

Anytime email and work-life balance: An exploration into the views of Adventist Schools Australia employees

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Keywords: emails, control, convenience, work-life balance

Abstract

Email has extended its reach beyond the traditional workplace into the non-work hours of employees, disrupting the work-life balance. What was once ‘anywhere any time’ has become ‘everywhere all the time’ (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013). This study examines the effects of email intrusion on work-life balance from the perspective of a Christian faith-based organisation, which has the additional dimension of espousing a ‘healthy’ balance between work and life. A survey of 500 employees of such an organisation, attracting 208 respondents, found that nearly all employees owned mobile devices that enable them to access work email outside work time, and that they frequently use these devices when not at work to access work emails. The employees perceived that anytime work emails have provided them with increased flexibility, but at the same time generated greater and frequently unrealistic expectations of them, by parents, students and to a minor degree school administrators. These employees also often felt that these anytime emails led them to working longer hours, generated a sense of being

overloaded, contrary to the espoused values of a work and life balance and the importance of family. For these employees the solution to the anytime work email intrusion and resulting stress is not some external control. To most of these employees external control would be much too restrictive and teaching was perceived to be and has always been more than just an 8.30am to 3.30pm responsibility.

Introduction

Whether we are ‘digital natives’ or ‘digital immigrants’ (Prensky, 2005) we cannot escape the impact of the digital age, with new technologies seemingly emerging before we have even had opportunity to come to grips with the existing. Just within the confines of communication technologies (PDA, Mobile phones, Blackberry, and Email) there has been considerable research on growth in use and how these devices impact us (see Bittman, Brown, & Wajcman, 2009; Golden & Geisler, 2007; Jeffery, 2012; Middleton, 2008).

There has recently been lively discussion of work-life balance in Australia (Skinner & Chapman, 2013), and while email of itself is simply a communication technology enabling users to transmit written messages, files and other forms of data almost instantly, it has impacted on work-life balance by changing the way we work, including

“Email ... has impacted on work-life balance by changing the way we work, including developing an expectation of immediacy”

developing an expectation of immediacy in responding to emails (Trinca & Fox, 2004). It is now common place for people to be interacting outside of work hours with email (Pocock & Skinner, 2013), being connected 24/7 (Jeffery, 2012). This relationship between email and work-life balance has generated much research (Barley, Meyerson, & Grodal, 2011; Golden & Geisler, 2007; Jeffery, 2012; Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013; Pocock & Skinner, 2013), however there is an absence of research considering the effects of such technologies from the perspective of a Christian faith-based organisation, which has the additional dimension of espousing a “healthy” balance between work and life, including a commitment to family values (Grant, 2007).

“For many employees, to have ‘personal choice’ or ‘free choice’ is important and where some workers are happy with flexibility, others see conflict”

Literature Review

The concept of work-life balance comes from the boundaries an individual constructs to differentiate the various domains in their lives including work, family, and personal time (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). Typically strong boundaries keep the domains separate, whereas weak boundaries see interaction between these domains (Nam, 2013). Increasingly these domains interfere with each other, causing conflict which tends to increase in proportion to the amount of time spent in each of the conflicting domains (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Nam, 2013), and conflict is not just perceived by the individual, but “also those connected to that individual” (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007, p. 597). Further complicating this relationship is that ‘no one size fits all’ (Nam, 2013). That is, what one person may be willing to undertake in their personal time may not be suitable for another, however as a generalisation, longer work hours are associated with worse work-life interference (Skinner & Chapman, 2013). The Christian idea of a ‘healthy’ work-life balance is based on the Biblical principle of periodic and regular disconnection from work (for examples see Table 1), and involves rest (Swindoll, 1990), family time (Julian, 2001) and reflecting on God’s plan.

Technologies like email have been accused of blurring the distinction, or even piercing the boundary between work and non-work domains (Fenner & Renn, 2004; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). This intrusion manifests itself through longer work hours arising from the associated volume of work (Barley et al., 2011) and expectations of faster

Table 1: Examples of biblical principles for a healthy work-life balance

text	action
Genesis 2:3	God completes creation and rests
Exodus 20:8–11	commandment to rest on Sabbath and do no work
Psalms 46:10	being still
Mark 1:35, 3:13, 6:31–32	Jesus seeking a time of solitude
Luke 10:42	Martha being admonished to cease work for a time

response times (Park, Fritz, & Jex, 2011), which decreases the downtime available to employees (Mazmanian et al., 2013). It also intrudes through employees feeling perpetually connected to the workplace (Wright et al., 2014) which has the potential to interrupt an individual at any time and any place (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). The concept of ‘anywhere, anytime’ has instead become ‘everywhere, all the time’ (Mazmanian et al., 2013). With this has come a sense of stress and overload (Barley et al., 2011; Mazmanian et al., 2013), and yet a number of researchers also reported that informants felt a strong sense of control in being able to cope with the volume of email by extending their working day (Barley et al., 2011; Cavazotte, Lemos, & Villadsen, 2014; Mazmanian et al., 2013).

Such a contradiction exists in the perception of this intrusion. The positives of flexibility and autonomy provided by mobile technology to an individual, specifically to respond at a time of their own choosing, can create a negative through a sense of overload and interference with free time (Mace, 2013; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Pocock & Skinner, 2013; Skinner & Chapman, 2013; Wright et al., 2014). It is common for employees to “oscillate between expressions of control and powerlessness” (Cavazotte et al., 2014, p. 85). Wright and associates (Wright et al., 2014) note that the perception of the intrusion also depends on the individuals concept of their work-life boundaries – those with more permeable boundaries would perceive the intrusion of such communications more favourably than those with a very rigid separation between the work and life domains. For many employees, to have ‘personal choice’ or ‘free choice’ is important (Cavazotte et al., 2014), and where some workers are happy with flexibility, others see conflict (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Boundaries are usually potentially permeable (Golden & Geisler, 2007); therefore employees need to set their own boundaries (Golden & Geisler, 2007; Mace, 2013). It is asserted that “workers who

schedule and exploit their time wisely, and who set reasonably separate boundaries between work and family are less likely to experience conflict” (Fenner & Renn, 2004, p. 196). A significant consequence of dealing with emails outside of working hours however, has been to ‘shift the norm’ by raising others’ expectations of accessibility through the constant connectedness to the office (Mazmanian et al., 2013).

Aim

This study aims to examine the effects of email intrusion on work-life balance from the perspective of a Christian faith-based organisation, which has the additional dimension of espousing a ‘healthy’ balance between work and life.

Method

Participants and procedure

Data for this study were collected by means of an anonymous online survey to access the views of employees working in the private education sector. Emails were sent to 500 employees located in seven of the nine operational regions within Australia overseen by Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), inviting them to participate in the attached online survey relating to the impact of emails on life at their workplace and beyond. Of those that were sent emails, 208 completed the survey; a 40.16% return rate (68 males, 128 females and 12 not specifying their gender). This sample consisted of 21.2% within the 20-29 age category, 23.1% within the 30-39 age category, 23.1% within the 40-49 category, 20.7% within the 50-59 category and 6.7% aged 65+ years and 11 omitting their age. In terms of roles in their respective schools 67.6% were teachers, 20.1% were administrators (head of department, assistant principal or principal) and 12.3% were support staff.

Survey Instrument

The instrument consisted of 20 questions divided into four sections. The first section consisted of six demographic questions. The second section consisted of 6 questions adapted from the Pocock & Skinner (2013) email intrusion survey relating to the participants access to emails. In particular, when and why the participants accessed these emails, the impact of these emails on their life now and how this compared with their past experience. Two open-ended questions made up the third section. These questions provided an opportunity for the participants to express their feelings related to any substantial increase in work-related emails and debate the issue of whether employers should restrict access to work-related emails outside work hours. The final section consisted of five questions from which a work-life index was calculated. This scale is a measure of the degree to which work is perceived to interfere with non-work activities, where a score of 0 indicates the lowest work-life interference and a score of 100 the highest work-life interference (Skinner, Hutchinson & Pocock, 2012).

Data Analysis

The numeric data from the survey responses were entered into the statistical software package IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 (2012). Descriptive statistics for the respective section two questions and the Work-life Index scale were calculated. Independent groups t-test and one-way between groups ANOVA with post-hoc comparisons were performed to locate areas of significant difference in the data. Reliability for the work-life scale was determined using Cronbach’s Alpha. The open-ended questions were explored following the general principles of thematic analysis. In this inductive process the textual data

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Table 2: Frequency of checking work emails when not at work

percentage of participants							
frequency	male (%)	female (%)	20–39 years (%)	40+ years (%)	teacher (%)	administrator (%)	support staff (%)
never	8.3	5.2	7.0	6.0	5.0	8.1	9.5
occasionally	11.7	16.4	20.9	12.7	17.5	0	28.5
every few days	1.7	8.6	2.3	7.5	9.2	0	0
once a day	13.3	16.4	7.0	17.9	15.0	18.9	9.5
a few times a day	40.0	46.6	48.8	42.5	41.7	54.1	33.3
every hour or so	25.0	6.9	14.0	13.4	11.7	18.9	19.0

is first coded and then these codes are refined into a smaller number of categories and finally nested categories are mapped into substantive themes.

Results

Email Access

Potential, frequency and times

The overwhelming majority of the participants had a mobile device (e.g. Smart phone, tablet) that lets them check their work email at any time. There was no significant difference in terms of possession of a mobile device between males and females (males – 88.2%, females – 91.3%), the different age categories of the participants (20-39 years – 89.5%, 40+ years – 90.5%), or participants with different roles (teachers – 91.2%, administrators – 90.2%, Support staff – 87.5%). The frequency of checking work emails when not at work for the various subgroups is shown in Table 2. A staggering 90+% of the participants indicated that they check work emails when not at work, the greatest number checking emails a few times a day. Even though there was no significant difference in frequency of email checking between males and females, or age categories, there was a notable difference across the different participants' roles, with the support staff checking less frequently than the others.

In terms of when the participants access their emails there is no significant difference across gender, age groups or the broad work role categories. With 21.2% accessing emails before breakfast, 42.3% accessing emails in the evening, 56.3% accessing emails at various times during the day and 30.8% when they are on holiday. If the data is analysed across the five different work roles however, a number of patterns can be identified (Table 3). It is important to note that numbers

within each sub-role are small and the data should be interpreted with caution. It is the assistant principal that checks work emails most often before breakfast, during the day and during the holidays. On the other hand it is the principal that most often checks work emails in the evenings and unexpectedly a large percentage (64%) of support staff check their work emails via mobile devices during the day.

Motivation and Impact

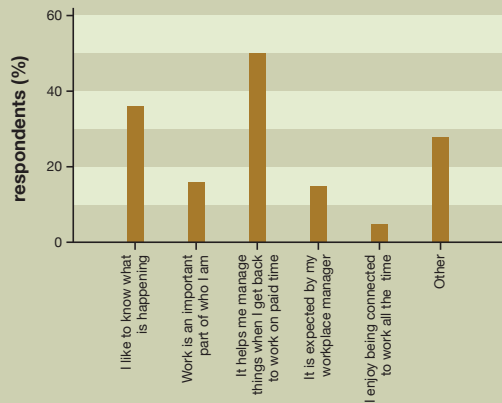
A question was asked to explore why the participants check their emails when not at work (Figure 1). The responses suggest the majority of the participants are motivated to access work emails outside of work because they see that this will enhance their ability to keep on top of work responsibilities when they get back to the workplace. Further, for most, their workplace managers did not expect this checking, which was contrary to the researchers' initial expectations. Another question was asked to explore the impact of having work email available at any time, on their lives in general (Figure 2.). The most common response was that it was helpful and made processing information more efficient. This question however, allowed multiple responses. For the analysis of the nature of the participants multiple responses, the responses were first categorized as either positive responses (helpful & efficient) or negative (an intrusion, tiring & a distraction). Of those who gave multiple responses 30% selected only the positive responses, 15% selected only negative responses and the majority (55%) selected both positive and negative responses. It seems that to many of the participants the impact of anytime work email availability is perceived as both a help and interference in their life.

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Table 3: A comparison of when participants access work emails across the respective participants' work roles

percentage of participants					
checking frequency	teacher (%)	head of department (%)	assistant principal (%)	principal (%)	support staff (%)
before breakfast	17.4	18.8	46.2	41.7	24.0
in the evening	41.3	31.3	53.8	83.3	32.0
at various times during the day	52.2	56.3	84.6	66.7	64.0
when you are on holidays	25.4	31.3	76.9	41.7	32.0

Figure 1: Why participants check work emails when not at work

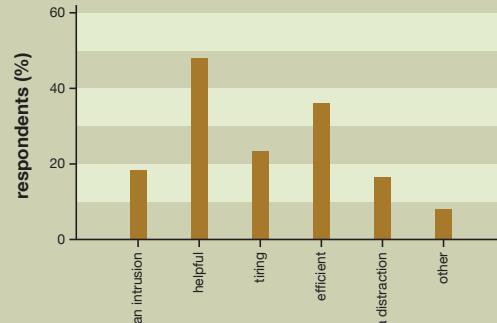


Attitudes to the email flood

When reflecting on their time in the work force, over 80% of the participants indicated that there had been a notable increase in work related emails. A t-test was used to compare the means of the 20-39 years age group with the 40+ year group, and it is noted the mean representing the perceived increase for the older age group was statistically greater [$t(171) = 2.009$, $p < 0.05$, $M_{20-39} = 3.1$, $M_{40+} = 3.6$] as expected. Even though the 20-39 years age group were less likely to indicate there had been an increase in work emails over their work life, still 76.2% of them indicated that there was a notable increase. There was no statistically significant difference in the perceived increase in work emails between the male and female participants. In summary, the vast majority of the participants independent of age and gender feel that the number of work emails they encounter has been increasing over the years.

In the first of the open-ended questions, respondents were asked to describe how they feel about the increase in work-related emails they have experienced in their time in the workforce. A number of informants indicated that the increase in work-related email that they experience has come about due to increases in technological advancement and availability. These responses were couched within a view that email has improved communication, or is seen as a better method of communicating than historical alternatives. *"When I first started teaching, we didn't have emails. So there is a significant increase. It doesn't worry me. Better than paper messages"* (Respondent 47). Additionally, *"I have been teaching for over 20 years and in the early years, email did not exist, hence the substantial*

Figure 2: The impact of email checking at work



increase. Also as I have progressed . . . email communication has been more frequently used." (Respondent 1).

A number of respondents had neutral feelings about the increase in work-related emails that they had experienced over their time in the workplace. As one teacher put it, *"It is just something I have to deal with, I don't really have any feelings about it"* (Respondent 9). Other participants suggested it was to be expected in order to remain current, *"It has to happen to move with the times"* (Respondent 17), *"It matches the changes in living and the work environment"* (Respondent 45), *"It is a sign of the changing world"* (Respondent 83), *"It is not a concern, it is just how it is today"* (Respondent 84), *"It's just the way things are done now. It's part of technology advancement"* (Respondent 85).

Negative aspects

A recurring theme of informants' responses addressed the expectations that surround the increasing expectation to respond quickly to emails received. Most respondents viewed this negatively. A head of department described this as finding emails *"demanding as people now expect immediate responses"* (Respondent 124). Teacher comments included *"it can also feel quite intrusive when unreasonable out of hours requests are made by students e.g. wanting you to email them another copy of a task sheet asap as they have lost theirs"*, (Respondent 86) and *"...much higher expectations of constant communication with students and parents"* (Respondent 76). One principal stated they felt *"Bound by expectations to deal with [work-related emails]. It's all just another stressor that you wish could be sent somewhere else"* (Respondent 23).

A consistent view, taken with regard to the increase in work-related email participants had experienced, linked to feelings of being overloaded

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by the extra work they perceived resulted from this increase. As one assistant principal stated *"It feels like you can never stop checking and simply have a break, otherwise it gets on top of you and you are unable to keep up with the demand"* (Respondent 109). This demand was indicative of the greater expectations respondents alluded to with regards to the educational setting in which they worked. A number of educators indicated increasing expectations from parents and students for timely responses, suggesting an increased demand on the teachers' time outside of work hours. The following responses were indicative of the views expressed: *"Mixed feelings [about work-related email] - it is convenient and makes communication instant and easy, but it has increased demand on the time of teachers - especially in relation to communicating with parents and students"* (Respondent 118). *"[E-mail] takes up a lot of time which means I spend more time working to stay on top of everything. Also much higher expectations of constant communication with students and parents"* (Respondent 76).

Numerous participants indicated the impact work-related emails have on their home lives. A constant theme of this was the ongoing nature of work e-mail and the intrusion this is seen to have on family life. One educator stated *"It's something that I'm in constant conflict over - as in it's hard to stop thinking about work, but it can also cause occasional conflict in my personal relationships"* (Respondent 106). Other comments included *"Unfortunately, it takes up a majority of family time to clear as there is limited time during the day..."* (Respondent 25), *"It does sometimes become intrusive of my home life"* (Respondent 54), *"Has serious impacts on family time and work-life balance"* (Respondent 75), *"Find it difficult to switch off..."* (Respondent 91). One Head of Department indicated a manageable current level of work-related email use, but noted that *"In a previous position it was all-consuming and intruded considerably on my family time"* (Respondent 100). Another Head of Department stated that the perceived increase of work-related email *"Only adds to one's workload. Destroys family life!"* (Respondent 121).

Informants also indicated that work-related email led them to work longer hours. One teacher commented that work-related email *"Takes up a lot of time which means I spend more time working to stay on top of everything"* (Respondent 76). An assistant-principal commented that *"It makes communication easier; though it keeps me tied to a desk for far longer as emails need replies..."* (Respondent 119). One respondent surmised *"I feel like time off is no more"* (Respondent 82).

A number of educators espoused the view that work-related email is often used in irrelevant ways, evidenced by comments such as *"It can be frustrating, as many of the emails I receive are redundant"* (Respondent 94). Additional comments such as *"The email system seems to be considered a bit of a social platform at times so a lot of the emails are really pointless, which is annoying"* (Respondent 67) and *"Too much irrelevant mail to look through. For example someone finds an article they've googled interesting and so they send it to everyone"* (Respondent 44) support this notion. Respondents also indicated concern that with the heavy increase of work-related emails, they had concerns that not being 'up to date' or being caught 'unprepared' were significant reasons for their use of work-related emails outside of work time. Comments that reflect this included *"Most of it could wait, but we are expected to read it and respond. If we do not regularly check our emails and wait, say until Monday morning, we can often be caught unprepared for something"* (Respondent 69) and *"It feels like you can never stop checking and simply have a break, otherwise it gets on top of you and you are unable to keep up with the demand"* (Respondent 109). One Head of Department explained that *"It is very time consuming to keep up to date and stay professional with timely responses when most people expect a reply within 12-24 hours"* (Respondent 92).

Positive aspects

Respondents indicated that the increased use of work-related email had significant benefits for communication in educational settings. *"It's the most efficient way for a larger school ... to communicate and with the rapid growth of our school more emails are to be expected"* (Respondent 27). This sentiment was echoed by other comments such as *"An increase in work related emails is a good thing. Emails are generally a quicker and more succinct way of communicating morning announcements or information that can be given in this manner rather than in another staff meeting"* (Respondent 43). One teacher summed this view up by stating that *"Communication is an intrinsic and important part of effective team work"* (Respondent 87).

In sum, many participants lamented the increased use of work-related email and used terms such as 'pressured', 'overwhelmed', 'increased expectations', 'demands', 'stress', 'overloaded', and 'constant barrage' to encapsulate how they felt about this. However, many and not infrequently the same respondents, felt positive about the opportunities email presents for increased communication, citing terms such as 'efficient', 'convenient', 'effective',

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'helpful' and 'easy' to describe this.

The second open-ended question asked survey participants whether they would be supportive of employers introducing measures to restrict access to work related emails outside of work hours. Over 67% of respondents indicated they would not be supportive of such measures and the remaining 33% indicated they would.

The case against external control

The most predominant reason for why education employees indicated they would not be supportive of restricting access to work-related email was their view that this access assisted their work efforts. As one respondent put it, *"It helps me keep up"* (Respondent 42). Other teacher comments suggested a need for email access in order to manage overall workload, with responses such as *"I need access to manage my workload at home. If I did not do the work outside of hours I would feel even more behind"* (Respondent 159). One principal was of the view that they *"wouldn't be able to do the job"* (Respondent 122), a view supported by a teacher who believed *"[Restricted access] would limit my ability to do my job"* (Respondent 115). Other educators felt they *"would have to be at work for longer periods rather than working from home during the evening"* (Respondent 142). Other views associated with this related to the time needed to respond to work emails, with comments such as *"If I had only during work hours to do emails, I would never get any real work done at work"* (Respondent 147) and *"I need access [to work-related email] to manage my workload at work. If I did not do the work outside of hours I would feel even more behind"* (Respondent 159).

Another theme that emerged from the survey results was related to employee ability to make the decision to access or not access work-related email for themselves. Respondents felt very strongly that this decision should rest with them, with comments such as *"If I want to do work, I would like to be able to choose when!"* (Respondent 62), *"I can choose when I look at my emails"* (Respondent 82), and *"Freedom to check emails at any time should be a right of the employee"* (Respondent 109). Specific reference was made to the fact that employees saw these hours as their own, stating *"I think if you want to stay connected outside of work hours that is your own personal choice"* (Respondent 103) and *"It should be up to individuals to regulate usage out of work hours"* (Respondent 107). A number of educationalists appeared to feel strongly against such regulation, declaring *"outside of work hours is my business, not theirs"* (Respondent 121) and *"I am an adult and capable enough of making that decision*

myself" (Respondent 131).

Respondents also identified that teaching is not strictly defined in its work hours, and as such, some after hours work is not only expected, but necessary. As one teacher commented, *"Teaching NEEDS to include planning and marking time outside of work hours. It is a necessity to be efficient in my job"* (Respondent 145). Convenience was identified also as a reason for not restricting work-related emails as *"Sometimes if you forget something its helpful to be able to email someone so they can check it the next day"* (Respondent 84).

Teachers have a particular need for planning in order to be prepared on a daily basis, and the survey responses provided strong evidence of this. Comments such as *"Some of the emails we receive on the weekend from HOD have important information which is critical to include in our planning for the week ahead"* (Respondent 120), and *"I need to know what lies ahead, so I can plan and execute accordingly"* (Respondent 52) shed light as to the rationale for not restricting access to email. One principal stated *"I should be doing much less from home than what I am currently doing, but would like the option to be able to work some evenings if it helps to make the next day better organized"* (Respondent 117).

Others cited the flexibility provided by the access to work email at any time as a significant factor in having no restrictions placed on their email access by employers. Teachers commented *"I'd like the flexibility to access them whenever I'm able"* (Respondent 54), *"I need to have access to work emails when I am ready to look at them"* (Respondent 59) and *"It means I can attend to work at a time that it suits me"* (Respondent 149). Other responses hinted at the angst that not having access would lead to, as *"Being able to check my emails means that I can manage my own time. If this was restricted it would be an absolute frustration"* (Respondent 151).

Responses also suggested that restricted access to work-related emails after hours would place more pressure on teachers during work time. A teacher commented that *"I feel that [restricted access after hours] would put more pressure on the time I was at work"* (Respondent 30). This tied to the belief that there was not enough time in the day to check and respond to work emails, with a number of teachers commenting that *"...teaching time takes up a large portion of the working day, so often emails need to be checked after hours"* (Respondent 43). It was suggested primary teachers particularly may find it difficult to access email as *"...on days where there are staff meetings till 5pm, you would not have a chance to check email from 8:15 (worship) to 5pm*

"Being able to check my emails means that I can manage my own time. If this was restricted it would be an absolute frustration"

unless you are lucky enough not to have a duty during recess or lunch break and don't want to use the bathroom or eat!" (Respondent 116). This view was affirmed by one teacher stating, "Often once the work day begins there is little time to do emails" (Respondent 126).

Overall, teachers appeared strongly of the view that restricting access to and use of email outside work hours was not something they believed the employer could do, with one teacher responding "Our employers cannot regulate that. Besides, it's up to the employee to decide how often he or she will check emails. It shouldn't be the employer's job to introduce new laws that should be regulated by the employees" (Respondent 134).

The case for external control

A clear theme emerged from the respondents who indicated they would be supportive of their employers taking measures to restrict access to work-related emails outside of work hours. The vast majority of comments related to the expected improvement such measures would have on work-life balance. There was a view that "[Teachers] should have a balanced work and home life" (Respondent 124). On the same theme, another respondent put the view that the restriction of work-related emails outside work hours may contribute to more productivity, suggesting "There needs to be a balance between work and time out of work for more productive employees" (Respondent 105). One head of department believed restricting access would "Help to have work life balance and not to feel stressed about work, so when I am actually at work I would feel more able to deal with issues and pressures" (Respondent 113).

Other views such as "Give me back my life!" (Respondent 96) and "Take a look at the breakdown

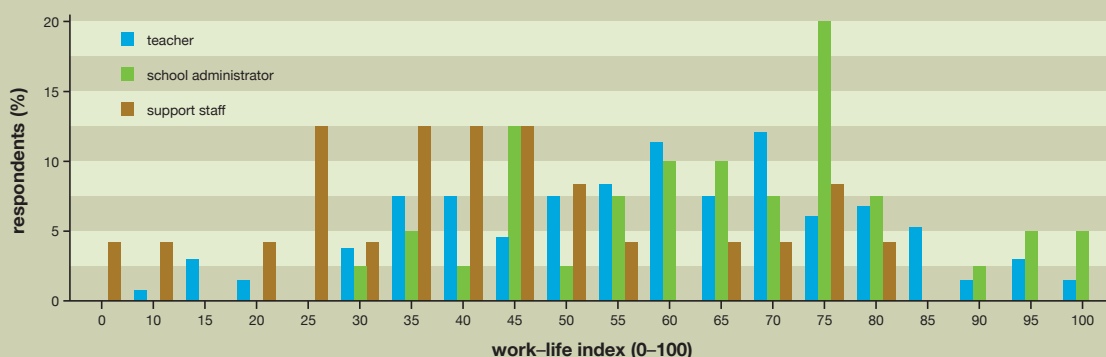
of the family.... come on people... prioritize!!" (Respondent 111) offered insight as to the rationale for restricting access. However, an overwhelming number of responses suggested that teachers felt strongly about being able to make use of work-related email outside of the time that would normally be spent on the campus of schools. The dominant view was that to have access limited would be "too restricting" (Respondent 125).

Work-life balance

The Work-life Index, where 0 indicates the lowest and 100 highest level of work-life interference was calculated for each participant. The Work-life Index registered an acceptable reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.88. The distribution of the Work-life Index amongst the participants' different work place roles is displayed in Figure 3. This difference in the mean Work-life Index between the support staff ($M_{ss} = 42.29$) and the other two work role categories ($M_t = 58.56$ and $M_{admin} = 65.25$) was significant [$F(2,193) = 10.402$, $p < 0.001$]. There was no significant difference between the mean work-life Index when comparing teachers and administrators, males and females or the respective age groups.

What is interesting, however, is the magnitude of the Index for each work role category. The Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) survey found that the average score for working Australians was 42.8 and that managers and professionals had the highest scores, in the 47-51 range (Skinner, Hutchinson & Pocock, 2012). So even though the work-life interference for the school support staff is comparable with the AWALI data, the work-life interference for the teacher and administrator participants was higher than any group in the AWALI survey.

Figure 3: Distribution of the work-life index across work role categories



Discussion

This study indicates that nearly all ASA employees own mobile devices that enable them to access work email outside work time, and that they frequently use these devices when not at work to access work emails. Other research suggests that this has become common place in many workplaces and professions (Pocock & Skinner, 2012; Jeffery, 2012). Interestingly there is no significant difference in the frequency of accessing work emails outside of work time between the males and females, and the 20-29 years age group and the 40+ years age group. There is a difference between the respective work roles in out of work time work email access frequency with the support staff not accessing as frequently (but not by much) as the teachers and school administrators. The data would suggest that principals during the evenings and assistant principals in the holidays are letting anytime work emails consume time needed to keep a work-life balance.

The ASA employees perceived that anytime work emails have provided them with increased flexibility but at the same time generated greater expectations of them, many times unrealistic, by parents, students and to a minor degree school administrators; a situation noted by other researchers (Mazmanian et al., 2013; Park et al., 2011; Cavazotte et al., 2014). This simultaneous praise for and condemnation of the anytime work email was a theme that was constantly encountered throughout this study. These employees also often felt that these anytime emails led them to working longer hours, generated a sense of being overloaded and as one employee put it, “[dealing with anytime work emails] does have a serious impact on family life”; with many of the employees expressing considerable stress from these consequences. For an organisation that espouses a work and life balance and the importance of family, this situation may need to be explored further. For these employees, however, the solution to the anytime work email intrusion and resulting stress is not some external control. To most of these employees external control would be much too restrictive and teaching was perceived to be and has always been more than just an 8.30am to 3.30pm responsibility.

The work-life Index values calculated for teachers and administrators are extremely high indicating significant work life interference. This should be of concern for the administrators of employees of ASA, particularly as they support a holistic view of living including promoting periods of rest and disconnection from the work place. Finally further study is needed to determine the degree to which this anytime work email situation is contributing to work-life interference and resulting stress, for as Barley et al. (2011) suggest the anytime email may be a source of stress

but it may also be a symbol of stress masking an appreciation for other factors that may be significant contributors. **TEACH**

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“The work-life interference for the teacher and administrator participants was higher than any group in the AWALI survey”