

**Experience of work-life interaction in the mining industry: A
phenomenological study.**

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Magister Commercii in Industrial Psychology at the
North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus)

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November 2006

Potchefstroom

COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The editorial style as well as the references referred to in this mini-dissertation follow the format prescribed by the Publication Manual (5th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Potchefstroom) to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The editorial style specified by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (which agrees largely with the APA style) is used, but the APA guidelines were followed in constructing tables.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a year! What an honour to have been part of the Industrial Psychology Masters' class 2006! This year has by far been the biggest learning experience of my life. A year filled with challenges, and the biggest challenge of all, the completion of this dissertation! This would not have been possible without the unconditional help, motivation, and guidance of the following people, to whom words cannot express my gratitude:

- Dr. Karina Mostert, my supervisor. Thank you for your guidance and willingness to share your knowledge to my benefit.
- Eileen Koekemoer, who was responsible for the co-coding of the transcribed interviews amidst the busy schedule of her PhD studies.
- All the mining employees who participated in this research. Thank you for your openness in sharing your work-life experiences with me.
- Marilu Greyling, for your professional language editing of this dissertation.
- My family and friends who supported me throughout this year.

Lastly, but most important, my heavenly Father for holding my hand through this year and giving me strength and endurance to complete my studies.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Experience of work-life interaction in the mining industry: A phenomenological study.

Key terms: Work-life interaction, experience, causes, antecedents, consequences, strategies, language differences, mining industry, phenomenological.

Hardly any research has been done on work-life interaction (WLI) in the mining industry in South Africa. Mining is a high-risk profession and the custom of reducing the occurrence of morbidity and inhumanity in these industries must be gainfully considered. Many of the individuals who work in the mining industry are shift workers. Individuals who are working shifts often appear to have little time for non-work related commitments. Their families, personal health, socialising with friends, maintenance of their households and hobbies do not receive the necessary attention, which cause an imbalance of work and life.

The general objective of this research was to study the experience of WLI of two cultural groups (Afrikaans and Setswana-speaking individuals) in the mining industry and more specifically, to determine certain antecedents, consequences and strategies used with regards to WLI. A non-probability purposive voluntary sample of 25 mineworkers was taken from the Northern Cape Province. Participants consisting of males and females were stratified in terms of language (Afrikaans and Setswana). Data collection for this research consisted of a pilot study, qualitative interviews and field notes. The data was transcribed verbatim and checked by independent researchers. Content analysis was used to analyse the data.

It was found that Afrikaans males, Setswana males and Setswana females experienced pressure and stress at work, where the Afrikaans females did not have that same experience. Several antecedents (e.g., pressure at work, heavy workload, stress, and family obligations) that led to definite consequences (e.g., lack of quality time for self and family, physical and emotional strains, and low levels of productivity), as well as the strategies (e.g., prioritising, time management, communication and planning) which the different language groups use to cope with their work-life interaction were revealed during interviews. The results also confirmed that there were some major differences between Afrikaans and Setswana-speaking individuals in terms of their experiences of work-life interaction.

Recommendations were made for the organisation and for future research.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Belewenis van die interaksie tussen werk en persoonlike lewe in die mynindustrie: A fenomenologiese studie.

Sleuteltermes: Werk-persoonlike lewe interaksie, belewenis, oorsake, agtergrond, gevolge, strategieë, taalverskille, mynindustrie, fenomenologies.

In Suid-Afrika is daar bykans geen navorsing gedoen oor die interaksie tussen werk- en persoonlike lewe nie. Mynbou is 'n hoë risiko professionele en die gewoonte om die verskynsel van neerslagtigheid/depressie en onmenslikheid in hierdie industrie te voorkom moet daadwerklik aandag kry. Baie individue wat in die mynbou-industrie werk, is skofwerkers. Dit wil voorkom of individue wat skofte werk gewoonlik min tyd het vir nie-werkverwante verpligtinge. Hulle families, persoonlike gesondheid, vriende, instandhouding van hul huise en stokperdjies verkry nie die nodige aandag nie. Dit veroorsaak 'n wanbalans tussen werk- en persoonlike lewe.

Die algemene doelwit van hierdie studie was om navorsing te doen aangaande die belewenis van die interaksie tussen werk- en persoonlike lewe van twee kultuurgroepe (Afrikaans- en Setswanaspreekende individue) in die mynindustrie en meer spesifiek, om sekere oorsake, gevolge en strategieë wat gebruik word, te ondersoek. 'n Doelgerigte vrywillige niewaarskynlikheid-steekproef van 25 mynwerkers in die Noord-Kaap Provinsie is geneem. Respondente wat uit mans en vrouens bestaan is volgens taal (Afrikaans en Setswana) gestratifiseer. Die dataversameling het bestaan uit 'n loodsstudie, kwalitatiewe onderhoude en veldnotas. Die data is getranskribeer en nagegaan deur onafhantlike navorsers. Inhoudsanalise is gebruik om data te analiseer. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die belewenis van werk- en persoonlike lewe in die mynindustrie te ondersoek.

Daar is gevind dat Afrikaanse en, Setswana mans en Setswana vrouens druk en stres ervaar by die werk, teenoor die Afrikaanse vrouens wat nie dieselfde ervaar het nie. Verskeie oorsake (bv. werksdruk, werkslading, stres en familieverpligtinge), asook strategieë (bv. prioritisering, tydsbestuur, kommunikasie en beplanning) wat die onderskeie taalgroepe toepas om die interaksie tussen hul werk- en persoonlike lewe te hanteer, is gedurende die onderhoude ondersoek. Daar is bevind dat daar wel groot verskille tussen Afrikaans- en

Setswanasprekende individue se belewenis van die interaksie tussen hul werk en persoonlike lewe is.

Aanbevelings is gemaak vir die organisasie sowel as vir toekomstige navorsing.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the experience of Work-Life Interaction (WLI) of employees working in the mining environment in the Northern Cape Province. This chapter consists of a problem statement, general and specific research objectives, and a discussion of the research method as well as an overview of the chapters.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Twenty-first century companies are extremely competitive, expensive and demanding and as a result, employees and management are under constant pressure to reach higher targets (Rothmann, Steyn, & Mostert, 2005). The challenges employees face in meeting demands of the work and family sphere have become more frequent and increasingly more complex (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Apart from reaching the normal deadlines, additional mental and emotional efforts in the workplace are often demanded of employees and the number of different roles in life that employees hold (i.e., spouse, parent, friend, caretaker) are seldom taken in consideration (Geurts, Rutte, & Peeters, 1999). Employees have to juggle welfare, activities and relationships outside work while still striving to meet rising demands in the workplace (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). Individuals also experience more inter-role conflict as they try to cope with the demands of their work and personal life (Olsen-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006). The difficulty of trying to create a positive and balanced interaction between work and personal life often puts strain on the individual and can have negative implications for his/her work (i.e., turnover, absenteeism, reduced performance) and in his/her personal life (poor physical and psychological health, decreased life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, family satisfaction and dissatisfaction with leisure activities) (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003).

The subject of Work-Life Interaction (WLI) has sustained to attract trendy media and stern research attention worldwide (Kirrane & Buckley, 2004). Modernising trends such as globalising influences, economic growth and equal employment opportunities are only a few that have led to a growing concentration on the interaction between work and personal life

(Kirrane & Buckley, 2004). Globalisation of the economy has for example had an impact on the flexibility of work time schedules, where employees have to work long hours, overtime and during weekends. Besides work, employees are also confronted with certain demands in their personal life. As a result, numerous of their everyday problems stem from job responsibilities that are mismatched with home or family responsibilities (Geurts et al., 1999).

The work environment is also changing; mainly in terms of how mentally difficult workers perceive their jobs to be (Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, & Houtman, 2003). A representative sample of the European workforce has shown that a growing number of employees, particularly in the Netherlands, reported working at high speed “most of the time”. As a result, there is confirmation that employees are facing greater pressures at home and at work because of the increase of dual-earner couples as well as changes in the nature of the workplace (Geurts et al., 2003). Several trends and demographic changes have also taken place that has an effect on the interaction between work and personal life (e.g., social-economical status, marital status and parental status).

The continuous rise in the rate of married women entering the labour market worldwide as well as in South Africa, affects the family life extensively (Smit, 2001). The dual-earner family is now a well-established social phenomenon. Findings have revealed that work-life imbalance is still tightly rooted due to the continuing limitations of ordinary childcare facilities, and the restraints forced on mothers by deprived part-time and non-standard work opportunities (Houston, 2005). Research shows that even when working, married women still do more household tasks than men (Kosseck, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). Fathers too have it difficult because while they seek to make a greater contribution to family life, their efforts can be blocked and well-established in linear career trajectories which provide no flexibility (Houston, 2005). Married couples with or without children or single parents are likely to be confronted by conflicts in their work and family domain (Karatepe & Baddar, 2006). High demands are also made on the commitment and the time of dual-earner couples and participation in the labour market of both husband and wife can have an enormous influence on their marriage and family life (Smit, 2001). The dual-earner couple may also experience relationship problems due to the husband’s feelings towards his wife’s participation in the labour market (Smit, 2001).

The use of laptops and cell phones are also a major trend that especially affects the personal life of employees. Extended working hours and new technology enable employees to work wherever and whenever they want (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). This has intended that the physical and chronological borders of work have changed to the supposed that work progressively has a greater influence on personal and family life (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006).

Several studies on WLI have been done worldwide, especially in Europe, which has yielded considerable evidence of its role in organisational wellness (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). However, a relative limited number of scientifically sound studies about WLI have been conducted in South Africa. Many of the studies have severe limitations, including poorly designed studies, a lack of sophisticated statistical analyses as well as deficiently controlled studies (Mostert, 2006). Furthermore, the majority of the scales used to measure WLI had reduced reliability coefficients and not any of the scales were validated for diverse demographical groups (particularly diverse language groups) (Mostert, 2006).

A major limitation of WLI research in South Africa is that international models and measurements are used. It is, however, difficult to apply international research in the South African context, due to the unique circumstances in the South African workplace (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). These unique circumstances refer to the diverse multicultural work environment of South Africa. Diverse societies and social ethics create a management challenge in a diverse working environment. Individuals are socialised in dissimilar cultures (languages) and communities, which result in diverse and often unique value and belief systems. These individuals from different backgrounds end up working for the same business (Claassen, Schepers, & Roodt, 2004). According to Kotze (2005), the different cultures and languages of employees, changes in beliefs and value systems as well as the greater significance of knowledge workers, may influence the quality of employees' work-life. The aforementioned emphasises the need for WLI research unique to the South African context and the need to determine how different cultures in South Africa experience WLI.

Work-family conflict is a major cause of stress for employees and organisations alike, and has been correlated to negative consequences, some of them severe (Theunissen, van Vuuren, & Visser, 2003). Personality characteristics (i.e., neurosis, extraversion, personal coping and Type A behaviour), family characteristics (i.e., family-work conflict has been particularly related to several demanding aspects of the family situation) and job characteristics (i.e., the

amount of time required by the job) are some of the main causes of work-life interference (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003).

Above-mentioned causes can lead to several consequences, including physical (e.g., headache, back pain, upset stomach, tiredness, light-headedness and chest pains), psychological (e.g., stress and burnout), behavioural (e.g., increased use of stimulants such as coffee, cigarettes and alcohol) and organisational (e.g., turnover, absenteeism and reduced performance) (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003).

These negative consequences emphasise the significance of further understanding the interrelationship between the work and family domain (Theunissen et al., 2003). There can be additional or different antecedents and consequences for workers in South Africa, because of the diversity and unique circumstances. Antecedents and consequences can be dissimilar for each language group. It is therefore also important to investigate which strategies South African employees (in different language groups) use to manage WLI. South African employees in general, as well as individuals from each language group can also use different types of strategies to deal with WLI issues. It therefore seemed important to investigate the antecedents and consequences of WLI as well as strategies that South African employees use to manage WLI.

This study focuses on the WLI of individuals working in the mining industry in the Northern Cape (South Africa), where Afrikaans and Setswana are the two languages mostly spoken. Hardly any research has been done on WLI in the mining industry in South Africa. Mining is a high-risk profession and the custom of reducing the occurrence of morbidity and inhumanity in these industries must be gainfully considered (Sun, Zhang, & Yang, 1997). Many of the individuals who work in the mining industry are shift workers. Individuals who are working shifts often appear to have little time for non-work related commitments (Sardiwalla, 2003). Their families, personal health, socialising with friends, maintenance of their houses and vehicles and their hobbies do not receive the necessary attention, which cause an imbalance of work and life (Sardiwalla, 2003).

The following research questions are formulated based on the above-mentioned description of the research problem:

- How do employees working in the mining environment experience WLI?
- What are the main dimensions in the lives of mineworkers that are in interaction with one another?
- What are the major antecedents and consequences of WLI for employees working in the mining environment?
- Which strategies do mineworkers utilise in order to deal with WLI?
- Do language groups differ regarding certain aspects of WLI (in terms of the experience, dimensions, antecedents, consequences and strategies)?

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives can be divided into a general and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective is to investigate the experience of WLI among employees working in the mining environment.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives include the following:

- To determine how employees working in the mining environment experience WLI.
- To determine the main dimensions in the lives of mine workers that are in interaction with one another.
- To determine the major antecedents and consequences of WLI for employees working in the mining environment.
- To determine the strategies that mineworkers utilise in order to deal with WLI.
- To determine if language groups differ regarding certain aspects of WLI (in terms of the experience, dimensions, antecedents, consequences and strategies).

1.3 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method consists of a literature review and an empirical study. The results will be presented in the form of a research article. The research design, participants and procedures, data collection, data analyses, and ethical aspects will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

1.3.1 Research design

For the purposes of this research, a qualitative design from a phenomenological approach was used to describe the essence or the lived human experience of WLI. The objective was to investigate the experience of WLI among employees working in the mining environment.

1.3.2 Participants and procedure

The participants are mineworkers living and working in the Northern Cape Province. The population was stratified in terms of language (Afrikaans and Setswana), gender (males vs. females), marital status (married vs. single) and parental status (with children vs. without children). A non-probability purposive voluntary sample of 25 individuals (13 Afrikaans and 12 Setswana) was interviewed.

A letter with information regarding the research was given to the HR manager. The information included a problem statement and reasons for research. The HR manager was also selected as intermediary. The HR manager signed a letter of consent to act as a mediator in the research. The mediator's role was to act as a 'go between' and to identify employees that were willing to participate in the research. The criteria for selection of participants were:

- Employees working and living in the Northern Cape Province.
- Employees whose first language is either Afrikaans or Setswana.
- Employees working in a mining environment for at least two or more years.
- Employees willing to participate in the research (and willingly give written informed consent) after having been informed about the purpose and procedures of the research.
- Employees who are able to understand and communicate in English, Afrikaans or Setswana and are prepared to have a tape-recorded interview with the researcher.

1.3.3 Data collection

The data collection for this research consists of interviews, a pilot study, and field notes. The trustworthiness of the research as well as the data will also be discussed.

1.3.3.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were held with the participants. The interview was held at a private location where the participant felt most comfortable. Attention was given to the atmosphere of the room (e.g., no cell phones, telephones, interruptions). The researcher who conducted the interviews received training in interviewing skills and techniques by an expert during a workshop, which was held in April 2006. These skills and techniques were used during interviews. Each participant was asked three non-directive questions:

- How do you experience the interaction between work and all facets in your personal life?
- What are the antecedents and consequences of the interaction between your work and your personal life?
- Which strategies do you use to deal with the interaction between work and personal life?

The participants were asked to complete a short biographical questionnaire on gender, qualification, race, language, marital, and parental status. Before the interview commenced, the use of the tape recorder had been explained to the participant. The participant was put at ease and assured that the interview was only for research purposes and that he/she would remain anonymous in the study.

The researcher made use of the following techniques during the interview:

- **Paraphrasing:** It is a verbal response in which the researcher enhanced meaning by stating the participant's words in another form with similar meaning.
- **Minimal verbal responses:** A verbal response that correlated with occasional nodding, e.g., “mm-mm, yes, I see”, showed the participant that you were listening.
- **Clarification:** This technique was used to get clarity on unclear statements, e.g., “Could you tell me more about...” “You seem to be saying...”

- Reflection: Reflected on something important that the person had just said in order to get him to expand on that idea: “So, you believe that suicide is sinful?”
- Summary: Reviewed the participants ideas, thoughts and feelings verbalised to see if you truly understood what the participant was saying:” So what you’re saying is....”.

1.3.3.2 Pilot study

An expert evaluated the appropriateness of the interview schedule. During the training (workshop in April 2006), the questions that were asked during the interview were clarified, refined and adjusted accordingly with the help of an expert. The research design and questions were tested with a small number of participants in order to come to grips with a number of the practical aspects of establishing permission, getting in touch with participants, conducting the interview, and becoming aware of the researcher's own level of interviewing skills.

1.3.3.3 Field notes

Directly after an interview, the field notes were transcribed. The field notes contained both empirical observation and interpretations. The researcher transcribed her emotions, preconceptions, expectations and prejudices.

1.3.3.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a measure to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research. Describe methods used to ensure credibility. The four main measures are credibility, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Also confidentiality and anonymity are ensured by not revealing the identity of participants or instances where data was collected anywhere in the research. Only the researcher and study leader have access to the participants' information. After the audiotaped interviews were transcribed, the participants' names were omitted from that point on.

1.3.4 Data analysis

The data was transcribed verbatim and checked by independent researchers. Content analysis was used to analyse the data. The following steps were used (Giorgi, 1985; Kerlinger, 1986):

- The first step in the content analysis was to universalise the context that needed to be analysed (for example the entire set of verbal answers of the participants), to be defined and to be categorised.
- The second step was to determine the subunits of the analysis, namely words and themes. The researcher read the responded notes in order to form an overall picture. Afterwards, the researcher once again read it in order to determine the themes. The words that were used by the participant were the smallest analysis that could be made. A sub-theme is usually a sentence and is more difficult but also more useful to analyse. Sub-themes can be combined in order to determine the themes. The analyses of the information were continued until repeated themes were identified.
- The third step was to free the data from unnecessary information and to determine the meaning of the rest of the subunits by linking it to the whole picture.
- The fourth step consisted of the conversion of the concrete language of the participants, into scientific language and concepts. The precise words of the participants were used in support, based on gained insights, integration and synthesis was then done.

1.3.5 Ethical aspects

If the participant at any time felt uncomfortable or unwilling to proceed with the interview, he/she had the right to stop and terminate his/her involvement in the research. Participating in the research was voluntary and participants had the right to decide to participate or not. The researcher at no time forced any participant to continue an interview when the participant was unwilling. All interviews were recorded in order for the researcher to recall the conversation. These taped recorded interviews were only available to the researcher and the study leader. After the conversation had been transcribed the tapes were terminated. The information given by the participants during the interviews was kept anonymous and confidential at all times. Only the researcher and study leader have access to the information. The researcher was

objective while conducting the interviews and the original data or observations were under no circumstances changed.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The experience of WLI, antecedents, consequences and strategies are discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 consists of the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this research.

1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focussed on the problem statement, research objectives, participants and procedures, data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical aspects of this study. This was followed by a short overview of Chapters 2 and 3.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Experience of work-life interaction in the mining industry: A phenomenological study

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to study the experience of work-life interaction in the mining industry. A non-probability purposive voluntary sample of 25 mineworkers was taken from the Northern Cape Province. Participants consisting of males and females were stratified in terms of language (Afrikaans and Setswana). The data collection for this research consisted of a pilot study, qualitative interviews and field notes. Several antecedents (e.g., pressure at work, heavy workload, stress, and family obligations) that led to definite consequences (e.g., lack of quality time for self and family, physical and emotional strains, and low levels of productivity), as well as the strategies (e.g., prioritising, time management, communication, and planning) different language groups used in order to cope with their work-life interaction were explored during the interviews. Finally, it was confirmed that there were some major differences between Afrikaans and Setswana-speaking individuals in terms of their experiences of work-life interaction.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die belewenis van werk- en persoonlike lewe in die mynindustrie te ondersoek. 'n Doelgerigte vrywillige nawaarskynlikheid-steekproef van 25 mynwerkers in die Noord-Kaap Provinsie is geneem. Respondente bestaande uit mans en vroue is volgens taal (Afrikaans en Setswana) gestratifiseer. Die data insameling het bestaan uit 'n loodsstudie, kwalitatiewe onderhoude en veldnotas. Verskeie oorsake (bv. werksdruk, werkslading, stres en familieverpligtinge), asook strategië (bv. priotisering, tydsbestuur, kommunikasie en beplanning) wat die onderskeie taalgroepe toepas om die interaksie tussen hul werk- en persoonlike lewe te hanteer, is gedurende die onderhoude ondersoek. Dit is bevestig dat daar wel groot verskille tussen Afrikaans- en Setswanasprekende individue se belewenis van die interaksie tussen hul werk- en persoonlike lewe is.

The challenges employees face in meeting demands of the work and family sphere have become more frequent and increasingly complex (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Apart from reaching the normal deadlines, extra mental and emotional efforts in the workplace are frequently expected from employees and the number of different roles in life that employees hold (i.e., spouse, parent, friend, caretaker) are seldom taken in consideration (Geurts, Rutte, & Peeters, 1999). Employees have to juggle welfare activities and relationships outside work while at the same time striving to meet rising demands in the workplace (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). Individuals also experience more inter-role conflict as they try to cope with the demands of their work and personal life (Olsen-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006). As a result, work-life conflict can happen in both directions – work demands can interfere with life and life demands can interfere with work (Olsen-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006).

New trends such as globalising influences, economic growth and equal employment opportunities are only a few that have led to a growing concentration on the interaction between work and personal life (Kirrane & Buckley, 2004). Globalisation of the economy has for example had an impact on the flexibility of work time schedules, where employees have to work long hours, overtime and during weekends. In addition, employees are also confronted with certain demands in their personal life. As a result, numerous of their everyday problems stem from job responsibilities that are mismatched with home or family responsibilities (Geurts et al., 1999). Furthermore, the difficulty of trying to create a positive and balanced interaction between work and personal life often puts strain on the individual and can have several negative implications for the organisation (i.e., turnover, absenteeism, reduced performance) and for the employees' own personal life (poor physical and psychological health, decreased life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, family satisfaction and dissatisfaction with leisure activities) (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003).

A major limitation of work-life interaction (WLI) research in South Africa is that international models and measuring instruments are used. It is therefore difficult to apply international research in the South African context, due to the unique circumstances in the South African workplace, such as the diverse multicultural work environment of South Africa (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). Individuals are socialised in dissimilar cultures (languages) and communities, which result in diverse and often unique value and belief systems. According to Kotzé (2005), different cultures and languages, changes in beliefs and value systems as well

as the greater significance that knowledge workers have, may influence the quality of employees' work-life. Furthermore, antecedents and consequences can be dissimilar for each language group. South African employees in general, as well as individuals from each language group, can also use different types of strategies to deal with WLI issues compared to other countries. It therefore seems important to investigate the antecedents and consequences of WLI as well as strategies that different language groups use to manage WLI.

Work-life interaction may differ for males and females, especially when they are married. The continuous rise in the rate of married women entering the labour market world-wide as well as in South Africa, affects the family life extensively (Smit, 2001). The dual-earner family is now a well-established social phenomenon. Findings reveal that work-life imbalance is still tightly rooted due to the continuing limitations of ordinary childcare facilities, and the restraints forced on mothers by deprived part-time and non-standard work opportunities (Houston, 2005). Research shows that even when working, married women still do more household tasks than men (Kosseck, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). Fathers too have a difficult task, because while they seek to make a greater contribution to family life, their efforts can be blocked and well-established in linear career trajectories, which provide no flexibility (Houston, 2005).

This study focuses on the WLI of individuals working in the mining industry in the Northern Cape (South Africa), where Afrikaans and Setswana are the two languages mostly spoken. Hardly any research has been done on WLI in the mining industry in South Africa. Mining is a high-risk profession and the custom of reducing the occurrence of morbidity and inhumanity in these industries must be gainfully considered (Sun, Zhang & Yang, 1997). Many of the individuals who work in the mining industry are shift workers. Individuals who are working shifts often appear to have little time for non-work related commitments (Sardiwalla, 2003). Their families, personal health, socialising with friends, maintenance of their houses and vehicles and their hobbies do not receive the necessary attention, which cause an imbalance of work and life (Sardiwalla, 2003).

The objectives of this research were to:

- 1) investigate how employees in the mining environment experienced WLI;
- 2) determine the main interacting dimensions in the lives of mineworkers;
- 3) determine major strategies that employees used to deal with WLI; and

- 4) determine if males and females and different language groups (i.e., Afrikaans and Setswana) differed in their experiences of WLI.

Theoretical background

In most studies, work and family are visualised as two conflicting domains – work conflicts with family and family conflicts with work. Thus, the most broadly cited definition of work-family conflict states that it is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That conflict occurs when a person's efforts to fulfil a role at work interferes with efforts to fulfil roles outside of work and vice versa (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). However, the majority of individuals believe that in general, work-life balance includes a variety of dimensions, with work and family regarded as the most ordinary, but also conflicting aspects. However, additional dimensions can also play an important role in an individual's life, including social interactions, friendships, physical and emotional health, fitness, spirituality, intellectual enrichment, and community involvement. Greenhaus, Collins, and Shaw (2003) define work-life balance as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in, and equally satisfied with his or her work role and family role.

Although work-life balance is a generally accepted term, there are complications with the concept of balance. Using the term "balance", ignores the possibility that both domains may also influence each other in a constructive way by transferring positive attributes. Lewis and Cooper (2005) state that work-family balance represents a vague concept where work and family life are integrated or harmonious in some way or where work-family balance is seen as a lack of conflict or interference among work and family roles. Achieving balance also implies that one must take away from one area and add to another. Another problem with the term "balance" is that it suggests that work is not part of an individual's life but something separate. This can lead to temporary answers for work-family conflict (Lewis & Cooper, 2005).

Recent research emphasises work-family integration, or more correctly work-life integration/harmonisation, as a more useful definition of the problem (Burke, 2004). Work and family can be equally reinforcing, and individuals can integrate or harmonise their work and family by choosing to keep them fairly part (Lewis & Cooper, 2005). In this study, the

term “work-life interaction” was used to describe the interaction that an individual experienced between his/her work and personal life.

A large percentage of employed workers have serious difficulty in combining obligations in the work domain and home domain (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). According to Geurts and Demerouti, the type of work-home conflict can be based on role characteristics that affect time, strain or behaviour in one domain, but which are incompatible when trying to fulfil the role in the other domain (work vs. home). Three types of work-home conflicts can therefore be identified, namely 1) time-based conflict (i.e., when work and home roles compete for time); 2) strain-based conflict (i.e., when strain in the one role affects performance in another role); and 3) behaviour-based conflict (i.e., when role behaviour in the one domain may be in conflict with expectations of behaviour in the other domain) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Several antecedents of work-life interaction have been identified and include personality characteristics (i.e., neurosis, extraversion, personal coping and Type A behaviour), family characteristics (i.e., family-work conflict has been particularly related to several demanding aspects of the family situation) and job characteristics (i.e., the amount of time required by the job) (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, and Houtman (2003) found that factors at work such as long working hours and pressure at work, could have an influence on individuals' personal lives. Strong and reliable proof had also been provided for quantitative workload (e.g., having various tasks to accomplish with insufficient time). According to Grzywacz and Marks (2000), environmental barriers at work (e.g., pressure at work) and at home (e.g., differences between spouses and family criticism) are connected with higher levels of negative overflow between work and family. However, environmental assets from work (e.g., decision autonomy, support from co-workers and supervisors) and home (e.g., spouse support) will be linked with higher levels of positive overflow between work and family.

Poor interaction between work and personal life can also lead to several negative consequences, including physical consequences (e.g., headache, back pain, upset stomach, tiredness, light-headedness and pain in the chest or in the heart area), psychological consequences (e.g., stress and burnout), behavioural consequences (e.g., increased use of stimulants such as coffee, cigarettes and alcohol) and organisational consequences (e.g., turnover, absenteeism and reduced performance) (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). Furthermore,

Geurts et al. (1999) found that burnout, sleep deprivation and mental distancing were some of the consequences individuals had to face when there was conflict between the work and family domains. A qualitative study conducted by Mageni and Slabbert (2005) found that corporations realised that giving employees additional time off to attend to personal business could be directly associated with higher job satisfaction.

As mentioned before, South Africa is a diverse country with eleven official languages. Therefore, it is probable that different language groups will differ with regard to work-life interaction. Indeed, a recent study by Rost (2006), found that, based on language, there were differences between the levels of negative work-home interference. It appears that Afrikaans and African groups experienced significantly higher levels of negative work-home interference, compared to English-speaking employees. However, Marais (2006) found that Setswana-speaking individuals experienced higher levels of positive work-home interference compared to Afrikaans-speaking individuals.

Relatively few empirical studies were done on the role of coping strategies that individuals used to deal with the interaction between work and personal life (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003). Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) found that active attempts to change the structural and/or personal definition of one's roles were more effective in dealing with work-home conflict than more passive and reactive role behaviour. Kirchmeyer (1993) reported similar findings, but showed that the type of coping strategy played an important role. Strategies that were aimed at changing one's attitude about what demands could realistically be met in both domains seemed to be more effective in coping with high demands from both domains than strategies aimed at changing the attitudes or behaviours of others. Furthermore, prioritising, delegating, support of spouses, and the positive nature of managerial experience were some of the main strategies individuals used in order to cope with WLI (Stoner, Robin, & Russel-Chapin, 2005).

METHOD

Research Design

For the purposes of this research, a qualitative design from a phenomenological approach was used to describe the essence or the lived human experience of WLI. The objective was to investigate the experience of WLI among employees working in the mining environment.

Participants and procedure

The participants were mineworkers living and working in the Northern Cape Province. A non-probability purposive voluntary sample of 25 individuals was interviewed. The population was stratified in terms of language (Afrikaans vs. Setswana) and gender (males vs. females) and consisted of six Afrikaans males, seven Afrikaans females, six Setswana males and seven Setswana females. Although the sample was not stratified in terms of marital and parental status (two variables that can play an important role in the experience of WLI), an effort was made to ensure variation of employees who were married vs. employees who were single, as well as employees who had (young) children vs. employees who had no or older (18+ years) children. The participants were divided into groups according to their different socio-economic status; 1) negotiation level (employees who were on the lower income level); 2) middle management; and 3) management level.

A letter with information regarding the research was given to the HR manager. The information included a problem statement and reasons for the research. The HR manager was also selected as intermediary and signed a letter of consent to act as a mediator in the research. The mediator's role was to act as a 'go between' and to identify employees that were willing to participate in the research. The criteria for selection of participants were 1) employees working and living in the Northern Cape Province; 2) employees whose first language was either Afrikaans or Setswana; 3) employees who had been working in a mining environment for at least two or more years; 4) employees willing to participate in the research (and who gave written informed consent) after they had been informed about the purpose and procedures of the research; and 5) employees that were able to understand and communicate

in either English, Afrikaans or Setswana and were prepared to have a tape-recorded interview with the researcher.

A short biographical questionnaire on the participants' gender, qualification, race, language, marital, and parental status was afterwards given to the participants to complete. Before the interview was conducted, the use of the tape-recorder had been explained to the participant. The participant was put at ease and informed that the interview was only for research purposes and that he/she would remain anonymous in the study.

Table 1 shows the biographical data of the participants.

Table 1

Characteristics of participants (n = 25)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	48,0
	Female	13	52,0
Race	White	8	32,0
	Coloured	5	20,0
	African	12	48,0
Qualification	Grade 12	4	16,0
	Post-matric Certificate	16	64,0
	Degree	2	8,0
	Postgraduate degree	3	12,0
Marital Status	Married	18	72,0
	Single	5	20,0
	Divorced	2	8,0
Parental Status	Children	22	88,0
	None	3	12,0
Years in mining industry	1 – 10 years	16	64,0
	11 – 20 years	7	28,0
	21 – 30 years	1	4,0
	31 – 40 years	1	4,0
Socio-economic level	Negotiation	15	60,0
	Middle management	4	16,0
	Management	6	24,0

According to Table 1, the majority of the participants were female (52,0%), African (48,0%) married (72,0%), and had children (88,0%). Concerning their qualification, 64,0% of the participants had post-matric certificates, most of them (64,0%) had been working in the mining industry between one and ten years, and were on the negotiation level (60,0%) of the socio-economic levels.

Data collection

The data collection for this research consisted of a pilot study, qualitative interviews and field notes. The trustworthiness of the research and data was also an important aspect to consider.

Pilot study

Before the interviews were conducted, an interview schedule was compiled and evaluated for appropriateness by an experienced qualitative researcher with a knowledgeable background of work-life interaction. Pilot interviews were held by the researcher with two participants in order to come to grips with a number of the practical aspects such as obtaining permission, getting in touch with participants and conducting the interview, and becoming aware of her own level of interviewing skills. After these interviews, the questions that were asked during the interviews were refined and adjusted, and problems experienced were clarified.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were held with the participants. The interview was held at a private location where the participant felt most comfortable. Attention was given to the atmosphere of the room (e.g., no cell phones, telephones, interruptions). Each participant was asked three non-directive questions:

- How do you experience the interaction between work and all facets in your personal life?
- What are the major causes and consequences of the interaction between your work and your personal life?
- Which strategies do you use to deal with the interaction between work and personal life?

The researcher made use of paraphrasing (stating the participants words in another form with similar meaning), minimal verbal responses (occasional nodding e.g., “mm mm, yes, I see”), clarification (clarifying unclear statements e.g., “You seem to be saying...”), reflection (reflecting on something important the person had said, in order to get him to expand on the idea), and summarising (reviewing the participants ideas, thoughts and feelings verbalising to see if she truly understood what the participant was saying) techniques during the interviews.

Field notes

Directly after an interview, the researcher sat down and wrote down her impressions. The field notes contained both empirical observation and interpretations. The advantage of field notes was that the researcher noted her emotions, preconceptions, expectations and prejudices, which assisted her in remembering and exploring the process of the interview. The reason for including field notes was to reduce the loss of data during the research.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a measure to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research. Various measures were used to ensure trustworthiness. The four main measures used, were credibility (examination of the truth value of the findings), applicability (transferability of the findings), consistency (ensuring dependability of the findings) and neutrality (not being biased, but objective throughout the study). This was achieved by means of an audit, keeping of the raw material, giving a full description of the research method, applying the same procedure throughout, triangulation, peer examination and the code-recode procedure; as well as by keeping an appropriate distance in order not to influence the research. Confidentiality and anonymity was ensured by not revealing the identity of participants or instances where data was collected anywhere in the research. Only the researchers involved in this study had access to the participants' information. After the audio-taped interviews were transcribed, the participants' names were omitted from that point on.

Data analysis

The data was transcribed verbatim and checked by independent researchers. Content analysis was used to analyse the data. The following steps were used (Giorgi, 1985; Kerlinger, 1986):

- The first step in content analysis was to universalise the context that needed to be analysed (for example the entire set of verbal answers of the participants), to be defined and to be categorised.
- The second step was to determine the sub-units of the analysis, namely words and themes.

The researcher read the responded notes in order to form an overall picture. Afterwards, the researcher once again read it in order to determine the themes. The words used by the participant were the smallest analysis that could be made. A sub-theme is usually a sentence and is more difficult but also more useful to analyse. Sub-themes can be combined in order to determine the themes. The analysis of the information was continued until repeated themes were identified.

- The third step was to free the data from unnecessary information and to determine the meaning of the rest of the subunits by linking it to the whole picture.
- The fourth step consisted of the conversion of the concrete language of the participants into scientific language and concepts. The precise words of the participants were used in support, based on gained insights, integration and synthesis was then done.
- A co-coder was used to ensure the trustworthiness of the content analysis. Data was analysed separately for the four groups (Afrikaans males, Afrikaans females, Setswana males, and Setswana females), to determine if there were any differences in WLI for different language and gender groups.

Ethical aspects

If the participant felt uncomfortable at any time or were unwilling to proceed with the interview, he/she had the right to stop and terminate his involvement in the research. Participation in the research was voluntary and participants had the right to participate or not. The researcher at no time forced any participant to continue an interview when the participant was unwilling. All interviews were recorded in order for the researcher to recall the conversation. These taped-recorded interviews were only available to the researchers involved in the study. After the conversation had been transcribed, the tapes were terminated. The information given by the participants during the interviews was kept anonymous and confidential at all times. The researcher was objective while conducting the interviews and the original data or observations remained unchanged.

RESULTS

The results obtained are shown in table format. The participants were divided into four groups, namely Afrikaans males, Afrikaans females, Setswana males, and Setswana females. The tables consist of main themes identified in the interviews. Each main theme has sub-themes supporting the main themes. The total frequency of responses supporting each theme and sub-theme is revealed in the last column. The themes of the Afrikaans-speaking males are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The Experience of Work-Personal Life Interaction of Afrikaans-Speaking Males

Theme and sub-themes	Frequency (<i>N</i> = 6)
Theme 1 Experiences in the working environment	2,75
a) Heavy workload and occasional pressure	4
b) Pressure from difficult employees	3
c) Expected behaviour at work resulting in emotions being withheld	2
d) Positive aspects of work	2
Theme 2 Causes and consequences from work to personal life	3,2
a) Work demands	2
b) Strain-based consequence for the individual	5
c) Strain-based consequences for the family	4
d) Time-based consequences for the family	3
e) Consequences for hobbies, school and church	2
Theme 3 The interaction between work and personal life	4,5
a) Strive to keep work and personal life separate	4
b) Problematic to keep a balance between work and personal life	5
Theme 4 Strategies to manage and cope with WLI	2,5
a) Communication	3
b) Planning	2
c) Self-awareness	3
d) Exercise and hobbies	2
e) Strategise	3
f) Supportive spouse, healthy marriage and family life	2

Four main themes were identified from the interviews, including experiences in the work place, causes and consequences from work to personal life, interaction between work and personal life, and strategies to manage and cope with WLI. The first theme that is addressed is experiences in the working environment.

Theme 1: Experiences in the working environment

Twenty-first century companies are extremely competitive, expensive and demanding and as a result, employees and management are under constant pressure to reach higher targets (Rothmann, Steyn, & Mostert, 2005). This was also true for Afrikaans-speaking males, who felt that their work environment consisted of a high workload, and who experienced pressure and stress from time to time. They also experienced pressure from employees who could be difficult and negative, responsibilities towards work, exceptional behaviour that was expected from the employer at all times which resulted in the withholding of emotions, and the positive aspects of their work environment. The participants' work had high expectations that needed to be met, which resulted in a heavy workload and occasional pressure for the majority of participants. Occasional pressure occurred when deadlines of certain projects had to be reached. It was only then that the workload got heavier and individuals had to work overtime: *"It is a high intensity work that we are doing, there is no time for failing. You are always busy, it is priority jobs that you work with, project work, no time to spare. You have to put in what is expected of you"; "It is the biggest frustration at work, because you have pressure from the top and from the bottom"*.

In addition to a high workload and pressure, some of the participants who were supervisors or foremen constantly had to deal with difficult subordinates, who put them in a difficult situation by putting pressure on them to satisfy their different needs. Their subordinates (the artisans) put pressure on them and at the same time, they experienced pressure from their line managers from the top: *"Cannot express personal feelings at work, try to always have the same personality at work. Difficult to always be same, everyone has their ups and downs"*. The employer expected exceptional behaviour at all times. Outbursts were not allowed and they had to push their personal emotions aside. This resulted in the individual venting his frustrations on his wife or children at home after work. However, supporting colleagues and better shifts hours were some of the positive aspects of the work environment that were mentioned by two of the participants.

Theme 2: Causes and consequences from work to personal life

Specific demands of work had consequences on the individual and influenced aspects in their personal lives. Apart from reaching the normal deadlines, additional mental and emotional efforts in the workplace are often demanded by employers (Geurts et al., 1999). The majority of participants worked on projects with deadlines, which had to be met at all costs, which lead to long working hours, and working over weekends. The consequence of this was that individuals did not spend a lot of time at home, and missed their children's activities: *"We sometimes get projects that are finalised in short period, then you get projects that can go on for two or three years, I have seen that such big projects affects my family life"*. Work also had an influence on their hobbies, other interests, school and church: *"My farm suffers under the work, I do not always have the time for it"*; *"the farm suffers the most, then the school and everything that goes along with it"*.

Work demands not only had psychological, but also physical strain-based consequences for the individual. *"It influences in terms of stress, physical tense, sometimes when emotions bottle up, you feel it in your shoulders, your back and your mind, there is a constant knocking feeling in your thoughts that says there is something wrong, and sometimes your blood pressure even goes up"*. Both the demands of their work and personal life made it difficult to keep the two domains separate and divide attention between them.

Theme 3: The interaction between work and personal life

Employees often hold a number of different roles in life (i.e., spouse, parent, friend, and caretaker) and have to juggle welfare, actions and relationships outside work while still striving to meet rising demands in the workplace (Mageni & Slabbert, 2005). Most of the participants stated that, ideally, it was best to keep the two domains separate from each other. However, to do that in practice was not simple and very difficult to accomplish. This was confirmed in statements such as *"You can't separate the two"* and *"one struggles to keep a balance"*. The main purpose of keeping the two domains separate was not to burden their family with problems from work, and to be able to give their families their undivided attention after work. This was clear from statements such as *"It is best not to bring your work problems to home, your family does not deserve it"*; *"it is important to maintain a balance"*

and not to bring stress from your personal life to work"; and *"you try to leave problems at work at the end of the day, but is not always that easy"*. To manage this interaction, the participants were asked how they coped with that interaction and which strategies they used. These strategies are discussed in the next theme.

Theme 4: Strategies to manage and cope with WLI

In order to cope with the interaction between their work and personal lives, participants used certain strategies, including good communication, planning, self-awareness, exercise and hobbies. They also had supportive spouses, healthy marriages and family lives. For some of the participants communication was very important. They felt that they had to communicate with their spouses about their experiences at work: *"You have to communicate with your wife after a bad day, otherwise communication gaps may develop in your marriage"*. The support of a spouse, a healthy marriage and family life also played an important role in coping with the interaction: *"On the other hand, if you have a healthy marriage and a healthy family life, then it is possible for you to manage and control these things"*. Self-awareness also played a role in coping, because knowing their limits and listening to their bodies helped them to manage conflicting aspects between their work and personal lives. This was confirmed by statements such as *"To manage this interaction, you have to be honest with yourself"*; *"know your limits and when to start delegating"* and *"how you handle it depends on yourself and your mindset"*.

Regular exercise and hobbies were also coping mechanisms for some of the participants. Two of the participants stated that *"Handle the interaction by doing exercise after work, go to the gym or jogging to get rid of your frustrations, feel better afterwards"*. Strategising and planning were important, they had to plan in order to get everything done: *"Planning is very important and plays a vital role"* *"work according to a programme everyday"*; *"you have to do good planning at work"*.

This concludes the results for the Afrikaans-speaking males. The themes of the Setswana male participants are presented in Table 3 and discussed below.

Table 3

The Experience of Work-Personal Life Interaction of Setswana-Speaking Males

Theme and sub-themes		Frequency (N = 6)
Theme 1	Experiences in the working environment	2,8
	a) Working with difficult people and their problems	4
	b) Pressure and stress	3
	c) No support of colleagues	2
	d) Positive aspects	2
	e) Importance and value of work	3
Theme 2	Personal aspects	1
	a) Not living in same town as family	1
	b) Sport, personal activities, exercise	1
	c) Extended families	1
	d) Nature of community and work environment	1
Theme 3	Interaction between work and personal life	2,33
	a) No problem with interaction	4
	b) View of interaction	1
	c) Interaction sometimes difficult	2
Theme 4	Influence of personal life on work	3
	a) Lack of concentration at work	3
Theme 5	Consequences of work on personal life	2,5
	a) Lack of quality time with family	4
	b) Not able to switch off after work	1
Theme 6	Strategies to cope with WLI	2
	a) Time management	1
	b) Not taking work home and not working overtime	2
	c) Planning	3
	d) Support and understanding of spouse	2

Six main themes were identified from the interviews with Setswana males, including experiences in the work place, personal aspects, the interaction between work and personal life, the influences of personal life on work, consequences of work on the personal life, and strategies to cope with the interaction between work and personal life.

Theme 1: Experiences in the working environment

Apart from reaching the normal deadlines, additional mental and emotional efforts in the workplace are often demanded by employers (Geurts et al., 1999). Certain aspects of the work environment also had an influence on Setswana males. These aspects included pressure at work, stress, as well as positive aspects of the work environment. Working with difficult people was being exhausting and strain-based for these participants: *“Work circumstances are difficult, it is difficult to work with people”*; *“people can be difficult sometimes and then you still have to treat everyone the same”*. Sub-ordinates felt that managers occasionally put a lot of pressure on them, which was very stressful at times: *“Sometimes you have pressure from the top and from people working under you”*; *“work is stressful and has a lot of pressure”*. In an Afrikaans community, a language barrier often exists between Setswana and Afrikaans-speaking people at work. In this study, it resulted in a lack of support from fellow Afrikaans colleagues: *“No support of some colleagues in terms of language is a problem”*.

Positive aspects of their work environment like work satisfaction, a good work environment, supportive managers, and respect from their fellow colleagues made it bearable. This was confirmed by statements such as *“I enjoy my work”*; *“I can positively say that I have good work colleagues, my manager is a very nice person, a good person, he is a good leader. So apart from the other obstacles that you experience, it is a nice experience to deal with people, especially older than you, if they give you the ultimate respect. Obviously there are other organisational frustrations, but it is beyond your control”*.

The importance and value of work was another theme that some of the participants emphasised. For them, work came first and they wanted to prove that they were capable and could accept responsibility. These participants made comments such as *“I want to make a success out of my work, then I will be happy”*; *“I have a commitment towards work and put pressure on myself to perform”*. Personal aspects also influenced participants' work and are discussed in the next theme.

Theme 2: Personal aspects

Personal aspects of the participants' circumstances had an influence on the interaction between work and family life and included positive and negative aspects, such as not living in the same town as your family, sport (e.g., soccer practices after work), choir practice (singing in the church choir required practice after hours during the week), exercise (e.g., going to the gym, and jogging), extended families (being the sole breadwinner of the family), and the nature of their community and work environment (mainly Afrikaans community). Not staying in the same town as your spouse was not a problem for one of the participants: "*The house situation not a problem, I choose to stay alone, so that the wife can stay and look after the house*". Extra curricular activities like sport, church and choir formed part of their personal lives, which they had to give attention to: "*Personal life includes sport, church and choir*".

Extended family had an influence on the participants, especially when they were the sole breadwinners of the family. That responsibility put constant pressure, especially financial on participants: "*I constantly have to give my family money. Even though my brother and sisters are working, they are not responsible with their money, so when they don't have any money left for the month, I have to help them, because I am the 'responsible' one for the family*".

According to Kotze (2005), different cultures and languages of employees, changes in belief and value systems as well as the greater significance of knowledge workers have, may influence the quality of employees' work-life. Individuals are socialised in dissimilar cultures (languages) and communities, which result in diverse and often unique value and belief systems. These individuals from different backgrounds end up working for the same business (Claassen, Schepers, & Roodt, 2004). This was also true for Setswana individuals, who felt that the nature of the community had an effect on them. Many of them also felt claustrophobic in a "white" community, as can be seen in the following statements: "*People at work is the people of the community, a small community, and this is frustrating*"; "*...like where I was, race wasn't such a big thing, but here you become so aware of it. Here I am not supposed to go to "Speedball", I want to drink beer and play pool, but I can't go to that place, because it is a "white only area"- here you must go there to where the blacks go. That is not good, you know, when you come from a city that is totally unacceptable! It is totally nonsense*".

The participants' interaction between their personal life and work is the focus of the next theme.

Theme 3: Interaction between personal life and work

The majority of participants felt that they did not have a problem with the interaction between their personal lives and their work: *"I feel there is a good balance between work and home"*. They also felt that, in order to be satisfied with their work and home, they had to maintain a balanced life. If it went well in one domain, it would flow over to the other domain: *"If it goes well at home it will also go well at work"*. One participant was of the opinion that work and personal life had to be in equilibrium in order to result in effective interaction between work and personal life: *"Because you don't think about what is going on at home, because the moment you think about home problems that are at home, then you try to slice on the other one, so the other one will somehow somewhere lose, you see? And it will be a lumpy situation. Like an equilibrium, where the other one gains, the other one loose"*.

However, two participants revealed that sometimes, it could be difficult to maintain a balanced life. They found it challenging to keep the two parts of their lives separate and not to talk about work at home and vice versa: *"Interaction between work and personal life ... there are huge difficulties"*; *"difficult to separate work from home and not to talk about work at home and vice versa"*. There were some influences that the participants' personal lives had on their work and these are the next theme's focus.

Theme 4: Influences personal life has on work

The main influence that the participants' personal lives had on their work was a lack of concentration while doing their work. Thinking of personal problems while working influenced their work negatively, their productivity levels dropped: *"If it goes bad in your personal life, you can't work"*; *"... personal life influences your concentration at work"*; *"Your concentration is not on work because of problems in your personal life"*. Not only did their personal lives influence their work, but their work also influenced their personal lives, which resulted in certain consequences. The following theme concentrates on these consequences.

Theme 5: Consequences of work on personal life

Work-family conflict is a major cause of stress for employees and organisations alike, and has been correlated to negative consequences, some of them severe (Theunissen, van Vuuren, & Visser, 2003). Personality characteristics (i.e., neurosis, extraversion, personal coping and Type A behaviour), family characteristics (i.e., family-work conflict has been particularly related to several demanding aspects of the family situation) and job characteristics (i.e., the amount of time required by the job) are some of the main causes of work-life interference (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003).

A major consequence that the participants mentioned was the lack of quality time with their families. A heavy workload and long hours were the biggest detractors on time spent with family: *"If the pressure at work gets heavy, you sometimes forget to go home after work"; "If work gets too much, I'll do it over weekends or during leave time"*. Extended working hours and new technology enable employees to work wherever and whenever they want (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). This means that the physical and chronological borders of work have changed and mean that work progressively has a greater influence on personal and family life (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). One participant mentioned constant thoughts regarding work that needed to be done, not switching off after work and literally dreaming about work: *"Sometimes the workload is so heavy, it stays the whole time in your head, you can't sleep or think, but just worry about it"; "...when it's hectic at work I constantly think of work, even when I am at home"*. In order to cope with their WLI, the Setswana male participants revealed some strategies they followed and used and these are discussed next.

Theme 6: Strategies to cope with interaction

Strategies the participants made use of were time management, not taking work home, not working overtime, planning, and the support and understanding of spouses. One of the participants regarded time management as very important: *"Time management is important because you have two parts in your life that is important"*. They also felt that it was important to manage time so that they could fit both domains of their lives: *"You should manage your time by not taking work home."* Not taking work home and not working overtime were strategies that worked for two of the participants. Planning, scheduling and

prioritising were also important strategies that the participants mentioned: “*Work according to a schedule*”; “*Planning and prioritising are important*”. Having the support of their wives and families, who understood their work situations, helped them to cope with interaction between work and personal life: “*Work has no consequences on personal life, because my wife understands the work situation in the mine, and understands when I have to work late*”; “*My wife is very supportive*”. This concludes the results for Setswana-speaking males. The results for the Afrikaans-speaking females are discussed in the following section.

Table 4

The Experience of Work-Personal Life Interaction of Afrikaans-Speaking Females

Theme and sub-themes	Frequency (N = 7)
Theme 1 Experiences in the working environment	1,50
a) Heavy workload	1
b) Enjoyment of work	2
Theme 2 Demands personal life	3,67
a) Children	5
b) Domestic obligations	4
c) Consequences for self and no time for housework	2
Theme 3 WLI is difficult and is a struggle to keep the domains apart	4,5
a) Difficult to balance all three domains	4
b) Try to keep work and personal life separate	5
Theme 4 Consequences of work on the personal life	6
a) Influences of husband, children, marriage and domestic duties	6
Theme 5 Coping strategies	2,71
a) Supportive husband	3
b) Planning and time management	5
c) Housekeeper	2
d) Communication	3
e) Personality	3
f) Experience	1
g) Rest and quality time with family	2

Seven Afrikaans-speaking females were interviewed. The themes that will be discussed are their experiences in the work environment, demands in their personal lives and the consequences it could have as well as the difficulty of work life interaction, consequences work had on their personal lives, and their coping strategies.

Theme 1: Experiences in the working environment

This theme differs from the previous work environments of the Afrikaans and Setswana-speaking males. Afrikaans-speaking females that were interviewed did not experience too many stressors at work, as can be seen in the following expressions: *"I do not necessarily experience stressors at work, but I am just not in the mood for work sometimes"*. The only stressor they had at work was a heavy workload now and then, but apart from that, they enjoyed their work very much: *"A heavy workload, do not get everything done in time"*; *"I enjoy the work very much"*; *"I experience no problems at work, because I enjoy it"*.

Theme 2: Demands in the personal life

The challenges employees face in meeting the demands of the work and family sphere have become more frequent and increasingly more complex (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaren, 2005). Afrikaans-speaking females experienced that young children required much attention and needed a lot of help with their homework: *"Children's homework require a lot of attention and help, take a lot of time, especially over weekends"*. Participants also felt that their children, family, and household should be their first priority: *"After work, family comes first. I can't work late any more, so working late is now an issue for me"*. Apart from work and family, women had domestic obligations as well. They had to clean and cook when they had come home after work: *"Sometimes when you get home, you are tired, you have to pay attention to housework, your kids, your husband, then you never get the things done that you wanted to do in the first place"*.

These demands had consequences for the individual. They constantly worried about and caring for their children, husband and household, and, therefore they often neglected themselves in the process: *"Less time for self, child comes first"*. Some aspects of the participants' personal lives occasionally had an influence on their work. Conflict with a spouse or children resulted in them being emotional at work: *"Sometimes you and your children have a fight over a small thing that turns into a big thing and then you go to work with that mood"*.

Demands of their personal lives and work made it difficult for the participants to keep the two domains (personal life and work) separate from each other. The following theme discusses how these participants experienced the interaction between their work and personal lives.

Theme 3: Interaction is difficult – struggle to keep domains apart

High demands are made on the commitment and the time of dual-earner couples and participation in the labour market of both husband and wife and can have an enormous influence on their marriage and family life (Smit, 2001). The continuous rise in the rate of married women entering the labour market worldwide as well as in South Africa, affects the family life extensively (Smit, 2001). Participants felt that interaction between work and personal life was difficult, because time and attention had to be divided between work, house and family: *“Interaction is hectic, difficult to accommodate everyone”*; *“It is not easy to separate work from personal life”*. Being a working mother was very difficult. Balancing all three domains (work, family, and house) was complicated for these participants. They had to give undivided attention to their work, families and households. In the attempt to separate these two domains, it happened that work occasionally had consequences for their personal lives.

Theme 4: Consequences work has on personal life

Work-family conflict is a major cause of stress for employees and organisations alike, and has been correlated to negative consequences, some of them severe (Theunissen et al., 2003). When participants went home after a day’s work, they were tired. Therefore, it was difficult to attend to all their household duties and obligations: *“Sometimes I take out my stress on the kids”*; *“...work has an influence on your house, kids and marriage”*. The result was unnecessary conflict with family members. In the process, the children, husband or domestic duties were often neglected. To cope and manage this interaction, the participants revealed certain strategies, which helped them to cope with this interaction.

Theme 5: Coping strategies

A supportive husband at home, who helped with the kids and domestic duties while the wife was at work made it easier for some of the participants: *“It helps to have a supportive husband at home who helps with the household and the kids”*. Their husbands fully understood their work situations. The majority of participants highlighted planning and time management as coping strategies. In order to cope with the interaction they had to manage their time. They coped by planning in advance: *“Planning is important”*; *“Plan and*

prioritise things at work to cope". In addition, having a housekeeper lightened the domestic responsibilities: *"It helps having a fulltime housekeeper"*.

Communication also played a vital role for some of the participants. It helped when they talked about their frustrations and what they were feeling to someone, either their husbands or a friend; *"I will talk to someone when I had a bad day, I wouldn't take it home"*; *"...communication is very important"*; *"talk things through, before leaving, don't leave things unresolved"*. Three of the participants felt that their type of personality helped them to cope with interaction: *"I don't take work stress home, because I am not that kind of person"*; *"I handle everything by being a responsible person"*; *"I do not take everything serious."*

Years of experience taught them how to handle certain situations and people: *"Manage stress through experience"*. Two of the participants felt that relevant rest and quality time with family did wonders: *"Our family love to go away together, maybe go camping... it helps to clean your head"*. Going away for a few days with family had a relaxing effect.

This concludes the results for the Afrikaans-speaking females. The results for the Setswana-speaking females are discussed in the next section.

Table 5

The Experience of Work-Personal Life Interaction of Setswana-Speaking Females

Theme and sub-themes		Frequency (N=6)
Theme 1	Experiences in the working environment	3,25
	a) Pressure at work and working with difficult people	3
	b) Support from colleagues	3
	c) Value and importance of work	3
	d) Personality type	4
Theme 2	Personal life	1,67
	a) House	3
	b) Extended family	1
	c) Children	1
	d) Household obligations / domestic duties	2
	e) Certain aspects of personal life influences other aspects	2
	f) Husband	1
Theme 3	Influences of work on personal life	1,5
	a) Taking work home when having pressure at work	3
	b) Work influences individual	2
	c) Taking emotions of work out on husband	1
	d) Less time with children, because of work	1
	e) People bothers the individual at home with work related issues	1
Theme 4	Personal life's influences on work	1,5
	a) Circumstances at home	2
	b) Divorce	1
Theme 5	Interaction	2,33
	a) Live separate from children	2
	b) Keep work and home separate	3
	c) Interaction difficult because of work and demands of personal life	2
Theme 6	Coping mechanisms for WLI	2,75
	a) Housekeeper and parents	3
	b) Supportive spouse	3
	c) Communication	2
	d) Time management and prioritising	3

The following themes are based on information gained from the interviews of six Setswana-speaking females. Themes concentrated on, are their work environment, personal life, influences work had on their personal lives, the influence their personal lives had on their

work, the interaction between their work and personal life, and coping mechanisms to improve this interaction.

Theme 1: Experiences in the working environment

The working environment for the Setswana-speaking females consisted of work stress and pressure, support from colleagues, importance of work and personality type required for working in the work environment. Working with the community and difficult people at work put pressure on some of these participants: *“Working with the community are very demanding”*. Participants experienced that members of the community came to them after work to talk about work-related issues. The result was that they seldom got the chance to switch off after work. However, having a support system at work made the pressure more bearable: *“My planner and foreman is very nice, they have a lot of patience, they support me in everything I do”*. Knowing that there were colleagues who would always help them were comforting. The value and importance of work were mentioned by some of the participants. Work was their first priority, and then family and all the rest. They had to have a job in order to have a family: *“I have to put work first, above sick child or crisis at home”*.

Having a certain type of personality was also an advantage. Participants felt that they worked in a difficult working environment and therefore had to have a certain temperament in order to survive. Adaptability was a characteristic that they highlighted: *“If your personality fits with your work, it will be better”*; *“...adaptability towards the work environment is difficult in the beginning, but you get used to it”*. The next theme focuses on aspects of the participants' personal lives, which had an influence on their work.

Theme 2: Personal life

In the community of the participants, there was a housing shortage, because of great new developments in the mine area. Families did not get houses; most of them had to stay in single quarters. Therefore, some of them were forced to let their children stay with their parents in a nearby town: *“The thing is we do not have a house now, we are living at the Hostel in Sesheng. The children are at home, the one is staying with my mom and the other one is staying with my mother in law in Bathlaros. So most of the time it is only my husband and me, but it is not so bad”*. Being the only breadwinner for their families could be very

stressful, especially when family members constantly asked for money: *“Both of my parents are still alive. I have five brothers and one sister, so I am the breadwinner. Every week I have to go home, to check on them, because none of them are working, of my family I am the only that has a job”*. Participants also had the responsibility towards their children, husband, and domestic duties. Research shows that even when working, married women still do more household tasks than men (Kossek et al., 2006). Their children needed a lot of attention, they had to cook and spend time with their husbands as well as attend to domestic duties: *“I do not always have time for my studies as I have planned, because my children are very demanding and need a lot of attention”*; *“I have to work, I have to make certain I look after my job, and at home I have to try my best to keep my husband happy”*; *“After work when I go home I have to clean the house and cook for my husband, after that it is already late and the children have gone to bed”*. Their work also had an influence on their personal lives and the individual person. These influences are the subject for the next theme.

Theme 3: Influence of work on personal life

Married couples with or without children or single parents are likely to be confronted with conflicts in their work and family domain (Karatepe & Baddar, 2006). Taking work home to finish influenced time spent with family: *“When my workload is heavy, I will take it home to finish.”* Emotions built up when constantly thinking of problems at work: *“Problems at work stays in your head, although I try very hard not to let it influence me”*. One of the participants revealed that she would take it out on her husband if she had a bad and stressful day at work: *“Sometimes I’ll just be moody towards my husband.”* Talking to a spouse or a friend helped to get rid of these emotions: *“It is difficult, you know, if you haven’t put something out of your mind, it will still ring in the back of your mind. I usually feel that way. When that happens I have to speak to someone”*. Their personal lives had influences on their work as well. These are explored in the next theme.

Theme 4: Personal lives influences on work

The participants pointed out that circumstances at home and getting divorced could have consequences for work. Home circumstances like a financial crisis influenced their work negatively, because it was difficult to concentrate, which resulted in unnecessary mistakes: *“Sometimes a family crisis influence your work, you cannot concentrate when you are*

emotional at work, the whole time you are thinking of the crisis at home". Other aspects, like going through a divorce, could also have an influence (e.g., worrying at work and not feeling well): *"While I was in the middle of my divorce, I tried my best not to let it influence my work, but sometimes I felt emotional at work, worrying, and even felt dizzy at times"*. How these Setswana-speaking females experienced their WLI is the focus of the next theme.

Theme 5: Interaction

The purpose of this theme is to understand how the participants experienced their work-life interaction. The overall response of the participants was that they did not have a problem with their WLI and tried to keep the domains separate from each other: *"I do not take personal problems to work, but keep them separate"*; *"I keep my work and house apart, and have no problem with interaction between the two"*. However, sometimes it was difficult because of the demands of their personal lives and their work. For example, sometimes they were forced to work overtime, although they also had responsibilities at home: *"If you work overtime, you have to catch up again at home, it is difficult because you have responsibilities and duties at home, after work"*. In order to manage this interaction, the participants applied certain coping mechanisms to their lives, to cope with their work life interaction. These mechanisms are discussed in the following theme.

Theme 6: Coping mechanisms for WLI

The mechanisms or strategies the participants used included a housekeeper, supportive parents and spouses, communication, time management, and prioritising. Having a housekeeper lightened their domestic responsibilities: *"For me it is not so difficult, because I have someone who is always at home, looking after the children and house."* Using this support system, they had more time to spend with their husband and children in the evenings because someone had already attended to the cleaning duties. It also seemed to help when children stayed with the participants' parents during the day, and some of them lived with their grandparents permanently: *"My parents look after my children."*

The support and understanding of their husbands was a great contribution to coping with the interaction: *"Husband understands pressure at work"*; *"supportive husband, he helps with duties at home"*. The importance of communication with either their work colleagues or their spouses was identified as a way of coping: *"Talking to my husband about something that has*

upset me at work, makes me feel better or sometimes I will talk to a planner about something that is bothering me at work". They also emphasised the importance of time management and prioritising their daily activities and duties: "A person has to prioritise and manage his time, if you can not do time management, everything will fall on the ground"; "Even though the interaction is difficult you can manage it by prioritising things at work and at home"; "I work according to a program to get everything done at work".

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to investigate how Afrikaans and Setswana-speaking males and females experienced the interaction between their work and personal lives in a mining environment.

The results of the qualitative interviews showed that the four groups experienced the working environment differently. Afrikaans males, Setswana males and Setswana females experienced pressure and stress at work, where the Afrikaans females did not have that same experience. Specific work demands also had consequences for the individuals and influenced aspects of their personal lives. For the Afrikaans and Setswana males, long working hours and working over weekends influenced time spent with their families (e.g., they were not able to attend their children's sport and school activities). This substantiated the findings of Geurts et al. (2003), that factors at work such as long working hours and pressure at work could have an influence on individuals' personal lives.

Work demands also had strain-based consequences for the Afrikaans males, including physical and psychological strain. The Afrikaans females experienced tiredness after a day of work, which made it difficult for them to attend to all their household duties. This resulted in unnecessary conflict with their families and spouses. Taking work home influenced time spent with family for the Setswana females (e.g., the time it took to complete work could have been spent with the children and husbands or to attend to domestic duties). Furthermore, all of the groups, except the Setswana males, revealed that when they had a bad day at work and emotions built up, they were irritated when they got home and then took out those emotions on their spouses and families. This confirmed the findings of Geurts and Demerouti

