



EXPLORING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN WORK-LIFE BALANCE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS IN VIETNAM

A qualitative study

Nhi Nguyen Hoang Yen

International Business
Bachelor's Thesis
Supervisor: Kate Black
Date of approval: 9 April 2020

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ABSTRACT OF
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Objectives

The main objective of this study was to explore if there are any variations in how different generations of the educational sector in Vietnam perceive their work-life balance. This main object was achieved by firstly critically reviewing existing literature on cross-generational work-life balance situations, secondly conducting interviews with teachers of the research generations about the concept, and lastly by analyzing and interpreting the collected data.

Summary

This study examines the effects of factors of generational differences on how people among those generations perceive work-life balance, focusing upon educational sector in Vietnam. The literature review explains and defines work-life balance as well as generational differences in workforces; it also discusses the teaching profession in Vietnam and applies the mentioned work-life balance perceptions on this particular sector. In-depth opinions are introduced by analyzing data conducted from qualitative interviews with Vietnamese teachers.

Conclusions

A certain level of difference is diagnosed between the two generations Millennials and Baby Boomers in perceiving work-life balance, and the younger generation tends to pay more attention to the concept than the other one. These perceptions are largely influenced by big social events of the country that only the Boomer generation experienced. In addition, it was concluded that Baby Boomers have higher work ethics compared to the young and show more respect towards authorities in the work hierarchy as well as appreciation towards their work. However, Millennials believe that they are working smarter than Baby Boomers, instead of having to work harder.

Nhi Nguyen

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Table of Contents

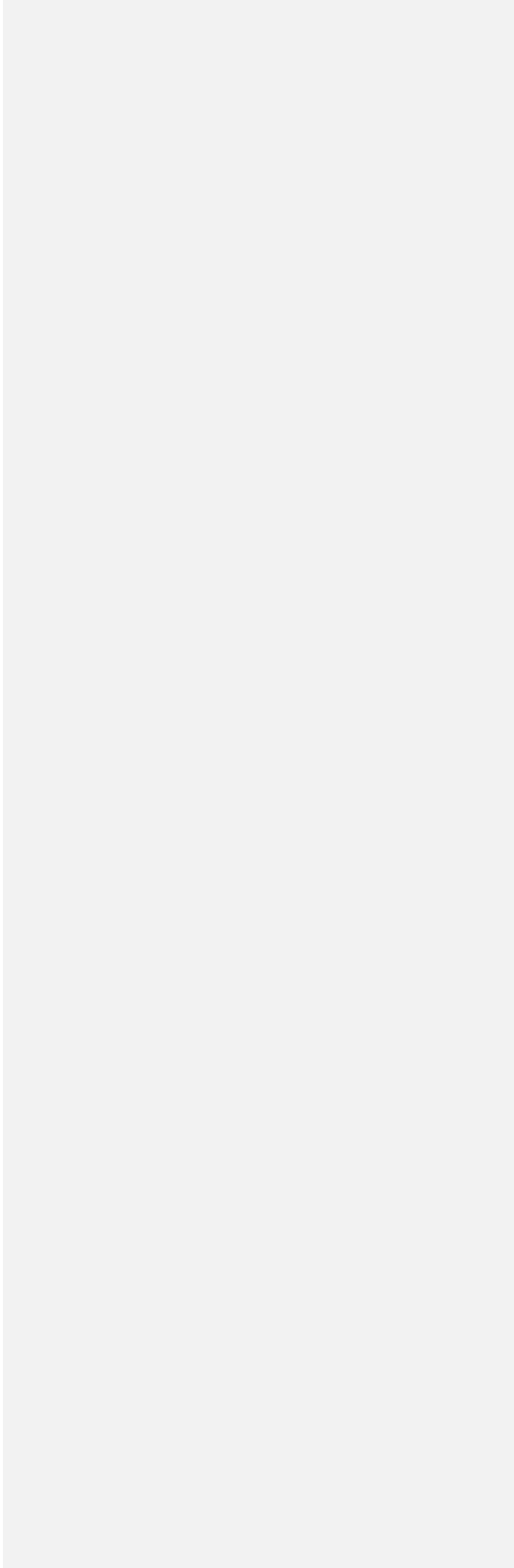
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background	1
1.2. Research problem	2
1.3. Research questions	3
1.4. Research objectives	3
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1. The educational sector	4
2.1.1. Teaching profession	4
2.2. Generations	6
2.2.2. Limitations of cross-generational research	9
2.2.3. Are generational differences facts?	10
2.2.4. Impacts of the perceived generation variations on education sector	11
2.3. Work-life balance	12
2.3.1. Definition	13
2.3.2. Different aspects of work-life balance	15
2.3.3. Perceptions of work-life balance of different generations	18
2.4. Forces that effect work-life balance perceptions	20
2.4.1. Technology	20
2.4.2. Gender diversity	22
2.5. Theoretical framework	24
2.5.1. The border theory	24
2.5.2. Job crafting	25
2.5.3. Social Identity theory	28
2.5.4. Relevance of the theories to the education sector and teachers' work-life balance	28
2.6. Conceptual framework	30

3.	METHODOLOGY	31
3.1.	Method	31
3.2.	Sample and Data collection.....	33
4.	FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	34
4.1.	Teachers in Vietnam	34
4.1.1.	The workload	34
4.1.2.	Seasonality of work.....	37
4.2.	Teachers' work-life balance.....	37
4.3.	Generational differences	38
4.3.1.	Work-life balance definitions	39
4.3.2.	Work-life balance perceptions and realities	41
4.3.3.	Work ethics	49
4.4.	Flexibility	51
4.4.1.	Working stages	52
5.	DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS	53
5.1.	Generational differences in work-life balance perceptions	53
5.1.1.	Underlying influencing factors of work-life balance perceptions	55
5.2.	Teachers' workload and work-life balance	56
5.3.	Border theory	56
5.3.1.	Permeability.....	57
5.3.2.	Flexibility.....	58
5.4.	Crafting theory.....	58
5.4.1.	Physical crafting	59
5.4.2.	Cognitive crafting.....	59
5.5.	Social identity theory	60
6.	CONCLUSIONS	61
6.1.	Main findings.....	61
6.2.	Implications	62
6.3.	Limitations of the research	63
6.4.	Suggestions for future research	63

Nhi Nguyen

Reference list 65

APPENDICES 76



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

In this developing society, work-life balance has become an issue that a lot of people, especially young ones, pay attention to. The business working environment is changing rapidly and becoming very challenging due to globalization, therefore requires people to work harder in addition to developing oneself in different aspects. Some changes highly influence people's private and professional lives, such as longer working hours and higher retirement age for both men and women, which are said to significantly correlate with occupational stress as well as one's work-life balance (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Hsu, Bai, Yang, Huang, & Lin, 2019). Work cultures in workplaces are also shifting as there are a wider range of age and gender in the workforce and an increase in the number of employees with families. Technology development also makes it so much easier and more convenient to communicate whenever and wherever, therefore blurring the line between work and non-work life. A study by Ernest and Young found that balancing work and life was becoming a difficult task for full-time workers (Twaronite, 2015) and that 71% of the participants would consider quitting their jobs because of an excessive amount of extra working hours (Twaronite, 2015). All these changes, result in people being more stressful and having less time for themselves, which makes work-life balance a modern discussion topic (Wheatley, 2016).

Teaching as a profession is somewhat a very particular job. Teachers are both employees to the school and "managers" of big groups of students. Having to perform well at both tasks, teachers' workload is large. Moreover, teachers' duties have expanded far more than just merely teaching, as other tasks include planning lessons, evaluating students' work, and attending meetings. Completing all the mentioned work must require quite an amount of additional time outside official teaching hours. Besides, teachers also need to continuously update and cultivate their knowledge to enhance the quality of their lessons. Teachers' work-life balance, therefore, is said to be poor as they are considered

Nhi Nguyen

overloaded and the levels of stress burnouts among teachers have significantly increased (Göksoy and Akdağ, 2014). More especially, the majority of teachers in Vietnam must teach extra classes after official working hours as the demands are high and also doing so would help them better make ends meet.

Many aspects can affect a person's work-life balance; however, studies have shown that people from different generations tend to differ in perceiving the concept (Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016; Cogin, 2012). Currently, the majority of the workforce is the Millennial generation, being the people who are born between 1980 and 1999. It is reckoned that in the next 10 years, Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce (Johnson, 2015). However, as retirement age has increased and there are still Baby Boomers remaining in workplaces, labor forces are said to be very generationally diverse, and their perceptions about work values vary significantly. Therefore, such differences must be acknowledged and addressed to establish a suitable working environment for everyone involved in the workforce.

1.2. Research problem

Many aspects shape workers' characteristics, which a manager needs to acknowledge and take advantage of. Generational difference is one of such attributes that may contribute to differentiating employees. People of different generations experience different living environments and conditions (Muzaffer Aydemir, M.Saint Dinc, and Mehmet Caglar, 2016), their expectations at work therefore may vary significantly. Therefore, this study aims to explore if there are any effects caused by such generational differences on employees' perceptions of work-life balance, focuses especially on the educational sector in Vietnam, as people of all ages are taking part in this 'industry'. There are, however, other counterarguments that claim that, first of all, work-life balance is a cultural myth (Livni, 2018), and second, there is no such thing as a generational difference because people should not be different just because they were not born in the same year. As a result, this research aims to test as well as compare the theories and findings of previous studies, to see whether there actually are generational differences in work-life

Nhi Nguyen

balance perceptions. Moreover, looking at this particular sector is interesting in terms of relevance as almost everyone is either directly or indirectly involved in the industry. With that being said, the study could be useful and applicable for people to be acknowledged of what to expect from this sector, of how variously the system can be with different aging workforce and if the quality is affected by such diversity. Furthermore, education is a highly important sector, 'is one of the basic needs for human development and to escape from poverty' (Sivakumar & Sarvalingam, 2010:20), therefore every affecting aspect should be taken into consideration, and this study would help address people's (including ones that are not directly working in education environment) expectations.

1.3. Research questions

So as to address the problem presented above, a few research questions were formed as follows:

- 1.3.1. How do teachers in Vietnam perceive work-life balance?
- 1.3.2. What are the influencing factors that contribute to shaping Vietnamese teachers' perceptions of work-life balance?
- 1.3.3. Are there differences in cross-generational perceptions of work-life balance of those teachers?

1.4. Research objectives

This thesis aims to:

1.4.1. Access the degree of differences in work-life balance perceptions among different generations within the Vietnamese educational sector.

1.4.1.1. Examining W-LB perceptions of Baby Boomer teachers

Nhi Nguyen

1.4.1.2. Examining W-LB of Millennial (gen Y) teachers

1.4.2. Explore alternatives on how to implement effective working policies that help improve the workforce's work-life balance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of this literature aims to evaluate as well as critique the already-existing studies concerning work-life balance and differences in cross-generational perceptions of the issue in educational settings within Vietnam. By comparing the articles, these concepts can further be defined and understood. This study also will attempt to find optimal solutions to any problems caused by the distinctions in perceptions of work-life balance in workforces within organizations, and then applies such findings to the educational sector in Vietnam to enhance the quality of the workforce in the field. The literature review will start with defining key terms of the research, namely generation, and work-life balance, and then narrowing down to relevant aspects of such terms. Next, it will introduce the theoretical framework and discuss the relationship between the two. Lastly, conclusions of how differently the work-life balance perceptions of different generations may affect the overall performance of the organization and ways how to resolve problems will be presented based on the conceptual framework developed.

2.1. The educational sector

2.1.1. Teaching profession

In "Democratic Teaching: An Incomplete Job description", Bradshaw (2014) cited the documentary *American Teacher* commenting that "the film's portrait of teachers invites more pity than awe" (Bradshaw, 2014:2) and presenting a commonly shared opinion: "Teachers do too much work for too little pay" (ibid, 2014:1). This opinion, though, is highly applicable in Vietnam, as most teachers complain about the low wage they make from

Nhi Nguyen

their work, which makes it difficult for them to even make ends meet. In the year 2000, Eacute and Esteve already indicated that the teaching profession at the time was a much more complicated work than it had been twenty years before. Now, twenty years later after the statement, teaching has undoubtedly changed more tremendously due to the development in demographic and technical modifications of the society.

Teachers were expected to manage larger-sized, more ability-mixed and sometimes even more culturally diverse than before when education was only for elite families, yet the quality and standard should endure (Eacute & Esteve, 2000). Although proposed twenty years ago, the opinion remains true and applicable to the current situation of the teaching profession. However, as much as teachers must develop and adapt due to the changes and although society values education (Janks, 2014), this intellectual responsibility is usually underestimated (Bates, 2014). The media even derogated the occupation by contributing to the view “Those who can’t do, teach”, which led to “a greater loss of status for teaching than previously seen” (Shaw, 1903; cited in Bates, 2014:4). Nevertheless, teachers are still “working harder” (Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006; O’Day, 2002; cited in Valli and Buese: 2017), and their roles are increased, intensified, and expanded (Valli and Buese, 2017).

2.1.1.1. The workload

Teachers are required to do more things with the positive correlation between expectations and level of sophistication (high expectations from more sophisticated tasks) (Valli and Buese, 2017), both inside and outside the classroom. Besides teaching, teachers also have to evaluate their students, planning lessons, and/or attending meetings. These tasks require working in addition to official working hours, approximately 7 hours more a week on these non-teaching tasks (Webber, A., 2019). To complete all the tasks, teachers have to be able to prioritize their responsibilities, which may result in a work-life imbalance. Research has shown that the workload of teachers is severe, and more teachers are leaving the profession before having taught for 35 years (Sugden, N., 2010). There are even terms such as “teacher burnout” and “teacher stress” to refer to

Nhi Nguyen

the “permanent negative effects” of the overall teaching environment on teachers and made them appear “worried, tired, or exhausted” at the classroom (Esteve, 1986; cited in Eacute & Esteve, 2000:198).

In Asia generally, and in Vietnam specifically, teachers work even harder than they are required to and compared to teachers in other Western countries. Most Vietnamese students go to extra classes, or also known as cram schools, after their main school time. Such demand requires “supply”, which is provided by, undoubtedly, teachers. Although working/ teaching extra is not mandatory for teachers in Vietnam, low wages and peer pressure from other teachers prevent them from settling with just teaching at the main school. Therefore, an adequate number of Vietnamese teachers teach extra classes, usually operated at their own homes or a rented venue. It can be inferred that the work-life balance of these teachers is heavily affected as they bring work to home.

2.1.1.2. Work-life balance of teachers

As can be inferred from the workload and the realistic situation of teachers in Vietnam, teachers do not seem to have a balance between work and life. However, although as same as all other occupations, a work-life balance needs to be achieved particularly to increase satisfaction and commitment level of teachers, which will result in positive education quality. After all, education is the basis of every platform in life, therefore teachers/ professors need to be considered properly and more according to their intellectual levels, instead of being thought of as “people who can’t do”.

2.2. Generations

Generations are differentiated using two main aspects: date of birth and events associated with time (Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016). Kupperschmidt (2000) cited in Cramer, Parris, and Saville (2011:3) defined generation as a “group of people who shares birth years, age, location and significant life events at critical developmental stages”, and

Nhi Nguyen

each generation developed distinctive preferences and traits about their emotions towards work and what they expect from work. However, it is important to emphasize on the “significant live events” part of the definition, since commonly sharing the same birth years is not enough for people to share a whole generation; it’s the experience and big events in life that create the bond between people who were born at the same period (Parry and Urwin, 2017). Based on such definitions, generations of the last decade are divided into several different groups, namely Traditionalists (born between 1925 and 1945) Baby Boomers (people who were born between 1946 and 1964), Generation Xers or Generation X – children of Baby Boomers (Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016), and lastly Generation Y, more widely known as Millennials – born between 1981 and 1999, and they are also the youngest current workforce. For this study, only Baby Boomers and Millennials are taken into account when analyzing differences among them and their work-life balance perceptions. Since the age gap is bigger, the differences between the two generations will be more clearly visible, which makes the results of this study more reliable. Besides, not considering more generations helps maximize the potential differences between them.

The study of generations is becoming more important, especially in Vietnam as the retirement age from 2021 will be increased to 62 years of age for men (previously 60) and 60 for women (previously 58), and the policy is applied for all kinds of professions, including those in the education sector. This means that there are more chances of different generations working together in a firm/organization, and it is crucial/imperative that they get along with each other at work in terms of perceptions, mindsets, and expectations so that the overall performance can be guaranteed.

2.2.1. Generational differences

As mentioned earlier, different generations are exposed to distinctive economic and political events, thereby leading to the formation of different traits and values (Kupperschmidt, 2000; cited in Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016:78). For example, Boomers are said to be shaped/influenced by the growth of televisions (Schullery, 2013).

Nhi Nguyen

They were also influenced by the consequences of World War II, thus “lived to work”, were committed to their organizations and considered “workaholics” (Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016). Similar to that generation in the US, Baby Boomers in Vietnam were also highly affected by the Vietnam War which took place not long after World War II. According to a research by Marsala (2015), the Vietnam War “operated as a contingency with the potential to have long-lasting effects on individuals” (Marsala, 2015:3). Therefore, it can be said that this generation, especially the baby boomer veterans who made up to 20% of the Vietnamese population of the time, was shaped by such a big event, which later generations did not have to experience.

While televisions and the impacts of wars might have affected the characteristics of Baby Boomers, Twenge et al (2010) cited in Schullery (2009:254) indicated that GenX-ers “grew up with Sesame Street, learned about AIDS as it became epidemic and watched the Berlin Wall fall”. As for Millennials, they are undoubtedly shaped by the fast-paced development of the Internet when computers made information available for this generation interminable (Schullery, p. 254, 2013). This, unlike wars, is true globally. Individuals from the Baby Boomer cohort could not be exposed to technology as early as those of later generations. Tapscott (2009) mentioned in Schullery (2013:254) also hypothesized that the early approach to technology instead of outdoor activities made children’s brains differ both physically and mentally, and therefore led to the generation being able to “access, sort, categorize, and remember information well” (ibid).

Demographics have shown that the population of millennials is larger than the 46 million people of Gen X and is nearly as big as the size of the 76.4 million in the baby boomer generation (DeVaney, 2015). As unvaried as the sizes of different generations are, they share different mindsets and attitudes. Aslop (2008) cited in DeVaney (2015:13) pointed out that Millennials were “entitled, optimistic, civic-minded, close parental involvement, values work-life balance, impatient, multitasking, and team-oriented”, while Gen X was described as “self-reliant, adaptable, cynical, distrust authority, resourceful, entrepreneurial, and technologically savvy.”, which highly contrasted with the traits of Millennials. Studies have also shown that Millennials and especially Gen X value leisure

Nhi Nguyen

over work in their lives (Twenge, 2010), in comparison with Boomers and Silent generations. Moreover, it was also stated extrinsic work values (for example, salary) and individualistic traits were higher for Gen X and Gen Y (ibid).

2.2.2. Limitations of cross-generational research

Although there appears to be an abundance of studies on generational differences in terms of mindsets, perceptions, and work values, some major limitations to these studies still exist.

First, most researches that study generational differences use data based on people of different ages collected at the same point of time, or in other words, lack time-lag designs. It is believed that the results would be more reliable if the study is designed in a way that inspects people of the same age at different periods. According to Twenge (ibid), with age being held constant, any variations observed would be due to either generations or periods. The results of how cross-generational studies are usually designed (non-time-lag designs) can be affected by the period that people are living in when the studies are conducted in, therefore are biased and can be unreliable.

Secondly, Murphy et al. (2004) and Johnson and Lopes (2008) cited in Cugin (2012, Multigenerational Theory, para. 10) argued that many studies failed to recognize the cross-cultural diversity that might have caused different opinions of different generations. This argument is true, as cultural diversity, in addition to other variables of this issue that should be taken into consideration besides ages (or in other words, generations), can largely affect viewpoints and mindsets of people. Cugin supported the claim by providing an example that Baby Boomers who grew up in Germany after World War II and those who grew up in the USA of the same period would differ in experiences due to the contrasting consequences after the war, therefore would be characterized differently. Muzaffer Aydemir, M.Saint Dinc, and Mehmet Caglar, authors who studied cross-generational differences of work-life balance and work values, also themselves

Nhi Nguyen

acknowledged this shortcoming of their study that it used generational difference as the main and only variable.

Last but not least, as DeVaney (2015) stated in the article that younger and older generations themselves have differences between each individual, therefore it can be implied that there could be significant variances among individuals within a generation group and therefore generations should not be generalized. The point was also further supported by an example that the first millennials born between 1986 and 1992 were taking part in the workforce during the December 2007 - June 2009 recession, while others who were born since 1992 were still studying in schools/ universities or just beginning to participate in the job market, which explained the varieties between the two groups. Parker (2007) also pointed out that a person's work-life balance was based basically on his or her definition of balance. Indeed, some can handle stress better than others, hence conquer a balanced lifestyle in their opinions.

2.2.3. Are generational differences facts?

Along with the limitations of generational studies presented above, there have also been claims that there are no such things as different traits or characteristics between generations. Ideas are that people should not be different because of when they were born. Trzesniewski and Donnellan (2017) found "little evidence of meaningful change in egotism, self-enhancement, individualism, self-esteem, locus of control, hopelessness, happiness, life satisfaction, loneliness, antisocial behavior, time spent working or watching television, political activity, the importance of religion, and the importance of social status over the last 30 years." Criticisms are that generation gap being rather a myth than reality (Giancola, 2006); not having enough empirical data to prove differences between generations (Lyons, Duxbury, and Higgins 2007, Costanza and Finklestein, 2015). There has also been the idea that such categories of generations can lead to discrimination, both in the workplace and society (Costanza and Finklestein, 2015).

Nhi Nguyen

Generational varieties may seem to appear in the form of other types of differences such as gender roles or culture. However, it is still a fact that the differences can be categorized accordingly to generational groups, and nothing is such a coincidence. Generational cohorts are actual concepts that should not be neglected or rejected, but instead need more careful attention in order not to be mistaken with any other concept such as age differences for example.

2.2.4. Impacts of the perceived generation variations on education sector

Studies have found that there are significant differences in the overall application of new teaching and learning skills of teachers belonging to different generation groups, especially between Baby Boomer teachers and Millennial teachers (Romanes & Veniegas, 2018). Results are that Boomers employ the applications of 21st-century teaching and learning skills, namely critical thinking, innovation and creativity, and global connection establishment skills, more thoroughly than the younger generation. Also, they place a greater deal of importance on such practices in comparison with Millennials (Romanes & Veniegas, 2018). This result may concern the levels of work ethics among different generations, as Boomers are said to have higher work ethics than Millennials (Twenge, 2010; Daloğlu, 2013). It also aligns with findings that Baby Boomers are hard-working and have the tendency to “work to live” rather than “live to work” Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016). Additionally, in terms of interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, it is safe to assume that generational differences contribute to shaping the nature of the relationships. According to Damme (2014), the generation gap between teachers and students is highly influential to effective teaching/ interacting and learning processes within the classroom. If the age gap is bigger than thirty-five years, it would be difficult for the two “parties” to connect to a certain extent. It can also be assumed that with such different approaches to teaching and learning skills, teachers that are from different generations may perceive their work-life balance distinctively. For example, as much as a Boomer teacher pay attention to his or her skill applications, the person will put more effort in working to achieve their demand, which action may result in less balance between work and life.

2.3. Work-life balance

Work-life balance has always been considered by those who are interested in the correlation between the quality of work and the expansion of other life qualities (Guest, 2002). Especially for generation Y, the concept of work-life balance is even more valued as they tend to seek leisure over work (Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016; Twenge, 2010; DeVaney, 2015) as mentioned earlier. Besides, being early exposed to technology – which offers new opportunities and at the same time requires non-stop upgrading – Millennials are more open to changes that help them develop new skills (Cramer, Parris, and Saville, 2011). Such facts infer that the idea of work-life balance can be a competitive aspect of employers when seeking new employees which nowadays are mainly Millennials.

In addition, it is evident that the concern/ demand for work-life balance nowadays is growing more widely among the workforce, and organizations are struggling to come up with optimal policies that both meet the employees' demand for work-life balance and at the same time enhancing the productivity of work (Barber, Grawitch, & Maloney, 2016).

Nonetheless, there are also arguments that state “Work is life” and that the concept is rather a cultural myth (Livni, 2018), therefore it is unnecessary to be concerned about such a concept. Critics also have it that the term “work-life balance” itself has problems, as it considers work not being a part of life. These opinions, however, seem to have not received as much attention from academics, as most of this- concept-related papers are about how to achieve work-life balance or effects of work-life balance on employees. It shows that a majority still believes in balance and still chases after it as a key to a healthier life. Beauregard and Henry (2008) also indicated the fact that fast changes in demographic and workplaces, namely increasing numbers of women in the labor force, extended working hours, an older population, and more sophisticated communications applied sciences, have led to organizations establishing work practices that help employees fulfill both their professional and personal responsibilities.

2.3.1. Definition

The term “work-life balance” has been around for some time and has recently received more attention as a generational shift in the workforce is taking place: Millennials are projected to take up to 75% of the workforce by 2025 (Alan, 2018). And as mentioned above that as this generation places more values on the work-life balance concept than previous generations, this increase in the proportion of Millennials in the workplace will influence how organizations treat their employees. Especially within the education sector, as heavy as the workload of teachers is, work-life balance becomes even more essential and valued among teachers in general and young teachers specifically.

2.3.1.1. Social perspectives

Social perspectives of work-life balance refer to opinions on the concept that are more organisationally-led, which means that the focus of the definitions is upon organizations. According to Forbes, work-life balance “is an important aspect of a healthy work environment”. Such definition, in comparison with more dated ones, appears to be simplified to understand in its most basic meaning, however, is not adequate to explain the underlying issues of the concept. In another recent study of work-life balance, the term is defined more thoroughly as finding “fashionable ways” to balance both work and non-work responsibilities and be pleased with one’s life (Prakash, 2018). According to Fisher-McAuley, Stanton, Jolton, and Gavin (2003), work-life balance is about choices and priorities people make which may or may not contrast to each other. Correspondingly Parker (2007:5) stated that choice preferences of people could lead to conflicts with executives, co-workers and/or members in the family. However, it does not necessarily need to only be among bosses/ co-workers versus family members since the term is much more complex than just ‘work-family balance’ as to how companies and organizations usually associate with when mentioning work-life balance. Such association is not enough to define the term all-inclusively (Zülch, Stock, and Schmidt, 2012). Prakash (2018) also supports this argument by establishing the idea that work-life balance for today’s

Nhi Nguyen

employees means “balancing work not only with family life but also with other non-work domains”.

According to Zülch, Stock, and Schmidt (2012), the word “work” refers to the working world, which includes all activities, factors, roles, and structural conditions that can affect one’s work and profession. The term “life”, on the other hand, is about “private life”, a personal life that besides family, comprises all aspects that are excluded from, or in other words, contradicting to the working world.

2.3.1.2. Individual perspectives

These definitions, however, vary because each individual has different priorities and own ideas of how to define the concept accordingly to their satisfaction. For example, Nevertheless, other definitions are more individual-focused – the ones that cater to a person’s interests. For instance, to some people the ‘life’ part of work-life balance is family, or other side jobs that are not necessarily non-work or non-paid. Since “Life” is a very broad and complex word that can be defined differently by distinctive individuals, therefore the concept of work-life balance can vary widely, and there are no necessarily adequate or inadequate definitions; a person achieves work-life balance when he or she feels satisfied with his/ her work and life.

Understanding work-life balance and implementing the concept into one’s daily life is important, as poor work-life balance can bring harm to both physical and mental health and may cause other diseases (Lunau et al., 2014). In addition, Smith (2010) figured that a healthy work-life balance can help improve performance and result in more ethical decisions, especially among Millennials. David E. Guest (2002) also indicated the consequences of the imbalance: augmentation in adolescent crime, more drug abuse, decline in attention for surrounding society as well as for elder family relatives. Therefore, the issue needs to be approached properly and more widely so that the quality of both home and outside life can be enhanced.

2.3.2. Different aspects of work-life balance

2.3.2.1. Flexibility

There are several different types of flexibility at work, but the common ones that are mentioned in almost every study about flexible work are flexitime and flexiplace. These flexibilities are said to help enhance the balance between professional and personal life (employee well-being) and can positively alter work outcomes (Hoeven & Zoonen, 2012).

Flexitime, or flexible work arrangements, means that employees can choose when to work beside certain hours of the day when they are demanded to be at work (Smith, 2010). Another way of implementing flexitime to the working practice is to obligate a specific task to be completed within the amount of time or to establish a fixed number of hours per day or week. In doing so, employees will be able to have more control over their schedule (Kelly & Moen, 2007), therefore capable of stabilizing between work and non-work responsibilities. Study results have shown that time-flexible working schedules are important cross-generationally and also through life stages (Orhanen, 2019). As much as Millennials value work-life balance (DeVaney, 2015), flexible time is undoubtedly of crucial importance (Twenge, 2010); however, it is also essential for older generations, especially near-retirement ones (Erickson, 2010).

However, although it has been clear that flexitime benefits employees in terms of giving them more freedom in working time, it can harm the organization as a whole (Kanlis, 2016) and also the individual him or herself (Omondi, & K'Obonyo, 2018). For example, problems such as "understaffing" (Kanlis, 2016:5) during business hours might negatively impact the success of the organization, and communications issues would undoubtedly take place when there are fewer working hours which reduces the interactions between employees themselves and between employees and employers (Kanlis, 2016). For individual impacts, flexible working hours may contribute to blurring the line between work and home, or in other words, reducing one's work-life balance as the working span is now

Nhi Nguyen

unlimited (Omondi, & K'Obonyo, 2018); it can be extended to working during night time for instance. Therefore, it can be said that the flexibility policy can be effective only if managed properly by both the employers and the employees, and this practice needs training.

There are different ways flexible working hours can benefit employees, both mentally and physically. For example, in Vietnam, traffic jam is a major problem, especially during rush hours when everyone is leaving the house for work/school. Vietnamese employees therefore can take advantage of flexible working hours so as not to stress during traffic jams to and from work. In this context of physical benefits, it may be safe to assume that Baby Boomers will be pleased with flexible working arrangements, as there will be less stress levels for them going to work. From Millennials' perspectives, although the physical benefits are undeniable, Millennials tend to perceive this policy more differently than Baby Boomers. As mentioned earlier, Millennials are tech-savvy (DeVaney, 2015), who grew up in the period of computers, tablets, smartphones, and social media networks (Elena, 2019), hence could optimize flexible timetables by applying such technology in working from home or working remotely. However, there should be a working culture that supports this policy (Galea et al. 2014).

Flexiplace, sequentially, offers employees some flexibility in their working locations. Telecommuting or telework allows people to work from wherever they want, for example from their houses through telecommuting means (Smith, 2010). Flexiplace is proved to reduce transiting time, pressure, over-time working and offer more space for personal activities (Kossek et al., 2006). Although the effects of flexiplace is not studied as much as those of flexitime (Rasmussen and Corbett, 2008; cited in Hayman, 2010), there are proofs of positive impacts on employees' well-being. According to Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea, and Walters (2002), flexiplace schedules help endorse various work and life routines of employees, therefore advance job satisfaction. Besides, Grzywarc and Marks (2000) cited in Hayman (2010, Flexible and Wellbeing, para. 1) had also found evidence that telecommuting helped manage role overload in some specific situations. However, everything has its two sides, and so does this work practice.

Indeed, as beneficial as flexiplace may sound, several studies have found flexiplace not having any major impacts on an individual's work-life balance (Hayman, 2010), and sometimes can negatively affect performances. It is argued that ineffective communication between managers and staff can lead to misunderstandings and disputes. Effects of telecommuting highly depends on a person's capabilities and skills: some may more easily be distracted working at home or feel isolated because of not meeting their colleagues (Hagel, 2015). Moreover, in some cases, flexiplace can even increase the interference level of work and life and eventually reduce one's productivity and well-being, which can be a serious issue.

Flexible working schedules have been perceived as one of the most important roles in balancing work and life, especially with Millennials who highly value work-life balance regarding a person's working quality, performance, and outcomes (Smith, 2010). However, as mentioned above, the effectiveness of such practices depends on other outer aspects such as the working culture and one's competencies. Additionally, these practices would also be at their maximum effects if applied. Additionally, basing on trust between employers and employees. Therefore, managers have to be flexible when establishing the flexibility policies at work in order not to experience unwanted reversed effects. As for Vietnamese working culture, flexible working would be good for a change, especially flexitime, because most Vietnamese employees are required to physically be at work during office hours (from 8 am to 5 pm), leading to a fact that they end up staying at work late even without any tasks assigned. In fact, according to a study in Vietnam by Adecco, a staffing solution provider company, up to 83% of employees claim that flexible working time will boost their productivity.

From the perspective of the education sector, people may argue that for teachers, working flexibilities are not an option, as the teachers' schedules are based upon those of students, and teachers are also required to physically be at work to deliver lectures. This argument is valid, but only to an extent because, besides lessons, teachers can decide when, where, and how to do their job. As mentioned earlier, teachers also have to do

Nhi Nguyen

plenty of other work besides teaching, such as planning, reviewing students' work, as well as meetings with students and/or colleagues, and such work can be arranged accordingly to their timetables (Robard, 2008). Therefore, it can be assumed that the nature of the teaching profession is flexible. However, teachers' working flexibilities are still in a way limited, for example, they cannot easily get days-off due to strict timetables of lessons. Also, different subjects require different numbers of lessons per semester/ academic year, hence the workload also varies depending on what subject the teacher is teaching. Hence, the situation can be that some teachers have a wider range of flexibilities than others.

2.3.3. Perceptions of work-life balance of different generations

It may sound very radical that as big as the time gap among generations, people from different generations acquire lots of different opinions (and even prejudices) towards not only work but in almost all other aspects of life since they have been through different major events of history. However, nothing is quite absolute without evidence, therefore a question of whether cross-generational differences in work-values true or false (Cogin, 2012) has been raised and a lot of researches have been conducted upon it. Therefore, a wide range of varied opinions on this topic has been formed and still debated overtime.

As the workforce today spans across 3 different generations, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, making the time difference more than 40 years, evidence has suggested that there are visible variations in expectations and perceptions among different cohorts of generations (Cogin, 2012). However, the cross-generational effects, although undeniable, are claimed rather small by Trzesniewski and Brent (2010). Parry and Urwin (2017) share the same thought that the appearance of generational differences is not yet validly testified. Nevertheless, studies still state that due to different periods and conditions that they have been experiencing, each generation has a different mind-set of work values (Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016). Baby Boomers are believed to have a completely distinctive view on the working world compared to that of Gen X and Gen Y

Nhi Nguyen

(Glass, 2007; cited in Cugin, 2012, Abstract, para. 1). It was also found out that Gen X and Y valued work-life balance much more than older generations, namely Baby Boomers and Traditionalists, and they tend to put more emphasis on the “life” part of the concept. In other words, Baby Boomers “live to work”, while Generation X-ers and Y-ers, on the contrary, “work to live” (Twenge, 2010; Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons, 2010; Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016). Early exposure to technology partly contributed to shaping this behavior, as later generations have easy access to all kinds of information/connections, making them dependent on the tool and take work less seriously. Therefore, it can be inferred that later generations emphasize maintaining work-life balance as they do not tend to work so hard but instead pay more attention to enjoying life, unlike their predecessors.

Also, Gen X and Millennials are generally believed to perform weaker work ethics than Boomers (Twenge, 2010; Daloğlu, 2013). Baby Boomers show more respect to authorities and pay more attention to their moral behaviors, while generation X and Millennials prefer independence and care more about recreation, hence show less respect to judicial forces. Generation X rebels against the authorities while Baby Boomers are showing respect, leading to conflicts between younger and older generations and each generation criticizing the other (Burke, 2005; Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016). Studies have shown that ethical behaviors at work and work-life balance are mutually influential. According to a study by Aktaran Walton (2007) cited in Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar (2016:80), 91% of the participants indicated that if work-life balance is rectified/achieved, they would display ethical behaviors. Vice versa, 60% of them responded that imbalanced work-life due to ‘working long hours, stress, and strict working schedules’ and job dissatisfaction result in unethical behavior at work. Parry and Urwin (2017), although suggests that there should be no such things as generational differences, agree that there are varieties in each generation’s values such as their reactions to authorities or their work-related values. On the other hand, they remained firm in their opinion that such differences are not due to generation, but instead to “age”, and claimed that failure to distinguish between generation and age had misleadingly driven the conclusion.

Nhi Nguyen

Another significant aspect that causes differences in work-life balance perceptions among generations is gender roles. To support this claim, Parker (2007) indicated that Baby Boomers had stereotypes for a successful worker: a male person perpetrated to a long-term position in a company without letting any family/ personal business interfere with his career (Moen, 1998, cited in Parker, 2007). Gen X-ers and Millennials, on the other hand, entering the working world, being more used to the appearance of female workers – who are also expected to handle the housework, therefore are less experienced with work-life balance.

In conclusion, there is indeed a line that seems to be indistinguishable between generation differences and other driving variables such as age and gender differences. However, cross-generational variations can still be valid due to particular traits of people that are shaped by particular events and trends of a specific period. Therefore, the debate is continuing and there is not yet absolute right/ wrong or valid/ invalid.

2.4. Forces that effect work-life balance perceptions

2.4.1. Technology

It is undeniable, the effect of technology on people's different perceptions about all aspects of life, therefore indirectly influence their ideas about work-life balance. The expansive appearance and application of technology has largely contributed to increasing flexibility in workplaces (Jestine et al., 2017). Allowing people to work anywhere and anytime, technology ubiquitous and especially mobile technologies, thereby creating an "overlap" between work and life. This fact intrigues researchers studying work-life balance due to the underlying shift in constructing the borderline between work and life that these technologies have made (Yun, Kettinger, & Lee, 2012; cited in Jestine et al., 2017; Duxbury and Smart2011; Golden and Geisler2007; Shumate and Fulk, 2004).

A common fact is that Baby Boomers were not exposed to technology as early as Generation X and Millennials, which may or may not be a disadvantage. Some studies

Nhi Nguyen

have concluded the overlap between work and life assisted by technology as favorable (Jestine et al., 2017). Certainly, technology helps enhance the productiveness of working flexibilities by providing fast and easy communication means. On the other, technology seems to have made younger people more “used to” working outside office hours, whilst older generations have never experienced such situations. With ease and convenience come anxiety and stress, because people can get anxious when not being able to reply to a work email or other inquiries immediately. Technology hence is thought to worsen work-life balance.

However, views are scattered among generations. Younger generations highly value creativity/recreation, innovation and flexibility, while older ones, specifically Boomers and Traditionalists, are more patient with traditional working styles. As little as older generations have the chance to approach new technologies, they find it clumsy and tend to stick with notebooks instead of smartphones (Cassady, 2017). Statistics have shown that above 74% of Millennials consider new technologies beneficial, or in other words, making their lives easier, in comparison with only 31% percent of people from Gen X, and 18% of Boomers feel the same way (Cassady, 2017).

2.5.1.2. The effects of technology development on education

As influential as technology on people’s lives, its effects on education are undeniable, too. It is a fact that with technology, teachers’ work has been easier and less stressful in a way that they can easily plan their lessons and better deliver their lectures by applying technological tools. Accordingly to Jones, Jo, and Martin (2007), technology applications have created a more efficient education system, for example learning materials are delivered timely, or more students can be reached on a wider range of geography. All of this would not be possible without the growth of technology, and such changes to the education sector undoubtedly benefits ‘workers’ in this profession in terms of expanding their chances of working without having to perform so much more physical effort. Additionally, Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) studied the effects of technology on

Nhi Nguyen

teaching and learning and stated that developments such as digital cameras, projectors, and computers play an important role in helping teachers deliver explain concepts more easily and making the classes, in general, more interactive and efficient.

Nevertheless, there are also cons of technology applications. Undoubtedly, if an individual relies too much on technology thus ignores the importance of realistic interactions between teachers and students, the quality of both teaching and studying will surely decrease. It was also pointed out that the use of technology can be very time-consuming sometimes for teachers (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018) in terms of having to be trained and adapt to new technologies, especially for Baby Boomer teachers who had not had a lot of chances to interact with technologies during earlier times in their lives. This, as a result, may negatively affect teachers' work-life balance as they have to take more time to be familiar with new technological tools.

2.4.2. Gender diversity

Gender differences in work-life balance have been an issue, as in most countries in the world irrespective of the culture, women still report to be more unsatisfied than men in work-life balance since they have to take care most of the 'life' part, or also known as domestic tasks, in the equation, regardless of their employment statuses (Doble & Supriya, n.d.; Parker, 2007). According to Doble and Supriya, although both genders prefer working in workplaces where work-life balance is supported, men still appear to be more beneficial than women, as they are more willing to give up on family responsibilities to further achieve more on jobs. Women, on the other hand, take equal responsibilities for both positions, therefore are more likely to be 'unhappy, disappointed, and frustrated' when work does not let them take care of the family (Doble and Supriya, n.d.:4). This is a result of the 'ideal worker norms', which emphasize men as "breadwinner" and women as "housewives" (Fujimoto, Azmat, & Hartel, 2013).

Nhi Nguyen

It was suggested that flexible working might help decrease the work-life conflict levels for especially women (Singley and Hynes, 2005; cited in Chung & Lippe, 2018:1). Indeed, as flexible working is becoming more familiar within companies and organizations since younger generations demand more flexibilities such as flexi-place and flexitime (Smith, 2010; Finn and Donovan, 2013, Deloitte, 2018, cited in Chung & Lippe, 2018:1), there should be more chances for employees, both men and women, to balance between their working and non-working lives. However, as discussed above about flexible working in the education sector, teachers' work is in a way flexible in nature, and there are not a lot of discriminations between male and female teachers in terms of workload and wages in this field of profession, gender roles do not appear so clearly at work. Nevertheless, the differences are still obvious at home; especially in Vietnamese households, older generations tend to have prejudices on this issue still, that housework should always be women's work. This makes it more difficult for women to balance between professional and personal lives in comparison with men. This goes along with the ideal worker norms mentioned above of Fujimoto, Azmat, & Hartel.

Such reality results in severe reversed effects of the work-life-balance-enhancing practices: due to the already-existing stereotypes of the society on roles of men and women in the workplace, flexibility at the workplace would contribute to traditionalizing gender roles in the working environment as well as at home (Lott & Chung, 2016). To be more precise, men will use the flexibility to "work longer and more intensely", while women, on the other hand, would spend more time doing non-work-related tasks (Burchel et al., 2007; Gambles et al., 2006; cited in Lott & Chung, 2016, Schedule Control and Overtime Hours, para. 2). Therefore, flexibility at work can, in turn, further expand work-life imbalance between men and women. However, this should not be too much of a problem for teachers, because nevertheless, there are still beliefs that women tend to be more "beneficial" from the establishment of work-life balance policies in organizations despite the same level of perceived risk between the two genders (Parker, 2007), in a way that they are willing to sacrifice their career for family goals. This, as expected, is due to the major household responsibilities of women in the family.

Nhi Nguyen

The term “glass ceiling” is also frequently mentioned in studies of gender differences in workplaces. The term is applied specifically to women and not men because women are often offered smaller wages than men when performing the same jobs, stand more risks of being turned down for a promotion, and their raise rates are smaller in comparison with those of men (Wolfe, 2019). Such facts support the idea that women endure more pressure from work-life imbalance than men do. Wolfe, therefore, asked an interesting yet very thought-provoking question: “How are women who may need to work more hours than a man to earn enough to provide for their families supposed to be “better” at balancing their lives?”.

2.5. Theoretical framework

2.5.1. The border theory

Quite a few studies related to work-life balance or work flexibility cited the Border Theory by Sue Campbell Clark (2000). The theory states that “People are daily border-crossers between the domain of work and family” (Clark, 2000:747). It goes deeper into explaining how individuals deal with the two different work-life spheres (in terms of purposes and cultures) to remain “balanced”. The theory was introduced to argue with other theories at the time, proposing that the connection between work and family system was not emotional, but instead by humans themselves.

Clark suggested three forms of border: physical, temporal, and psychological. Each of them “serves” as a different cause for an individual’s behavior, yet all contribute to affecting work-family balance. Physical borders refer to ones that literally are walls at the office or at homes which create domain-relevant behaviors; temporal borders, for example, are set working hours which define and decide when an individual end work and start his or her family responsibilities; and lastly, psychological borders are rules regulating appropriate thinking, behavior and emotion patterns that are set by the individual. Having these borders explicitly categorized, individuals can more easily restrict one sphere from interfering with the other, hence enhance their work-life balance.

The author went on to explain the qualities that ‘decide’ work-life balance of an individual, namely permeability, flexibility, and blending. Each of which explains the physical and psychological parts of work and life and how people fluctuate between such domains. In order to achieve work-life balance, people bargain and form borders of work and home their way and they can even modify the nature of such domains if necessary (Clarks, 2000). For example, people apply flexitime and flexiplace at work intending to develop work-life balance for employees. However, as discussed above, the effects of such practices can either be positive or negative, depending on how the person adopts such policies. In a way, flexibility can act as a catalyst that provokes the blending process between work and life, therefore increase the permeability level of the two spheres.

2.5.2. [Job crafting](#)

Job crafting is a framework presented by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2011) that suggests employees craft specifically three of behaviors that help them better define their job meanings and work identity, in ways that 1) modify the job’s characteristics so that they are more suitable for oneself, 2) enhance relationships with those encountered at work, and 3) develop one’s images. More detailed examples are provided in Figure 1 below.

TABLE 1
Forms of Job Crafting

Form	Example	Effect on Meaning of Work
Changing number, scope, and type of job tasks	Design engineers engaging in relational tasks that move a project to completion	Work is completed in a more timely fashion; engineers change the meaning of their jobs to be guardians or movers of projects
Changing quality and/or amount of interaction with others encountered in job	Hospital cleaners actively caring for patients and families, integrating themselves into the workflow of their floor units	Cleaners change the meaning of their jobs to be helpers of the sick; see the work of the floor unit as an integrated whole of which they are a vital part
Changing cognitive task boundaries	Nurses taking responsibility for all information and “insignificant” tasks that may help them to care more appropriately for a patient	Nurses change the way they see the work to be more about patient advocacy, as well as high-quality technical care

Figure 1. Forms of Job Crafting

Nhi Nguyen

These forms of crafting behaviors, as shown in Figure 1, have contributed to modifying an individual's job values, work identity, and purposes. In any case, the employees applying these changes to their jobs are reconstructing the job "in ways that differ from its original structure, and they craft a different purpose for the work that is believable for self and others", therefore find what they are doing more meaningful and engaging.

Such changes in behaviors were then put into 3 specific categories, namely physical, relational, and cognitive crafting. These groups of behaviors are said to have similarities with ones that young professionals use to better manage their work-life balance (Sturges, 2012).

2.5.2.1. [Physical crafting](#)

Results have shown that physical crafting seems to be the "move" that is most common among participants when seeking work-life balance by modifying influencing physical factors such as working hours and locations (Sturges, 2012). These results have led back to the practices of flexitime and flexiplace mentioned earlier, as apparently, they can be considered as forms of physical-crafting behaviors, or as Sturges divided them, temporal and locational crafting.

Temporal crafting, or flexible working hours, is thought to benefit both older and younger generations (DeVaney, 2010; Erickson, 2010). What is more, cross-generational differences in work values, especially when how technology has affected such values, can also be identified using this frame of locational crafting. Technological development has enabled telecommuting, which Millennials very much enjoy while older generations prefer traditional working methods – meaning working offline at the office (Twenge, 2010). Therefore, locational crafting remains a debate of whether it is a beneficial practice to adopt.

2.5.2.2. [Relational crafting](#)

As the name suggested, relational crafting concerns an individual's management of relationships both at work and at home (Sturges, 2012). According to the study results, the person usually performs/ crafts these behaviors with an aim to reducing the amount of work or unnecessary interactions. By adjusting oneself to the situation of the workplace or at home through communicating, relationships will be enhanced and thus helps achieve work-life balance.

2.5.2.3. [Cognitive crafting](#)

Cognitive crafting refers to an individual's own opinions about work and life, thus "Defining and framing perceptions of what work-life balance means and entails" (Sturges, 2012). Each person has different viewpoints; for example, work-life balance to some people means having free weekends despite they have to work extra hours during weekdays, and to some other it can simply mean that they have time to engage in some other occasional social events besides work. Therefore, cognitive crafting states that whether a person achieves work-life balance or not depends on his or her definitions of social life, work satisfaction and values (Sturges, 2012). However, as each person has a different point of view on the concept, there should still be a common trend within a generation group. In other words, people that come from the same generation share a to-an-extent-common opinion about work-life balance, which also suggests that different generations will share a definite level of differences in perceiving work-life balance.

Despite the results of the study of behavior crafting support the theories, this framework still neglects the fact that everyone is distinctive and has different definitions for work and life values. Therefore, people's behaviors cannot be grouped into any particular category and it is essential to take into account how such divergent values impact one's work-life balance perception.

2.5.3. Social Identity theory

The social identity theory proposed by Henri Tajfel in 1974 is an important psychological, stating that a person's sense of who he or she is is based on the social group they belong to. Taifej (1974) suggested that such groups are where self-esteem and self-identification come from, and "through the process of self- categorization or identification, an identity is formed" (Stets & Burke, 2016:224). Belonging a social group, having a specific social identity, means considering things from the group's perspective (Stets & Burke, 2016), and if taken further, it can also mean people admire to meet expectations of the group.

This theory relates to the work-life balance concept in a way that when people want to fully identify themselves with particular traits of the group that they are in, or even of ones they are not a part of, work-life balance does not seem to be their priorities anymore.

They try to adopt an identity so much that they do not feel the need to achieve work-life balance, instead focus on conquering their goals of becoming a specific identity for themselves.

2.5.4. Relevance of the theories to the education sector and teachers' work-life balance

The theories presented are all relevant to teachers' work-life balance, or more specifically, teachers' flexible working. As mentioned, teachers can plan their work accordingly to their own timetable outside of the rigid lesson times. As much work as teachers have, they need to properly divide and segment their tasks in order not to integrate their professional and personal lives. In addition, teachers have a restricted amount of working resources such as time and energy, thus such resources need to be distributed evenly between various spheres of life. Therefore, borders need to be formed and maintained so that a balance can be achieved. However, the border theory itself does not completely comprehend all aspects of the work-life balance concept and ignores some critical elements, such as impacts of role values in achieving work-life balance. Hence, the job-

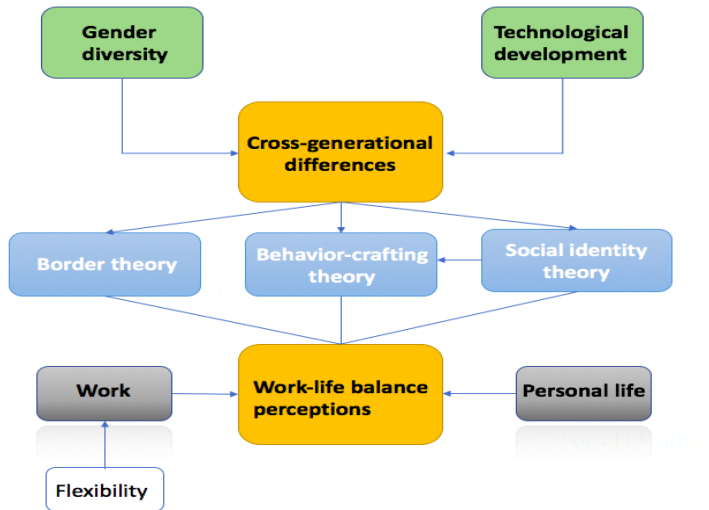
Nhi Nguyen

crafting concept was introduced to consider other psychological and mental spheres. The crafting behavior concept builds on ideas of the border theory by delineating actions one can take to have more control over segmented domains. For teachers, the ability to prioritize tasks is very important, and the application of these presented theories, using flexible working practices, would be beneficial in dealing with the pressures from their work.

The social identity theory was also presented, building upon the above theories in how an individual – a teacher – perceives his or her work-life balance. As was suggested, one defines own work-life balance basing on the society he or she is living in, or in other words, on the surrounding environment and on the way how one perceives himself or herself in that society. A characteristic of teachers' work is that, by logical and common sense, after some time of working, the teacher would gain more experience and spend less time in planning the lessons (as they can re-use and update the syllabus based on the original one), thus have more time for himself/ herself. Therefore, it is safe to assume that how teachers perceive their social identities may affect the way they perceive their work-life balance. More specifically, for example, teachers who consider themselves "juniors" at work would probably pay no attention to work-life balance, instead, they would try hard to become "seniors", and as long as they achieve their goals, their work-life balance is also considered achieved, although maybe unconsciously. This idea also reinforces/ builds upon the idea of cognitive crafting concept that each individual forms their own definitions of balance.

In conclusion, no theories by themselves can fully encompass the work-life balance concept, as one may focus too much on one aspect and overlook others. These three theories and concepts presented together in the literature review make a firm basis of understanding work-life balance and theoretical applications to the education sector. Therefore, it can be said that these theories are compatible and complementary.

2.6. Conceptual framework



The conceptual framework depicts the relationships among the main variables of this study. Technological development and gender diversity shape the mindset of different generations, therefore creates cross-generational differences, which directly influences how an individual defines his or her perceptions of work-life balance. On the basis of border theory and behavior-crafting theory, people form the balance/ border between their work and personal lives. Flexible working practice also highly influences people's crafting their work-related behaviors as well as their balance. However, flexible working hours, when analyzed within the border theory and behavior-crafting theory, can be either beneficial or harmful to work-life balance, as it can help separate work and non-work life, but can also make transitions between spheres more difficult. In addition, how people perceive their identities/ positions within a society also contributes to affecting the way people craft their cognitions about work-life balance, and such an idea can be explained by social identity theory.

3. METHODOLOGY

As this research aims to discover whether generational differences in perceiving the concept of work-life balance, a qualitative study approach was selected, in addition to the existing secondary data discussed and analyzed in the Literature Review section. Qualitative approaches help build, rather than just test theories about any specific topic, in this case cross-generational work-life balance perceptions. Each person, coming from different backgrounds and possessing various experiences, hence has a unique idea about a concept/ theory. Conducting qualitative studies, researchers can explore/discover such distinctive and interesting stories that people will tell and comprehend in-depth emotions, reasons, and values behind human actions/ behavior.

3.1. Method

Conducting a qualitative study, the author interviewed Vietnamese teachers face-to-face through Messenger video calls. As mentioned above, such direct conversations allow for more in-depth and follow-up questions in addition to the existing ones. Data collected were recorded and transcribed in detail to guarantee the validity of this study. All the data were then critically analyzed, and limitations to the research were also acknowledged so that any bias that may influence the results can be removed. Moreover, the validity of this study was also established by the question set for the semi-structured interviews, which was carefully organized and structured based on the existing literature to evaluate what was intended, and was then checked and approved by an outside expert on the topic. Due to language differences, all the questions and answers were freely translated between English and Vietnamese by the author. Nevertheless, the meanings and main ideas are still preserved to the best extent possible.

With the permission of the interviewees, all the interviews were recorded for the author to later transcribed and translated. Based on the transcriptions, the data collected were then categorized and coded thematically according to the main research areas of this study: generational differences and work-life balance in the education sector. The themes were

formed by detecting similarities/ trends as well as relationships between the responses. Both the existing codes (which were the basis of the interview questions) and new, inductive codes were used to explore the main concepts and findings from the data. Existing theories and concepts introduced in the Literature Review section were also taken into consideration with the aim to compare new versus previous findings. The open coding data approach was also used with the aims of identifying the main concepts of the collected data. The objective is to theoretically interpret from specific wordings and phrases used by respondents deeper, underlying meanings and comprehensions of the topic. A thematic table (Figure 1) was also established to summarize the main themes that were inducted from the data, given that the teacher participants are the basis of the themes.

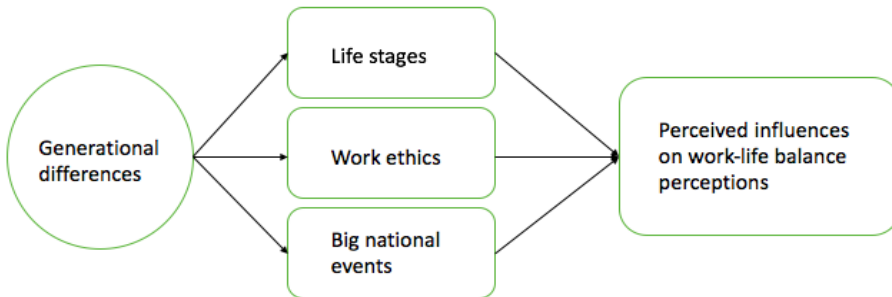


Figure 1. illustration of the main themes of collected data

There are, though, some limitations of these approaches to the research. First of all, by nature of a qualitative study, there cannot be any mathematical or statistical analytics of the data, instead, the data would be analyzed based on the author's own judgments and opinions. Moreover, although data was carefully coded into themes, the study results

Nhi Nguyen

cannot be fully verified because they are based on open-ended questions and answers. Therefore, it is not possible to verify the results objectively against the scenarios provided by the participants.

3.2. Sample and Data collection

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured and in-depth form with teachers in Vietnam. Purposive sampling method was used, as participants must share certain characteristics/ criteria that are needed for the study. In this study, the criteria include: participants being born either between 1946 –1964 or between 1980 – 1999 (so that they belong to the Boomers and Millennials group, which are the focus of this study), and being teachers coming from somewhat the same working environment, so that the workload and working policies are similar to an extent, thus there would be no biases for work-life balance perceptions. The majority of participants (6 out of 10) contacted for this study are high school teachers, however, they all come from High school for the Gifted, a high school which follows policies and systems of universities, therefore differentiating its education environment from other ordinary high schools in Vietnam; the rest are university teachers. People who fulfill the criteria were then contacted by email in which the topic and purpose of the research were introduced. The author chose people to contact based first, on the criteria set, and secondly, on own connections. The sample size of 10, half of which representing Baby Boomers and the other half representing Millennials, was chosen because 10, although is a small sample size for the scale of this topic, is decent enough to draw trends and differences (if there are any) between the two generations and within each of the generation. Due to distance issues, interviews could only be conducted through video calling, between 16/2/2020 and 24/2. Eight out of ten interviews were face-to-face, and two were just merely calling because the participants were not comfortable with showing their faces, which did not allow for facial expressions or feelings to be observed and studied; however, it was still possible to ask follow-up questions and explore different aspects of the responses. The language of the interviews, as mentioned earlier, was Vietnamese because the participants are not fluent English speakers.

Nhi Nguyen

A list of 10-12 questions (this number of question varies because there are more questions for Baby Boomers than for Millennials) was created accordingly to the research objectives and based on the existing theories/ literature of relevant topics which were already introduced in the Literature Review section above. Also, the questions are to discover new aspects of the topic, and in addition also to reinforce/ validate findings of previous studies, compare the results, and expand beyond present opinions. The question set concerns issues such as work-life balance, generational differences, flexibility in working/ teaching, and effects of technology on work-life balance perceptions. Semi-structured interviews allow for explorations of new ideas provided by the participants that might not have been thought of before in the field of the same topic. Indeed, each person has a very different definition and viewpoint of work-life balance, and they can freely express such opinions throughout the interview by answering within and beyond the questions asked. Therefore, there was room for follow-up questions, which helps deepen the informants' ideas and discover new aspects of the topic.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Teachers in Vietnam

4.1.1. The workload

The findings of this study support those of cited literature that teachers' workload has increased significantly over the last 30 years (Valli and Buese, 2017). There are more tasks for teachers to take care of rather than just merely teaching. Averagely, most participants perceive the workload to be adequate. However, opinions on the amount of workload varied among participants and also among generations. While there were opinions (mostly among Millennials) that the amount of work was completely fine and appropriate, another one was that there was not enough time to do all the work and that the person had to always prioritize work over everything else including family and own

Nhi Nguyen

interests (#2, age 64). According to the responses, it can be seen that the workload of teachers is tough since the job has changed significantly over the last few decades, therefore creates variations also for teachers from different generations. The workload for teachers now is not encapsulated in just teaching anymore, but it is also about a lot of other extra work. One major factor of this change is technology and the use of the internet. As teachers are encouraged to take advantage of technological development, more training and practicing are required, especially among older teachers. In addition, technology allows for more convenient communications between students and teachers, which in a way blurs the line between life and work for teachers, and also contributes to increasing teachers' responsibilities that they now also need to care about student's personal lives. A retired participant told:

"Sometimes I wonder how I could have time to do everything like that. It was a lot of work and it never seemed to be ending." (#2, age 64)

The phrase "never seemed to be ending" probably has captured how big the amount of work that teachers have to deal with.

Teachers' workload also appears to be indefinite, as the common answers of participants when asked about the amount of average working time in a week are "It depends" or "It varies". However, generally, still, the workload (including both paid and non-paid working time) is huge and teachers have to try hard to keep up with such amount.

"There are times I have to teach 6 classes in an academic year, other times I teach 4, so the amount of work is unstable. In addition, I also have to teach thematic classes or guide national teams, so the average amount of hours varies for different years. I also teach extra classes, because as I told you, us teachers cannot make ends meet with our basic wages. Therefore, I'd say I have to work quite a lot to help finance my and my family's lives" (#1, age 33).

4.1.1.1 Teachers' identity threat

One very interesting theme that was discovered about teachers in Vietnam is the identity threat that seems to concern every one of the participants, regardless of which generation they are from. It appears that teachers pay a lot of attention to cultivating and renewing their own knowledge in order not to “lag behind students in terms of knowledge updating” – as participant #7 (age 27) has mentioned. The general opinion is that the lesson plans should always be modified and kept updated in order to maintain the validity of knowledge and to keep the teachers themselves passionate about what they are doing. Therefore, most participants express their concerns alongside with how they keep up with the issue.

“I usually do that on my own by reading books every day, or taking part in short-term studying courses, or finding new passions and creativity in my work” (#1, age 33).

“I have to spend at least 2 hours a day on reading books and studying” (#6, age 28).

“I always feel the need to keep striving and quitting my own teaching plan – it is only merely a basis for my lecture. What I deliver to my students has to be much more than that” (#10, age 66).

It can be seen that, in addition to teaching, teachers also have to themselves study a lot. This, although, is not the “official” workload that is assigned to teachers, but it is something that cannot be ignored being a teacher. Undoubtedly no one wants to lag behind others, including both colleagues and students, in terms of knowledge, when being a teacher, whose job is to teach others. Besides, there are also other tasks that teachers need to take on, such as attending meetings, not only with faculties and colleagues but also with parents of students. Therefore, it can be said that teachers' workload is enormous and cannot be measured exactly.

4.1.2. Seasonality of work

As excessive as teachers' workload is, there are "seasons" that it can get even more overloading, for example the exam seasons or matriculation periods, where the pressures are much higher than normal working days. However, there are also relaxing seasons for teachers accordingly to students' breaks such as summer vacations. However, teachers of all age agree that such seasonality characteristic of the teaching job benefits their work-life balance in a way that teachers can take advantage of the holidays to handle the excessive amount of work they currently have, so when the holidays end and teachers get back to their daily working life, it would be easier for them to manage the workload. In addition, although work seasonality exists, it is still predictable for every academic year for the holidays are at around the same period. Therefore, teachers can get used to the pattern and better delegate their tasks for each "season" (#7, age 27).

4.2. Teachers' work-life balance

It was discovered that Vietnamese teachers' work-life balance is quite poor due to low wages and high demands of work outcomes. Most participating teachers describe their work-life balance as unsatisfying since there is much more work to do rather than just teaching during "office" hours. Besides time spent at work, in schools and classrooms, teachers also have to spend a lot more time at home or outside the workplace in order to get all the work done. All, regardless of generation, report working overtime every day and on weekends, the only difference is whether the person actively makes time for themselves or not. However, participants, although fully acknowledge the unsatisfactory work-life balance, have the tendency to accept such reality and "co-habit" with it, and eventually 'unsatisfactory' has become 'normal'. This interesting point was discovered when at first, participants described their work-life balance as 'fine' and 'acceptable', and only when asked deeper about one's professional and personal life, the reality appeared to be not as good as was described by the teachers themselves. Teachers' work-life balance can be said to be poorer than what they identified.

Nhi Nguyen

One point worth noting when discussing teachers' workload in Vietnam is that the demand for extra classes and lessons besides official schooling time is huge. Such demands are due to the desire to get into the schools for "the Gifted", or at least to get into decent schools with quality education. Apparently, education in Vietnam is very competitive and harsh not only for students but also for teachers. Therefore, every single participant in this study reports a lot of extra work to first, make ends meet, and second, meet the big demand for extra lessons.

Another opinion that all participants agreed on is that being a teacher allows them to have flexibility in work, from which it can be inferred that helps positively contribute to balancing between work and life.

"The way my school operates is that they give you an amount of work for the week, and your job is to complete it. No matter how much or how little time you want to spend on it, you need to get your work done" (#2, age 64).

"It (working time) is very indefinite" (#5, age 35).

It can be seen that besides official teaching hours at school, teachers can decide when, where and how they complete their jobs. This, however, can be both beneficial and disadvantageous for one's work-life balance, as there are no clear boundaries between work and non-work time. As mentioned in the literature review chapter of this study, flexible working could incorporate the two responsibilities, thus resulting in work-life imbalance.

4.3. Generational differences

This section of the thesis concentrates on displaying the data collection and data analysis on differences and/or similarities between the two generations – Baby Boomers and

Nhi Nguyen

Millennials – in their perceptions of work-life balance. Data were categorized based on birth year/ generations and a coding matrix was used as a tool for data analyzing (see Appendix 2).

4.3.1. Work-life balance definitions

It appears that the definitions of work-life balance vary among individuals, but consistent within the generation group. However, all, regardless of generation, agree that striving for work-life balance is a healthy habit and one should always try to reach his or her goal of work-life balance accordingly to own definitions.

“Work-life balance is really important to me and I am concerned a lot about the issue” (#5, age 35). “It (work-life balance) is very important. In fact, it was almost all I ever thought about while I was still working and at the same time maintaining my family” (#3, age 62).

Nevertheless, as mentioned, definitions differ among people, or more specifically, between the two studied generations, and these variations between older and younger teachers are somewhat evident. For Baby Boomers, an explicit border/ separation of work and non-work responsibilities is demanded and considered essential, especially for one’s own physical health. Opinions among this generation are that, no matter how busy one is or how much work there is, there should be a clear limit where one needs to stop to ‘try too hard to the point that far exceeds one’s abilities’ (#4, age 59). Baby Boomers appear to value transparent separation of work and home, which indicates aspiration for high permeability.

Baby Boomers:

“We have to be realistic and balance between our demands and the job’s targets; the targets can be very demanding, but we shall not try too hard to the point that

Nhi Nguyen

far exceeds our abilities and instead strive for a balance as perfect as possible” (#4, age 59).

“I have to follow a strict 8-8-8-policy of time management for my day: 8 hours for sleeping, 8 for working, and 8 for all the other activities including relaxing and family responsibilities” (#3, age 62).

For Millennials, as much attention as they pay on work-life balance, their definitions are evidently different from those of Baby Boomers. They think that work-life balance is achieved when one feels satisfied with his or her pace of living and working and without an actual barrier between those two spheres. As long as the person feels happy, work-life balance is considered achieved. This means that Millennials value personal happiness and satisfaction, regardless of whether such happiness comes from work or own interests. This finding goes along with behavior-crafting theory, or more specifically, cognitive crafting. Each individual possesses a distinctive interpretation of the concept, therefore resulting in differences in perceiving work-life balance.

Millennials:

“For some people, they may find a lot of happiness in working, so whether work-life balance is beneficial and healthy for each person depends on how the person finds happiness and how they can be themselves” (#7, age 27).

“I think the best balance is when the person finds freedom in work, and they can feel that their work every day ignites excitement, passion, and creativity for them” (#1, age 33).

Both generations value work-life balance and consider it very essential to one's life, but they apparently approach such a concept very differently, however, the trend of achieving work-life balance appears to be consistent within their own generation group. Baby Boomers pay more attention to physical health and conditions in maintaining a good

Nhi Nguyen

harmony between work and life, while Millennials emphasize more on one's satisfaction and enjoyment in work and work-life balance does not necessarily mean having a clear boundary between professional and personal life. Hence, it can be inferred that there exist generational differences in defining the term work-life balance. However, despite such variations in definitions, the common ground of the participants is that most of them are not satisfied with their working/ living pace as they have not been able to live up to their interpretations of the concept.

4.3.2. Work-life balance perceptions and realities

4.3.2.1. Work values

Although Baby Boomers' responses to defining the concept work-life balance show desires for high permeability and a clear separation between the two spheres, interestingly enough, the reality shows completely differently. All themselves form ideals of work-life balance, but none seem to have achieved those throughout their career lives. This reality results from a variety of factors, one of which is one's perception of work values. Baby Boomers tend to prioritize work responsibilities over own interests and personal times, meaning that they highly value their work, and even though they long clear borders between work and life, they let themselves get caught up in the workflows. This finding aligns with the idea that Baby Boomers "live to work" (DeVaney, 2015).

Boomers:

"When I work, I do not consciously pay attention to work-life balance. I must do my best to guarantee the quality of my work" (#2, age 64). "I did not pay attention to my work-life balance at all before marriage" (#9, age 63). "Before marriage, I focused more on work and tried to complete my work the best possible and bring out the best results" (#4, age 59).

Nhi Nguyen

Millennials, on the other hand, seem to value life over work, as was already inferred from their definitions of work-life balance. They do strive for a balance between work and non-work life and they are responsible at work, but what is more important to them is that they get to enjoy their personal lives and be satisfied. However, Millennial participants are also not fulfilled with their work-life balance, although differently from Baby Boomers, this younger generation do spare time for their own interests and relaxation instead of working all the time without pauses like the older generation does. This dissatisfaction of Millennials may result from their high expectations from the “life” part of the term work-life balance. Opposite from the older generation, Millennials tend to “work to live” rather than the other way round.

Millennials:

*“As much as I am concerned about my work-life balance, I am not at all satisfied.”
(#5, age 35)*

As can be inducted from the findings mentioned above, that Millennials tend to enjoy life more than Boomers, or in other words, pay more attention to the “life” part of work-life balance, while Boomers wanted to work as hard as possible without the needs to care about their personal, non-work lives. Participants that are from the Boomers generation group report working all the time and always trying their best to fulfill their work requirements. Millennials, on the other hand, although they are aware of the amount of work, still follow so-called balanced schedules, as they would spare at least one day in the week to, according to them, relax and recharge their energy for better working quality. This suggests that Boomers places more importance on work than Millennials do, and tend to be more caught up in work without consciously paying attention to it. Therefore, although both generations are aware of the importance of work-life balance, none is really satisfied with their own working and living pace, but due to different reasons and expectations from the concept.

Nhi Nguyen

Another interesting small aspect that can be drawn from the participants' answers about perceiving work-life balance is the working attitudes towards their profession of the two generations. These behaviors at work are crafted from and are in accordance with their working values. For Baby Boomers, 'there is no time for relaxing', while for Millennials, as long as one can complete the work responsibly, some stress-releasing activities are essential and there is "no need to try hard all the time", as quoted below.

Millennials

"I always want to harmonize both things (work and life). There should not be a lot of pressure, and you only need an adequate amount of awareness of your responsibilities, that is okay. No needs to try hard all the time" (#8, age 26).

"I often spend my evenings for myself and my favorite activities: watching TV, reading books, listening to music, and talking with my family" (#5, age 35).

Boomers

"There was no time for relaxing. I needed to work all the time to get my jobs done, and I had to really try to manage my time" (#9, age 63).

"I spent almost all my time for work: teaching, then planning lessons, and trying not to rely too much on my lesson plans" (#10, age 66).

4.3.2.2. Life stages

It can be seen from the interviewees' responses, especially Boomers', that life stages play a very important role in how they perceive work-life balance. The older group of participants reported changes in work-life balance perceptions aligning with changes in life stages. Variables/ factors that affect the concept change when life changes, thus

Nhi Nguyen

changing insights about work-life balance. The responses also indicate that older teachers centralized work in the non-family stage of life and were unconscious about harmonizing between professional and personal lives but instead prioritize work over personal responsibilities. However, most Baby Boomers had the tendency to change that mindset after marriage, as they started to pay more attention to their personal life as well as their family responsibilities and work to them was no longer the priority. One Boomer participant even said that *“Since I had had my own family, I realized that I needed to take care of myself, because only by being able to take good care of myself could I take good care of everything else!”* (#9, age 63).

Baby Boomers:

“After marriage, besides all the working, I had to make my family happy and stable also. Therefore, I had to reduce my ambitions in working but still tried to maintain the working quality and achieving happiness with my own family” (#4, age 59).

Millennials, on the other hand, have always been actively aware of the needs to equalize work and life, regardless of which life stages they are in. It can be said that there exist differences in different life stages of Millennials, but they are rather minor and insignificant; married Millennials report that the biggest ‘difference’ between pre- and post-marriage is that it becomes much more difficult for them to achieve the already-unattainable work-life balance.

Millennials:

“I have never been satisfied with my work-life balance. Now that I have family, it (work-life balance) becomes even more difficult because there are many more responsibilities” (#1, age 33).

It can be seen that life stages influence Baby Boomer generation more than Millennials, as the former started to consciously work-life balance differently after their marriages,

Nhi Nguyen

Difference of the two generations lies within the consciousness of work-life balance concept: Millennials teachers, whether married or not, have been conscious about and striving to achieve work-life balance. Boomers, on the other hand, did not have work-life balance during their young times (or when not married) because they were unaware of it, but such a reality changed since marriage for most of the older participants.

Table 1 below show data about how differently life stages affect the two generations.

Generation	Before marriage	After marriage
Baby Boomers	<p>“I never really paid attention to balancing my work and my life. I mostly only focused on working; I kept on working and working and not caring so much about separating work and personal life. TO be fair, work was my life!” (#2)</p> <p>“I knew that having a balance would be good, but the amount of work just did not allow me to. Therefore, I was just going with the flow to work as best as I possibly could” (#10)</p> <p>“Besides official working hours at school, us teachers need to work a lot extra to prepare for the lessons, but we couldn’t also just stay at school all the</p>	<p>“Outside of office hours, I only think of my family, no more work interference”. (#4)</p> <p>“After marriage, it was compulsory for me to balance between work and family.” (#9)</p>

	time, which means we had to bring work to home. There was actually no other choice, but I loved my job so I felt fine.” (#10)	
Millennials	<p>“I always spend evenings for myself and my favorite activities, watching TV, reading books, listening to music, talking to my family. I do try my best not to let my work interfere with my family and personal life, and vice versa.” (#5)</p> <p>“My personal life and my work are completely two different issues.” (#8)</p>	<p>“I split my time clearly into three categories: job, family, and myself. So I am still trying to arrange my work at school, at the same time guaranteeing my housework, time for my kids and husband, and most importantly I must make sure that I have time for myself.” (#1)</p>

Table 1. How life stages affect one’s work-life balance approaches

4.3.2.3. Big national events

One major factor that causes differences among different generations’ work-life balance perceptions is the big events that Boomers had experienced. Existing studies also have stated that Baby Boomers and younger generations are shaped by various distinctive events throughout different periods of time, therefore there are contrasting characteristics between the two generations. As mentioned in the Literature Review section, Baby Boomers in Vietnam were highly influenced by the Vietnam War from 1955 to 1975, in which period Millennials were not even born yet. Boomers participants for this study

Nhi Nguyen

confirm such a hypothesis with responses to the question that asked if big national events affect their views on work-life balance in general and how.

Baby Boomers:

“Such periods influence a lot on how I perceive life. The conditions back then were not as good as they are now. Therefore, us old people tend to value all the working opportunities that we have, and we were trained to live under harsh conditions. The young, nowadays, they have better conditions, making money is also easier for them, so they have the tendency to enjoy life more than us” (#9, age 63).

“Oh, they (the social events) affect a lot. For example, my generation would put all our hearts and minds for work and family, while the younger generations nowadays pay more attention to enjoying life. Secondly, as I have been through different periods of this country, for example, life was much more difficult back then and having been through such difficult times, I appreciate more the opportunities that I was offered throughout my life. The kids now have happier, more fulfilled lives, they would not know what it was like to be in difficult times, so they seem to be more selfish than our generation. Generally, they are not as good as we are at taking care of others around them, for example, their parents” (#2, age 64).

Baby Boomers are highly aware of these generational variations as they pointed out themselves how the younger generation perceives work and life differently from them. They stated that as youngsters nowadays did not know how difficult and draining it was during wartime or how it felt to experience famine, therefore they would not know the true values of having chances to work as well as the will to develop themselves as much as possible with all the provided conditions. As for Boomers, if there were any chance given, they would take advantage of it and make the best out of themselves, which in their opinion, far different from Millennials nowadays.

Baby Boomers:

Nhi Nguyen

“When I was in my 20s, Vietnam was a closed-off communist country, so even though I was desperate to work outside of official hours at school to earn extras for my family, I couldn’t. I was short of money but I had so much free time it was frustrating. When Doi Moi (Renovation) happened in the 1990s, I could then start “selling” my knowledge, so I just jumped at the opportunity” (#3, age 62).

“When you are in too much agony, you automatically have the will to develop and cultivate your skills/ knowledge and strive for a better life. Like our predecessors have said, “Fire proves gold. adversity proves men”. (#9, age 63).

Millennials, on the other hand, share a different view on this issue. They think that each generation faces different problems, and the effects cannot be compared on any level. Young people in this current society must deal with many more issues to which the solutions are not simple and visible, for example mental diseases such as depression or anxiety disorder. They claim that physical problems that the older generation face, although difficult, but easier to “cure”, compared with what the young have to deal with.

Millennials:

“I do not think older people consider mental health something so important. To them, as long as they are physically healthy without any diseases, they are fine. In Vietnam, people who have depressions are not taken seriously, especially by older people since they do not believe there is such a thing as depression, instead, they think that people are just exaggerating and overreacting. Then come tragedies such as misunderstanding their child leading to kid committing suicide” (#5, age 35).

It can clearly be seen that different societies in which people are living in or having lived in shape their mind differently. Each community has different issues to deal with, due to the fast changes and development that people experience every day. Therefore, the gap

Nhi Nguyen

in years that different generations were born can be said to be big enough for the so-called generational differences.

4.3.3. Work ethics

Previous studies have said that Boomers have higher work ethics than Millennials (Twenge, 2010; Daloğlu, 2013) and that the younger generations, in general, show less respect to authorities in comparison with Baby Boomers. Indeed, the findings of this study support such theory. As much as teachers belong to the Boomers generation value their work, they all agreed that they would never skip teaching lessons unless there is something very urgent and inevitable, such as relatives' emergency conditions or funerals.

Baby Boomers:

“Personal and family work must always come after my main work, but rarely when there is inevitable family work, I'd take a day off maybe. Most of the time, I prioritize my work” (#2, age 64).

“I only take lessons off if there is a force majeure such as funerals or weddings; I will ask someone to replace my teaching. Otherwise, I will try to handle anything possible” (#4, age 59).

Millennials think differently. Unlike their “predecessors”, most of the younger-generation participants highly value their personal as well as mental lives, therefore they would not mind hopping jobs for their well-beings.

Millennials:

“Sometimes when I feel uncomfortable or am in a bad mood to go to work, I will take a day off, and I will make up for my students later” (#1, age 33).

Nhi Nguyen

“If I already have plans for traveling, I will ask somebody to replace my teaching, or I will take days off. This is a normal thing for me. If I feel like I can take a day or two off, or there’s anyone that can replace me, I will not hesitate to do that. I think it is not so important that I have to complete my job by all means” (#6, age 28).

“It depends. For example, last year was the year I had a lot of unfortunate things, which made me really stressed and my mood was really down. I knew that I needed my personal time and space, therefore I decided to sign up for a meditation course so that I can purge myself. When all the work was kind of dealt with, after I tried to solve the problems as much as I could, I spent 10 days, turned off all my phones and tablets and laptops, did nothing but meditation to look inside to my inner self. I didn’t even communicate with the people who were there with me. After 10 days, I felt like I was energized again, I stepped into the new year with more comfortable mind and soul. If I didn’t let myself have such silence, I would definitely be cornered and would not be able to get out. I would be stuck” (#5, age 35).

However, an interesting point derived from the responses of Millennials is that paying more attention to their personal lives is a way to help them work better and more effectively, rather than work too much without breaks and collapse afterward. This viewpoint has not been mentioned in most studies about the work-life balance of generations; most of them just generalized the idea that young generations in the workforce like Gen X or Millennials do not work as hard as older people from previous generations and spend more time enjoying life. Although such an idea is not completely wrong, it is not enough and creates a negative tone when mentioning the attitudes of youngsters in the workforce. The findings of this study imply that young people nowadays think that they are working smarter, not harder, which is undoubtedly a positive aspect of young people’s work-life balance.

Millennials:

Nhi Nguyen

“I need time for my personal interests and hobbies as it would help re-energize and motivate me to keep doing what I am doing, or else when it comes to a point that I cannot take it anymore, both my teaching qualities and my personal life will turn out badly, and I definitely don’t want that to happen” (#1, age 33).

In addition, it is also worth mentioning that most of the Millennials interviewed are Literature teachers, who highly value their emotions. To them, emotions can largely affect the quality of their lessons because teaching Literature requires honest and sincere emotions in order to deliver the lesson in the most accurate and inspiring way. Therefore, they are willing to not teach if their emotions are unstable thus will negatively affect their teaching quality.

Such different views on work ethics of Baby Boomers and Millennials partly show the variations of work-life balance between the two generations. Boomers value work more, so generally there seems to be less balance between their personal and professional lives compared to Millennials. Apparently, in order to guarantee the wellbeing of their personal lives and achieve the balance, people from the younger generation are willing to take “short-cuts” in their work.

4.4. Flexibility

It seems that in Vietnam, flexibility in teachers’ work is not widely familiar as most of the interviewees report to be unsatisfied with the working traditions to some extent. In terms of flexi-time, all participants express the demand for having more control over their schedules and work. Although it is reasonable that teachers need to follow rigid timetables requiring starting and ending time of lessons, most Vietnamese teachers are still required to have a specific amount of time physically be at school, which upset them. Especially Millennials, who highly consciously pay attention to work-life balance, it is interesting to find that they feel such rigidity means that they are not respected and trusted enough by authorities, while Boomers, do not seem so concerned by this issue.

Millennials:

“The rigid working schedules make people wither. I just wish we could be able to make more choices. That would be so much more comfortable” (#1, age 33).

Boomers:

“I am so accustomed to the traditional culture that I don’t see myself doing any differently. I had been working under this scheme for more than 30 years and everything was fine for me” (#3, age 62).

These responses infer that the Millennial participants value flexibility more than Baby Boomers. One reason behind this may be because of the number of years of working. As the older group of participants indicated, they are “used to” this working scheme already, so inflexibility is not a big problem. The question is that, will Millennials feel the same way as Boomers when they grow older both in age and in experience? However, Boomers responds that during younger ages, they would appreciate any chances available to work, thus it can be inferred that younger Boomers would not mind having no flexibility at work.

4.4.1. Working stages

Besides life stages, work stages also have an enormous effect on teachers’ work-life balance. The viewpoints, though, are consistent across generations, that the more experienced a person is at his or her job, the closer they can get to their definition of balance between work and life. Responses from interviewees show that when teachers get to the “senior” level at work, they can start paying more attention to work-life balance since they need less time for the extra work such as lesson planning or grading.

Millennials

Nhi Nguyen

“When I started teaching, I used almost all of my time working and preparing for work and developing my teaching skills. I even had to practice giving lectures at home in front of the mirror. Only when I started to earn a position in the hierarchy at work and I was more used to the classes as well as having my teaching plans already could I start thinking about making more time for myself. Since then only, I was aware of how to have more personal time, to relax and re-energize myself” (#7, age 27).

Baby Boomers

“I definitely had more time for myself and it was much easier to balance between work and life when I gained more experience in what I was doing” (#9, age 63).

“When I was new to this job, I worked wholeheartedly. Later, I had some more time for myself since I could work more effectively and efficiently” (#10, age 66).

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In this section, the theories and concepts introduced in the Literature Review chapter will be used for data interpreting and comparing.

5.1. Generational differences in work-life balance perceptions

Are there really generational differences, or is it just a myth, that people cannot be so different just because of when they were born? Literature has it that being born in the same year is not enough condition for a so-called generation, but the events and experiences shared by those people who were born in the same period of time that create the generation (Parry & Urwin, 2017). Indeed, findings of this study have proven that Baby Boomers and Millennials share big differences when perceiving life, due to the distinctive

Nhi Nguyen

societies that they have been through and are living in. Different traits and values of generations are formed by economic events and political issues of the country and society (Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016), which point is applicable to Vietnam. As can be seen from the Findings section, Boomers are heavily affected by the social big events which were not experienced by Millennials, therefore the values placed on work varied widely between the two generations.

Many studies have stated that younger generations value work-life balance much more than older generations, specifically Baby Boomers who are partly still in the workforce of today's businesses (Cogin, 2012; Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016). The biggest difference is the mindset of each generation towards the purpose of working – Boomers “live to work” and Millennials “work to live” (Twenge, 2010; Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons, 2010; Aydemir, Dinc, and Caglar, 2016). Findings of this study fully align with these previous researches that the older generation central work and tend to put work above everything else, while Millennials enjoy life more and are not as serious in work as the older predecessors. However, this does not suggest that the younger generation is not so concerned about their work. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, Millennials think that they are working smarter rather than harder because taking time for themselves is a way of re-energizing and refreshing both their minds and physical conditions, so that they could work more effectively and efficiently. In order to explain this novel opinion, job-crafting theory would be an appropriate tool. Apparently, in Millennials' cognitions, the effective way of working is not always trying hard to achieve goals, but being able to have breaks in between when necessary so that the quality of teaching can be maintained. In their opinion, being healthy in both mental and physical conditions is essential for work. It can also be interpreted that Vietnamese teachers from Gen Y crafted a novel interpretation of non-working responsibilities that they would help improve other working responsibilities, that work and life have a causal relationship. The older generation, on the other hand, crafts the idea of work and life differently that work should be prioritized and “life” (in terms of personal issues) comes after.

5.1.1. Underlying influencing factors of work-life balance perceptions

As findings have suggested, there is a variety of factors that influence how a person perceives his or her work-life balance. In the Literature Review section, a few aspects have been discussed, namely gender diversity and technology.

5.1.1.1. Gender diversity

Data collected do not suggest much about gender differences in work-life balance, or more precisely work-family balance, as the term seems to be universal for both genders. Especially, for the married ones, both female and male participants care much about their families, therefore share the same responsibilities at home besides work. This finding goes against to previous studies which stated that women were more dissatisfied with their work-life balance than men due to having to take care of more family responsibilities/ tasks (Doble & Supriya, n.d.; Parker, 2007) and that men would be more likely to prioritize work over family (Doble & Supriya, n.d). Regardless of generation, people of all groups place much value on their families, however the way how they display their caring are different cross-generationally, as discussed earlier.

5.1.1.2. Technology development

Existing literature – ones discussed in Literature Review - claim that Baby Boomers find technology clumsy and unfamiliar, so they prefer traditional working styles with notebooks and pens, or prefer face-to-face/ telephone conversations to text and sending emails (Cassady, 2017; Wiley, 2020). The findings of this study indicate the opposite, as Boomers were the ones who praise the effectiveness of technological applications in both their work and lives. They implied that the development of technology had helped tremendously in balancing their work and non-work responsibilities, especially when teachers' workload eventually increased over time. In addition, two out of five Baby Boomers interviewed adopted technology academically and turned it into their additional

Nhi Nguyen

teaching profession. It can be indicated that technology is beneficial for the older generation in various ways, even though the generation approached the tool much later in comparison with the younger age cohort.

As for Millennials, the adoption of technology is slightly different from that of Boomers. Although again, it is universally agreed between the two that the benefits of technological advancement are undeniable, Millennials express more negativity towards the development. They (Millennia participants) claimed that technology blurred the line in communications between teachers and students, blurred the line between work and life due to convenient information exchange via social media/ texting applications, therefore made it more difficult to maintain the balance between work and life.

5.2. Teachers' workload and work-life balance

Teachers' workload is indeed very heavy and has increased tremendously over the last few decades. Teachers' responsibilities include many tasks other than just merely teaching, namely planning lessons, attending meetings, evaluating students, and in today's modern society teachers sometimes become "friends" with students due to the closeness offered by technologically convenient communications. Apparently from the results of this study, teachers in Vietnam are not satisfied with their work-life balance according to the heavy workload and responsibilities. However, most of them strive for the best balance lifestyle possible. In order to deal with the all the workload, as shown earlier in their answers, the participants have to perform the task in an order of importance, and such finding aligns with that of Göksoy & Akdağ (2014) which states that teachers must prioritize the most important tasks so that they could have enough time.

5.3. Border theory

Clark (2000) has indicated the desire for a clear separation, which can be divided into three types, namely physical, temporal, and psychological border, between work and non-

Nhi Nguyen

work lives of people in general. Findings of this study align with Clark's assumption, as mentioned above, the aspiration for such borders is evident within all generations, although tends to be stronger for younger generations, or more specifically Millennials.

In terms of hopping jobs, Millennials are more likely to take days off from work than Baby Boomers to balance their work and like. The finding is in line with the study by Aktaran Walton (2007) that if work-life balance is well-achieved accordingly to one's definition, higher work ethics will be displayed, and vice versa. This can be considered a way of forming a border between work and personal life of Millennial teachers. It can be inferred that they put a limitation on their working: when they feel like relaxation is needed, they would not hesitate to skip teaching lessons and spend time for themselves. As mentioned, this situation is the result of how generation Y defines their work-life balance and how they perceive work values: personal satisfaction should be prioritized. In contrast, while Baby Boomer participants show desires for clear, transparent boundaries between work and non-work life, job-hopping does not seem to be an option for them as they are much less likely to take days off from work for their personal issues. Therefore, it can be said that although the idea of creating borders between professional and personal lives exists in both generations' mindsets, the borders are created distinctively between two generations.

5.3.1. Permeability

In addition, Millennials also yearn permeability more than Baby Boomers, and the general desire for high permeability level seems to be inconsistent between the two generations, as most teachers belong to the Boomers group, although fully aware of such concept, do not appear to pay so much attention to aiming for it, instead, they would rather drift along with their work. However, this habit of Boomers tends to change, little if not much, after one's marriage (see Table 1). As some Millennial participants have not married yet, the desires for permeability after marriage cannot be generalized and concluded for the generation themselves, but the trend is that once married, Millennials yearn for

Nhi Nguyen

permeability even more as there are more responsibilities to be carried and the separations of them become more important to one's well-being. Therefore, it can be said that Millennials and Boomers share the same mindsets of permeability after marriage.

5.3.2. Flexibility

The flexibility of the Border theory is different from flexibility in work, but instead is the flexibility/ elasticity of the border, which indicates if the border shrinks or expands (Clark, 2000). Nonetheless, it is still highly affected by other working flexibilities such as time and place. The findings of this study have shown that interviewees expressed clearly their desires for more flexible working, as they believe such flexibility will positively affect their work-life balance.

5.3.2. Blending

Data are coherent with the theory which stated that higher levels of permeability and flexibility result in a less 'concentrated' blend of borders. Interviewees have expressed little implications for work and life, or work and home blending, but on the other hand desires transparent border between the two areas of life. It is reasonable to conclude that the border theory is fully supported by these findings. However, it is also worth mentioning that this blending sphere of the theory is built on the common-sense logic, so it can be applied in most cases.

5.4. Crafting theory

Two out of three principal aspects of this theory - physical crafting and cognitive crafting - were supported by the results of this study, from a cross-generational perspective. Relational crafting, although may be fully applicable in other office types of work, does not really concern teachers in terms of work-life balance perceptions.

5.4.1. Physical crafting

From the Findings section of this study, it can be seen that flexibilities, especially flexi-time, are more of a concern of Millennials rather than Baby Boomers. However, it can also be implied from the responses that implementing flexibilities into teachers' work would definitely be beneficial for any generations, in line with the results of studies by DeVaney (2010) and Erikson (2010). Being able to have control over his or her own schedule, one's self-esteem is consolidated, and it allows people to balance their work and lives better as they can choose when and where to work. This finding aligns with Sturges' (2012) suggestion that physical crafting tactics (including temporal and locational crafting) are essential in helping an individual both fulfill his or her responsibilities to perform better at work and cater to one's demands and needs. As can be inducted from the findings, most participants want to create a physical border between work and life, but the approaches are different between the two generations. However, the theory is not applied thoroughly for this study. As for locational crafting, Vietnamese teachers – the participants - are not so intrigued by the idea because most of them enjoy coming to class every day to give lectures as it is also a way for them to keep themselves inspired and motivated in work.

5.4.2. Cognitive crafting

As discussed in the Literature Review section, cognitive crafting refers to one's own definition or perception of work-life balance, and as long as they achieve their aims and goals, it can be considered that their professional and private lives are balanced, although the criteria for such a balance vary for different people (Sturges, 2012). Interviewees of this research, as shown earlier, have different opinions about the work-life balance concept, although they remain consistent within the generation group. In addition, individual cognitive crafting is also applied to modify one's viewpoints on his or her job, to advance skills that can help the person adjust to the current situation. Therefore, teachers, by different ways of continuing to engage and be motivated in their jobs, are

Nhi Nguyen

developing and adapting themselves using cognitive crafting, although they may not be aware of it.

Permeability and boundaries play an essential role in forming people's perceptions of better work-life balance. Also, they appear to be undeviating across generations as the desire to clearly separate work and non-work responsibilities exists in all generations, although stronger among the younger generation. To Millennials, permeability, or in other words, the detachment of work and life/ home/ family, is of crucial importance. A few teachers from the Boomer generation, however, also emphasize the need to have a clear boundary between work and family.

As Boomers value work more, their work ethics are therefore also higher than those of Millennials. Likewise, Twenge (2010) and Daloğlu (2013) suggested that the older generation shows more respect to authorities while Gen X and Millennials tend to rebel against such official forces. This shows the distinctive opinions between Baby Boomers and Generation Y in perceiving work values, which in turn contributes to differentiating work-life balance perceptions between them. Millennial participants expressed discomfort and boredom towards authorities but did not have any intentions of "riot", instead accepted and adapted to them policies. However, Gen Y still report being unsatisfied with their work-life balance, which infers that being adaptive to the working policies does not necessarily mean they are comfortable with them. This finding can be explained by behavior-crafting theory, more specifically relational crafting, as when Millennials are not satisfied with their relationships at work, their work-life balance is negatively affected.

5.5. Social identity theory

Findings have suggested that the more experienced one is at work, the better control one has over his or her own work-life balance, which can be explained by the social identity theory. All participants have agreed that the work stages can largely impact one's work-life balance, as if the person refers himself or herself to as a senior at work, it would be easier for them to manage the balance between their professional and personal lives.

Nhi Nguyen

“Junior” teachers – ones who are new to the profession, on the other hand, should not think about having a balance between work and life, but instead should devote all of their time into developing themselves and cultivating more knowledge as well as learning from the “seniors” about the work in general. As the conceptual framework has suggested that social identity theory also helps to strengthen job-crafting theory, according to the responses of participants, in this essential period of starting the job, one should also craft his or her relationships with other colleagues, or in other words, make themselves “identified” among the workforce in order to have a more comfortable working environment.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Main findings

This thesis studied if there were generational differences among teachers in Vietnam in perceiving work-life balance. The findings of this study are coherent to an extent with existing literature on the same topic. However, new, novel ideas were discovered thanks to the qualitative research approach.

Regardless of generations, all the teachers value work-life balance as of crucial importance and all strive for an ideal balance accordingly to their own definitions. Cognitive crafting seems to be the most influencing factor of one’s work-life balance. Organizational policies also seem to have affected physical crafting. Both generations studied showed desires for a clear border between personal and professional lives, especially when the workload of teachers in Vietnam is tremendous and all of the participants have to work extra a lot just to make ends meet. However, Millennials still appear to lay more emphasis on this concept than Boomers, even when compared with Boomers at the age of Millennials nowadays. Such a result suggests that there exist generational differences rather than just merely age differences. In addition, big social events that different generations experienced contributed largely to differentiating the

Nhi Nguyen

mindsets of Boomers and Millennials. Also, life stages as well as working stages affect largely how an individual perceives work-life balance. Social identity theory explains the effects of working stages on an individual's perception of work-life balance. A "newbie" to the teaching profession should not pay too much attention to balancing, but instead, devote all his or her time into working, both on- and off-office. Thus, the more experienced one is at work, the more chances for them to achieve their harmony.

In terms of approaching work-life balance, Boomers are more work-ethical than Millennials as they would not hop their jobs for personal reasons/ issues and have more respect for authorities in general. This is due to different working values between the two generations. Millennials value life over work, and "work to live" rather than "live to work" like most Boomers do. This is probably the biggest difference between the two generations in perceiving work-life balance; nonetheless, all agree that as long as one is satisfied with his or her life/ working pace, it can be considered that the person has already achieved their work-life balance.

6.2. Implications

This study provides insights into how generational differences in workplaces can impact employees' attitudes towards work-life balance and working responsibilities in general. As the concept is considered essential by many, it is beneficial to understand what forces can affect people's perceptions of work-life balance, and from which understanding appropriate policies can be implemented to better manage the workforce. Since the study focuses upon and considers generation as the main factor of differences in work-life balance perceptions of teachers in Vietnam, Vietnamese schools and educational institutes may use the findings to improve their working environment in ways that cater to teachers' needs so that the quality of work can be advanced. After all, for educational organizations, improving working quality should be the first and foremost priority.

6.3. Limitations of the research

This study is no doubt with limitations. Firstly, although for the undergraduate level, the sample size is quite sufficient, it is dangerous to generalize the results as the sample size is still very small for the results to be valid and applicable for the country in general. However, on the other hand, the qualitative study gives more insights into novel, in-depth ideas about the concept in comparison with quantitative study, although the latter can provide generalizable data and findings. Secondly, most Millennial participants selected are Literature teachers, who highly value mental and emotional lives, so there might have been biases in terms of perceiving work-life balance compared to teachers of other subjects such as Mathematics or Physics for example. Thus, the sample used for this study may not represent the common reality among Vietnamese teachers in general.

Another limitation of this research which is also one restraint of other researches about generational differences is that this study is not a time-lag design study, which would be a better approach for this topic. A time-lag study design examines the responses of different participants of similar age at different points in time, therefore it helps distinguish between generational differences and age differences. This study, however, clustered people into groups based on generations, therefore assumes generational differences from the beginning.

In addition, there can be mistranslations when interviews were conducted in a different language, and especially when Vietnamese is a very expressive language than English may not always cover all the meanings of Vietnamese, which extends possible errors in the data.

6.4. Suggestions for future research

Future research about generational differences could make use of time-lag design study, meaning that it should observe people throughout different life stages instead of grouping participants into generation categories. Such a longitudinal study design will provide more

Nhi Nguyen

reliable results and findings. Further research could also deepen more into the perceived influences of generational differences on the working environment in general. This study, although suggested variations in work-life balance perceptions between generations, did not generate any effects of them.

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Nhi Nguyen

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview questions

1. How long have you been in the field of teaching?
2. How important is W-LB to you?
 - Do you think that you have a good WLB?
 - Why do you think that?
3. How do you define good W-LB?
4. How many hours on average do you work a week?
 - Thoughts about the seasonality of the teaching work? (how do exam/matriculation weeks make W-LB different from normal weeks?)
5. How often do you have to work extra hours/ on weekends?
6. How much time do you feel that you have for your own leisure activities besides work and family responsibilities?
7. Do you consciously pay attention to balancing your work and life? Or do you just go with the flow?
8. Do you take short-cuts in your work when you feel that your personal time is being threatened by work?”,
 - Could you give an example?
9. Do you think that your ability to have an acceptable WLB has changed through the course of your teaching career?”
 - Why do you think that?
 - (How do you think technology has affect your W-LB? –ask if not implied in the response)
10. Do you think that the Vietnamese working culture affect your W-LB? For example: rigid working hours, requirements to physically be at work,...?

Additional questions for Boomers:

11. When you were at the age of the Millennials nowadays (presumably from 25—40), how did you perceive W-LB back then? (-> to see if the differences in perceptions

Nhi Nguyen

are really generational or just different life stages -> literature: time lag design thing)

12. How much did the big social events (for example the VN War) of your generation affect your characteristics and perceptions of life?

Appendix 2: Participants coding table

No.	Gender	Generation	Age	Place of teaching	Subject of teaching
#1	Female	Millennial	33	High school	Literature
#2	Female	Baby Boomer	64	University	English
#3	Male	Baby Boomer	62	High school	Literature
#4	Male	Baby Boomer	59	University	Mathematics
#5	Female	Millennial	35	High school	Literature
#6	Female	Millennial	28	High school	Literature
#7	Female	Millennial	27	High school	Literature
#8	Male	Millennial	26	High school	Literature
#9	Male	Baby Boomer	63	High school	Information Technology
#10	Female	Baby Boomer	66	University	Russian