AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

AN EXPLORATION OF WORK- LIFE BALANCE (WLB) POLICIES IN HOTELS IN LEBANON AND VIABLE WLB POLICY DEVELOPMENT

by
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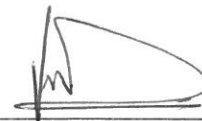
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Hala Hussein Mazeh   for   Master of Human Resources Management
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Title: An Exploration of Work- Life Balance (WLB) Policies in Hotels in Lebanon and Viable WLB Policy Development.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the availability of work life balance policies in the hotel industry in Lebanon as well as the barriers to their introduction and implementation. In addition, this paper aims at developing indigenous WLB policies that are viable within the prevalent Lebanese and Arab culture and that will help achieve higher organizational competitiveness while at the same time catering for the needs of various employee categories. In addition to a detailed literature review that will tackle our focal issue, work life balance, this field project will draw data from 11 structured interviews conducted with Heads of Departments who are currently employed at chosen hotels in Lebanon. We believe that the 11 respondents will provide enough insights that will allow reaching saturation of information since the project is exploratory in nature. Our results show that two main factors govern logic behind adopting certain policies in this industry as well as the barrier to their introduction and implementation which are the nature of the industry as well as the Lebanese context.

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To

My Beloved Family

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Our world today is becoming increasingly globalized leading to changes in the demographics of the workplace in addition to a shift from the traditional way businesses were run (Fleetwood, 2007); whereas demographic shifts are reflected in the increased percentage of employed females along with more aged people working, the shift in businesses can be linked to the increased number of working hours required by individual employees (Fleetwood, 2007; Pichler, 2009). Both points are sufficient to determine the rising issue of work life balance on the global agenda, thus making employers responsible to accommodate to these determinants in order to avoid any obstacles that might arise in the business operations. Moreover, the July editorial of *People Management* (2002) states that work life balance is becoming a key issue in the general scene of employment because people nowadays are seeking a better quality of life through flexible work arrangements (Hyman and Summers, 2002). "The WLB metaphor is a social construct located within a particular period of time and originating in a Western context" (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2007). The same results were reflected as well in the findings of a study conducted by Chandra (2012) on work life balance in the East and the West, revealing that the majority of work on work life balance originates from West European and Anglo-Saxon countries (Chandra, 2012). With the increased participation of women in the workforce in late 1980s, several changes in the structure of the family occurred, such as increased conflicts and/or the abolishment of man from being the primary breadwinner, which is why the issue gained back then more publicity in this part of the world (Poelmans and Sahibzada, 2004).

By examining the different offerings of work life balance among different countries, it becomes evident to the researcher that the way this concept is defined and looked at is variable among different cultures for the sole purpose that what people believe in, in one country and what is essential to them, is completely different from what would be important for people living in another country (Guest, 2002); one concept, however, is surely common; it lies in the fact that the extreme end goal of work life balance practices is to attain a "meaningful achievement and enjoyment in everyday life" (Joshi, Leichne, Melanson, Pruna, Sager, Story and Williams,2002) and the way this is attained is what makes it unique from one country to another.

As previously stated, the work life balance concept stems from Europe and the West where the topic has gained significant attention and many publications and articles related to the topic have appeared in both academic and professional journals. It was not until the early 1970s that the topic of work life balance started to gain publicity when scholars such as Lawler (1975) and O'Toole (1974) realized that the workplace required some improvement in terms of leveraging the level of work life balance among employees. Consequently, and with the advancement of research on the issue, researchers realized that values among various generations are distinct, for what seems to be important to a certain age group is different from what is important to another (Smola and Sutton, 2002) and the youth today highly values work life balance more than employee groups in the past (Lewis *et al.*,2003); nevertheless, and despite these changing attitudes, the bulk of research revolves around the spillover from work to family or vice versa and focuses on the importance of balancing work and family (Hill *et al.*, 2004).Similarly in the Middle East, studies have only focused on the career paths of women where academics such as Afiouni (2014) discussed issues pertaining to the careers of women in Academia in reference to career scripts and gender roles and

highlighted how crucial are certain contextual factors in binding women's careers; it is worth mentioning here as well that Afiouni (2014) criticizes the overall boundary-less career model which implies full agency of individuals in relation to the factors that stand in the way of the career of women. Additionally, Jamali, Sidani and Safieddine (2005) examined the obstacles that impede Lebanese female managers throughout their career progression. When researching women in the Middle East, one cannot go without devoting a special attention to what has been published by Haifa Tlaiss; in one of her researches, Tlaiss (2013) studied the organizational factors that lead to employee job satisfaction among women managers operating in the industry service in Lebanon. Findings showed that the main reason women were not satisfied was due to the low salary scale in the industry. Only few studies pertinent to the topic of work life balance were found. But what was of great value was basically a thesis prepared by an MBA Graduate atthe American University of Beirut entitled "Work Life Balance Policies Implementation and Impact on Women's Career Advancement: The Case of the Lebanese Banking Sector" by Marwa el-Nakib (2012). In addition, Karam, Afiouni and Nasr (2013) targeted the topic of work life balance directly from an institutional lens and looked as well into the topic in cross-cultural terms; also, Karam and Afiouni (2014) highlighted the experiences of women working in academia specifically across various countries of the MENA region and developed a hypothetical model that would serve as a tool for researchers that help them examine the context of these women from a clearer perspective; Karam and Afiouni (2014) hope that this model will be utilized by Human Resources practitioners within the region in order to enhance the status of these working women by shaping a better context for them.. The decision to shed focus on Lebanon in this research study is due to two main reasons one of which is the fact that Lebanon has been known for having a dynamic Hospitality and Tourism industry which

leads us to the second reason that is the unique nature of this industry in terms of operations as well as rigid policies and procedures. Moreover, what makes the Hospitality industry distinctive is not only that Lebanon has always been a key destination for tourists thus scoring a 39% growth rate in tourist arrivals in the world, the highest in year 2009, but also that the average spending per tourist was estimated to amount to $3000, as per Tourism Minister Dr. Fadi Abboud, which is the highest in the world (http://www.marcopolis.net/lebanon-tourism-analysis-of-lebanese-tourism-sector.htm). In addition, the contribution of the Hospitality industry to the GDP growth in Lebanon by 23% of the GDP makes it an interesting case (http://search.worldbank.org). Taking the former point on the uniqueness of the industry into account makes it even more interesting to shed light on work life balance in this industry; in fact, hospitality industry which has the longest working hours among all other industries makes it hard for one to find time to practice extracurricular activities in their personal lives; also, being a 24/7 operation that functions round the clock with a guest as an end user makes it difficult and out of control to predict the needs of this guest at specific times. It is as well interesting to address work life balance in the Hospitality industry in Lebanon, from the perspective of the high contribution of the industry to the Lebanese economy, as the bulk of the economy relies on it. Therefore, in order to proceed with the success of this industry and provide guests with the ultimate experience, one must ensure to start from within and guarantee employees are satisfied on the most basic levels, one of which is work life balance.

In light of the lack of research done in Lebanon on work life balance in the hotel industry, comes this research project to shed light on this topic by exploring which work life balance policies in hotels are being offered and what are the barriers to their implementation. Consequently, suggestions of suitable work life balance policies will

be provided to facilitate the implementation of work life balance policies in hotels by communicating their added value to the hotel's business and not only to the employees, thus enhancing the wellbeing of employees operating within.

In order to improve the status of hotels in Lebanon as well as the employees operating within, our main goal in terms of the practical contribution of our research study will be directed towards highlighting the work life balance policies and procedures that are offered in the hotels and to whom they are tailored. Furthermore, following the identification of the documented and offered policies, the research will proceed in identifying the barriers facing the implementation of work life balance policies in these hotels. Finally, in reference to the current status of hotels regarding these policies versus the obstacles that some of the hotels are facing when it comes to the introduction of these policies, viable work life balance policy suggestions aimed at addressing the needs of employees and having direct impact on businesses will be drawn. Theoretically speaking, our research study aims at acting as a positive contributor to the body of literature in the country and the Middle Eastern region as it is a pioneer in investigating this topic in Lebanon which will hopefully raise awareness of the topic of work life balance on a larger scale.

Studies show that wherever 'work-life programs' are offered, both employees and employers will benefit as the employees 'productivity will increase while the employers will enjoy higher commitment rates and lower absenteeism ratios (Buddhapriya, 2005). Hyman, Baldry, Scholarios and Bunze (2003) also state that the increased job satisfaction that comes along with these policies will eventually reduce turnover and absenteeism rates and lift up the quality of job performance. Despite all of this, we notice that many organizations lag behind on this issue and though many policies were introduced, little or even no action has been taken.

Since my research aims at examining how well hotels in Lebanon are doing in terms of work implementation of such policies, I will tackle the following research questions:

- What are the work life balance policies and procedures that are available for employees in the hotel industry in Lebanon and to whom are they tailored?

- What is the underlying logic for the adoption (or not) of such policies and what are the perceived barriers to their implementation?

- What type of indigenous work life balance policies makes business sense in light of the predominant national culture?

The first step of this research project will be directed towards examining what is available in the literature concerning the topic of interest, including both work life balance and work family balance. Consequently, the research will be giving a general overview of Lebanon and will be delving into the contribution of the Hospitality and Tourism industry to the country's economy; in this realm, the project will be also looking at the general political situation of Lebanon and its impact on the industry as well as the work life balance policy formulation and implementation in specific.

Living in an era of ongoing changes that occur in a blink of an eye, it becomes normal to witness that the structure of organizations and the way business functions are consequently affected by this change (Dunne and Teg, 2007); this in turn is the main reason why work life balance has become a hot topic on the global business agenda especially in the last 10 to 20 years (Dunne and Teg, 2007). In "Why WLB now", Fleetwood (2007) presents general reasons that address this question including the fact that we are living in times where there is constant change especially when it comes to the hours expected to be worked by an employee and which are increasing up till 9 to 10 hours per day in the majority of industries, not to forget the technological advancements

that inflicted indirect pressure on employees as it becomes easy for an individual to access his work material wherever he is (Fleetwood, 2007). Other factors that contributed to the publicity of this issue in the business scene are the difficulty that some employees face when trying to strike a balance between their jobs and their personal commitments, which in itself is related to the demanding nature of jobs nowadays; consequently this will lead not only to physical fatigue on employees, but will also leverage their stress level due to their failure to manage between both ends (Hyman and Summers, 2004). These factors had massive negative implications on changing the career path of many talented individuals worldwide as some had to take a step down the ladder just in order to be able to reach a balance between life and work, and even it had to make employees change their work environment in order to join another company that could possibly offer more flexibility time schedule (Dunne and Teg, 2007). Having all these changes which are in turn a consequence of globalization and witness many involuntary changes in employees' career paths drafted out is fair enough to raise the issue of work life balance in such a dynamic business world today.

The research study will initiate by presenting a thorough literature review which discusses the evolution of work life balance to define the very basic concept of balance, moving on to the emergence of work family balance where how it did come up and who it does target in specific will be covered; a link will then be drawn from work family balance to work life balance in reference to the changing demands and needs of societies and employees. As the research study is concerned with work life balance, it will study it as a concept in itself in addition to the most common policies and procedures as well as users that fall under it. The benefits of the implementation of these policies not only for the employees but also for the organization will be highlighted.

Then, the Hospitality and Tourism industry in Lebanon will be examined by

looking at its elements and characteristics of having a 24/7 ongoing operation of long working hours as mentioned above, as well as some statistics on the hotel count in Lebanon and their classification; in this regard, a brief overview about the political situation in the country for the past decade will be given, since it has been a major determinant for the booming and failure of the Lebanese economy.

Moving on the analysis section, the focus here will be on the primary data sources on work life balance policy availability and barriers to their implementation in hotels within Lebanon, and whether or not it is feasible to suggest indigenous work life balance policies that are viable within the Lebanese context.

The primary data sources stem from interviews that have been conducted with heads of departments who are employed at various hotels in Lebanon and listed in this research study for the purpose of gathering data to answer the research objectives and help respond to research questions. In an attempt to answer the research question, a qualitative method of data collection encompassing an interview will be adopted for this study. Interviews will in turn be analyzed via the NVivo Qualitative Analysis Software that will help create themes to categorize the output of the interviews at hand. Through the utilization of this approach, meaningful themes related to the propositions and objectives will be reached, which in turn will help in answering the research questions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Balance

Taking the term from a basic linguistic perspective, the complexity of the word 'balance' is reflected in the various meanings that it offers in the English language. 'Balance' can stand out as a noun to signify a scale; it can also be regarded from a physical and psychological perspective to reflect equilibrium of either the body, if speaking physically, or peace of mind if we are looking it from a psychological angle . Adding up to this, the term 'balance' can come in a sentence as a verb in order to refer neutralizing or stabilizing (Guest, 2009). Thus, the importance of the term 'balance' stems out in our context since it has different attributions to different situations and/or people and in itself is a dynamic term such that it is influenced by many factors. Examining the term in what is available in the literature, we find that in "Walking a tightrope or navigating a web: Parameters of balance within perceived institutional realities", Karam, Afiouni and Nasr (2013) mention that "balance is not a static state referring to equilibrium between two different equally important entities, but rather a dynamic process that requires navigation between multiple poles of salience ; what is meant by this is that balance is related to the macro environment that a person is situated and thus is affected by social, economic. Cultural and political criteria that are specific to that context whereby balance is in fact an agentic process and will be attained when one is able to practice their roles in their society at ease (Karam, Afiouni and Nasr, 2013, p.288). Moreover, Hyman and Summers (2004) reinforce the notion that balance is a concept that differs with changing circumstances and various

individuals. Based on this, say we consider a person who is currently employed and single; what seems to be important at this point for this person might cease to be important ten years from now when this very person remains employed but gets married.

In the regard of the variation of the meanings and synonyms of the term in the English language as well as the databases in the literature, it is by no doubt that the term can be both subjective and/or objective in a sense that its attribution will vary according to the situation or the individual seeking this balance for whatever reasons it is (Guest, 2009).

In reference to the dynamicity of the word 'balance' on its own, it thus becomes rational for scholars to face obstacles when studying work life balance because the topic in itself begins with an extremely controversial term that does not have a standard meaning (Guest, 2009). Thus, and since work life balance is concerned with people, it is logical to presume that work life balance is also dynamic since "different people interpret work life balance differently, with some needing more personal time than others, to experience wellbeing" (Chandra, 2012, p.1041).

Work Family Balance

Emergence of Work Family Balance

Long working hours, working at home practices and increased use of social media which makes it easy for employees to access their work material at home are reasons that placed obstacles in front of employees when trying to balance their work and the needs of their families (Major, Fletcher, Davis and Germano, 2008). These are few of the causes that made the attempt for one to balance between their work and family a major concern, especially after women have started to occupy a vast proportion

of the workforce not to forget the increased number of families that were composed of dual earners or single-parent families (Bourhis and Mekkaoui, 2010). "Early studies focused on the causes and consequences of conflict between work and family" (Harris, 2004, p.820); as simple as it is, this includes difficulties faced by a person due to the mismanagement between their responsibilities towards their job and their duties towards their family. The societal culture of an individual with all what it holds from norms, values and gender ideologies, impacts the overall roles and responsibilities that the individual is expected to fulfill and thus will impact their overall actions as well (Karam *et al.*, 2013). This is why it is assumed that since different countries and societies are bound by different perceptions of norms and values that impact both an individual's work and family, the perceptions of work family balance in turn are highly related to the culture and society that the individual is situated in and what is this individual expected to achieve.

When speaking of work family balance, it is crucial to shed a special focus on Work-family conflict (WFC), the conflict that arises when one fails to meet the requirements of one role in their life due to the pressure exerted by the nature of their other role, as it is from this specific conflict work family balance was born (Bourhis and Mekkaoui, 2010). Research has proven that work-family conflict can have negative implications not only on the individual but also on the organization that the individual operates within; these include but are not limited to increased rates of absenteeism and a decrease in the productivity quality of the individual (Boyar *et al.*, 2005).

In attempt to diminish this work-family conflict that has negative consequences on many aspects of their life, employees sought numerous ways to reach what we call today a work family balance (Clark, 2000; Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003).This in turn has posed a greater problem in face of these employees seeking this balance as the need for

an organization to adopt a supportive culture which includes these "family-friendly" policies was acknowledged and was a major requirement to reduce and possibly eliminate this work-family conflict (Bourhis and Mekkaoui, 2010). Here the work-family culture is defined as "the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives" (Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness, 1999, p.394). Accordingly, we define work family balance "as the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the temporal, emotional, and behavioral demands of both paid work and family responsibilities" (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, Weitzman, 2001, p.49).

Users of Work Family Balance and Impact on Career Paths

Early research has shed a special focus on the examination of the impact that work has on an individual's family life with a special focus on women as well as dual earners in households (Guest, 2009). Having this been said, work family balance strictly included married people who have liabilities towards their families and work overload, especially women as they were deemed to be the primary caregivers of the family and thus needed this balance between work and family the most (Gambles *et al.*, 2007). Indeed, in the majority of cultures and societies all around the world, the woman was always the caregiver of the home whereby she was expected to fulfill house chores and take care of the man and children as being part of her fundamental reason of existence. During the past three decades, however, there has been a slight change regarding this view as the man ceased to be the primary 'breadwinner' since there has been an increased labor participation for females (Zuo and Tang, 2000); this, and in the majority of societies however, did not affect the notion that women still had to fulfill their duties towards their families all alone which implied that the woman had two roles now to fill instead of one.

Work life balance presents a challenge to most employees seeking to advance in their careers. In organizations, employers and employees find it easy to talk about work-life balance, but it is hard when it comes to their actions (Deery, 2008). As a result, the outcome of the stress of coping with work-life balance influences career progression in a negative way (Ahuja *et al*., 2007).However, for women employees, and especially the married, it comes out that they find it hard to keep up with the work-life policies (Ahuja *et al*., 2007). In the end, women observing work life balance end up taking a toll on their careers and their employers perceive them as uncommitted because of the stress they pick. Married women have the greatest responsibility when it comes to balancing life and work. In most communities, it is the role of the woman to take care of house chores. For this reason, they need to ensure that they balance the two. Managers in an organization observe employees and identify that women divide more between their life and work (Deery, 2008). In the process, women tend to have less managerial roles when it comes to their places of work. Thus, they do not find the chance to progress because they seem less dedicated. When women take the policies into consideration and input a lot of time on their work than in their family duties, they experience marital problems (Deery, 2008). However, they choose to forego their work responsibilities and commit more time to their home duties. In the process, they find themselves, reducing the rate of their career progression.

Spousal support is essential for an employee (Beauregard and Henry, 2009). Women and men experience different levels of spousal support in their careers. For men, their spouses support them whole heartedly because they are the heads of the family and breadwinners. On the other hand, women have less spousal support because if they dedicate a lot of time to their work, they will have less time for their marital or home affairs (Ahuja *et al*., 2007). Dues to this, women will not have time for their

career advancement because they do not have the necessary support. Employer perceptions about women also differ when it comes to work life balance.

When companies prefer to hand managerial roles to women, they choose the unmarried or single and the ones with fewer family responsibilities like the childless (Beauregard and Henry, 2009). Once this group of people wishes to advance in their personal lives by either getting married or giving children, they find themselves stagnating because they lose the trust that their employers had in them. Again, the decisions take a swipe at their careers compared to men that observe work life balance. Among the roles that work-life balance plays is to ensure the management of stress between the two aspects of life (Beauregard and Henry, 2009). When it comes to this point, women are stronger than men are. However, with the fact that there are more women as single parents, women find themselves on the losing end because of not attending to their children as necessary. The stress that women pick from the situation makes them have a weaker concentration on their work. In the process, they end up committing less and affecting the functionality of their roles and duties.

To wrap up this section, it is clear that women observing work life balance end up taking a toll on their careers and their employers perceive them as uncommitted because of the stress they pick. Employers should instead decide on other approaches that will accommodate women and hence, enhance their capability to progress their careers.

Work Life Balance

Evolution of the Concept

"Family-friendly practices and policies, in turn, ran into their own problems: they tended to focus on women with children, thereby, excluding men, and women

without children" (Fleetwood, 2007, p.393). For this reason the term was replaced by work life balance instead which can be looked at as a "self-defined, self-determined state of wellbeing that a person can reach, or can set as a goal that allows him/her to manage effectively multiple responsibilities at work, at home, and in their community" (Buddhapriya, 2005, p.233). As a concept, work life balance emulates from a period of social and economic development that changed the way work is done due to issues pertaining to globalization, high advancements in technology as well as a workplace that operates around the clock (Marchington *et al*., 2005; Sennett, 1998) all of which are factors that added up to the workload of the individual employee (White, Hill, McGovern, Mills andSmeaton,2003); the workload of the employee was negatively impacted in terms of increased pressure and no personal time for oneself (Gambles *et al.*, 2007, Lewis *et al.* 2003). Thus, and only recently had the term work life balance been adopted instead to signify that the expression encompasses both men and women irrespective of marital status, including not only an individual's ability to balance between their work duties and family duties, but also to attain to a spiritual life and engage in extracurricular activities of their interest such as sports or charity work (Gambles *et al.*, 2007).

The work life balance discourse is highly linked to the national context as well as the culture that the organization is situated in because different cultures have different concerns at different periods of time rather than mutual ones (Gambles *et al*., 2007).

Work Life Balance and Culture

As previously mentioned throughout the literature review of our research study, the basic notion of work life balance is the ability to draw a dichotomy between one's source of income-work- and their personal life with all what it might entail.

Through the utilization of work life balance policies and procedures one is able to establish not only personal outcomes, but also it can leverage organizational outcomes. Some of these organizational outcomes include a decrease in the rate of absenteeism, reduced work accidents and injuries, increased retention rates and thus leading to lower turnover, higher levels of productivity and commitment, increased morale and not to forget improvement in core business outcomes such as innovation, service delivery and better client experience (Zuo and Tang, 2000).

Though the benefits that accompany the utilization of these policies are common among different contexts, the perception of these work life balance ideologies vary between cultures, societies and even genders. According to Zuo and Tang (2000), for instance, the way women perceive work life balance has changed whereby initially when comparing women to men, it was difficult for them to maintain a work life balance due to competing pressures at work and home; this, however, has been suppressed by the sharp decline in men's provider roles due to the increased women labor participation and the growth of the women's earning power. On the other hand, Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) argue that men also face unequal opportunity to family life mainly because they are often expected to be the sole financial supporter of the family unit hence the masculine ideal of a worker unencumbered by care giving obligations is built into the workspace structure and reward patterns.

Work life balance policies vary in given societies and the effects also vary although as previously mentioned similarities in benefits occur. In Britain, legislation has been passed allowing parents of children under age the age of six to request more flexible working schedules unlike the Middle East where only few countries reported employer-provided childcare facilities such as Egypt and Jordan (Zuo and Tang, 2000). In New Zealand, Kean (2002) conducted a survey of employees among 25 organizations

whereby a clear relationship was found among the offered work life balance policies and the turnover rates.

Furthermore, while most countries have adopted the work life balance policies, a country like India is yet to initiate such policies for its workforce despite the fact that there has been an increase in dual earning couples (Moen and Yu, 2000; Doughery and West, 2000). Similarly in the Middle East and North Africa, most governments have focused on establishing measures to facilitate work life balance such as in Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia and Kuwait, however, unlike in Western countries the paternity leave is not yet widespread in the Middle East (Alfano, 2007).

According to a study conducted by Harvard and McGill University researchers in February 2007, workplace policies for families in the USA are weaker than those of all high income countries and even some low income countries. The study also states that countries such as Lesotho, Papua New Guinea and Liberia do not guarantee any form of paid paternity leave. These are a brief reflection of the kind of value attached to work life balance in various countries especially when comparing the West to the Middle East.

Positive Spillover vs. Negative Spillover

When considering work life balance, the focus of research has been directed towards discussing how work and personal lives are distinct and the highlight has constantly shed light on the negative spillover among both roles (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Hariss, 2004). It is important then to mention at some point role conflict theory which implies that a person finds it difficult to properly participate in one role due to the basic fact that he/she is obliged to participate in another role as well because what employees are facing nowadays is more of a mismanagement towards their roles (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009). Looking at this conflict, people resort to what is called

'adaptive strategies' in order to keep up with the daily challenges that are brought up by the participation in multiple roles; these strategies are basically concerned with how a person goes about restructuring their own roles and relationships through the manipulation of resources (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009).The other side of the coin which has not been the central focus of researchers is concerned with the positive spillover that comes along the participation in multiple roles; here role enrichment is discussed which in simple terms translates into the idea that the participation of an individual in one role can positively impact their participation in the other role in their lives (Bloome, Sok, van Rheede and Tromp, 2013). Opposing to role-conflict theory, the idea here is that role accumulation, or being involved in multiple roles, leads to positive results such as enhanced effects on a person's well-being, lower distress rates in one of the individual's roles and positive experiences that are produced in one of the roles will consequently lead to positive outcomes as well in the other role (Greenhaus and Powell 2006).

Nonetheless, regardless of the extent to which an employee, whether male or female or married or not, tries to come up with adaptive strategies to cope with the stress that comes along with the participation in multiple roles, work life balance as well as work family balance and employee satisfaction cannot be achieved without having an organization that promotes and fosters the adoption of such policies in its organizational culture. What is available in research concerning this area is related to the concerns of the developments that occurred in the workplace on the social and economic level, rather than what has been done to address these concerns (Gambles *et al.*, 2007).

Work Life Balance Policies in Literature and Benefits

As discussed in the previous section on work life balance and culture, the way work life balance is defined and implemented differs among different countries due to

the fact that each country looks at the discourse from a different angle which basically highlights the needs of its citizens; for example, in the United States work life balance is different from the way work life balance is in Europe; one thing in common remains is the desire to create a meaning out of one's life (Joshi *et al*., 2002). Defining work life balance from Estes and Michael's (2009) lens, the concept simply implies that the organization is committed to support dependent care, provide flexible work options as well as introduce family/personal leaves, each of which includes further policies or initiatives that an organization can adopt. Since more women are entering the workforce and there has been an increased need of having both parents juggle between multiple roles in their life (Hochschild, 1997; Perlow, 1998), organizations can adopt policies that are concerned with childcare and/or elder care assistance (Rothbard, 2001). Once the organization chooses to be family-friendly, it will with no doubt witness a high quality workforce (Glass and Estes, 1997). Indeed, organizations who launched work life programs have witnessed a decrease in absenteeism, increased retention rates as well as higher productivity rates (Durst, 1999; Vincola, 2001).

Looking at the work life balance offerings from a broader perspective that is not centralized around the concept of family, offerings include but are not limited to flex-time, job-sharing, gym subsidies, increased leave days and possibly less working hours. Moreover, these can go as far as having the company provide corporate cars for certain senior levels, flight tickets as well as flexible dress codes which can be considered part of work life balance for some people especially the youth age groups (Joshi *et al*., 2002).

Although it may be considered that the concept of work life balance is only beneficial to the user, i.e. the employee, however, many companies have started to witness the advantages of launching work life balance programs; these include:

- Increased employee satisfaction accompanied by a higher level of ethics (Friedman, 1992)

- Decrease in absenteeism rate hence decreased turnover rates (Galinsky and Stein, 1990)

- Decreased work family conflict (Ezra and Deckman, 1996)

- Reduced stress levels that increases turnover rates (Goff *et al*., 1990; Johnson, 1995)

- Leverage in the talent management system which will enhance the quality of the skills of the pool of applicants which will lead to a highly competitive environment (Dunne, 2007)

Looking at the benefits for the user of these policies, on the most basic level the user will witness more flexibility in their lives with more control over it which will lead to less stress levels; this in turn will empower the employee and drive them to perform tasks with passion (Dunne, 2007). Nevertheless, and despite all of the listed business benefits that accompany the adoption of such policies, employers will introduce change only if they perceive a benefit from it which is why it is crucial to raise awareness on the issue of work life balance and the benefits it can provide to the organization that introduces it (Hyman and Summers, 2004).

Context of Study

As it is important to be have a solid knowledge of our context of study within which lies our chosen sample, this section aims at providing a review of the Lebanese context since the country marks a great touristic attraction. A review of such literature is likely to givea critical background of the dynamics likely to surround the development and implementation of a work-life balance policy among hotels in this country.

Furthermore in this section, are overviews of the service and hospitality industries in the world and particularly in Lebanon, and the importance of this industry to the country's economy? Additionally, this section looks at the patriarchy and the gender-based system as part of the main cultural values shaping employment practices, as well as the possible effects political instability on the hospitality industry in the country.

Lebanon in Brief

A threat to some, a promise and heaven to others, whichever you choose to name it does not affect the fact that Lebanon has always been in the spotlight and center of attention to many stakeholders. Indeed, when one comes across the word "Lebanon" a wide array of images come to a person's mind depending on the angle that they are standing at and observing the country from. To some people, Lebanon has been the ultimate touristic destination whereby this *"Little Switzerland"* has been an attraction due to its sandy beaches that lie along the Mediterranean Sea not to forget its mountains that are not that far away from the beaches; adding up to that is the country's rich history that has long been known for its tolerance for multiple cultures (Jallat and Shultz, 2010). To other people, Lebanon is a country that symbolizes nothing but ultimate instability which is reflected in its vast history of wars as well as the high political instability that posed obstacles to many people that have to struggle to live a simple decent life (Jallat and Shultz, 2010). Nonetheless, this has not stopped Lebanon from ranking number one for New York Times among the 44 top-rated tourist destinations in the year 2009(http://www.marcopolis.net).

Overview of the Service & Hospitality Industry: The Case of Lebanon as a Touristic Attraction

Previous studies on the larger topic of service and hospitality industry have dwelt on awide range of issues. Critical among such issues is the existing theoretical

understanding of the term services and service industry in general. In line with this research area, Zeithaml and Bitners (2003) and Vargo and Lusch (2004) view services as constituting deeds, processes, general activities and interactions. In a seemingly consequent advancement to this conception, other scholars like Edvardsson (1997) see services as extensions of the wider concept of the product itself. Based on the existing conception of "services," the services industry is defined as that form of industry that is basically concerned with providing services to either business operators or end-user consumers. In other words, this is an industry where there is no any production of physical goods is done. Some of the most notable service industries include: hotel and accommodation, tourism and the provision of such business-related services like auditing and accounting among other practices.

The hospitality industry is on its part used to denote a wide range of subsectors, specifically the hotel and accommodation and travel and tourism sectors. This sector has played a vital role in the global economy and the respective national economies of virtually all countries in the contemporary political economy. According to Apostolopoulos, Leontidou and Loukissas (2014), these inter-related sectors have had considerable developmental impacts by serving as sources of revenues at the national level, serving as sources of foreign exchange, creating employment opportunities, and supporting the growth and development of indigenous sectors, both directly and indirectly.

There are a large number of previous studies identifying Lebanon and the larger Middle East region as part of the main tourist destinations in the world today. In the views of Drakos and Kutan (2003), this state of affairs is practically supplemented by the presence of a wide range of natural, cultural, historical and even religious resources, which pool tourists from all corners of the world. The presence of these

tourists attraction centers has heightened the development other subsectors directly related to tourism such as the hotel and accommodation sub-sector and the hospitality industry as a whole.

Developments in these complimentary sub-sectors further intensify growths in the tourism industry in Lebanon and the whole region in general. Such promising hospitality conditions explain why a recent report by the Global Futures and Foresight Report predicted that the number of tourists into this region will surpass the 150 million mark by the year 2020.

Lebanon has remained one of the most renowned tourist destinations in the world over the past few decades. Borrowing from the views of Sheehan and Abdul Latif (2007), the capital city of Lebanon, Beirut was prior to the start of the Lebanese Civil war in the Mid1970s,considered one of the leading tourist destinations in the larger Middle East region. The country's position as a leading tourist hub has been attributed to a wide range of factors that largely serve as tourist attraction, both directly and indirectly. These factors range from the existence of a strong historical heritage and archaeological sites. These are represented by such entities like settlement schemes dating back to the Stone Age period, Roman temples and the Ottoman Hammams among others. The capital city of Lebanon, Beirut has also built a strong name for itself as a formidable financial and business hub in the larger Middle East region.

Economically, tourism remains one of the most vital industries in the long-term wellbeing of the Lebanese economy. Needless to say, the tourism industry is one of the most critical sources of revenue in the country. The status and significance of the larger hospitality industry to the Lebanese economy was however negatively affected by the Lebanon Civil War and other frequent instances of political instability in the country. Prior to the civil war for instance, tourism contributed close to 20% of the country's

GDP.

The immediate period after the end of the civil war has however not registered significant growth rates in the country's tourism industry and its general contribution to the Lebanese economy. In the late 1990s for instance, the tourism industry accounted for a mere 9% of the GDP in Lebanon. However, the past few years have seen a significant growth and development in the larger hospitality industry and the tourism sector in particular. According to Lanquar (2013) the tourism sector contributed more than 30% of the GDP in Lebanon in the year 2010.On top of this is also the fact that this sector supports more than 1.2 million people in direct employment, which represents close to 9.3% of the total employment in the country.

Patriarchy System and Gender-Based Structure in Employment

Cultural frameworks and themes are often advanced by different scholars as a key determinant of the conduct of business and other economic related activities in a given country. In other words, existing cultural trends and practices in one country will go a long way in shaping a wide range of activities, directly or indirectly related to business process. This line of argument is perhaps highly covered in the cultural dimensions theory by Geert Hofstede whereby his theoretical framework is largely built on the conception that cultural values vary across different national set ups.

On the basis of Hofstede's theoretical understanding and the general conception that cultural values vary across different nationalities, different scholars have tried to give a critical theoretical review of some of the main cultural values underpinning the general conduct of business and management practices in Lebanon. One of the main recurring themes highlighted in most studies on the existing national cultural values in Lebanon is the supremacy of the family as the basic social unit.

According to Thomas (2013), the supremacy of the family is manifested in

virtually every aspect of life in Lebanon without the exception of financial, political and interpersonal interactions or relations. Within the business and general employment quarters, those in positions to carry out the recruitment and selection processes at the firm level depict preferences to hire individuals from their immediate nuclear and extended families. The family consequently plays a vital role in shaping the behavioral and general conduct of employees at the work level. In the development of a work life balance policy at the firm level in Lebanon would therefore entail a strict adherence to the existing familial values in the country.

In addition to the family based structure, employment and employment relations in Lebanon are also shaped by the country's inclination towards the patriarchal system of social structure and the gender based system of roles allocation. According to Hooks (2004) patriarchy is a system of social structure characterized by the supremacy of the father figure at the family level. Under this particular model of social arrangement, the adult male enjoys seemingly unrivalled chunks of power, authority revere the family set up. However, aspects of patriarchy are often adopted in other quarters of life and as such; men are held in superiority in those societies arranged under this particular system.

In line with the general trends of the patriarchy system, the male figure or men in general, are accorded a superior status in the society. Borrowing from the views of Apostolopoulos *et al.* (2014), tendencies of the patriarchal system cut across different ethnicity and religious affiliations in Lebanon. The patriarchy system is largely hinged on the general construction of the family institution, where the father is taken as the sole property owner and on whom the entire family depends. This construction has further been adopted in different spheres of life including the general world of employment and the consequent allocation of roles at the society level. Men are for instance allocated the

seemingly superior roles in the society whereas women are only expected to take up peasant-like jobs.

The patriarchy system in this country simply discriminates against women especially when it comes to the allocation of roles on the basis of gender. However, the levels of discrimination against women in Lebanon, as is the case in a large number of other countries in the Middle East region, are rapidly diminishing. The past few decades have seen women take up more active roles in the workforce in Lebanon and in the Arab world in general (Thomas, 2013).The country has for instance seen a sharp increase in the number of women in the national labor force, although such developments are still curtailed by the presence of traditional cultural values that assert supremacy of patriarchy.

Political Instability Impact on the Lebanese Hospitality Industry

Existing literatures on the larger field of hospitality and tourism industries often point out to the existence of a positive correlation between growth rates in these industries and political stability. Similarly, the existence of such relations has largely been covered in previous studies and especially in those studies touching on the equally tumultuous Middle East region. One of arguably the earliest studies on the relationship between the hospitality industry and political stability was carried out by Enders and Sandler (1991)and sought to find the link between tourism rates in Spain and the number of terrorist incidences over a period of 18 years. These two authors found out that terrorism and other forms of political instability affected the number of tourists into the country.

Another similar study by Drakos and Kutan (2003) revealed that there was a negative effect of terrorism on tourism in the three countries of Greece, Turkey and Israel, between 1991 and 2000.Within the Middle East region, different scholars have

also tried to establish the linkage between terrorism/political instability and the state of the hospitality/tourism industry. In one of such studies Basu and Marg (2013) point out to the fact that political instability has often affected tourism and the larger hospitality industry in the three Middle East countries of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

However, most studies on this region have produced what could be seemingly termed as complex results. That is, although political turmoil has been found to negatively affect tourism at the state level, the effects of such turmoil is minimal at the regional level. Similarly, existing literatures have also pointed out to a 2005 bombing at Taba in Egypt and the fact Cairo hotels reported minimal impacts following such attacks, as a clear indication of the existing complexities in the relationship between the hospitality industry and political instability in the Middle East region (Basu and Marg, 2013).

The seemingly complex trend in the relations between political instability and tourism/the hospitality industry in the Middle East has largely been attributed to such factors like existence of physical insulation present in popular tourist spaces and the intra-regional/domestic nature of most consumers of tourism/hospitality products in this region. The intra-regional/domestic nature of most tourist groups in the Middle East simply implies that most of them understand the construction of violence and political instability in the region. This makes them less frightened by such instabilities. Concerning the effects of political instability in Lebanon in particular, political troubles in the Lebanon-Israel border are said to have had minimal impacts on the hospitality industry in the country. Similarly, the frequent squabbles pitting Hezbollah and Israel have had seemingly minimal effects on the number of Arab tourists visiting Lebanon over the past few decades.

However, some standpoint instances of political instability like the 2006

summer war and other political squabbles at the internal level have had devastating

effects on tourism and the hospitality industry in Lebanon. According to Asmar (2006),

the 2006 summer war led to immense cancellations of hotel bookings and far-reaching

levels of inactivity in some of the main outlets highly considered as critical in driving

the country's hospitality industry. Although some outlets partly benefitted from the

seemingly increasing entry of international reporters and correspondents, a majority of

them closed shop due to a high level of inactivity. Some of the main hospitality entities

in the northern parts of the country were literally vandalized by the huge number of

people fleeing from those other parts of the country affected by the political turmoil.

This move led to the closure of a number of large hotels such as the Monroe Hotel in El

Mreisseh, and the Habtoor hotels across the country (Asmar, 2006).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the first step of our research study was focused on examining what is available in the literature regarding the topic of interest which is work life balance in the hotels in Lebanon as well as the service industry under which falls the Hospitality sector, the second step is normally concerned with collecting primary data in attempt to answer our proposed research questions. For this reason, 11 Head of Departments from different hotels in Lebanon were recruited for the purpose of collecting data. Due to the fact that the topic of work life balance has not been tackled thoroughly in the Middle East, specifically when considering Lebanon as there are no studies that examine the topic in the hotels located within this country, a qualitative analysis method is adopted encompassing an interview with each of the participants individually. The approaches that fall under the qualitative data analysis technique are in turn numerous where each approach targets the specific needs of the researcher among of which is the "thematic analysis" (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Underneath this approach, data is categorized into themes because whereby "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.6). Utilizing this approach will help us come up with meaningful patterns within the 11 interviews whereby while reading our interviews we will be able to come up with patterns that could be directly linked to our research question. What is interesting about categorizing our data into themes is that "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data

sense" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.10). In this sense, the researcher has the flexibility of choosing the themes that from their point of view seem to beneficial when attempting to answer the research question. Flexibility is one of the most important advantages of thematic analysis because it gives birth to a rich data set which includes explicit details that the researcher decides on the importance of a theme rather than selecting themes based on their frequency (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Despite the fact that thematic analysis is a flexible approach that could be utilized by a researcher who possesses minimal expertise in qualitative studies, this approach's significance lies within the fact that it can summarize a large volume of data under key determinants whereby it can compare and contrast these determinants to note similarities and/or differences (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

On the most basic level, we adopt a qualitative method of analysis within this research study since this is the optimum tool for interpreting texts. Additionally, since our research questions aim at studying the topic of work life balance within a specific industry and examine the underlying logic between their presence/absence, qualitative research serves to be the optimum tool in our context that will help observe a phenomena in a distinct setting from the perception of the people interacting within this setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).As mentioned, our research questions look at a specific phenomenon which is why we adopt a phenomenological approach because we are interested in studying how do our participants feel and interact with this topic through sharing their experiences about it.

The Sample

Our chosen sample through which we collect data from consists of 11 Head of Departments whom are currently employed at hotels within the country of Lebanon.

The age range of the participants lies between the age of 25 and 38 years old, whereby each participant holds a minimum of a Bachelor's degree. 27% of our sample was males whereas the remaining 73% were females. The majority of the participants were single, composing a volume of 63% of our sample whereas the remaining was married; among the four married participants, only one of them had no children. All participants possessed a minimum of a Bachelor's degree with only 27% who held a Master's degree; among the entire sample only one participant held a degree specifically in the field of Human Resources whereby there was only one other participant who is currently pursuing their Master in Human Resources Management. Interestingly, one of the participants holds a Bachelor in Interior Design that of which is not related to the operation at all. Considering the level of expertise of our chosen sample, all participants possessed a minimum of five years of experience in the Hospitality field with a maximum of 15 years of experience. Last but not least, all participants operate in hotels with a classification that is strictly of 4-star or 5-star. Table 1 below illustrates the basic demographics and characteristics of our chosen sample.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

	Participants' Demographics						
	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Civil Status	Educational Degree	Hotel Code	Position	Experience (in years)
P1	Patricia	Female	25	Single	Bachelor Business Administration	A	Assistant HRM	5
P2	Dany	Male	32	Single	Bachelor Hospitality Management	B	Cluster F&B Manager	15
P3	Karim	Male	34	Single	Bachelor Hotel Management	C	Human Resources Manager	13
P4	Tina	Female		Married	Bachelor Hotel Management	D		12
P5	Samar	Female	27	Single	Masters Hospitality Mngmt-LU	D	Reservations & Revenue Supervisor	5
P6	Lynn	Female	26	Single	Bachelor Business Administration	E		5
P7	Tala	Female	38	Married-3 children	Bachelor Interior Design	F	General Manager	13
P8	Yara	Female	33	Single	BBA Auditing & Accounting USEK; Diploma Office Management; MHRM (in progress)	G	Assistant HRM	6
P9	Jad	Male	32	Single	Hospitality mngmt (LU); BBA (AUL); Masters in HR emphasis Industrial Psychology (James Madisson University); SHPR (USA); GPHR (AMIDEAST/London)	H	Human Resources Manager	12
P10	Lama	Female	33	Married-1 child	Bachelor Hotel Management	B	Cluster HRM	13
P11	Yasmine	Female	35	Married-2 children	Business Management & Finance-LAU	I	Human Resources Manager	10

Sampling Methodology

Since the Hospitality industry in Lebanon is in itself a close-knit society among

the different industries, getting in contact with the different participants was facilitated

through referrals among their managerial network. The participants of our research

study were recruited both via e-mail and/or the telephone whereby the contact details were obtained through personal connections, referrals and LinkedIn. Initially, a e-mail was sent to participants introducing the research study as well as the procedure and confidentiality terms accompanied by an Informed Consent form that will ensure their privacy and that all responses will be kept anonymous. In case a participant did not reply to the e-mail, a reminder e-mail was sent followed by a telephone call if they still did not reply. Once the participant was briefed on the research study and agreed on all the terms of the data collection method, an interview was scheduled according to the convenience of the interviewee in terms of date and time. The below table reflects the characteristics of our sample whereby each person was provide with a pseudo name to preserve anonymity and the hotel was given a pseudo name as well to preserve confidentiality issues.

Data Collection

The data used for this research study was all of primary sources which stemmed from one-to-one interviews. The importance of adopting such a method for this particular research study is basically linked to our aim of the exploration of the insights of each participant through specific preset questions that tackle our specific topic of interest (Gill *et al*., 2008). Our interview protocol branched from our research questions whereby the questions were designed to help determine what participants have to share on this topic and thus group their respective insights into meaningful themes that could answer the research questions and would be linked to our literature. Specifically speaking, our interview protocol entailed questions that tackle what employees complain about on a daily basis in attempt to determine the level of their satisfaction and if that is related to a presence or lack of a work life balance system. In

relation to this, one of the questions aimed at examining the level of interference of the job duties of the employees and their respective personal life and whether or not the hotel management is supportive in that. Other questions tackled the current availability of work life balance policies and procedures and whether or not there are future plans of introducing such policies; the purpose of these questions is to determine how well hotels are doing in terms of the topic of interest and thus examine the level of awareness on work life balance. Looking at the current status of the hotels in terms of the availability or absence of these policies, our interview protocol attempted to examine the barriers that confront the hotel when it aims at introducing/implementing such policies. The interview protocol also tried to determine who are the major users of work life balance policies, if any and whether or not the hotel perceives that they facilitate/restrict the career development of this user. The final two questions of our interview protocol were dedicated to test whether the hotel perceives the added value of the utilization of these policies in case they were offered and to determine what ideas they suggest to introduce in case of unlimited top management support and budget.

Interview Protocol

Our interview protocol consisted of 12 questions that were created by the researcher and revised and approved upon by the Principal Investigator. The bulk of the interview protocol relied on open-ended questions as well as probing questions in order to come up with patterns from the personal experience of each of the individual participants. Throughout the beginning of the interview, general questions on the demographics of participants were tackled (age; civil status; educational qualification; level of expertise); then the interview proceeded to tackled the topic of work life balance in an indirect manner at first and then deepened to target it specifically. We

look at the demographics of participants to distinguish if gender, age and/or civil status have anything to do with the lack of balance and how they perceive balance; the educational background, on the other hand, looks at the existence of a link between education and knowledge of the subject of work life balance.

Data Analysis

Previously mentioned, all interviews were kept anonymous whereby pseudonym were provided to participants as well as hotels they operate in to avoid any sort of conflict of interest and to ensure confidentiality of the identity. Access to the raw data was only permitted for the data researcher and the Principal Investigator of the research study; the data collector was the sole transcriber of the data whereby the Principal Investigator revised the transcriptions only. Based on the revision of the researcher and the Principal Investigator and on the significant redundant responses of the participants, themes were created accordingly with the utilization of the NVivo 10 Qualitative Analysis Software. Thus, our research study was dependent on the "thematic analysis" approach; the usage of NVivo is unique in a sense that it enables the researcher to create a wide range of unlimited themes and subthemes from the exported data which is in our case beneficial as we are pioneers who are among the first to tackle this topic and will surely give birth to unlimited themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Both the researcher and the Principal Investigator coded the statements individually and came up with separate themes and then compared both results to agree on the final list of salient themes; the purpose of this is to avoid any personal bias from both ends and to ensure that no significant points and information are disregarded.

Results

Table 2 below summarizes the most salient themes that emerged through analyzing our interviews. Each participant was provided with a pseudonym so that the reader of our research study could be able to establish a connection between the participant's view by going back to the demographics that are listed in Table 1. The numerical code in the "source" column reflects how many participants mentioned a statement that could be linked to a certain category. On the other hand, the "references" column shows how many times a category was mentioned since the same category could be repetitive by the same participant.

Table 2

Thematic Analysis Results

Name	Sources	References	Pseudonym
1-Employee Complaints			
None WLB-related Complaints	8	14	Jad, Karim, Lama, Lynn, Patricia, Samar, Tala&Yara
WLB-related Complaints	8	13	Dany, Jad, Karim, Lama, Lynn, Tina, Yara&Yasmine
2-Life to Work Conflict			
Negative Spillover	9	17	Dany, Karim, Lama, Lynn, Patricia, Samar, Tina, Yara&Yasmine
Life & Work are Intertwined	2	2	Jad, Tala
3-Importance of Helping Employees Cope with LWC			
Important	11	26	All
Operation as a Barrier	4	9	Dany, Jad, Tina, Yara
Case Dependent	2	3	Patricia, Yara
4-Current WLB Policies			
Ramadan Schedule	11	15	All
No clear-cut Policy but flexibilities	8	17	Dany, Lama, Lynn, Samar, Tala, Tina, Yara, Yasmine
Flextime	8	11	Dany, Jad, Karim, Lama, Patricia, Samar, Yara, Yasmine
Other	5	9	Jad, Karim, Tala, Yara, Yasmine
Social Activities	3	4	Karim, Yara, Lynn
No WLB policies	2	2	Lama, Tina
Sat Sun OFF	2	2	Jad, Karim

Table 2

Continued

Name	Sources	References	Pseudonym
5-Future Plans for WLB Development			
	9	13	Dany, Jad, Karim, Lama, Patricia, Samar, Tina, Yara, Yasmine
6-WLB Impact on Career Development			
Facilitate Career Development	5	7	Dany, Karim, Lama, Yara, Yasmine
No Impact	4	7	Jad, Lama, Lynn, Patricia
Restrict Career Development	4	4	Dany, Lama, Tala, Tina
7-Added Value of WLB Policies for Hotel			
Motivation & Engagement	6	7	Karim, Patricia, Samar, Tala, Tina, Yara
Higher Retention	5	5	Jad, Karim, Lama, Tala, Tina
Higher Productivity Rates	5	5	Dany, Patricia,Samar, Tina,Yasmine
Improved Employer Brand	4	6	Dany, Karim, Lama, Lynn
Loyalty	3	3	Yasmine, Yara, Jad
Enhanced Talent Pool	1	2	Lynn
8-WLB Users			
Married			
Married Women	6	10	Dany, Lama, Patricia, Samar, Tala, Yara
Other	4	5	Jad, Lynn, Tina, Yasmine
Gender Neutral	2	2	Lynn, Yara
Students	2	3	Lynn, Lama
9-Utopic WLB Suggestions			
10-Price of WLB Offering			
No price	8	10	Karim, Lama, Lynn, Patricia, Samar, Tala, Yara, Yasmine,
Decreased Salary	2	3	Dany, Lama
Increased Workload	2	2	Lama, Samar
11-WLB Implementation Barriers			
Macro-environment	9	16	Dany, Jad, Karim, Lama. Lynn, Patricia, Samar, Yara, Yasmine
Organization	5	6	Jad, Lama, Samar, Tala, Yasmine
Nature of Industry	4	6	Karim, Lynn, Tina, Yasmine

Employee Complaints

Analyzing the first question "What are the issues that employees complain

about the most? Do they differ between genders, ages, religions and nationalities?"

which was basically tackling the most dominant employee complaints, gave birth to two

major subthemes which categorized the complaint of the employee of simply being

"Work Life Balance Related" or "Non-Work Life Balance Related". Looking at both

subthemes, it is evident that there was an equal weight for both types of complaints

whereby the number of sources of each complaint was equal; however five of the

respondents listed two types of complaints.

Non WLB-Related Complaints

In total, eight of the participants listed complaints that they hear from

employees that are not linked to work life balance-related. Complaints ranged from the

type of food that was being served in the canteen, to the grooming standards that posed

restrictions to many employees as well as having an unclear Job Description at certain

times and a slow process of promotions. Significant in this category was a redundancy

of the complaint that is related to the low salary scale which basically is a distinctive

characteristic of the Hospitality industry and the case of the industry within the

Lebanese context. Below are two statements quoted from our participants that reflect

the case of the low salary scale specifically in Lebanon:

> *"Most of the issues are definitely related to the pay scale which is a*
> *very common issue in Lebanon and the Lebanese culture". (Patricia)*

> *"I think that employees complain about the salaries because*
> *Hospitality Management outside is well-paid but here in Lebanon it is*
> *not". (Samar)*

Data related to this subcategory shows that employees suffer from the issue of

the low salary scale due to the major fact which is that they believe that the amount of

effort they put into work is not fairly compensated.

WLB-Related Complaints

The second type of employee complaints is directly related to work life balance

whereby a number of eight respondents as well mentioned that some of the complaints they hear from their employees could be directly categorized under work life balance. The complaints here ranged from the difficulty of assigning a female employee on a night shift due to the fact that she might be married and the culture views on this issue, to the massive workload compared to the relatively low salary scale as well as the need for more vacations; the emphasis of the complaints here was regarding the long working hours as the nature of the industry already sets more working hours for an employee per week and due to the fact that the industry operates round the clock sometimes employees are obliged to work for even more hours leaving them no time for their personal life. Following is a quote that illustrates how long working hours is a major problem for employees as it leaves them no time for their personal life along with the fact that there is a lot of workload required:

> *"You know that in the Housekeeping Department we have plenty of hard work & some extra hours to do on a daily basis, so some people complain about being tired, being taken from their families, they do not have a work life balance if you want; this is mainly about hard work, physical work & long working hours" (Tina)*

As a complement of the above quote, the following statement links the non-work life balance related complaint of having low salaries to the work-life balance complaint of having to cover long working hours, where the participant mentions that employees perceive it to be unfair that they get a low package compared to the tasks that they have to fulfill:

> *"The second thing that employees complain about is the overload of work, there is too much work & you are working in environment that operates 24/24 & 7 days a week. So employees complain about salaries, benefits & the work life balance because they feel that they do not have a life. They must sometimes work overtime or for example come at late times to fix an issue or fix a problem" (Yara)*

Life to Work Conflict

Our second question "To what extent does the employee's personal life interfere with their job duties? Is this an issue that the hotel should assist the employee with or be concerned of?" is concerned in determining whether or not the personal life of the employee interferes negatively with their work and whether or not the hotel that the employee operates in is being responsive and supportive to this issue. Here we distinguish two subcategories whereby the former "Life and Work are Intertwined" signifies that the personal life of the employee and their work are inseparable whereby work should be part of their life; the latter which is labeled as "Negative Spillover" points out that the personal life of the employee leaves a negative impact on their work and thus affecting many spheres such as their productivity and quality of work. Within this major theme, the responses of the participants strictly fell under one of the subcategories with no commonalities.

Life and Work Are Intertwined

Only two participants of our sample mentioned that life and work are intertwined whereby one of them mentioned that they rarely see the life of the employee interfering with their job duties. An interesting reflection that could be categorized here was made signifying that working in this industry is a matter of a lifestyle; below is the statement:

> *"For me I consider a hotel is not a job but rather a lifestyle, where both spheres are merged together. You cannot separate your family from the hotel industry because you have to be involved in each and every thing as you leave them all the time to come in and sometimes you have to jump in on weekends so you have to get them in with you as well; sometimes we leave them at the restaurants or outlets so I think you cannot separate your life at home from your job at your hotel. This is why I think it is very important for the person to create this balance to take the breaks and still to get their family in" (Tala)*

Negative Spillover

Reflecting from personal expertise in the industry and from the day-to-day operations, the majority of statements of our participants fell under this subcategory whereby nine of them mentioned that the personal life of the employee has a negative impact on the quality of their work. The negative spillover here was linked to the long working hours that an employee has to cover within this industry which in turn affects their social life by depriving them from it and having less time to spend in this other personal sphere; also, it was mentioned that whereas some people could draw a barrier between their personal life and work, others are not able to draw that link. There was a redundancy of the fact that the negative spillover happens the most with married couples who have liabilities to fulfill towards their families, with a special focus on females since they are expected to fulfill more chores around the house. Below are two expressive statements that reflect the tough situation of women in the Lebanese society whereby whether she is married or not she would either have to put her household responsibilities as a priority over her work and if she was not married it would be hard for her to cover nightshifts because she is a female and it would not be right for her to go back to her home late at night:

> *"Usually this happens a lot with women it plays a major role because women when they are married or even if they are not married we have some restrictions in our society for example working during the night shift/evening shift, staying late whereas married women would have issues with their husbands/children; there are commitments so this is why it would interfere with their job requirements especially in the operations of the hotel. Anytime my baby is sick I have to take a leave of absence from my job in order to sit with her & take care of her"* (Lama)

> *"For example, if we do have married employee with babies the employee will come, especially if the employee is a female, she will come to work tired, sleepy that is the case mainly"* (Samar)

This statement perfectly illustrates the negative spillover from a woman's

personal life to her job whereby unexpected problems that arise in her personal life

would lead to further conflicts in the scope of her job, thus leaving the woman feeling

pressured and stressed out trying to balance between both ends:

> *"When asking for flexibilities of leaving early or taking the day off*
> *because my baby is sick, I feel pressured because I have things &*
> *tasks to do that I have to postpone them or delegate them to someone*
> *else, mostly postpone them because some issues I need to deal with*
> *them personally & I cannot delegate these tasks so I feel pressure*
> *because of my position in a managerial level; it is different when it*
> *comes to an entry level position or a junior position but we have to*
> *cope" (Lama)*

Here, Tina mentions that it is very frequent to witness the personal life of an

employee interfering negatively with their job duties even though they do know from

the very beginning of studying the industry and working in it that the nature is tough

and the job has to come first:

> *"We see their personal life interfering with their job duties up to 80%.*
> *For example, having families you have to work on Sundays, public*
> *holidays & even if everyone is enjoying a public holiday outside &*
> *you are working in a hotel you have to come. Your job takes a priority*
> *over your personal life especially in the hospitality industry since it is*
> *something that is operating for 24 hours, it is not something that*
> *closes at 5.00PM & you go to enjoy your life outside no the work has*
> *some priorities" (Tina)*

Importance of Helping Others to Cope with Life to Work Conflict

As it was observed from the analysis of our data that the personal life of the

employee has to some great extent many negative implications on the work duties of the

employee which will in turn affect the overall quality of their life on all spheres, it was

important to examine whether or not hotels are being supportive in such issues and what

are their views on supporting employees with this conflict. All of our 11 participants

believed that it is important for the hotel to support the employees when they face a

conflict, having two of them mention that this support provided should be based on the

intensity of the case. Among the 11 participants all of whom believe that the hotel

should be helping their employees, four of them mentioned that the nature of the

operation stands as a barrier when trying to help these employees.

Important

As stated, all participants believe it is crucial for the hotel to support its

employees when they face problems in their personal life that might lead to problems in

their work duties. The reasons that interviewees found this to be important is because

some talented and skillful employees lived far so it was important for the hotel to cater

for this issue so that they can retain such employees. Furthermore, some believe that it

is important mainly because the industry is very critical in a sense that it is serving a

guest who has unexpected needs and personality, so failure to handle the problems of

employees will lead to poor guest experience. Others mentioned that the main reason to

help these employees is to raise the morale in the hotel by tackling their humane

problems whether they were social, medical or personal. Last but not least under this

subcategory, is that one of the participants mentioned that though they do believe it is

important to help employees with their problems, however, if their problem affects the

operation they have to be punished for it as per the policies and the procedures. The

statements below highlight the most salient insights of two of our participants on the

importance of helping employees with the life to work conflict:

> *"We as an HR Department do help employees when their personal life
> interferes with their job. One of our team members recently was
> suffering from depression because he got a divorce & we were very
> understanding & helpful towards his situation. We waited for him as
> he took a long leave from work & even the hotel's doctor helped him
> out with his treatments & even when he came back to work his
> attendance wasn't regular as sometimes he used to feel that he was not
> in the mood to present to work & sometimes he used to come & do
> nothing because he was down. We felt that we had to help this
> employee because we believe that we will not just throw away
> employees, especially those who are productive & have potential, you*

have to support them. However, you reach to a point at the end where you have to put a limit to this when you can sense that the employee's psychological status is better because you cannot be flexible for the whole time (Yasmine)"

"Hotel (...) believes that we should always provide support to our employees regardless of the case. I can give you an example of an employee who lost his house because it got burned. We decided to help this employee but taking the Engineering staff to fix everything, we painted the house, we collected money for this employee, we have a system that supports employee whereby let us say today you have a 20-day annual leave balance you can go to the Finance/HR Department & transfer leave days to another employee; so this is what happened with this specific employee where all staff members transferred leave days to their balance. This transfer is usually done in emergency cases & falls under the title of human compassion where we collect 30-40 days & calculate the value of the leave day of each employee in numerical terms because the waiter's price day is different from that of a supervisor, so we calculate the total amount of the days & provide it to the employee to support his problem" (Jad)

This statement explains that though it is very important for the hotel to help its

employees in times of need, however. the employee should still be punished in case any

massive harm affected the hotel:

"We have an example of a former position where the employee was engaged to someone & one night this employee comes to work informing us that he broke the engagement & it affected his work to a great extent especially that he is in a supervisory level. On that day he left the operation & he ruined a whole wedding event just because he had a personal problem whereby his fiancé left him. The hotel compensates for this loss, we had to offer the bride & groom a special discount along with complimentary items but still this is a cost at the end of the day. When you have to go to the corporate at the end of the day & elaborate why this did happen or to justify why you provided the guest with complimentary items & a discount you have to be able to put the right blame or the right reason. In this case, the reason was that this employee went through a personal problem which directly impacted the operation so the owners will directly ask: So what was your action taken management? HR? This is why we had to give him a warning. However, we were understanding enough to decrease the intensity of the warning by making it a note-to-file & without registering it in the Ministry of Labor because we took into consideration that this man was going through a hard personal case & we also took his usual performance into consideration which was usually good because this was the first time that he performs in such a manner" (Jad)

> *"If students have exams & they are working in the operational departments, they tend to fix their schedules so that it doesn't interfere with their exam schedule & they give them shifts that are more comfortable for them to be able to handle. I think that the hotel is doing whatever they can to cater to the personal needs of employees taking into consideration that there is a minimum productivity & an operation that needs to move on in the hotel" (Lynn)*

Case Dependent

Within this subcategory, two of the participants mentioned that though they do believe it is important to help out employees when it comes to their personal problems but to a certain limit and depending on the severity of the case.The statement quoted from Yara below mentions that there are some cases that go beyond the control of the hotel whereby no matter how hard they support the employee the help of the hotel management is just not enough and there is an operation that has to keep going at the end of the day. In this sense, all what the hotel can do is provide moral support to the employee and listen to their problems:

> *"For me as an HR I can support the employee, but for the Head of Department point of view and the General Manager's point of view for them work is work they cannot tolerate if a person wants to leave before two or three hours because they would directly say that if an employee wants to leave before two or three hours who will cover them or who will be in the employee's place because we have guests to serve and a guest who is expecting high services from us and who is expecting services all over the day" (Yara)*

Operation as a Barrier

In reference to the importance of helping employees with their personal problems so that it does not lead to negative consequences among both spheres of their lives, the operation sometimes imposes a major barrier for the hotel to provide support to employees since operating on a 24/7 basis and having to deal with guests requires huge commitment and sacrifice from the hotel's behalf. As one of the participants mention, by choosing to work in the hospitality industry, the hotel management takes it

for granted that the employee should be fully committed to the operation whereby work

comes first; below is the exact statement quoted from this participant that summarizes

the idea on how the operation is an obstacle when trying to help:

> *"The hotel cannot do anything regarding this, it is the Hospitality*
> *industry that we choose to work in whereby in all universities &*
> *schools that teach hospitality they tell us from the beginning that this*
> *is how the operation is: one day you will find everyone enjoying a day*
> *OFF outside where you will have to come to work...or if your son is*
> *sick you cannot go with them to the hospital, you have to come to the*
> *hotel ... even if you live very far from the hotel you have to come. So*
> *being part of the hotel becomes a matter of choice because you know*
> *from the start that this is how it is going to be. One day there was an*
> *employee whose wife gave birth to a child & he cannot take more than*
> *2 days off because the occupancy is high & the hotel is full. I could*
> *realize that because of this he became demotivated & disappointed*
> *especially with that level of thinking of people; you know in the*
> *housekeeping department they are different people than other*
> *departments because they are not educated at all & they feel it more*
> *than the others but sometimes when the management is treating them*
> *very well they work for people & not for the hotel" (Tina)*

Current WLB Policies

The third question "Tell me about your work life balance policies. What is

currently being offered at your hotel and who does it target in specific?" aimed at

determining how well hotels in Lebanon are currently doing in terms of work life

balance policy implementation and whether or not they are catered for specific group

types, through the examination of the available policies. Two of the participants

mentioned that the hotels they operate within do not provide any work life balance

policy and mention that the environment that they operate within is not flexible in any

sort; another participant mentions that the lack of such policies at their hotel is due to

the fact that they do not exist in Lebanon in general which is why we do not witness

them in the policies and procedures of the hotel. What was common among all of the

participants was the fact that they all offered a flexible schedule for Muslim fasting

employees in the holy month of Ramadan whereby an employee can dismiss work an hour earlier instead of taking their lunch break. Eight of the participants mention that there are no written policies pertaining to work life balance, however, there exist unwritten flexibilities that occur from beneath the table. Furthermore, we realize from the response of participants that a work life balance policy was translated into the idea of flextime in terms of scheduling and off days. Finally it was stated that three hotels put a lot of weight on conducting social and extracurricular activities for employees; this was grouped under the theme of work life balance policies because due to the fact that the nature of industry does not allow for a good deal of flexibilities outside work, the hotel resorts to conducting certain activities within the hotel environment in order to establish a balance.

Flextime

Reading through the responses of our different participants, this policy entails that the employee has a freedom of choice over their schedule as long as they liaise with their fellow employees and cover the official number of working hours which is an average of nine hours per day; this is especially important for students who have university classes to attend or exams to conduct whereby they would have to choose a schedule that would best fit their university commitments as well as their job. Below are two examples that reflect this flextime policy where the first example shows the importance of only covering up required working hours since at the end of the day it is the results that matter and the second example reflects the case of students who have different university schedules that the hotel tries to cater for so that they are able to work and study at ease:

> *"For example for me I have an HR Officer whom I supervise where I do not care for the schedule meaning that I agreed with her that if she comes to work at 9.00 AM she must count 9 hours and then leave, if*

she comes at 8.00 or 10.00 same thing applies. I do not care what time does she report to the office, she can come whatever time she wants as long as she is covering the required number of working hours."(Yara)

"Sometimes you would understand the student schedule, we would take this into consideration, we should consider people who are not married as well we have a lot of students who are working with us and we would take into consideration their university schedule versus their working schedule especially in the operations department" (Lama)

What is interesting about Lama's statement is that she acknowledges the fact that the hotel management should not only cater for the needs of married people, but also they should consider the circumstances of different group types, which is in this case the students, as each person might have different responsibilities to manage regardless of their marital status.

No Clear-Cut Policy but Flexibilities

This subcategory is a reflection of the fact that there exists no policy that directly falls under the title of work life balance whether it is in the Lebanese Labor Law or the Internal Policies and Procedures of the hotels, however, it is something that the hotel management as well as the Head of Department of the respective employee does as a favor to facilitate their life. The quotes below explains the difficulty of having a clear-cut policies in hotels due to the nature of the operation, which is why the hotel management do not promise with policies but rather try to help employees whenever they can:

"Being a 24-hour operation I think it is more difficult to have a clear-cut work life balance definition but I think we very much work hard on providing the employees after the nine hours you can go home, sometimes we give early leaves for whatever reason it is or that requires the employee leaves early" (Lynn)

The below quote simply states that these policies are not written and do not exist:

"Wedo not have a dictated policy that falls under work life balance.

> *However, we do offer flexibilities for our employees but they are not*
> *written and categorized as "work life balance" policies" (Yasmine)*

Saturday/Sunday OFF

Two of our participants only mentioned that the hotels that they work at offer both Saturdays and Sundays OFF for their employees, which is in turn only feasible for employees operating in the administration part and not the operational one; the case is as such because the work of the administrative employees is not directly related to serving guests, thus making it hard to provide this option for operational employees due to the fact that they are required to serve guests and the nature of their job cannot be postponed because the requirements of guests are unexpected in nature.

Social Activities

As it was mentioned, by making a choice to work in the Hospitality field the employee acknowledges the fact that certain restrictions will be made to their life whereby they should be able and ready to cope with them. For this reason, it becomes difficult for the hotel management to be flexible with its employees in terms of providing them with a work life balance whichever you name it. This is why, as mentioned by the responses of three of our participants, it becomes crucial for the hotel to conduct extracurricular activities for its employees so that they can be able to get out of the work mood every now and then. The conducted activities take different forms ranging from Annual Dinners and Iftars, to Christmas Parties and Excursions; below are quotes that highlight activities done by some hotels:

> *"We do a lot of activities which I think falls under work life balance.*
> *For example, we do the Iftar, the Christmas Kids Party whereby we*
> *invite the family and their kids and we get the kids gifts and let them*
> *have fun (and this is done for all employees with kids). We do an*
> *Annual Staff Party where the employee can invite his/her spouse or*
> *partner. We have a policy that employee whereby the employee can*
> *have dinner or lunch at the outlets and get a 50% discount up to 4*
> *people. The sports activities include football, basketball & we*

participate in the marathon. We do beach cleaning activities but I think this falls under Corporate Social Responsibility. Last year we did a bowling event, we did a Cinema Movie Tonight" (Karim)

"Regarding activities this is very crucial for us we do too much activities. I believe that activities are more of an employee's relation thing than it is a work life balance; however, if activities do fall under work life balance then I think that we are doing great. Each month I should put an activity & a training calendar for the hotel & it is very obligatory. For example, I do not remember specifically each month what has been done but I can give you examples. For example this month we have a movie night at 6.00 PM after their work we will go together with the employees to watch a movie. We also had a this month something called "Have a Pizza with the General Manager", where we choose 1 employee from each department & they will go the main restaurant of the hotel not the canteen & they will take lunch with the General Manager which is Pizza because it is informal & he will talk to them about their life & not about work & he will communicate with them. During Summer, we did 2 hiking activities for employees for operational & administration, so that people who did not come for the first trip can join us on the second trip; it was in Eco-village in Chouf which was a full day of activities & hiking & lunch all of which are free of charge & the transportation is free. The employees liked it so much because they felt that it is a relaxing day where they are not obliged to come to work. We also take our employees to the museums, we took them once to the AUB Museum & to the Banque du Liban Museum & we took them to مسرح المدينة & the Robert Mouad Museum.

Christmas is a hectic month for the HR Department but it is a lovely month for employees. During Christmas, it is obligatory to do a Christmas Kid's Party for the children of employee; this year it was done at KidzMondo where the family can spend a full day at KidzMondo for free both adults & children & we offer them gifts as well & candies for their children. We also decorated our back are with the collaboration of employees. We also have a special Christmas lunch at the canteen where we serve turkey, salads & soups, everything that is usually served during Christmas; it is at the canteen but done in a very special way. We also visited an NGO called Oum El Nour in Christmas that is for drug prevention with the employees. We also launched the Secret Santa game in all the hotel for operational & administration but on a departmental basis so it becomes easier.

We will also hold an annual staff party next month & we also once did a Photography Session for employees where we took them to a studio in Hamra & they were about 10 employees where they were taught how to take professional photographs & we did a photography competition. We also do lots of sports activities such as football,

> *bowling & aerobics & biking. We also reserve a day for our*
> *employees to access Fitness Zone Hamra here once a month" (Yara)*

Future Plans for WLB Policy Development

Here, the question "What future plans does your hotel have in terms of work life balance policy development and implementation?" was concerned with determining whether or not hotels in Lebanon have the issue of developing and implementing work life balance policies and procedures on their agenda and to what reasons this is attributed; this in turn will open a door to another question which will help us distinguish why or why not this issue is on the Human Resources agenda of the hotel. Only nine out of the 11 participants in our research study mentioned that they would like to develop a future plan for work life balance policy development, whereby five mentioned that the hotel management they are working at currently have no future plans for introducing work life balance policies; this is attributed to issues pertaining to lack of sufficient budget or the nature of the operation that makes it hard to implement these policies from the participants point of view; additionally, the absence of such plans on the Human Resources agenda is due to the fact that the upper management and the Chief Executive Officer does not accept the implementation of such policies (Dany). Two of the participants mentioned that though they operate in hotels that fall under an International Chain, however, they cannot introduce any new policy whatsoever without gaining the approval of the headquarters which in turn will have to revise the policy to make it compatible with the Lebanese Labor Law which is also another obstacle.

WLB Impact on Career Development

Speaking of the impact of utilizing a work life balance policy on the user's

career development, the question "How do these work life balance policies facilitate/restrict the career development of the different employees who benefit from it" was created to verify if a link exists between benefiting from these policies and one's career development; specifically speaking, our aim was to figure out whether or not the different Heads of Departments perceived that a work life balance policy will facilitate or restrict the career development of its user. Looking at the different outputs regarding this question gave birth to three subcategories which implied that a work life balance policy would either facilitate career development, restrict it or simply has no impact or relation to the career development of the employee using it.

Facilitates Career Development

As the title of this subcategory indicates, five of our participants believed that by being flexible with employees and allowing them to benefit from work life balance policies this will facilitate their career development and help them alleviate with ease on the career ladder. Based on their responses, this is mainly because by providing the employee with more time for personal leisure and to fulfill their responsibilities or whatever they have outside of the hotel work, they will reach to a self-fulfillment from that part which will increase their happiness and thus positively reflect on their productivity and work outcomes because they are able to manage properly between both spheres of life. What was interesting about this subcategory, however, was that three out of the five participants mentioned that this is also a matter of personal choice whereby if the hotel management was supportive with the employee, the employee has some sort of on obligation or choice to determine the path they want to take at work and whether or not they wish to improve in their career and use these flexibilities wisely. Following is a quote stated by one of our participants within this category where she mentions the positive impact of being flexible with an employee out of a real-life experience that

occurred at their:

> *"Of course providing employees with WLB policies and procedures*
> *facilitates their career development and this example is reflected in*
> *the example of the man who got divorce. I believe that our flexibility*
> *towards him facilitated his career development because this man*
> *came back to work in a better mood whereby he got over his crisis and*
> *he performed in a very good way which shows that our flexibility*
> *preserved and maintained this talent" (Yasmine)*

The below quote on the other hand explains how work life balance is a matter

of a personal choice whereby if a person loves their job to a certain extent then it

becomes a crucial part of their life and thus attaining a balance and advancing in one's

career:

> *"We had a training that a Leadership Expert did; she said that work*
> *life balance is what you choose. If you choose that what you are doing*
> *is part of your life then you are balancing your life. If you are*
> *enjoying what you are doing, then you just love what you do and you*
> *are spending hours here because you love what you do then that*
> *means that you are balancing your life. But if you choose to come to*
> *work to get a salary, work nine hours & stop because you are only*
> *coming here for the salary, for example like Stewards. They have been*
> *here for about five to six years and they have been occupying the*
> *same job all this time and I think that they can work for the same*
> *position for another 5 years and they do not care if they are going to*
> *get promoted or not. They just want to get their salary and then leave.*
> *These people might look for a work life balance; they do care about*
> *only taking their salary and spending some time with their family. So*
> *work life balance is a matter of a choice to a person and what he*
> *wants. If the person wants to build a career and he is in love with*
> *what he is doing and he is enjoying what he is doing because this is*
> *his life; this is for him a balance" (Karim)*

No Impact on Career Development

In this subcategory, four participants mentioned that the utilization of a work

life balance policy has nothing to do with career development, where one of them

already mentioned that it could be a facilitator towards one's career path but as

mentioned in the previous subcategory, it is up to the employee and their personal

choice (Lama; Karim). The rest of the participants believed that career development is

linked to the objectives and goals that the employee sets for themselves and how do they fulfill their tasks in attempt to attain these goals. Below is a quote by Jad that simply summarizes the insights of all four participants on this viewpoint:

> *"I will not say that it will facilitate the career development, I can say that it will motivate the employee. It will give the employee a boost at work. Employees here already have a good career development, but it will give the employee a boost in the motivational level. Being part of a big chain in Lebanon, the chain does not look if you have a bomb blast they just are interested in the revenue figures at the end of the day & they do want to retain the employees. But when they cannot cover a certain salary raise or a bonus we compensate in a motivational way created by the Human Resources Department on the floor & the empowerment of the corporate" (Jad)*

Restricts Career Development

According to the four participants whose statements contributed to the birth of this subcategory, the Hospitality industry is characterized by being a tough operation whereby working for long hours and in most of the times (especially during high seasons) for extra hours which implies that being flexible with employees in that sense and providing them with work life balance policies marks a lack of commitment from their behalf towards their job and prioritizing their life over work, which should not be the case in this industry. Moreover, all participants here believe that work life balance policies restrict career development because one of the determinants that is considered when evaluating a candidate for promotion is the amount of hours they work and how much extra hours they fulfill when it comes to seasons of high operation; so by utilizing a work life balance policy the employee will be covering less working hours and thus will fail to meet the requirements for career development and promotion. Ironically, however, two of the participants who mentioned that work life balance policies facilitate career development for the employees who utilize them mentioned that their utilization might be a restriction; according to them, this policy marks a restriction for people who

on more senior levels and in managerial positions whereby in these positions long

working hours are required and departing early or on time is not a right to be taken for

granted. Below are their statements regarding this viewpoint:

> *"For ambitious people or people who are seeking more senior levels and would be asking for promotions they can move from a company to another those people will not ask about those benefits from my point of view" (Dany)*

> *"It is up to the employee because now it does not restrict them in their current position, however, for a senior position it happened where we offered them a promotion that required longer hours because it would be a managerial position where should we be in charge of a department so they cannot leave that early every single day; sometimes it is required of them to work more but they refused the development because of this" (Lama)*

Though both of these participants implied that work life balance might restrict

career development, it was obvious from their statements that they highly perceive the

issue as a matter of personal choice and planning.

Added Value of WLB Policies for Hotel

The question "How does the hotel benefit in terms of added value when it

offers its employees work life balance policies?" was set to determine whether or not

the hotel management perceived any advantage from providing employees with such

policies and thus determine if this is a reason for introducing a work life balance policy

or refraining from doing so. Apparently, the Heads of Departments perceived an added

value from being flexible with their employees and the advantages ranged from an

enhanced talent pool, higher productivity and retention rates, improved employer brand,

more loyalty to the hotel and increased levels of motivation and engagement.

Enhanced Talent Pool

Only one participant perceived that the added value of adopting a work life

balance policy will get more talented people in the hotel's workforce as they are referred by other people due to this characteristic of being a flexible environment:

> *"Being flexible helps you in the recruitment process as well and here you are getting people who are referred by your people so it is your basically convinced that you are trying to get in the best talent possible" (Lynn)*

Higher Productivity Rates

Out of the 11 participants, five of them thought that work life balance policy implementation will in fact increase the productivity rates among employees which will lead to a better quality of output at work. This in turn is related to the job satisfaction of the employees whereby once these employees are satisfied within their job environment due to the fact that they are enjoying their personal life, they will be providing a better performance quality and would definitely be flexible with their employer whenever needed. Also, employees who are provided with a work life balance policy will strive to fulfill their tasks within their assigned schedule all of which will reach to a better guest experience:

> *"You would have satisfied employees who would hopefully see what you have done on the long-term and would return the favor somehow in providing better quality and being flexible in some other aspects" (Patricia)*

Higher Retention Rates

In addition to the enhanced talent pool as well as the higher productivity rates that the hotel management will witness, five of our participants mentioned that work life balance policies will definitely diminish the turnover rates within the hotel and thus resulting in retaining the employees. Leveraging the retention rates is attributed to the fact that by attaining satisfaction within one's job will refrain from leaving their current position seeking another one elsewhere because they are happy where they currently are and they will not be sure that they might find this flexibility somewhere else. According

to Jad, retaining employees is a crucial issue for the hotel that he operates within and is

an important factor towards the guest experience which is why at the hotel he works in

they try to accommodate for the needs of the employees so that they reach to a win-win

situation for both ends:

> *"I have a great concern of retaining this employee and not to*
> *substitute them. Take that table for example, that man sitting over*
> *there is the owner of this building and they have been coming here for*
> *around 11-12 years as repeated guests. When you see that they are*
> *accustomed to the face of the same waiter and they have known this*
> *waiter for all these years you realize that this environment becomes*
> *like more of a family more than just a restaurant and a guest-waiter*
> *issue. The waiter is recognizing the guest which is an added value to*
> *call him by his name and on the other hand the guest who is coming*
> *here frequently the first thing that will come to his mind is the waiter*
> *he is used to and he will ask about him if he is not there. You feel that*
> *part of the guest experience is this waiter and the guest gets attached*
> *to this waiter. Definitely, life has to continue however we do try to*
> *accommodate the needs of our guests" (Jad)*

Improved Employer Brand

Four of the participants believe that an important added value of adopting work

life balance policies is the contribution of these flexibilities towards the creation of a

better employer brand. According to them, being flexible with employees will improve

their reputation as a hotel whereby they will be among the "Employer of Choice" to

applicants as they will be marked for being the providers of these policies which will

also lead to a positive word of mouth and thus contributing to the previous subcategory

which is enhancing the talent pool from within.

Loyalty

Within this subcategory, the responses of the three participants were general

and simple as they perceived that work life balance policies will create a happy

environment with loyal employees.

Motivation and Engagement

Last but not least among the perceived added value of the adoption of work life balance policies and procedures within hotels, six out of the 11 participants believed that a work life balance system will motivate your employees to wake up to work and leverage their level of engagement vis-a-vis their daily tasks. This was reflected in the statements of one of our participants whereby he mentioned that they witnessed high engagement scores in their surveys:

> *"We have been very lucky because our Employee Engagement Survey*
> *has been the highest in the region and in the company; our results are*
> *very high" (Karim)*

WLB Users

Considering the available work life balance policies and future plans of work life balance policy introduction and implementation, we created a question that aims at looking at who are the major users of these policies which asked "Who are the major users of your WLB policies (e.g. single men, married men, single women, married women, young/old, Lebanese/non-Lebanese, Muslims, Christians, etc)?" Within this subcategory, we noticed the emergence of two major user groups which are married employees versus students.

Married Employees

Revising the responses of our participants, it appeared that eight of the participants mentioned that the majors' users of these policies are married employees as they had liabilities to fulfill towards their families. Furthermore within this category, we noticed that the responses of the participants could be further categorized into two major groups whereby most of them believed that married women are the most beneficiaries

of these policies and others believed that gender was not a factor here.

Gender Neutral

Here, two participants mentioned that the groups of people who are in need of

these policies are married people regardless whether male or female who had

responsibilities to meet towards their families whether it is related to their children

and/or to the household chores:

> *"I think that the flexibility issue should be for all people, however, the*
> *group that is benefiting from them the most are the married people.*
> *This is because they have more responsibilities regarding their*
> *children and their home more than single people do" (Yara)*

Married Women

The other six participants within this theme believed that it is married women

who are in desperate need of these work life balance policies because it is taken for

granted that they are the primary caregivers of their homes which might require of them

to work for less hours in order to manage between their home and family. Moreover,

and due to the fact that a female woman might get pregnant, she will be vulnerable to

taking more days off due to pregnancy symptoms. Below is the response of one of our

female participants who draws from her personal experience on how married women

would mark as the major users of work life balance policies in our Lebanese culture:

> *"I guess mothers would be the major users of work life balance*
> *policies because they have more requirements. As a mother, she needs*
> *more to abuse the system because she has more things to do. She has*
> *to take care of the family which is something big. Being single does*
> *not impose on you major requirements here as it is for married*
> *people. When you are married you responsibilities increase; being a*
> *mom or a dad will increase your responsibility. I also think that the*
> *pressure is greater for mothers because in our mentality the mother is*
> *the housewife and everything is her responsibility; you end up finding*
> *the mother doing her job as well as her chores as a mother...she is*
> *working double shift!" (Tala)*

Students

Within the theme of the work life balance users, emerged the subtheme of students. Two of our participants mentioned that students would highly benefit from the utilization of a work life balance policy in order to avoid any sort of conflict with their university schedule; also, in periods where students have exams, they might need to use the flexibility the most in order to study well for their exams and be able to show up to work smoothly. This also applies for students who are pursuing their post graduate studies. Below is a statement quoted from Lama whereby she explains that the hotel management should be flexible not only with married people but also with students as well:

> *"Sometimes you would understand the student schedule, we would take this into consideration, we should consider people who are not married as well we have a lot of students who are working with us & we would take into consideration their university schedule vs. their working schedule especially in the operations department" (Lama)*

Other

Finally on the theme of the users of work life balance policies, four participants gave answers that do not fit under the above mentioned subcategories. For instance, Lynn mentioned that employees who might benefit from work life balance policies are people who live quite far away from the hotel that they work at because they would either have to leave earlier than others and thus have a special customized schedule or might even require an increased transportation allowance to accommodate for the long distance that they have to travel on a daily basis to reach their work. Also, Jad and Yasmine mention that it is the administrative staff that might be requesting more of these policies due to the fact that they know that their job duties are not directly related to the guest which will make it easier for them to have some flexibilities in their job. Tina mentions that at the hotel she works at, discrimination is not allowed in any terms

and a policy is either provided to all employees exclusively or not.

WLB Implementation Barriers

The question "What are the barriers that confront the hotel when it comes to introducing and implementing work life balance policies?" is dedicated to determine the obstacles that are standing in the hotel's way when attempting to introduce work life balance policies. The barriers were linked to three main factors which are the macro environment that the hotel is situated in, the nature of the hotel industry and the organization or the hotel in itself.

Macro Environment

Nine of our participants believed that the major reason that work life balance policies are not being introduced and implemented is due to the factors that are situated within the macro environment. This entails the Lebanese Labor Law as the law does not include any policy that is related to work life balance, as well as the Lebanese Culture that does not possess proper awareness on work life balance; in relation to the Lebanese Culture is an obstacle which includes various sects whereby when introducing a certain policy the hotel management has to be able to accommodate for each of the needs of these sects in order to ensure fairness. The majority of the responses attributed the most salient barrier to be the ongoing instability and political situation that has been governing Lebanon which is negatively effecting the occupancy rates and operations and thus making it hard to focus on the needs of the employees only; below are some quotes pertaining to the political situation and how does it contribute as a barrier to the introduction of work life balance policies:

> *"I believe that the political situation of the country is a main factor or*
> *shall we say a barrier to the implementation of work life balance*
> *policies. You are working based on the business & political situation*

of the country. At the end of the day you have to consider all factors because the owners want to see revenue & added value in terms of money to see where are they investing their money" (Yasmine)

"Whatever happens or whenever something negative comes up the first thing that you see is last-minute cancellations or a drop in occupancy & all these issues. The same thing applies vice-versa; so if there is something good the occupancy suddenly increases & we are operating at a normal occupancy then you are up to a 100% which leaves you with no enough staff to handle, so what you will have to do at this point is to keep your staff for extra hours no matter how much hours they have to work over their duties & you have for a period of time people who are getting tired & this is just a vicious circle where they are tired & they start nagging & they want to leave & they start getting better offers somewhere else so they leave & then you are into recruiting again & doing the whole process all over again. So basically it is about the unstable environment that we are living in that is very much standing in the way of these issues because sometimes you have to force people to stay or to work for extra hours not only in operational departments but also in the administration. If there is a load, administration & operation, everyone stays just for the operation to go on as smooth as possible" (Lynn).
Nature of Industry

Among the barrier to the introduction and implementation of work life balance policies is the nature of the hospitality industry as stated by four of our participants. As it was previously mentioned in many sections of this research paper, it was reflected in the statements of the participants that since the industry operates on a 24/7 basis and because it is guest-related, promising employees with these policies becomes difficult and unattainable most of the times because you never know when to expect a rise or drop in the occupancy. Below is a personal experience drawn from one of the participants on this issue:

"For example, I was once a Manager on Duty sitting here in the Front Desk & we had a lady that was complaining that we damaged her shirt. So she came to the hotel & asked for the Manager on Duty & I was present & I was ready to offer her the policy we have which is paying 5 times the cost of laundry of the shirt because we damaged her shirt & the policy was clearly written on the laundry bill & the guest saw it & signed the form. She refused to accept this & she was shouting & yelling in front of everybody at me because I could not replace her shirt with a new one. I stayed calm while dealing with her,

> *& whatever she speaks & whatever she says I did not reply. The point*
> *that I am trying to tell you hear is that nothing is predictable & you*
> *have to be ready for everything & the whole operation here is*
> *dependent on the needs & wants of the guest which is the main thing*
> *that stands in our way. Our major barrier is the guest & we are*
> *desperate from this, we chose to be in the Hospitality industry & we*
> *have to accept these issues" (Tina)*

Organization

Finally on the barrier of work life balance policy introduction is the organization or the hotel in itself whereby five of our respondents mention that the management and the owners are not supportive when it comes to introducing such policies as they do not perceive any benefit from it.

Price of WLB Offering

The question "Do you perceive that an employee's career is compromised if they are benefiting from work life balance policies (e.g. decreased salary, increased workload). Is there a price to pay?" was dedicated to determine if the Heads of Departments believe that they should take something in return from the employees if they decide to be flexible with them. The majority of participants believed that the employee should be no price for benefiting from such policies whereas a minority thought that they should increase the workload as a price for these policies and none of the participants were with the option of decreasing an employee's salary for these policies.

Decreased Salary

Dany and Lama mentioned that an employee's salary should not be decreased under any circumstances as it is a demotion for an employee. As long as the employee is being able to fulfill their assigned tasks, decreasing their salary ceases to be an option as they are being paid to fulfill these tasks and not cover certain hours. Lama mentions however, that the only case whereby an employee's salary should be decreased is when

there is a major adjustment in the schedule and it is based upon the employee's request:

> *"Once we had an employee who requested to work until 2.00PM*
> *instead of 5.30 PM and to take Saturdays off. It was an agreement that*
> *the employee asked for from the beginning when we were negotiating*
> *her offer; she explained that it is crucial for her to have such a*
> *schedule during the week and we wanted her onboard so the salary*
> *that we agreed upon was subject to deductions in order to give her*
> *these benefits because it is a big difference in time and schedule. In*
> *her case we had to fix the salary so that they are parallel with the less*
> *working hours, it is not a one hour less: it is Saturdays off and half-*
> *days during the week" (Lama)*

Increased Workload

Two of our participants, Lama and Samar, mentioned that the workload could increase for these employees since their working hours would be compressed. This could be done by shortening their one hour lunch break to 30 minutes, for example, depending on what time they will be departing.

No Price

Eight of the participants stated that the employee should pay no price whatsoever in return of utilizing work life balance policies because at the end of the day the hotel is seeking productivity and output and it is not a give and take matter of issue. In fact, taking something in return from the employees will result in a drop of their productivity on the long-term according to participants. The statements below reflect some of their insights on this issue:

> *"So I think we do not have the mentality of "I give you" & "You give*
> *me" in return & it is not the case where it is this way or you are out,*
> *we at this hotel are working more on retaining these people because*
> *these are the people whom we spend time recruiting, training &*
> *developing so you do not want to lose those people & then start from*
> *zero because this is both time-consuming & money-consuming as well.*
> *I think by doing this, being flexible with employees, we will witness*
> *higher retention rates" (Lynn)*

> *"No, I still do not think that there is a price to pay because I think that*
> *the benefit from being very flexible with her and understanding her*
> *life and her problems in life and her needs in life will make her*

satisfied with me and will make her feel that it is her place in the Human Resources and she will be more productive and more creative and she will take maybe initiatives to do many things without having me to tell her to do so which is what I am facing now with my Human Resources Officer. If I ask her for example come to the hotel on Sunday which is her day off she will come because she knows that if she asked me to be absent for 1 week to see her boyfriend coming from Dubai I will say her to okay go and enjoy it and I will cover you & that is what I am experiencing now with her. She is doing everything for the Human Resources Department and sacrificing a lot because she sees that I value her work and I value her as a person & I understand her needs and I do not care for an hour more or an hour less sometimes & I do not care if she left one month I can cover her I do not care, I care for the result and when I need her she will come" (Yara)

Utopist WLB Suggestions

The last question of our interview was "In case you had unlimited budget and unlimited top management support, what type of WLB would make the most business sense in your hotel"; here we wanted participants to share their insights on suggestions regarding the topic if there were no obstacles standing in their way. Here suggestions ranged from appointing a doctor for the employees whereby the employee does not pay for the checkup as well as a psychologist whereby employees could resort to a professional person when they have certain problems and conflicts to share. Moreover, one of the participants suggested that for employees who live in areas which are far from the hotel, a good suggestion would be to provide them with an accommodation within the hotel so that no conflict occurs within setting the different shifts and schedule. As it is known in the global policies and procedures of all hotels that employees are not allowed to take their lunch breaks outside of the hotel premises, one of the participants suggested that employees would take their lunch break outside of the hotel so that they will resume their duty in a fresh manner since nine hours is a long period of time for a person to stay within one place. One participant suggested an

extended maternity leave in order to preserve the health of working mothers. Three of

the participants suggested either establishing a gym subsidiary for employees or

providing them with a gym allowance so that a healthy lifestyle is promoted. Also, three

employees suggested offering two days off per week instead of one so that employees

will have the time to both rest and fulfill certain personal commitments that might not

be able to fulfill during one day off day only. Last but not least, the majority of

participants which were six encouraged that establishment of an on-site day care that

would prove to be beneficial for working married people, particularly working mothers.

Below are the emotional quotes from the responses of our different participants that

reflect how valuable and beneficial this initiative is to them:

> *"Maybe we would do a kids' corner for mothers because it will make them feel at ease and less stress at work because the maternity leave is not enough for them. Some mothers cannot afford sending their new babies to a nursery & they cannot even afford getting a maid so having a small nursery could be an option and if we have the money we would recruit professional nurses. A lot of things can be done"* (Karim)

> *"I would recommend is to introduce a daycare in the hotel, especially for women; a place where they can leave their children wherever they are & this would not affect their work because they know that they are leaving their children with people they trust because they already know these people & it is in the same location that they are working in so they would be working as if they are working from home…their heart is with them now at work because their heart is usually with their child while working away from them. Wherever the child is, the heart is"* (Lama)

> *"I think that we need to have for people who have young kids to be able to get their children to work by providing a place to them such as a kids' corner. Trying to make a kids' corner for employees children will make employees feel more comfortable & less stressed out during their work environment because they won't have to finish as soon as possible because they have a kid to get from kindergarten or nursery"* (Lynn)

> *"I think we would offer babysitting services for the employees because the parents would be at more ease during their work instead of worrying about their children. We have that sometimes during*

summer camp where the employees can enroll their children in the summer camp so they would be very close to their parents" (Patricia)

There was a suggestion to develop an on-site nursery/daycare because most of the Department Heads were females who had new born babies so they suggested this idea so that they can bring their babies to duty so that they would stay around them. I think that this would have been beneficial because the mothers would not be worried & thus will be more productive. What stopped the project from being implemented, however, because it was a matter of an oral discussion rather than being properly planned on paper. I think that this project should be suggested again because it brings lots of benefits such as increased productivity because part of the employee's brain is relaxed since their babies are nearby them & they can check on them every now & then; they might even stay overtime to finish their work since they have their kids with them. Also, we will witness higher retention rates; once our Director of Sales had to leave due to a similar issue of giving birth & she preferred to spend more time around her child rather than being far away especially because she lives far away" (Samar).

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The following field project has considered the current availability of work life balance policies in hotels in Lebanon from the perspective of the employer only. Moreover, it examined the underlying logic behind adopting these policies as well as the barriers that confront the hotels in an attempt to introduce them within their respective policies and procedures.

The results of the research study drafted out the major concerns of employees operating within hotels in Lebanon, to which degree their personal lives interfere with their work duties and whether or not hotels are taking any action to support their concerns and complaints, as per the different Heads of Departments. For that reason, the research proceeded by examining the nature of the available WLB policies and whether or not a link could be drawn among them, in addition to complaints submitted by these employees. In this regard, the study of the perceived impact of these policies on the career path of their users and whether or not hotels have included within their business agenda the introduction of such policies took place. The stories shared by various Heads of Departments were a reflection of the current status of the Hospitality industry in Lebanon and how it lacks sufficient awareness on the issue of work life balance. In fact, the generated results show that WLB is still at an embryonic stage in the country because minimal awareness exists on the topic in addition to the fact that the nature of the operation and the ongoing political instability reigning over Lebanon directs the efforts of the management of hotels towards other issues that are of more importance to them, such as increasing occupancy rates. Indeed, the quotes of participants and the

analysis showed how these two factors represent a crucial hindrance during the drafting phase of WLB policies by the hotel. Furthermore, results highlight the fact that hotels will only adopt a WLB policy if they perceive an added value in it. As an answer to the research questions, the following discussion will shed focus on two main findings: A1- To whom the current available WLB policies are tailored? A2- What is the intensity of the nature of the operation and the Lebanese situation and mindset when attempting to adopt these policies. Last but not least, basic WLB policy suggestions will be proposed based on the prevailing Lebanese culture and industry keeping in mind the mentioned barriers when shaping them.

Looking at the interview questions and considering the different responses of our participants, two crucial factors were found to be in common among all of the various statements; the first of which pertains to the tough nature of the Hospitality industry and operation while the second is the overall Lebanese context, both impacted WLB from different angles. What was noticed from the results is that both the context of the country and the tough operation touch upon the type of complaints that employees voiced, whereby the Lebanese context is known for having a relatively low salary scale compared to other countries. The latter has a hard round-the-clock nature thus putting employees under constant stress and pressure. The fact that working at a hotel requires covering long working hours and sometimes overtime working hours can be directly linked to the literature whereby the emergence of WLB as a hot topic is associated with the increasing number of working hours required by an individual employee (Fleetwood, 2007; Pichler, 2009). Furthermore, the cultural context of Lebanon plays a major role in pressuring married women by posing obstacles to them when trying to manage between their work tasks and their personal responsibilities; this is due to the fact that the women in Lebanon should consider their main priority as their

responsibilities towards their households (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).Moving on to the availability of work life balance policies and procedures, what appeared from the results is that there is a lack of written policies in the majority of the hotels relating to this category. On the contrary, what is available is not written but falls under the category of what participants call "no clear-cut policies"; this in turn takes us back to Lebanon's macro environment which lacks awareness on WLB in addition to the absence of any law that falls under this category in the Lebanese Labor Law. As for the available policies, and while examining the groups targeted by the flexibilities, it was noticed that they are often regarded as an issue that should be targeted primarily towards married women; here, and as stated in the literature, women tend to resort to these flexibilities the most because they strive to preserve their roles as caregivers along with maintaining their job (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001). Indeed, though Lebanon is considered to be a westernized country among its neighbors hosting both Muslims and Christians and having women occupying political positions, this has not stopped the country from preserving a sense of patriarchy within its culture whereby married females are still expected to put their family first when taking any decision related to their career (Afiouni & Karam, 2013; Neal *et al*., 2005). In this regard, and according to observations based on responses given by participants, it is still frowned upon to see women covering night shifts and thus going back to their homes at late hours during the night or at dawn. Another point worth mentioning here in relation to the fact that most of the available flexibilities are targeted towards married women, is that in Lebanon more attention is given to the work family conflict making the importance directed towards the balance between work and family rather than work and life.

When considering future plans hotels have set on their agendas regarding WLB policy development and implementation, it was observed that though the majority of

participants do have many suggestions to share on the topic, the hotels where they operate are unfortunately not considering the issue in the near future; as per their responses, the obstacles here are also the nature of the operation and its requirements, which makes it hard for the management of the hotels to create such policies. Furthermore, participants ensured that because not many revenues are being generated due to low occupancy rates and the ongoing political instability in the country, it is hard to focus on developing work life balance policies as the owners and management are mainly concerned about figures. It is worth mentioning here that seniors and managers believe that due to the current shortage of staff in the industry as well as the surprising confrontations that the hotel might face such as unexpected business and check-ins or reservations, one cannot promise an employee with any kind of balance due to the complex nature of running a hotel.

Questioning participants on the barriers they face when they attempt to introduce a work life balance policy, the study was taken back to the macro environment factors of Lebanon, the nature of the hotel industry and the mindset that governs hotels. Within the macro environment, many factors concerning the culture in itself and the political instability that negatively impacts the occupancy rates and workflow are mentioned. The unstable political situation in Lebanon is reflected in the occupancy rates that have been unstable for the past decade; indeed the hotel industry was affected the most following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005 which marked a crucial turning point, followed by a series of incidents that in turn contributed to this drop in figures (Jallat & Shultz, 2011). Other incidents such as the Hezbollah-Israel July war of 2006 as well as the internal conflicts on the Lebanese territories between 2007 and 2008 negatively impacted hotels which pushed hotels administrations to have as a primary focus raising occupancy rates and generating

revenues rather than formulating policies that aim at balancing the lives of employees (Jallat & Shultz, 2011).As per introducing and implementing such policies, it was evident from the various responses, that the hotel will not introduce a policy unless it perceives an added value from it, and provided it will raise scores of engagement and satisfaction surveys.

Finally, it was apparent that when the participants shared their insights on suggesting possible WLB policies that would make the most business sense in their respective hotels, responses were centered on a category that somehow reflected a need that was governed by the operation and the context which was the establishment of an on-site daycare. From their perspective, this will provide a great deal of support to married people, especially mothers who would be more productive and would perform better knowing that their kids are around.

The above discussion aimed at providing a summary of the most interesting findings generated from responses which can fall under two major categories: the tough nature of the operation and the hotel's cultural context. The collected data helped answer the proposed research questions by listing what was currently available in the hotel industry in terms of WLB policies and procedures as well as the logic behind adopting these policies linked to the emerged categories. Furthermore, the answers that participants provided on WLB offerings that would make business sense in the prevalent culture also reflected suggestions that in fact are most salient to the Lebanese Hospitality industry. Last but not least, it was apparent from the analysis of our results that employees in the hotel industry do acknowledge an intense need of a work life balance, but however, do not have sufficient awareness on the terminology and description of the issue in order to express it and voice it to the upper hotel management.

Nature of Operation

By linking the two major categories that emerged from the findings to what is available in the literature, it was realized that the tough operations in the concerned industry and the cultural context of the organization are two major factors that are not to be overlooked when analyzing available WLB policies and creating them. While establishing a WLB policy entails the creation of a harmony between personal commitments and one's work, it becomes difficult for the majority of employees operating in hotels to maintain such a balance due to a simple important fact which is working in a 24/7 environmental setting (Clutterbuck, 2003; Deery & Jago, 2009). Indeed, the long working hours imposed by hotels and entailing high stress levels in addition to the abolishment of the idea that men are the sole "breadwinner" since more women are employed at hotels, represent factors that lead to the complaints voiced by employees because they end up mismanaging among both spheres of their lives (MacInnes, 2006). Providing balance to employees who operate in a non-stop working environment such as the ones in the hotels poses an obstacle for employers who attempt to introduce WLB policies for their employees (Deery and Jago, 2009). As this becomes an issue out of the control of the employer, turnover rates from within increase drastically because employees are not being fairly paid nor are they attaining a decent quality of life (Hjalager and Andersen, 2001). What was reflected from the responses of participants on the case of Lebanese hotels is highlighted in Delfgaauw's (2007a; b) study which explains that the Hospitality and Tourism industry has a low salary scale in comparison to other industries in addition to a set to extremely tough requirements in terms of the input required from the employee. Deery and Jago (2009) verify that "the very nature of the industry, the constancy and complexity of running a hotel that is open

at all times..." (Deery and Jago, 2009, p.99) is a major barrier when shaping WLB policies which contributes negatively to the satisfaction of employees and WLB. Furthermore, shortage in labor as found out in the results is another crucial factor to consider here because in light of a lack of a proper manning, current employees are sometimes obliged to cover double shifts or extra hours for nothing in return, which deprives them from leading a healthy and balanced life (Deery and Jago, 2009; Deery, 2002). Finally, the lack of awareness on the topic in the field is discussed by Doherty (2004) where it is noted that there are no studies at all showing WLB initiatives that are catered for the Hospitality and Tourism industry. Here it is concluded that the industry where an employee is working becomes a major factor when studying and shaping WLB policies and procedures (Clutterbuck, 2003).

Cultural Context

Aside from the micro environment where one works, an important factor relating to WLB is the country within which work is situated. In Western countries such as the United Kingdom, France and the United States, the quality of life is highly valued. For this reason, employees need to have a more ideal balance in the energy and time spent both in their personal lives and at work (Investors in People, 2003). Recent studies have showed that Denmark has been rated as the best country on a global scale to live and work in where there is good support for mothers with young children, with the country making it easier for them to find jobs and work. Over70% of women in the country are employed. It is worth mentioning here that approximately 2% only of employees in Denmark work for more than 50 hours per week due to the policies set by the government (Investors in People UK, 2003). Denmark's policies attempt to assist employed mothers to maintain a good balance between work and childcare and the

policy of gender equality has made western countries namely Denmark very successful in work life balance. The economic conditions in these western countries as well as their friendly policies allow employees not to worry too much about money and hence they set aside time for their free activities (Chick *et al*, 2004).

Comparing the above example to the context of study Lebanon, it is clear from the findings that Lebanon continues to have a poor work life balance because the main aim of employees in this country is to make money rather than spend time practicing other interests and leading a decent life, which is due to the overall poor economic conditions governing the country. In such a country and industry, the poor macro environment conditions make workers do their jobs overtime because their nature of work is unstable and there are no good policies and laws that enforce a good life work balance. In Lebanon, employees work more than 50 hours a week and over 9 hours per day without dedicating time for their own interests as long as they are making money that will help them survive on a daily basis.

Apart from the above factor, there is a link between WLB policies and the gender ideologies that are embedded in a country, as Neal *et al*. (2005) states; Lebanon is a westernized country unlike other countries in the region in many elements, however, there are some gender ideologies that govern the shaping of WLB policies at a macro level. Kolb *et al*. (1998)'s work on gender ideologies reflects how women in this country are constrained by such ideologies whereby their careers are pressured between preserving their roles at homes and their jobs to earn a living. Indeed, patriarchy acts as a discriminator in this part of the world for women specifically married ones who have two roles to fulfill, one at home and one at work, whereas these patriarchal values do not exist in other spheres of the world (Hofstede, 1980). When looking at the findings in the Lebanese context and comparing them to what is available in Denmark, Lebanon

suffers from the absence of laws that support women whereas Denmark enjoys supportive gender policies that aid women especially those who have children (Investors in People UK, 2003).

In a nutshell, the following field project shows that the intense and complex nature of the Hospitality industry in Lebanon as well as some elements of the Lebanese culture stand out as major barriers when developing WLB policies and procedures. For this reason, the below suggestions serve as general WLB propositions that are viable within the Lebanese Hospitality industry and that will serve to be beneficial for both the employee's side as well as the hotel's side:

- Flextime or Flexible Scheduling Arrangements

- Part-time position offerings

- Extended Maternity/Paternity Leaves

- On-site Daycare/Kids' Corner

- Pre-approved overtime hours

- Regulated Leave Policy

In addition to the fact that both the nature of the industry as well as the Lebanese cultural context were taken into consideration when providing these WLB propositions, we also took into account the WLB complaints that employees voiced when proposing these suggestions in attempt to diminish the intensity of the complaints and perhaps leverage the quality of life of the employees. As the name of the policy suggestion indicates, flextime arrangements will enable employees to have greater control when choosing their schedules in order to be able to fulfill both their work requirements and personal duties at ease; this will not only have a positive impact on the quality of life of the employee but also will result in increased engagement and productivity in one's job. Second, by providing part-time positions this will increase the

chances of attracting a higher quality of talent and probably married women who will be able to meet the requirements of their family and job successfully. Third, hotels can resort to increasing the maternity leave entitlements in their internal rules and regulations in order to provide greater support to working mothers and engage them in their jobs; moreover, hotels can initiate in the extension of the paternity leave entitlements such that when the other hotels and/or organizations witness the benefits that accompany a paternity leave, they might introduce it within their own organizations which might possibly have a positive impact on the Lebanese culture as a whole. Fourth, and regarding the issue of introducing an on-site daycare which all of the participants proposed, we believe that it is crucial for hotels to implement such an initiative since it will be beneficial for both working men and women who have children. Within this point and taking into account the low budgets that hotel are running on, hotels can establish a simple kids corner rather than a sophisticated daycare or even provide paid overtime working hours for current staff who wish to cover a shift at the daycare. Last but not least on the overtime hours as well as the leaves, the Human Resources Departments of the different hotels should develop a strict policy to regulate the overtime working hours such that no employee works for extra hours without gaining a pre-approval from their supervisors and providing a valid reason. Furthermore, the HR people as well as the concerned Heads of Departments should make sure that the leaves of employees do not accumulate in order to ensure that employees are getting the rest that they need as well as ensure that the hotel does not handle additional costs due to these accumulations of both the extra hours as well as the leaves.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this research study, 11 interviews were conducted with Heads of Departments currently employed at hotels in Lebanon and who are involved in the policy making process. The purpose of this paper was to examine the current available WLB policies within hotels in Lebanon and to whom they are tailored as well as to highlight the logic behind adopting such policies. Furthermore, barriers confronting hotels when introducing and implementing such policies were studied, in an attempt to provide possible suggestions for indigenous WLB policy development. The following procedure was done through addressing three main research questions that highlight the various aspects of targeted WLB. By adopting a qualitative approach with a focus on the thematic analysis perspective, the research project managed to generate several themes through which it was possible to answer the research questions and accordingly propose both theoretical and practical implications for future research.

Theoretical Implications

The following research study gave an insight on what is currently being offered in terms of WLB policies at hotels in Lebanon as well as the logic behind adopting specific policies and the barriers facing the adoption of others, which in turn paves the way for future researches that could be further developed.

Based on the research findings, the majority of the samples related all available WLB policies and procedures and to whom they are tailored to the cultural context and the industry. Moreover, participants linked the barriers that they confront when shaping

WLB policies at hotels to the tough nature of the industry and the Lebanese context as a whole. Therefore, it can be deducted that the macro-environments where the organization is located in addition to the nature of the industry are two major determinants to consider when studying WLB in any industry. While there exists many studies that provide WLB suggestions, there still remains a lack of sufficient knowledge that addresses WLB initiatives for the Hospitality and Tourism industry whereby not much attention has been directed towards them (Doherty, 2004; Mulvaney *et al*., 2006). Specifically speaking, no studies in Lebanon were found tackling WLB in the hotel industry, which opens room for future research on studying the topic in this context. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the scarcity of studies on WLB in the region as well as the low awareness of the topic could be an interesting area for future researchers to shed more focus on WLB in the MENA region, specifically in Lebanon.

Practical Implications

Findings show that though some of the participants had interesting suggestions to share on WLB, others proved that they lack sufficient awareness on the issue as they would only introduce a policy if they perceived a direct benefit from it. This gives room for a practical implication on raising the awareness of these participants who are involved in the policy making process by providing them with education on the topic through training programs, seminars or workshops that would provide fruitful insights regarding this issue. Furthermore, with regards to WLB awareness, Human Resources practitioners ought to communicate the benefits of adopting WLB policies to Heads of Departments so that they can better support their employees. Benefits which are salient in this culture and context range from decreased percentages of absenteeism, to reduced turnover rates and higher commitment and engagement to the hotel (*Mulvaney et al*.,

2006). In light of the absence of written policies that fall under the category of WLB, most of the participants stated that the Heads of Departments tend to be flexible with their employees whenever they can. Here, employers can resort to solutions such as job sharing, flexible working schedules or even compressed working hours in order to cater for the various needs of the employees and thus observe the benefits that accompany the usage of these flexibilities (Deery and Jago, 2009). In reference to the most frequent proposals for introducing WLB initiatives within the prevalent culture and context is the idea of adopting an on-site day care. Such an idea provides a remarkable implication for HR practitioners in Lebanon as well as the region due to the fact that because of tough economic situations that lead to increased participation of women in the labor force as well as the continued dominance of her role as a caretaker of her home, building a simple space where married people, mainly mothers, can leave their children will not only make the individual feel secure but will also result in a higher performance quality.

Limitations

The most evident limitation that stems out of the following research study is the sample size which is very small and thus poses obstacles when attempting to find salient results and implications for work life balance policy development and implementation in the entire hotel industry in Lebanon. For this reason, it is crucial to keepin mind that this research study is purely qualitative in a sense that it looks at work life balance from a very tight angle due to the fact that the sample is small, thus leading to overgeneralization; this implies that the data and the output results of this study need to be validated further before utilizing it for any possible reason. An additional shortcoming pertains to the fact that work life balance is examined from one perspective only, that of the employer (Heads of Departments) without having any primary data

regarding employees. This marks a major shortcoming because usually the perceptions of employers are different from those of the employees, thus making it difficult to rely solely on what the employers have to say or share on the status of work life balance in the hotel industry in Lebanon. Relative to this limitation lies another disadvantage: the topic of work life balance is considered within one industry only, the Hospitality industry, without considering any other industry or how they are doing on work life balance; this as well over generalizes the findings and results and reflects the ongoing situation of work life balance strictly in the Hospitality industry. Furthermore, the majority of the participants were acquaintances of the researchers who in turn referred the researcher to possible candidates that would meet the selection criteria of the interview. Last but not least only a minority of the chosen sample possessed an academic background in the field of Human Resources and few of them had experience in the field.

APPENDIX I

WORK LIFE BALANCE INTERVIEW

One-to-one interviews will be conducted with 11 Heads of Departments employed at chosen hotels within Lebanon in order to examine their views concerning work life balance policies and the barriers to their introduction and implementation.

1.	What are the issues that employees complain mostly about? Do they differ between genders, ages, religions and nationalities?

2.	To what extent does the employee's personal life interfere with their job duties? Is this an issue that the hotel should assist the employee with or be concerned of?

3.	Tell me about your work life balance policies. What is currently being offered at your hotel and who does it target in specific?

4.	Do the same work life balance policies apply to all employee groups or are they different (e.g. Ramadan schedules, Christmas/Easter vacations)

5.	What future plans does your hotel have in terms of work life balance policy development and implementation?

6.	How do these work life balance policies facilitate/restrict the career development of the different employees who benefit from it?

7.	What are the barriers that confront the hotel when it comes to introducing and implementing work life balance policies?

8.	Who are the major users of your WLB policies (e.g. single men, married men, single women, married women, young/old, Lebanese/non-Lebanese, Muslims, Christians, etc)

9.	Do you perceive that an employee's career is compromised if they are benefiting from work life balance policies (e.g. decreased salary, increased workload). Is there a price to pay?

10.	How does the hotel benefit in terms of added value when it offers its employees work life balance policies?

11.	In case you had unlimited budget and unlimited top management support, what type of WLB would make the most business sense in your hotel?

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