Invited Keynote Symposium: Person centred approaches to work-life balance: changing organisations by understanding the people within them.

Work-life balance self-management strategies. Almuth McDowall, University of Surrey, acknowledgements to Allison Lindsay, Juliane Sternemann, Alexander Edge

Sponsored by the DOP Work-Life Balance Working Group
UK Police as a critical sample

Spending review → Operational and Organizational changes, regional variation

High risk job, work-family conflict potential cause for burnout – focus on people, not ‘just workers’

Need to develop research with practical implications, “things are dire” mindset not helpful for individuals!

WLB about perceptions, fluid, malleable
Theoretical gap

- Domination of conflict paradigm:
  - Documented negative outcomes, work and non-work related
  - Individual differences as antecedents:
    - Stable personality: High neuroticism = high conflict
    - Malleable differences: self efficacy, positive affect, proactive personality: high levels linked to low conflict
    - Coping skills: e.g. behavioral problem focused skills more effective in ameliorating FWC than WFC (Rotondo et al., 2003)

- How can these be fostered?
WLB as skills/ competence approach?

- Frone (2003): facilitation = transfer of skills between life domains
- Kossek et al (2010): acquisition and development of skills as enhancer of well being, and potential trigger for organisational change
- Border theory (Clark, 2000); Kossek et al.’s (2012) person centred approaches: border/ boundary management and negotiation – what facilitates individual effectiveness?
Behavioural approach: competencies

- KSAs (Boyatzis, 1982)
- Successfully applied to understanding stress management competence (Lewis et al., 2010; Yarker et al., 2007; 2008; Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2009)
- Specific competencies for WLB management in the context of UK police force:
  - What are they?
  - Do they differ between groups in the organization?
  - Relationship to overall ‘WLB self-management competence measure’
Method

Large modernising UK force

Behaviour elicitation through interviews

Card sort to cluster and refine

Survey analysis for initial validation
Interviews

• Purposive sample 20 full-time Police Force members; officers (n = 9) and civilian police staff (n = 11) from different areas of operations (neighbourhood patrols, specialist roles, criminal investigations), with specific focus on frontline roles; 14 male and 6 female

• Semi-structured interviews: including CIT, critical examples for WLB management; transcription

• Average number of two incidents per interview, 302 behaviours; reviewed and refined to 134 behaviours
Card sort: Two groups + expert review: 12 behavioral themes

**Table 2**: Behavioral themes arising from the card sort with initial descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral Themes</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number of behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Workplace negotiation</td>
<td>The individuals’ negotiation with people in their workplace to help them manage different domain demands</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Behavioral coping strategies</td>
<td>Behaviors used by the individual to help them cope with the demands of different life domains, such as ‘Changes physical location of work to give a break’ or ‘Makes lifestyle changes to achieve desired work-life balance’</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Time management strategies</td>
<td>Strategies used by the individual to help them manage their time effectively to achieve necessary tasks and feel they have a balance between work and home</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cognitive coping strategies</td>
<td>Cognitive strategies used by the individual to balance different domain demands, such as perceiving a boundary between work and non-work</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. De-stress mechanisms</td>
<td>Winding down and relaxation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey

- Online survey testing the 12 behavioral themes, piloted first, each behaviour rated on 5-point effectiveness scale
- 356 respondents, 212 completed each and every question
- Reliability analysis; excluded items with extreme facility index; regressions for 11 clusters (12th cluster distinct, as encompassed ‘managing WLB in others’)
- 58 behavioural items retained, such as “Finishing daily work tasks to avoid taking things home”, “Ring-fencing me-time”, “Anticipating problems”
PCA and Bivariate analysis

- **PCA: 10**-component solution, few cross loadings, separate component 11 (manager competence)
- Few inter-correlations, except ‘Making lifestyle changes’ and ‘Communication’, with correlated with nearly all other competencies
- Overall compound competency: closest association with ‘communication’
- Work Ethic and Self Reliance: negative competencies, “workaholics”? 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Making Lifestyle Changes</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.01</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Efficiency</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>0.11</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Using Boundaries</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Use of Flexible Working Policies</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Negotiating the Use of Time</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Communication</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.197</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Working with your Partner</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.251</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Self Reliance</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.255</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.209</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.171</td>
<td>-0.222</td>
<td>-0.232</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Cognitive Coping Strategies</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Work Ethic</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>-0.245</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.233</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.196</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>-0.141</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Compound Competency</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.541</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>0.400</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td>0.492</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings in summary

- Competencies ranged from broad to narrow
- Seeking support become “Self reliance”
  - Cultural factors?
- Context specific: for instance NOT taking work home effective boundary management in this population – potentially confidential and also intrusive work
- Communication and negotiation important
- Separate competence for line managing WLB in others
Implications

• Theoretical: **WLB understood as KSAs**, gap in the literature so far. Competencies models widely used in practice, not reflected in research to date

• Practical: screening, training, raising self awareness. Empowering, not limiting

• Future research: further validation, different occupations, is there a ‘global WLB KSA model’?
Thanks. And please stay in touch!

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