often be a factor, with higher demands placed on women in the home, while age, life-stage and career-stage issues will influence willingness to tolerate certain kinds of demand at work and at home”* (p. 266).

The workload and the consequent pressures posed on managers further determine the satisfaction with work and personal well-being.

5.3 The relationship between the WLB, job satisfaction, well-being

By our model below, we want to point out the very close relationship of work-life balance, job satisfaction and well-being. In many cases they are so interrelated to each other that further separation between them is difficult to make; issues on the domain of one component will reflect their impacts to other domains. For example, according to spillover theory, presented in our theoretical framework, there is a similarity between what occurs in work environment and what occurs in family environment. After having a really bad day at work it might be difficult to move these feelings aside while going home. In the same way, problems at home might keep one silent and mentally absent from work. Furthermore, continuous overload and feelings of stress will most likely appear as job dissatisfaction if pressure put on individual employee does not ease at a certain stage. Job dissatisfaction further influences the overall well-being on individual, which again moves the negative elements into one's private life.

Instrumental theory and conflict theory, which were also described in the theoretical part, further support our model. It is suggested in instrumental theory that activities in one environment are means to facilitate obtaining thing in other environment. While asking managers to describe job satisfaction factors which they experience the most important, one of our participants – Brian - answered as follows: *“[but then of course] the salary because it is pretty much related to your family. If you are putting quite a lot of hours to the company,*

the family must see the benefit of your work.” ; this is exactly what the instrumental theory suggests. Based on the conflict theory, the feelings of satisfaction in one of the three domains might require sacrifices in other areas; “...high levels of demand in all spheres of life, some difficult choices have to be made and some conflicts and possibly some significant overload on an individual occur” (Guest, 2002, p. 259). The same respondent as in previous example points out that “we should perform during the day when we are here at work. At home we should be with family because this is a job, family is more important.” This statement addresses that even though in management position, it is possible to have balance between work and life, and any significant sacrifices should not have been needed to do.

Through these above examples we want to express the many-sided nature of the triangle (Figure, and point out that every individual experiences the balance among the components of the triangle differently. That is why, instead of offering the reader one clear response, we offer examples which might help him/her to perceive the triangle based on his/her personal attitudes towards balance. As mentioned before, everyone needs to find their own way balancing their WLB; no ready-made answers exist.

Figure 3: The relationship between work-life balance, well-being and job satisfaction



5.4 The fit between higher managers’ perceptions and the HR policy

In the last section of the analysis, we are going to examine the fit between individual perceptions of managers and the organizational HR policies in terms of rewards and benefits offered to the employees (besides salary), communication tools used to reveal the feelings and needs of managers and job satisfaction factors. In case of job satisfaction factors, we will first discuss the fit in every company separately and then compare the findings with each other.

5.4.1 Rewards and benefits

Neither of the organization offers a complex range of rewards and benefits, instead those, which are offered are rather simple. Based on our findings, managers are not expecting to get any special rewards/benefits either. Rather than tangible, more intangible rewards/benefits are wished and valued by them. Based on external consequences, stated by Wilson (2003), the verbal/social categories (feedback, encouragement) and work-related categories (good

working environment, independence) are perceived as the most important by higher managers.

5.4.2 Communication tools

Referring to the previously accentuated importance of feedback for the managers, the communication between them and the human resource department is an important element of HR policy that should not be underestimated. According to Clark (2000), besides the companies, there are individual tools such as communication and central participation that can be used to improve the WLB. Both individual discussions and overall employee surveys are used by all four organizations. We would like to stress that it is important to perform the surveys on regular basis, at least once per year. Organization C performs the employee surveys only once per two years, which may possibly cause that the HR policies will deflect from the actual employees' needs. According to Torrington et al., counselling and improved communication can lead to better mental health.

The face to face discussions, so called development talks, are an important element of the communication in organizations. In some of them, these talks are on monthly or even monthly basis. However, Carol from organization C reports that in fact such talks and employee surveys are only directed at her subordinates, but for managers, nothing like that exists. Moreover, she stated that during the development talk, which she had a long time ago, her boss did not leave her any space to talk about her personal needs concerning job satisfaction and work-life balance. This might suggest that in large bureaucratic organizations such as organization C, it is much more difficult to adjust the HR practices for everyone. The financial restrictions may also hinder the ability of organizations to introduce transparent communication systems.

5.4.3 The 21 Job satisfaction factors (see Appendix D)

In organization A, three out of five most important factors were common to both managers. These are: Meaningfulness of job, relationship with co-workers, and contribution of work to organization's business goals. The flexibility to balance work-life issues was ranked number 8 in case of Adam and number 14 in case of Alice. The answers of HR manager were closely related to the answers of the managers. Communication at the workplace, autonomy, and challenging job are the core aspects of job satisfaction in organization A.

The managers in organization B both stressed the meaningfulness of job. However individual differences could be perceived in the remaining factors. While Brian values the compensations and career as the most satisfying aspects of his job, Bridget values the relationships at work and variety of job the highest. The flexibility to balance work-life issues was ranked number 5 in case of Bridget and 9 in case of Brian. The HR manager's perceptions corresponded to those of higher managers.

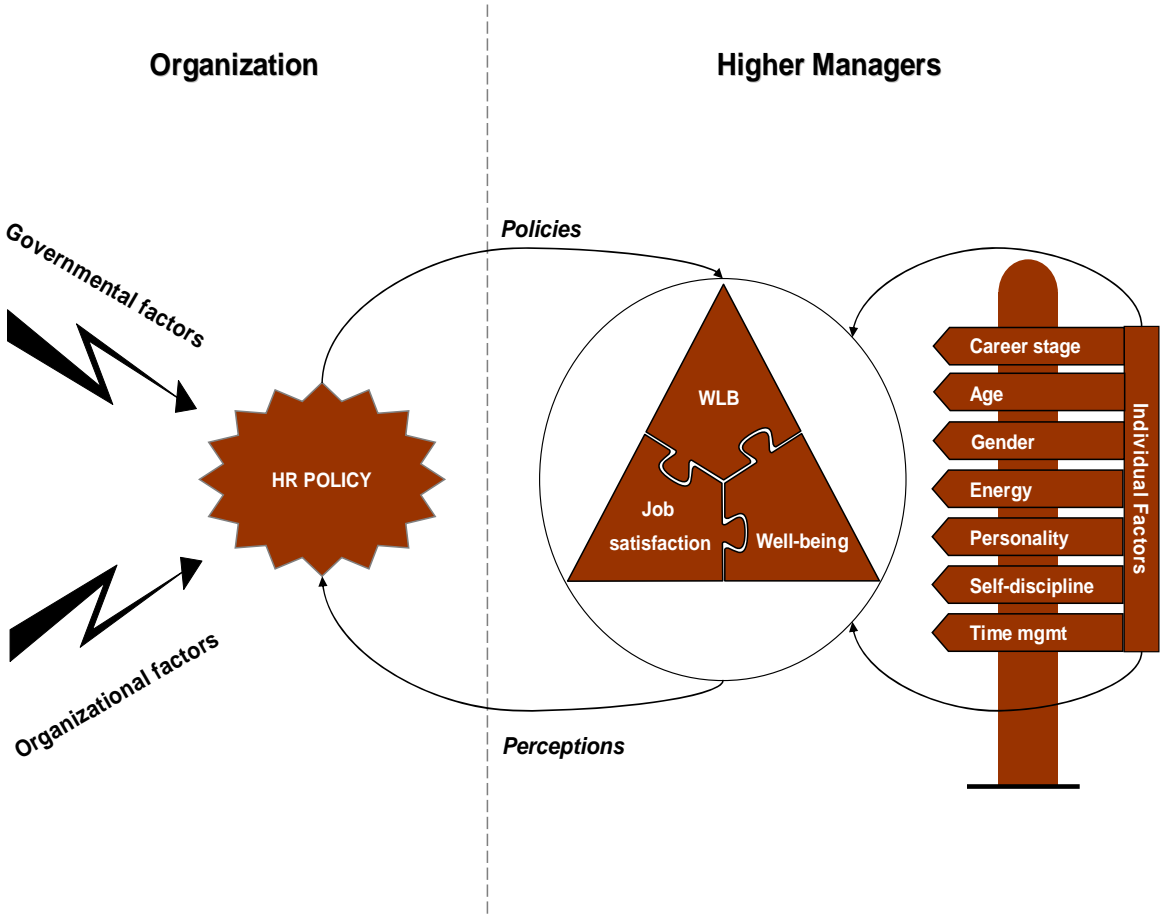
Chris and Carol, who work in organization C, valued the most the variety of work, meaningfulness of job, and the work itself. They marked the flexibility to balance work-life issues as number 5 (Chris) and 11 (Carol). The HR manager answered that the most important satisfaction factors for their higher management is the job security, salary, the job itself, support and training. Here, we could observe a mismatch between the respondents' perceptions.

In organization D, David and Diana have valued the most the work itself, the meaningfulness of job, and autonomy and independence. The flexibility to balance work-life issues was ranked 10 by David and 5 by Diana. The HR manager pointed out that "everyone wants to be seen and heard", meaningfulness of the job and the contribution to overall company performance. *"This is more important than the salary."*

The overall results suggest that the meaningfulness of the job and the issues related to the job contents and communication are valued the most by the managers. In most of the case, the HR managers understood the needs of their management. In organization C the mismatch could be caused by the lack of communication with the managers on regular basis. The work-life balance issues do not seem to be unimportant to managers. All of them ranked them in the middle of the job satisfaction factors scale. On the contrary, the results suggest that the job security is not anymore considered a key job satisfaction factor. Only in case of Brian, the career and salary was pointed out as important job satisfaction factor. This might be a consequence of the generation shift and the changes in attitudes of younger workforce.

Below (Figure 4), our findings are summarized in a model of fit between higher managers' perceptions and the organizational HR policies. The model addresses the governmental, organizational and individual factors and their relationships, and reflects the previous analysis of our findings.

Figure 4: The model of fit between higher managers' perceptions and the organizational HR policies



6 Concluding remarks

“Do you love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.”

Benjamin Franklin

From our study, it became apparent that the HR policies in terms of work-life balance mostly concentrate on individuals who have families with small children. Moreover, health, reduction of the number of sick-leaves, increase in gender equality, and parental leaves were frequently addressed in the HR practices. The flexible working arrangements were used as one of the tools to facilitate the managers to combine their work and private life. This study has explored the factors that influence the higher managers in four companies in Sweden. The findings might be further used by researchers focusing on this subject area. We are aware that in case the research would be conducted in different country, the results might be completely different. However, the findings might be valuable for organizations that face similar labour market conditions as Swedish ones. Further, some of the findings seem to be in line with previous research on the WLB topic and therefore we believe that they could serve as valuable foundation for further research. The key findings of our study follow.

Firstly, we have found out that the higher managers feel that the responsibility for balancing the WLB issues rests primarily on their shoulders. They do not expect any support from the organizations in terms of WLB – they believe it is their own responsibility to manage their time effectively and control themselves in terms of amount of work. However, all of them report the workload and pressures posed on them to be high, especially during some phases or periods of the year. Also the researched organizations seem to perceive the dilemma faced by WLB as one-way approach, which means that organizations experience the issue to be more a problem of individuals, which is then influencing them. They have pursued several attempts to improve the work-life balance of individuals in their HR policies and introduced flexible working hours, which might help the individuals; however still is somewhat one-sided and does not reach the essence of the whole problem. We completely agree with Bird (2006) that one of the core ideas of WLB is that it is a mutual cooperation between the organization and an individual. This further suggests that the awareness in practice has not yet reached the level of the research and that it is much to do to catch up with the needs the current society has.

Secondly, with the technological advancements, the whole nature of the work has changed, which has further influenced the overall life of individuals in both positive and negative ways. The mobile phones and information technologies made it possible to work from home and to be reachable anywhere at anytime. Bringing work home has become much easier than before and therefore the boundaries between work and non-work have become unclear. Our findings suggest, that all of the managers bring work home to more or less higher extent. In many times they do not even realize that it might negatively impact the well-being of other family members. We would like to encourage further research in this area as our study does not include the issues of WLB on family level.

Thirdly, even though only one of the respondents belongs into the ‘Generation X’ group, from his answers as well as from the answers of HR managers, we observed that the shifts in attitudes among younger people also exist within the Swedish workforce. The younger generations of managers seem to be less willing to take work home and work during their free time, for example during the weekends. The rest of the respondents admitted to be working during the weekend on regular basis, especially the checking of e-mails on Sundays and preparing for the next week seems to be a common practice.

Last but not least, we strived to explain the relationship between the WLB, job satisfaction and well-being. Their interdependence is rather significant; in fact we suggest that they cannot

exist separately from each other. Disturbances in one of these domains generate imbalance in the other domains as well. Therefore, in order to reach the balance between their work and private life, both the managers and the organizations that employ them, need to be aware that they have to take care of the 'order' within the well-being and job satisfaction domains as well.

In case an organization Cares about the job satisfaction of its workforce and supports also family-friendly policies, which facilitate the combination of work and personal life of the higher managers, it may raise positive feelings both at work and outside work, which may lead to higher creativity and better job performance. Moreover, happy managers, through functioning as prototypical group members and symbols for their co-workers, have high impacts on working environment.

The research question of this study "What are the factors influencing the work-life balance of higher managers and how do these factors further affect higher managers' overall well-being and job satisfaction?" as well as the aim have been answered both in the analysis of the findings and in the overall conclusions. Moreover, we believe that the model presented at the end of analysis has contributed to the clarity of our findings to a great extent.

Concerning the further research on the topic, there are many unexplored research areas, which are waiting to be investigated. We, personally, would be interested in further research in terms of differences between industries, cultures and also age groups. Also a comparison of expectations of higher managers and the rest of the employees in terms of HR policies would be an interesting study subject, which could take advantage of the results of our study.

7 Truth criteria

7.1 Practical applicability

Firstly, it should be stressed that the purpose of our study was not to create any concrete tool or tools with which the issue being studied could be improved. The aim of it was rather to provide deeper knowledge about the factors which have impacts on well-being and job satisfaction of individuals (managers) in terms of their work-life balance. We believe that the findings of our study provide readers with relatively versatile view of current situation in four organizations. Even though the study can not be stated as representative, the results offers reliable information of issue being studied and furthermore, are seen as useful to take into consideration in any organization. Based on this we believe that our study is applicable in practise.

Furthermore, as the topic of our study has recently stirred a fierce debate, we also claim that our findings are for high interest for many people. The individual who will benefit the most from our study are the HR managers due to their central role in this discussion. However, as the issue is relevant and topical for any individual being employed, we believe that the findings arouse interest also in larger extent. Although the findings would not be applied in practise in every case, they most certainly make readers to consider they own balance between work and leisure – this is the indirect purpose of our study as we experience that overall well-being is essential for any individual to pay attention to.

7.2 Credibility

Issues such as validity, reliability and generalizability are essential to consider at the design stage of research; they are the most important criteria while evaluating a research. As the further mentioned terms are more typical for positivists, we apply these ‘measures’ by using softer approaches, which are more known among non-positivist researchers. (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 114) Due to this fact we approach the issues through the following questions: “*Are the findings really what they appear to be about; has the researcher gained full access to knowledge and meanings of respondents?*” (Saunders et al., 1997, p. 81-82, Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 115) and “*How believable are the findings?; Do the findings apply to other contexts and at other time?; has the investigator allowed his or her values to intrude to a high degree?*” (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 35).

Our thesis is based on a careful design. We believe that thorough planning in the beginning of a study is a necessary procedure to take care of for any academic research. By having clear guidelines of how to carry out a study, and furthermore, to write a thesis, provided us with a better understanding of our upcoming work as whole.

The careful selecting of a research method was our foundation in achieving reliable findings. The questionnaires, which were created by basing the questions on the theory of our thesis, ensure the ‘fit’ between the theory and reality. (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 115) In addition, by providing respondents with the information about the purpose of our study before the interview by an e-mail and repeating the main issues at the interview moment, we made sure that all the participants were aware of our study and what it handles about. As the interviews took place as face-to-face meetings it was also possible for us to observe that our questions have been understood and in contrary, make sure that we have not misunderstood the respondents. The transcription of the interviews further minimized the errors and served as helpful material while creating empirical part of the study.

As our method was that of interviewing people, and settings under which the study was conducted did not need any special arrangements, we believe that our study is replicable and

its results are comparable with the outcomes of similar studies. (Remenyi et al., 1998, p. 115) Taking into consideration the topic of our study and the fact that there are big differences in HR practices of companies and natures of industries, the results between different studies may vary in a great extent. Furthermore, as the study of us was focusing on individuals and their personal ways of experiencing the balance between work and life, the new results are more likely to bring new perspectives to the issue. However, this is only seen as positive as our study represents a small part of the potential target population.

In general, the results of our study are comparable and the study is possible to reproduce; this fact has also been taken into account by stating the results in the empirical part so clear and in readable form than possible. As addressed in our preconception, in the methodology part, we experience that a 'healthy' amount of a researcher's bias is only beneficial for a study. However, it should be highly stressed that by that statement we do not mean that the results should not be objective; the context of the results has not been interfered in any means.

7.3 Limitations of the study

As we perceived the topic of our study as a very interesting subject area to research we would have preferred to extend the study to concern more organizations and more participants. Also, a deeper investigation of the factors prevailing on individual level would have lighten up the fundamental factors, which determine how an individual experiences the surrounding environment and furthermore, provide with better understanding of the factors directing individuals' behaviour. However, by taking into account the limited time and other resources, it was necessary to draw appropriate lines at it and narrow the study to concern the issues which are shown in this thesis.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide – HR managers

1. How do you perceive organization X as a place to work?
2. What is the ratio between men and women in organization X? What do you do to achieve gender equality?
3. Can you describe the reward and benefit systems that organization X offers to its employees? What is the evolution of these systems? How often are they reconsidered?
4. How do you decide which employee receives which reward/benefit? Could you elaborate more on the situation in higher management? How would you describe managers' expectations regarding the structure of bonuses and benefits? Do they differ and how from those of the rest of the employees?
5. Could you tell us how do you handle the issue of balance between work and private life of your employees in your HR policy? In which form? How often do you reconsider and make changes to your HR policy? What were the latest changes concerning WLB? How do you see the future development of WLB?
6. Does the Swedish government support the WLB policies sufficiently?
7. How and how often do you examine what the managers' expectations are towards having a balanced work life? What types of questions are asked? How do you analyze and further use the results?
8. Did significant downsizing take place during the 1990's or recently? Could you describe whether there have been any changes in managers' preferences as a consequence of a generation shift? In what way has the workload put on managers changed? What type of pressure is the higher management in organization X exposed to?
9. How many hours per week on average do members of higher management work? How often do the higher managers work during weekends? Do you know if the higher managers take work home, skip lunch or other breaks because of the work overload? Are the higher managers obliged to be available constantly (i.e. be reachable on their working mobile phone)?
10. Are there any managers at the moment on long-term sick leave? Do you know the reason? Have you noticed a change in the nature of sick leaves during the past years?
11. Do you offer any flexible and part-time working arrangements to your managers? Which ones? (Can the managers choose their working time?)
12. Please, state 5 types of job satisfaction factors you think are the most important for the managers. How do you measure job satisfaction of your managers?

Appendix B: Interview guide – higher managers

Background information:

Gender, age, marital status, children (live at home, live away from home)

No. of years of employment in the company:

No. of years of employment in the current position:

1. Do you like your job?
2. Is this your dream job?
3. What do you expect from a company where you work?
4. What kind of benefits do you receive from Organization X?
5. Do you think that your salary is in balance with the amount of work you do?
6. How often are you asked by your employer to describe feelings about your job and working environment? What kind of questions are you asked? Does your feedback have any impact?
7. How do you perceive Organization X as a place to work for? (Do you like the working conditions, working environment?)
8. How many hours per week do you spend at work?
9. When do you come and leave work every day?
10. How many breaks do you have during the day and how long are they? (In reality, not the official amount)
11. Can you choose your working hours? Can you describe how do you use the flexible working hours?
12. Are you satisfied with your work time?
13. Do you ever feel overload of work? How often?
14. Do you receive feedback on your work results? How often?
15. Who do you talk to when you have any wishes or problems related to work?
16. How intense would you describe the pressure put on you at work?
17. Are you forced to skip lunch or other breaks because of the work duties?
18. Do you often feel tired during and after work?
19. How often do you feel stressed at work?
20. Have you been on a sick leave recently? Was it a short or a long-term one? Was it stress-related?
21. Do you think you are efficient?
22. Would you like to spend less time in work?
23. Do you work at home?
24. Do you have your work mobile phone on after you quit work? When you are on holidays do you have your work mobile phone turned on? Do you carry it with you everywhere?
25. Do you check your e-mail regularly on holidays? How often?
26. Are you always off during the weekends? How often does it happen that you work during the weekend?
27. Do you stop thinking about work when you leave the office?
28. Do you think that you have enough time to spend with your family, friends, your hobbies, sports?
29. How does Organization X help you in balancing your work and leisure?
30. Do you feel sufficient support in order to joint your work and private life? How does the company support you?
31. Can you name 5 job satisfaction factors that are most important for you?
32. If you could change something in your work conditions in order to improve your work-life balance what would be on your 'wish list'?

Appendix C: The 21 job satisfaction factors (Source: Babcock, 2005)

Autonomy and independence

Benefits

Career advancement opportunities

Career development opportunities

Communication between employees and senior management

Compensation/pay

Contribution of work to organization's business goals

Feeling safe in the work environment

Flexibility to balance work/life issues

Job security

Job-specific training

Management recognition of employee job performance

Meaningfulness of job

Networking

Opportunities to use skills/abilities

Organization's commitment to professional development

Overall corporate culture

Relationship with co-workers

Relationship with immediate supervisor

The work itself

Variety of work

Appendix D: Job satisfaction factors of higher managers

JOB SATISFACTION FACTORS

	Adam	Alice	Brian	Bridget	Chris	Carol	David	Diana
Autonomy and independence	3	8	5	8	2	9	4	4
Benefits	19	20	6	13	16	14	19	21
Career advancement opportunities	18	7	3	11	17	15	18	18
Career development opportunities	7	11	4	6	9	13	17	12
Communication between employees and senior management	17	15	8	14	18	12	8	10
Compensation/pay	16	10	2	9	15	16	11	17
Contribution of work to organization's business goals	5	2	7	16	8	1	7	8
Feeling safe in the work environment	21	19	20	17	20	17	21	16
Flexibility to balance work/life issues	8	14	9	5	5	11	10	5
Job security	20	16	21	19	21	18	20	20
Job-specific training	9	17	19	12	19	12	16	14
Management recognition of employee job performance	15	6	18	7	14	19	12	7
Meaningfulness of job	1	1	1	1	4	2	2	1
Networking	10	13	17	18	6	8	13	19
Opportunities to use skills/abilities	12	3	16	15	12	10	15	6
Organization's commitment to professional development	11	12	13	20	10	3	14	3
Overall corporate culture	6	18	12	21	13	6	5	15
Relationship with co-workers	4	4	14	2	7	7	3	9
Relationship with immediate supervisor	14	5	15	4	11	20	9	11
The work itself	13	21	11	10	1	4	1	2
Variety of work	2	9	10	3	3	5	6	13