The Shift from Work-Life Balance to Work-Life Integration.

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THE SHIFT FROM WORK-LIFE BALANCE TO WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

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The author hereby declares that, except where duly acknowledged, this thesis is entirely her own work and has not been submitted for any degree in any University or Institute of Technology.

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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration. The term 'work-life balance' was first introduced in Ireland in the mid-1980s, outlining the significance of balance between employees' work and personal life activities. Studies on work-life balance most often show that work and life are perceived as mutually exclusive domains that are constantly competing for an individual's time or energy. Work-life balance practices improve employee motivation and enhance their job performance and commitment. For employers, these policies are essential to maintaining an edge over competitors, and necessary to retain highly qualified staff. Flexible working is seen as one of the most important facets of maintaining a good work-life balance; however, this has led to the integration of work and personal life. Work-life integration refers to when professionals blend what they do both personally and professionally, and suggests that work and life are incorporated into one fulfilling purpose.

The primary aim of this research is to explore the extent of the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration, and also investigate the effects of this shifting trend. The study focuses on a cross section of different demographics, genders, occupations and personal circumstances. Based on the findings of the literature review, and the philosophy underlying this study, the choice of research strategy for this dissertation was the quantitative method. A questionnaire was used to provide quantitative data in this research, and a pilot study was conducted prior to distributing the questionnaire to the full research sample.

The findings of this study show that there has been a shift to a more integrated work-life, but also that there are negative consequences associated with this shift, such as stress, burnout and workaholism. It is notable that while this changing trend seems to be impacting negatively on some employees, this is ultimately a change that the employee wants. Employees are aware of the danger of blurring the lines between work and life, but are willing to accept this in order to choose a routine that best suits their needs. A solid foundation of trust between the employee and the employer is crucial in facilitating and implementing any practices or policies around work-life fusion and integration. An employee who is willing to demonstrate their flexibility to the company should be rewarded with the same flexibility in return.
Table of Contents

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................1
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................3
List of Tables .........................................................................................................................4

Chapter 1: Introduction ...............................................................................................5
Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................6
1.1 Introduction and Background ........................................................................................6
1.2 Aims and Objectives ......................................................................................................7
1.3 Chapter Overview ..........................................................................................................8
1.4 Conclusion .....................................................................................................................9

Chapter 2: Literature Review ....................................................................................10
Chapter 2: Literature Review ...............................................................................................11
2.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................11
2.2 Defining Work-life Balance ...........................................................................................11
2.3 A Background to Work-life Balance .............................................................................12
2.4 The Benefits of Work-life Balance ................................................................................13
2.5 Flexible Working and Work-life Balance .....................................................................16
2.6 The Focus of Work-life Balance Policies ......................................................................20
2.7 Factors Potentially Contributing to “Workaholism” ......................................................27
2.8 Work-life Balance and the Potential for Career Advancement .....................................31
2.9 The Shift to Work-life Integration / Work-life Fusion ..................................................35
2.10 Conclusion ...................................................................................................................41

Chapter 3: Methodology ..............................................................................................42
Chapter 3: Methodology ......................................................................................................43
3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................43
3.2 Research Question, Aims and Objectives .....................................................................43
3.3 Research Philosophy .....................................................................................................44
3.4 Data Collection: Primary Research ..............................................................................46
3.5 Questionnaires ...............................................................................................................49
3.6 Sampling and Gaining Access .......................................................................................52
3.7 Validity, Reliability and Ethics .......................................................................................56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis</th>
<th>60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Job Satisfaction, Employer Loyalty and Being Valued at Work</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Annual Leave, Hours Worked and Overtime</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Availability and Take-Up of Flexible Options</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 How Employees View Work-Life Balance</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 The Shift from Work-Life Balance to Work-Life Integration</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5: Conclusion</th>
<th>82</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Key Findings</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Limitations</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Recommendations for Practice</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Overall Conclusion</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>93</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Questionnaire</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Parental Leave and Flexibility
Figure 2.2: Sacrifices made to manager work-life
Figure 2.3: Who works the most hours?
Figure 2.4: Dual Career Dynamics
Figure 3.1: Sample Breakdown
Figure 3.2: Industry Breakdown
### List of Tables

Table 4.1: Job Satisfaction  
Table 4.2: Employer Loyalty  
Table 4.3: Valued at Work  
Table 4.4: Do you avail of Flexible Working Arrangements?  
Table 4.5: Annual Leave Utilisation  
Table 4.6: Annual Leave Compensation  
Table 4.7: Weekly Contractual Hours  
Table 4.8: Weekly Hours Actually Worked  
Table 4.9: Do You Have a Good Work-Life Balance?  
Table 4.10: Level of Satisfaction with Current Working Hours  
Table 4.11: Which Flexible Working Arrangement Would Best Suit You?  
Table 4.12: Availability and Take-up of Flexible Working Arrangements  
Table 4.13: Industry Breakdown  
Table 4.13: The Importance of Work-Life Balance  
Table 4.14: Employees View of Work-Life Balance  
Table 4.15: Impact of Work-Life Balance  
Table 4.16: Company Work-Life Balance Rating  
Table 4.17: Work-Related Tasks Performed Outside of the Workplace  
Table 4.18: Personal Tasks Performed During Work Hours  
Table 4.19: Work Impact on Personal Life
Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Background

The old mantra of "work to live, don't live to work" has been slowly fading away as employees today are more aware of the variety of careers and job opportunities available to them. Not only are people choosing a job that will allow them to sustain their personal life, but they are also choosing a career path they believe will offer both professional and personal fulfilment. Employees today know what they want and are not afraid to "shop around" until they get it. As such, organisations are now changing their traditional working arrangements to accommodate these needs and preferences in order to attain, and retain, a highly diverse workforce, and also to promote a healthy work-life balance (Smeaton et al., 2014). This study will look at the existing literature surrounding the concepts of work-life balance and work-life integration, provide research and subsequent analysis in the modern environment, linking this back to the literature.

The literature review defines work-life balance, and investigates the background of the concept of work-life balance. Work-life balance has been spoken about as being the phenomenon of striking an ideal balance between the professional life of an individual and their personal life with all of their respective associations. Flexible working was seen as one of the most important facets of maintaining a good work-life balance. Flexible working, however, is what has led to the integration of work and personal life. The concept of balancing work and life has been highlighted as being particularly important for employees with young families or dependants, for example children, elderly parents or other dependants. More recent literature, however, showed that work-life balance and flexible working is desired by all employees, not just those in a parental or caring role. The literature also suggested that in modern society, new technology and blurred boundaries between work and private life have resulted in more and more people becoming addicted to their work. This has also led to "workaholism", which has several consequences for employees in the gender, socio-cultural, behavioural and familial contexts.

The research has shown that work-life balance remains an important factor for all employees at different stages. Some generational differences, however, are thought to exist; the generation referred to as "Millennials" is believed to value work-life balance more highly
than other generations. In relation to the impact of work-life balance on career advancement, evidence suggests that work-life balance is an increasingly important value, particularly among younger workers. Research has shown several various opinions on the relationship between work-life balance and career advancement, arguing that the participation in one role, such as work, is more difficult for employees who participate in another role, such as family, resulting in work-family conflict. There has, however, been a shifting trend from work-life balance to work-life integration, and while this change has advantages for many groups, there are also several issues arising from the “always on” phenomenon, such as “workaholism”.

It is the hope that the findings of this study will contribute to studies related to work and home life synthesis and the strategies employed by workers to manage the demands of balancing, or integrating, work and life. The assignment of work and personal life are no longer circumscribed to specific times and places (Golden and Geisler, 2007), but rather it can be seen that the use of technology is now a medium with which to simultaneously address the demand of both. The findings of this study will also add to the body of knowledge around flexible work arrangements and supportive work-life policies (Richman, 2008) by informing employers about the importance of having and enabling technology, policies or practices for employees to manage work and life in order to achieve higher levels of job satisfaction. With the increasing pressure on organisations to be as supportive of new work-life arrangements as possible, a study examining the extent of the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration, and the effects of that shift, is particularly timely and relevant.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

This study aims to explore the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration. The lack of clarity and research around the area of work-life integration prompted this study. This dissertation will look to investigate what work-life balance and work-life integration means to employees, their perceptions of a “good” work-life balance, and how they wish to integrate their work and personal lives, if at all. This study will also look to understand the impact of the shifting trend from work-life balance to work-life integration, and what the effects of such a change are.
The legislation surrounding work and flexibility is also examined, specifically in the Irish context. The applicability of the Organisation of Working Time Act (1997) is questioned, and how this applies to the modern day worker. The area of flexible working will also be explored, with an aim of identifying what flexible working options are available to employees, what options currently being availed of, and also what arrangements employees would like to have in place at work.

The research will provide an analysis of the current working climate in relation to work-life balance and work-life integration. Using the experiences of employees from a variety of different industries and sectors, a detailed analysis will be presented. The primary objectives of this research are to:

- Establish if there has been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration.
- Establish the extent of the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration.
- Establish the effect that the change from work-life balance to work-life integration has had on employees.
- Review the impact of managerial support on the progression to work-life integration.
- Confirm whether varying demographics influence any of the areas.

The main aim of this research is to understand what work-life balance and work-life integrations means to the modern worker and workplace. Impact analysis to organisational goals will also be contrasted with the impact to personal life. An overview of the chapters will be outlined in the next section.

1.3 Chapter Overview

This dissertation has five chapters. This chapter, Chapter 1, provides an introduction to the study, offering a background to the research, and also setting out the key aims and objectives. Chapter 2 analyses the existing literature in relation to the chosen topic of work-life balance and work-life integration, and all related contributing factors of these areas. Beginning with the definition of the topic, Chapter 2 then explores the benefit of having a good work-life balance, how flexible working and related policies have affected work-life balance and other factors which have led to work-life integration. Some key research is introduced to
demonstrate the existing viewpoints and data in relation to the topic. The focus of this study assesses work-life balance and work-life integration in the Irish context.

Chapter 3 details the methodology used in the research, and how the findings from the primary research are linked to the literature in Chapter 2. The research philosophy of this study is outlined and discussed, and the basis for deciding on a Quantitative Methodology is detailed. The process used to gather the quantitative data through a questionnaire is explained. This chapter also outlines why the quantitative method process was chosen and why it is believed to be the best approach for this dissertation. Results of a questionnaire of 103 employees show their perceptions in relation to the chosen topic, and provide valuable data for analysis. The processes of sampling, data validity and coding in relation to this study are explained in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 analyses the findings of the primary research conducted in this study. The data collected from the research is presented to the reader and the impact and meaning of the data is explained. A critical and comparative analysis of the findings in relation to the existing literature is carried out, in order to understand whether the findings of this study support or contradict the existing literature, or indeed add to it in any way.

Finally, Chapter 5 identifies the major themes of this study, focussing on the results of the key findings; how work-life balance has shifted to work-life integration, and the impact of this changing trend. The limitations of the study are outlined, with recommendations drawn from these limitations and the also the key findings. Proposals are made for opportunities for future research in this area, as well as for industry. This aims to make the findings of this study usable and transferrable to practice. An overall conclusion of the meaning of this dissertation is provided.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter served to introduce the topic of the study and position the reasoning for its need and proposed value. The structure of the dissertation was outlined, mapping the format of this research paper.
Chapter 2:
Literature Review
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review provides an overview of research that has been conducted in the area of work-life balance and work-life integration. The focus is on the factors which are believed to have particular impact on work-life balance, and on work-life integration. The review will begin with the broader definition of work-life balance that will underpin this particular research, followed by a brief background into the concept of work-life balance. Next, the benefit of having a good work-life balance and flexible working is discussed. This is followed by a review of the focus of work-life balance policies and factors potentially contributing to “workaholism”. The impact of work-life balance on the potential for career advancement is then discussed, before concluding with an examination of the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration.

2.2 Defining Work-life Balance

Work-life balance issues impact on everyone and the concept is broadly defined as the degree to which individuals attain equal levels of engagement and satisfaction in both work and life roles (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Clark, 2000). There has, however, been much debate over a formal definition of work-life balance. According to Greenhaus et al. (2003), most of the major reviews of work-life balance articles either do not mention the term ‘work-life balance’, or, when it is mentioned, it is not explicitly defined. Furthermore, in studies where work-life balance or related constructs are explored, researchers seem to have used several different approaches to operationally define and measure the construct (Potgieter and Barnard, 2010). In a review of the literature, Kalliath and Brough (2008, p.323-327) identify six different definitions that are commonly used within the literature, specifically;

1. Work-life balance reflects an individual’s orientation across different life roles,
2. Work-life balance is the extent to which an individual is engaged in, and equally satisfied with, his or her work role and family role,
3. Work-life balance means achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, while personal resources such as energy, time and commitment are well distributed across domains,
4. Work-life balance is the extent, to which an individual’s effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are compatible with the individuals’ life role priorities at a given point in time,

5. Work-life balance is where low levels of inter-role conflict and high levels of inter-role facilitation contribute to higher levels of perceived work-family balance, and

6. Work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work. (Kalliath and Brough, 2008, p.323-327)

Ultimately, Kalliath and Brough (2008, p.323-327) define work-life balance as:

*The individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible, and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life priorities.*

Clark (2000) also defined work-life balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict. In other words, work-life balance refers to having enough time and energy to handle both work and non-work commitments. From these definitions, it is important to note that work-life balance is about individuals’ perception as they fulfil multiple and often competing roles. Furthermore, the background to the concept of work-life balance will be investigated in the next section.

### 2.3 Background to Work-life Balance

The term ‘work-life balance’ was first introduced in Ireland in the mid-1980s, during the active prominence of the industrial relations, outlining the significance of balance between employees’ work and personal life activities (Dobbins, 2008). Early literature of work-life balance predominantly focuses on the conflict experienced by women, because women were, and continue to be, the primary caregivers of children and managers of the household (Gerkovich, 2006; Hochschild, 2003). Women in the 1970s entered a workplace that was predominantly populated and managed by men. At this time, the accepted concept of an ideal worker was an employee totally dedicated to the job, with no family responsibilities, and who was male (Kanter, 1977). The dynamics of the workplace changed, however, as women began to be hired into jobs previously held by men, propelling issues of work-life balance to the attention of employees and employers alike (Gerkovich, 2006; Kanter, 1977).
The resulting conflict that became apparent in the 1970s persists today and poses important challenges employers (Gerkovich, 2006; Kossek and Lambert, 2005). With greater numbers of men now involved in caring for children and participating in household chores (Gerkovich, 2006; Kossek and Lambert, 2005), the problem of work-life integration and balance is now seen as a cross-gender issue. Many men as well as women now feel the effects of competing work and personal demands on their quality of life and career advancement (Gerkovich, 2006; Kossek and Lambert, 2005). The lack of balance between competing work and home demands is broadly acknowledged by scholars as an undesirable state for any employee and usually results in lowered levels of employee satisfaction and increased levels of stress for employees (Edwards and Rothbard, 2005). Lowered levels of satisfaction create an environment where employee retention becomes a problem and performance is adversely impacted. Literature suggests that it is in the best interests of the employer to foster higher levels of employee satisfaction and reduced levels of stress in order to build employee loyalty and retention. Companies should seek to create an atmosphere where employees experience lower levels of stress and can therefore perform at their highest potential (Allen et al., 2000). The benefits of having a good work-life balance, for both the individual and the organisation, will be outlined in the following section.

2.4 The Benefits of Work-life Balance

Studies on work-life balance most often show that work and life are perceived as mutually exclusive domains that are constantly competing for an individual’s resources, for example time or energy (Brownstein, 2014). There are many benefits of having a good work-life balance for both the employee and the company, and improving work-life balance has been seen as a way to reduce turnover and improve productivity (Russell et al. 2007). Research has shown that providing work-life balance practices such as flexible working, time off requests, compressed working hours, home based working and job sharing helps to improve employee motivation and enhances their job performance and commitment (Bunting, 2004). In practice, however, Pillinger (2001, online) states that work-life balance involves:

*Adjusting work patterns so that everyone, regardless of age, race or gender can find a rhythm that enables them more easily to combine work and their other responsibilities and aspirations.*
Drew et al. (2003, p. 13) also point out that:

*Personal fulfilment is important inside work and that satisfaction outside work may enhance employees' contribution to work.*

Work-life balance has been spoken about as being the phenomenon of striking an ideal balance between the professional life of an individual and their personal life with all of their respective associations (Clark, 2000). The level of importance given to this phenomenon is due to the harmful results brought about because of the severe lack of work-life balance. It has been proposed that an effective work-life balance makes a person happier and more content, which is beneficial to both the individual and the company (Veenhoven, 1991). It has also been suggested that this contentment leads people to maintain the level of hard work they put in to the development of their careers and thus remain satisfied (Veenhoven, 1991). While Veenhoven (1991) does not imply that working harder to achieve more milestones or the thirst to advance is harmful, studies have shown that in their ambitions to achieve more, people exert extreme effort which reduces the level of satisfaction they once experienced, because their working time increased and they lost a healthy work-life balance. The increased levels of stress experienced by the majority of professionals in every field, shows the need for, and the importance of integrating work-life balance into our lives (Beehr and Newman, 1978).

It has been suggested that work-life policies and benefits are essential to maintaining an edge over competitors, and that a comprehensive offering of policies and programmes is economically advantageous and necessary to retaining highly qualified staff (Caligiuri and Givelekian, 2008). Casey and Grzywacz (2008) have noted that the health and wellness outcomes of flexible work-arrangements using longitudinal data from employees affiliated with a multinational pharmaceutical company. Their findings have suggested that perceptions of work flexibility decreases work absences due to sickness and work-related impairment and increases job commitment (Casey and Grzywacz, 2008).

In studying work-life balance and flexibility, Connelly et al. (2004) offered a model for assessing the value of employer-sponsored child care, and the importance of this feature for both current and potential employees. They found that there was significant value for parents
and all employees of firms that offered on-site child care centres. Research showed that employers that offer on-site assistance are more competitive than those that do not. Furthermore, newly hired employees placed greater significance on the availability of this service, regardless of whether or not they had children (Connelly et al., 2004). For some employers, childcare is not seen as their responsibility but that of individual workers or government and so no childcare support is envisaged (Hein and Cassirer, 2010). In a UK employer survey, about half of those not offering any support gave this as a reason (Kazimirski et al., 2006). Another major reason why employers are reticent to help with childcare is the perceived cost of creating and operating a workplace facility, which is seen as the only option (Hein and Cassirer, 2010). Hein and Cassirer (2010) state that employers often feel that they are not in the childcare business, and that providing any support for childcare would distract company staff from their main work. As noted by an official of the Irish Business and Employers’ Confederation (IBEC) (Cronin, 2004, p.140-145):

For many businesses childcare is not their core competence and there is genuine concern that involvement in such projects will become time and resource consuming taking the focus away from business priorities.

Small employers are particularly hesitant to offer childcare support, as since so few employees would be potentially interested, they do not feel it would be worthwhile putting any system in place (Hein and Cassirer, 2010). In a UK employer survey, many employers not providing support felt that they had too few employees who wanted a childcare scheme or had too few employees in the organisation in general (Kazimirski et al., 2006). Keeping trained staff and reducing absenteeism, however, are concerns of small as well as large enterprises (Hein and Cassirer, 2010).

Research shows that, for most employers who provide their employees with childcare support, it is part of a business strategy (Hein and Cassirer, 2010). Shapiro (2005) found that for IBM, one of the pioneers in providing childcare support, this is considered as a strategic business initiative, and not a charitable one.

Childcare support is often, although not always, part of a more general strategy for work–life balance, along with flexible work schedules, pay during childcare leave and a general effort by management to develop a culture that accepts that workers have responsibilities and a life
beyond the workplace (Hein, 2005). Hein and Cassirer (2010, p.68) also found that childcare is considered a strategic initiative for organisations because of the benefits which have been perceived in relation to:

- Reducing turnover and retaining employees, including women who go on maternity leave;
- Attracting new employees;
- Reducing absenteeism and lateness;
- Increasing productivity and focus; and
- Enhancing employees’ morale, commitment, motivation and job satisfaction, while reducing stress and stress-related disorders in the workplace.

It was observed by Hein and Cassirer (2010, p.69) that the HR Director of the National Health Service (NHS), believes that:

_Childcare forms part of a whole package of measures that help to retain people. It is not the only thing in the package, but we can’t have the package without it._

The idea of flexible working is further explored in the next section.

2.5 Flexible Working and Work-life Balance

Georgetown University Law Center (2010) defines a “flexible work arrangement” (FWA) as:

_Any one of a spectrum of work structures that alters the time and/or place that work gets done on a regular basis_

Furthermore, the Georgetown University Law Center’s 2010 paper on Workplace Flexibility outlines what a flexible work arrangement includes, specifically:

- Flexibility in the scheduling of hours worked, such as alternative work schedules (e.g., flex time and compressed workweeks), and arrangements regarding shift and break schedules;
> Flexibility in the amount of hours worked, such as part time work and job shares; and
> Flexibility in the place of work, such as working at home or at a satellite location.

Flexible working is a way of working that suits the employee's needs (Facer and Wadsworth, 2008). In relation to flexible working arrangements, and 'flexi-time', studies show a link between job satisfaction and work-family conflict in respect of the traditional workweek (five 8-hour days) versus a compressed workweek (four 10-hour days) (Facer and Wadsworth, 2008). Facer and Wadsworth (2008) also suggest that there is a correlation between a compressed workweek of four 10-hour days and increased work productivity. These workers also reported lower levels of work-family conflict than their traditional workweek counterparts. There were, however, no significant correlations with respect to job satisfaction. Flexible working was seen as one of the most important facets of maintaining a good work-life balance. Flexible working, however, is what has led to the integration of work and personal life (Facer and Wadsworth, 2008).

Golden (2009) investigated the prevalence of flexible work arrangements and found that access to flexible scheduling is dependent on both the individual and the job characteristics. Golden's studies showed that educated workers have more flexibility in scheduling than lesser educated workers. Sales representatives, for example, managers/executives, and workers involved in select specialty professions are more likely to have discretion in choosing when to start and end working time. Golden (2009) concluded that in these cases, flexible work arrangements are likely to be facilitated through informal structures instead of formal policy mechanisms. Hayman (2009) also suggests a positive correlation between comfort in the use of formal flexible work arrangements and work-life balance, with flexitime scheduling yielded higher levels of work-life balance. Previous research on flexible working in Ireland has found these arrangements are more common in the public sector than in the private sector and that they are more frequently availed of by women (Drew et al., 2003; Fynes et al., 1996).

A U.S. study conducted by Ernst and Young (2015) showed that 38% of workers would leave the country they work in if it meant they would find better parental leave benefits and flexibility. The report, based on a survey of 9,699 employed adults around the world, found that people complain about ever-longer working hours and a lack of flexibility among their employers, especially when the employees have children (Otani, 2015). In this
study, the majority of employees said that increased flexibility and work-life balance policies would mean they would be less likely to quit their job, would work longer hours, be happier in the workplace, and recommend their company to other (Ernst and Young, 2015). This proved particularly true for Millenials and Gen-X workers (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Parental Leave and Flexibility.

Another aspect of flexible working is the ability to work from home, and the impact this has on job performance, retention, and dependent care responsibilities. Studies in this area have shown that there is a positive correlation between working from home, an employee’s intention to stay with an organisation, and also job performance (Major et al., 2008). It is interesting to note, however, that in these cases formal policies were non-existent, or existing policies were not applied evenly across departments. There are, however, potential barriers to the implementation and usage of work-life balance policies and programmes. It has been suggested that poorly designed programmes and cultural dynamics, such as lack of senior level support, play a powerful role in the success and longevity of any work-life balance programme (Thompson, 2008). These types of initiatives need management support to succeed in an organisation.
Flexible working is not only beneficial to many groups of workers; there are also advantages to employers from developing and implementing flexible working arrangements (Fine-Davis et al., 2005). Armstrong (2001) refers to the US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health’s (NIOSH) finding that policies benefiting worker health also benefit the bottom line.

Emmott and Hutchinson (1998) and Fynes et al. (1996) are quoted in Humphreys et al. (2000) as having identified the following advantages to employers for providing flexible working arrangements to staff:

- Reduced fixed costs, for example, by the use of tele-working
- Improved recruitment and retention of employees
- Increased productivity and efficiency
- Improved staff morale and loyalty
- Reduced stress and sick leave
- Reduced absenteeism
- Access to a wider pool of potential employees

Every organisation has its own ethos, but organisations who respond to the work-life balance needs of their employees demonstrate a commitment to and appreciation of their workforce, as well as sending a positive image of the organisation to the wider public (Fine-Davis et al., 2005).

Glass and Estes (1997) also note clear positive effects of reduced work hours and flexible working on employers, by increasing employee productivity and decreasing staff turnover. In the UK, Dex and Smith (2001) found that the provision of family-friendly policies relating to child care and working at home were associated with greater employee commitment in the private sector in a multivariate analysis of data from the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey in Britain. Dex and Smith (2002) found that 90% of managers with experience of family-friendly working arrangements considered that they were cost effective. There is an assumption that flexible working arrangements and other such policies are invariably
beneficial for employees (Russell et al., 2007), an opinion that is also reflected in the recommendations of social partnership bodies promoting work-life balance, such as the National Framework Committee for Work-Life balance policies in Ireland. Yet some flexible working arrangements may actually exacerbate work-life conflict, for example, flexibility in timing of work may result in employees being asked to work unsocial hours (Russell et al., 2007). Hochschild (1997) proposed this notion of “spill-over” from work into personal life, a view further explored by Hyman et al. (2003), whereby both ‘tangible’ extensions into family-life such as work taking up family time and ‘intangible’ incursions from work such as exhaustion were suggested. Similarly, Kent (2015, p.59) found that flexibility in the form of working from home can also lead to work-life conflict, and states that:

For those employees who are completing overtime at home, while they may be physically present, emotionally they are still in the workplace.

Regarding flexible working hours, evidence from the United States suggests that flexible working time reduces work-family conflict (Glass and Estes, 1997). White et al. (2003) test the impact of a number of measures which allow employee discretion in starting and finishing times. It was found that while flexible working hours in general reduce work-life conflict, there is some evidence that men may use flexible starting times to increase working hours, exacerbating work-life conflict (White et al., 2003). Similarly, in an investigation of call centre workers and software developers, Hyman et al. (2003) found that temporal flexibility does not always reduce work-life conflict, and can lead to intermittent working patterns and greater intrusion into family life. While it can be expected that flexible working times will reduce work-life conflict, an alternative hypothesis is that flexible working hours will increase work-life conflict (Russell, et al., 2007). The focus of work-life balance policies and programmes that are implemented in organisations, however, will be discussed in the following section.

2.6 The Focus of Work-life Balance Policies

The concept of balancing work and life has been highlighted as being particularly important for employees with young families or dependants, for example children, elderly parents or other dependants (Pedersen et al., 2009). Pedersen’s (2009) research in this area has explored
the relationship between the workplace environment, a company’s family-friendly policies, and how this affects the family dynamic, and it was found that the availability family-friendly policies and flexibility in the workplace had a significant positive impact on an employee’s personal family life.

Individuals with childcare and eldercare responsibilities clearly have particular needs, but many employers now recognise that options to work flexibly should be available to all employees, not just to those with caring responsibilities (Gifford, 2007). Gifford (2007) found that employers offer their staff a comprehensive range of flexibilities, including career breaks, extended maternity and paternity leave, adoption leave, paid dependency leave, compressed weeks, job share, leave for community and volunteer work.

A study conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) (2007, p.1) identified a range of family-friendly policies currently in operation, including:

- Childcare allowances
- Paid family, ‘special’ or carer leave
- Paid paternity leave
- Enhanced maternity leave and benefits
- Phased return from maternity leave
- Job-sharing
- Flexible starting and finishing times
- Voluntary reduced-hours working
- Unpaid leave during school holidays
- Family access to learning resources
- Childcare voucher schemes
- Guaranteed Christmas leave for employees with families
- Homeworking and teleworking arrangements.

Despite challenges to the organisation in facilitating work-life balance, the IES (2007, p.1) research also shows that employers perceive certain business benefits when these flexible policies are in place in their organisation. Another study carried out by the IES (2007, p.3) showed that policies promoting family-friendly employment, for example, have been seen to:
➢ Reduce casual sickness absence
➢ Improve the organisation’s ability to recruit
➢ Improve employee productivity
➢ Improve staff morale
➢ Improve employee commitment.

Gifford (2007) also addresses absence issues and policies, stating that illness and injury are not the only causes of staff absence; employees now have a variety of statutory rights to time off work, including annual leave, maternity leave and ante-natal care, adoption leave, domestic emergencies, paternity leave, parental leave, career breaks, civic responsibilities and religious holidays. Furthermore, it was found that the ease and effectiveness with which absence is managed varies between employers: while some have ad hoc and somewhat reactive approaches, others have well-established practices that allowed them to respond to most incidences of absence (Gifford, 2007). Gifford’s (2007) research also showed that employers seem to put more effort into managing and minimising the amount of absence due to, or attributed to illness than any other type of absence, however, some employers have developed absence policies that are seen to be more supportive of employees’ work-life balance; these include providing more opportunities for planned absence, and being more flexible with giving employees time off to deal with emergencies.

Workplace culture also plays a critical role in an employee’s ability to meet both work and family needs. Secret (2005) explored the differences between companies that support parenting in the workplace (PIW) and those that do not. Parenting in the workplace refers to an arrangement where an organisation allows its employees to care for their children while working. This research suggests that PIW practices are less intrusive and less problematic than had originally been anticipated. Secret (2005) also found that PIW poses no disadvantages to business results, and it is interesting to note that when compared to non-PIW companies, PIW workplaces were regarded as having a higher regard for innovation, less recruitment and hiring difficulties, and more positive collegial interactions (Secret, 2005).

The 2015 study into work-life challenges conducted by Ernst and Young indicated that Millennial employees commonly start managing other workers between the ages of 25
The study showed that this generation are getting more responsibility both at home and at work, with 62% of Millennials now managers (Ernst and Young, 2015) (See Figure 2.2). Yet, that timing coincides with another big life event for many young employees: having children. The Ernst and Young (2015, p.8) report states that:

*U.S. Millennials are likely taking on more responsibility—as both parents and managers—at the same time.*

**Figure 2.2: Sacrifices made to manage work-life**

In relation to the experiences of workers involved in eldercare responsibilities, it has been found that individuals are more likely to provide home or family care themselves, rather than outsource the care of aging relatives (Shoptaugh *et al.*, 2004). In these cases, the companies
were less satisfied with these arrangements, as they were time consuming and caused substantial interruptions at work. Shoptaugh et al. (2004) noted a positive correlation between an employee’s need for eldercare, and intent to leave the organisation. This arguably suggests that there is a need for more attention to be paid to the eldercare needs of employees, perhaps through employer-sponsored eldercare programmes.

2.6.1 Work-life Balance and Women in the Workplace

In relation to women and mothers in the workplace, given the social expectation that the responsibility for bearing children brings with it the responsibility for child-rearing, it is perhaps unsurprising to learn that, for the mothers of very young children who work full time, the path to senior management can be difficult (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). Also, women managers with no children may be censured for failing to perform their embodied femininity in accordance with social expectations (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). Women with children, however, who also work full-time in demanding, professional roles often experience stress due not only to the “multiple demands inherent in running a career and a home and a family” (Davidson and Cooper, 1992, p.82), but also due to the criticism they receive from colleagues for, apparently, failing to maintain a socially acceptable level of embodied maternal presence with children. Davidson and Cooper (1992) report how mothers with young children who work full-time receive expressions of ‘disgust’ when others learn that they are combining motherhood with full-time employment. The stress experienced by mothers who are in full-time work is often exacerbated because such women are accused of being uncommitted to their professional employment (Desmarais and Alksnis, 2005; Hopkins, 2005). This may be especially problematic if their child-care responsibilities mean that they cannot offer to employers the ‘flexibility’ of being readily available to work additional, atypical and unsocial hours, but are able to be present at work only during ‘office hours’ (Lewis, 2006; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004). Employers might, therefore, expect mothers who work full-time to be ‘flexible’ in relation to putting in long hours at the office, but might concurrently block their career progress either because they cannot accept that women can combine mothering with a high work orientation (Desmarais and Alksnis, 2005; Fielden and Cooper, 2002). A professional and/or managerially employed mother who works full-time may, therefore, find herself constructed simultaneously as a ‘nominal’ mother, who is failing to perform her maternal role appropriately, and also as an uncommitted, unambitious employee (Moorhead,
2004), when, in fact, she may be deeply committed both to her children and to her paid work (Gatrell, 2005).

In an attempt to address the difficulties of combining motherhood with career, a proportion of professionally employed women arrange to work part-time while children are young (Birnie et al., 2005). Lewis and Cooper (2005) have suggested that, where organisations do offer the possibility of part-time work, this is often instigated as a short-term solution due to problems regarding the recruitment and retention of female staff. However, organisations offering part-time work do little to acknowledge, or to accommodate mothers’ long term career ambitions (Lewis and Cooper, 2005, p.10), and can;

*Detract from the need to look more deeply at actual working practices and inherent assumptions that sustain counterproductive behaviours and values, such as the over-valuing of visible time at the workplace.*

Through their child-related absences from the office, mothers working part-time are often marked out from the ‘ideal’, and continuously present, male worker (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). Furthermore, maternal concerns with the needs of small children are regarded as incompatible with paid work at a senior level (Gatrell, 2007; Lewis, 2006). Mothers are, therefore, expected to accept limited career opportunities in return for the ‘privilege’ of maintaining a professional or management role part-time (Blair-Loy, 2003). Blair-Loy (2003) has found that for highly qualified, professional women who are contracted to work less than full-time, there is likely to be a forfeit to pay in terms of earnings and promotion prospects, therefore the notion ‘flexibility’, when utilised by mothers, is linked to limited career and development opportunities.

The Guardian (2014) and The Irish Times (2014) suggest that flexible working is a female-friendly initiative. Evans (2001) and Dowd (2014) identify a trend of flexible working being geared towards women and parents. Research in the area of flexible working, conducted by Kent (2015, p.66), has shown that there is a common opinion that;

*Flexibility is more important to females than males and that this, combined with parenthood, is often the reason for a need for flexible working.*

25
There is a perception that women need more flexibility than men, or non-parents (Kent, 2015). These findings are also supported by the theory of Smeaton et al. (2014), that parents are more likely to request flexible working options. Furthermore, while flexible working has traditionally been perceived as a policy that is applicable only to women, research has shown that men who avail of flexible work arrangements are less likely to thrive and succeed than women in the same situation (Wells, 2016). Global management consultation firm, Bain and Company, conducted a survey of over 1,000 employees to gauge the effectiveness of flexible workplaces, which Sanders et al. (2016) defined as:

_A workplace that allowed employees control over when, where and how they work, including working part-time, working from home, setting their own hours and taking leave._

The study found that whilst women were found to feel more supported and confident in their careers when working flexitime, the same beneficial effects are not felt by men (Wells, 2016). Bain and Company (2016) have found that 10% fewer men work flexitime than women, as their survey showed while that women respondents who work flexibly are more confident and committed to career progression than those who don’t, the story is different for men. Confidence and commitment levels were lower for men who work flexibly than those who don’t. Again, this is potentially a result of the perception challenges they face.

The survey showed that while there were flexible working arrangements in place for men, those male employees who availed of the practice “felt judgement for using it” (Sanders et al., 2016), with one respondent admitting that:

_While opportunities exist, the environment that management creates makes it difficult to participate._

It was also revealed that men are twice as likely to have their requests for flexible working arrangements rejected, and that even if their requests are granted, they feel judged for trying to make their work life easier (Wells, 2016).
A study conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) found that 27% of fathers face discrimination related to their paternity leave and subsequent return to work, despite taking considerably shorter leave than mothers (AHRC, 2014). One manager in the AHRC study reportedly told a worker that:

*Part-time is traditionally only something we make work for women.*

Hellicar (2016) suggests that men have pulled the short straw with flexitime work due to pre-existing social norms and attitudes. It is proposed that cultural values are deeply embedded in society, and so perceptions must be changed around whose role it is to care for kids, and that it must be accepted that men can, and want to, take on this role too (Hellicar, 2016). In addition, the demand for flexibility for men is growing, and in line with new legislation being introduced in Ireland to support equality for parental leave, and as workplace equality grows, the logical consequence is that the disparity of flexible working uptake in relation to gender will narrow (Kent, 2015). Hellicar (2016) further notes, however, that it should not matter to employers what their employees’ reasons for wanting to work flexibly are, and that technological advancements mean that flexible workplaces for all businesses and workplaces should now be the norm.

The issue of having a work-life balance, or lack thereof, not only impacts on an individual’s personal responsibilities but can also lead to “workaholism”, which will be investigated further in the next section.

### 2.7 Factors Potentially Contributing to “Workaholism”

The term “workaholism” was coined by the American minister and psychologist, Wayne E. Oates in 1968, to denote his own work addiction, and the term has since become colloquial notion (Burke and Cooper, 2008). Burke and Cooper (2008) also found that in sharp contrast to its colloquial use, however, relatively few scholarly publications on workaholism have appeared, due to the lacking agreement on its definition. Although for the lay public, workaholism is synonymous with working excessively hard, scholars, such as McMillan and O’Driscoll (2006) have proposed several more elaborate definitions. Burke (2006) proposes that workaholism should be considered a negative psychological state akin to addiction.
In a review of the literature regarding workaholism, McMillan et al. (2001) and (2003) identified two models surrounding this theory, the addiction and the trait models. Within the addiction model, workaholism is portrayed as a compulsive and potentially fatal disorder, which involves the release of adrenaline leading to so-called ‘work highs’. The trait framework is the second most prominent, and views workaholism as a core aspect of the individual’s personality.

2.7.1 Addiction Theory

The term ‘addiction’ has been referred to as the difficulty a person has in managing to do without something (West, 1991). This addiction involves a number of related factors, the unravelling of which provides a challenge to addiction research (Teeson et al., 2002). Traditionally, addiction has been seen as a disease (Goldstein, 2001), however more recent research proposes alternative interpretations of addiction.

In this field of research, it is unclear what the addiction theorists endorse. There is a lack of clarity, which is due to the absence of explicit attempts to link workaholism addiction research with any other addiction theories, and is apparent in the workaholism addiction literature (Robinson, 2001; Robinson and Kelley, 1998). It has yet to be established from the literature if conceptualising workaholism as an addiction is warranted. A large section of the addiction literature may not be applicable to the phenomenon of workaholism, as addiction theory typically involves ingestion of substances, illegal drugs and socially disapproved behaviours. Conversely, workaholics engage excessively in a behaviour that could be seen as being a responsible citizen (Killinger, 1991). It is also impossible to ‘abstain’ from work if an individual wants to remain functioning socially (Killinger, 1991). Indeed, the workaholism addiction literature is an area of much speculation and little research.

2.7.2 Behavioural Theory

In more recent years, a number of studies have proposed new conceptualisations of workaholism. Snir and Zohar (2000) have defined workaholism as a person’s significant
allocation of time to work related activities and thoughts, which is not due to economic need. Furthermore, McMillan et al., (2004) have described workaholism as being characterised by an unwillingness to disengage from work, which is evident in a person’s tendency to work or to think about work in any setting and at any time (McMillan et al., 2004). These additions to the literature position the invasion of work activity into non-work domains, as one of the core aspects of workaholism. This factor also links to studies on boundary theories (Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Zerubavel, 1991; Richter, 1990). Clark’s (2000) research differentiates between work and home domains and investigates the notion of boundaries between the two. Clark’s study, and its emphasis on time, also echoes Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997; 1990) theory of ‘flow’, which asserts that the experience of ‘flow’ occurs when individuals are in a state of deep focus due to engagement in a challenging, intrinsically rewarding task that demands intense concentration and commitment. Individuals experiencing ‘flow’ thereby lose track of time.

The viability of these new definitions is currently being explored (Snir and Harpaz, 2004). Snir and Harpaz (2004) found that economic need was determined by inquiring about an individual’s number of dependents. Lifestyle and financial situation were not examined. Another recent view in the literature emphasises the relationship between obsessive-compulsive personality disorder and workaholism. Naughton (1987) and Mudraek (2004) present workaholism as a behavioural tendency characterised by high job involvement and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.

2.7.3 The Socio-Cultural Context

An understanding of workaholism cannot be attained without reference to the socio-cultural landscape (Sussman, 2012). The term workaholism was coined towards the end of the 1960’s in the US (Oates, 1968). During the 1960’s, Hutchinson (1969) referred to the low importance of work in the life of the majority of Irish people. This contrasted sharply with the emphasis placed on sociability and recreation. For most of the twentieth century, Ireland was an agricultural, communal based society and a late moderniser (Tovey and Share, 2003). The Protestant work ethic which views work as intrinsically good has not traditionally been part of the Irish psyche, perhaps due to the dominance of the Catholic Church (Weber, 1958).
Weber (1958) had the view that Protestants were committed to an ethic of hard work and success in their working lives, but saw this as a way to honour God.

In recent years, this traditional way of life in Ireland seems to have changed dramatically, as the rapid cultural change in Irish society which accompanied the economic boom in the late 1990's may have been conducive to workaholism (Inglis, 1998). Secularisation is the way in which a supernatural, spiritual orientation to life gradually gives way to a rational, material and technological approach (Gibbons, 1996). Contemporary theorists, such as Kirby (2002), have found that values such as individualism, materialism and a failure to value caring are seen to be characteristic of life in the ‘Celtic tiger’ era. Lee (1999) also suggests that in modern Ireland, people exist solely as producers and consumers. These attributes are seen to be both social values and personal characteristics to be cultivated by the individual (Peillon, 2002). Research indicates that it is only since the onset of the ‘Celtic tiger’ period that workaholism may have emerged in Irish society. Indeed, Sprankle and Ebel (1987) view workaholism as propagated by society’s search for salvation through work and to the rise of individuation.

2.7.4 The Familial Context

The familial context has a significant influence over an individual’s work behaviour in adult life (Arnett, 2004). The family of origin and family of procreation have differing impacts on work patterns. The former influences career development in the opportunities that are provided for children, for example, paying college costs. As such, the family’s socio-economic status is highly influential in determining the child’s career choice and eventual occupational attainment (Conger and Galambos, 1997). Values, norms and expectations for achievement are also transferred and internalised via parent-child relations (Schaie and Willis, 1996). In particular, a person’s parenting style impacts strongly on work behaviours (Arnett, 2004). The authoritative mode of parenting, for example being highly demanding and highly responsive, is thought to produce the highest level of school success among students (Steinberg, 1996). The family of procreation context also significantly influences workplace behaviour. A large proportion of the workforce is involved in multiple roles, such as parent, employee and spouse (Arnett, 2004). There is an on-going debate about whether having such a large number of roles is beneficial or detrimental to an individual’s mental and
physical health (Matlin, 2004). It is generally accepted that experiences from the home and work environments ‘spill over’ and affect both contexts (Conger and Galambos, 1997). One manner in which family affects employees is through absenteeism. Family demands may interfere with work commitments, for example, if a child is ill or child-care arrangements cannot be organised (Shaie and Willis, 1996). It is evident, therefore, that both family of origin and procreation are key factors in shaping behaviour in the workplace.

Tsoi (2012) has suggested that in modern society, new technology and blurred boundaries between work and private life have resulted in more and more people becoming addicted to their work. A number of studies show that work addiction has been associated with insomnia, health problems, burnout and stress as well as creating conflict between work and family life (Tsoi, 2012). Workaholism can also be a factor when looking at an employee’s potential for career advancement. The effect of work-life balance on an individual’s potential for career advancement is explored further in the next section.

2.8 Work-life Balance and the Potential for Career Advancement

Another important facet of work–life and work–family research is career advancement. Kirchmeyer (2000) defined work–life balance as achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains. In order to achieve work-life balance, however, it was also pointed out by Kirchmeyer (2000, p.81) that:

*To do so requires that personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment be well distributed across domains.*

There has not been substantial research in this area so not much is known about whether or how work–life balance is related to career advancement, which is defined as promotions to jobs at higher levels in the management hierarchy or to jobs that have a larger scope of responsibilities (Hall, 2002). Prior research about career advancement has examined predictors in the work domain and individual differences, such as personality (Ng et al., 2005). In relation to the impact of work-life balance on career advancement, evidence suggests that work–life balance is an increasingly important value, particularly among younger workers (Shellenbarger, 1999). On the other hand, new communication technologies enabling constant contact with employees and the need for businesses to cut lead times in order to compete globally have led to increased time pressures and intrusion of work into
non-work time for managers (Milliken and Dunn-Jensen, 2005). Research has suggested that a supervisor's perceptions about a manager's involvement in non-work activities, such as family responsibilities, might affect promotion decisions (Judiesch and Lyness, 1999; Acker, 1990). Historically, men were traditionally expected to fulfill the breadwinner role and women the homemaker role, and deviations from these societal expectations can result in negative evaluations (Eagly, 1987; Nieva and Gutek, 1980). Non-work involvement, or work-life balance, has previously been perceived as more congruent with the female gender role than the male gender role, and these cultural values related to traditional gender roles can lead to different perceptions about career advancement potential for female and male managers (Lyness and Kropf, 2005; Poelmans, 2005; Spector et al., 2004).

Research has shown several various opinions on the relationship between work-life balance and career advancement. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p.76-88) have argued that the participation in one role, such as work, is more difficult for employees who participate in another role, such as family, resulting in work-family conflict, defined as:

*A form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures of the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect.*

This opinion is echoed by Goode (1960) and Rothbard (2001) in which the scarcity or depletion hypothesis is discussed. This theory which suggests that an individual has a limited amount of time, energy, and other resources such that involvement in one role results in fewer resources available for other roles, again leading to inter-role strain or conflict and diminished performance in those other roles (Rothbard, 2001; Goode, 1960). The scarcity perspective would predict that due to involvement with non-work roles, the "balanced" employee would have less time or other resources for work than would an employee who is more exclusively focused on work. Furthermore, research into gendered culture theory has found that organisations give promotions to employees who focus on task accomplishment and who do not let family or personal matters interfere (Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1977), suggesting that work-life balance might be negatively related to career advancement.

In the U.S. study conducted by Ernst and Young (2015), it showed that almost 50% of managers have to work more than 40 hours per week, and 39% say they have been asked to work longer hours in the past five years. The results of this study suggested that managers with children seem to be penalised, with 41% saying they have had their working hours
increased, in comparison to 37% of their managerial counterparts with no children (Ernst and Young, 2015) (See Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Who works the most hours?

Managers working over 40-hour workweek

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Working over 40-hour workweek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. About how many hours do you work a week? Please give us your best estimate.

Source: Ernst and Young (2015, p.7).

Further research evidence has shown that focusing on work was positively associated with perceptions about a manager’s potential to advance, as well as actual career advancement (Bray et al., 1974). A study of AT&T’s management progress conducted in the 1950s showed that the assessors’ ratings of male managers’ primacy of work (i.e., low work–life balance) were positively related to both assessments of the likelihood of promotion to middle management, and management levels attained eight years later (Bray et al., 1974). Similarly, in the AT&T management continuity study conducted between 1977 and 1982 with a more diverse sample including women as well as African American and Latino managers, there was also a strong positive relationship between work involvement factor scores and assessments of advancement potential (Howard and Bray, 1988). More recently, Ng et al.’s (2005) meta-analytic research with broader samples of employees showed that work centrality was positively related to promotions. In one of the few studies that examined the relationship between non-work involvement and career advancement for managers, Judiesch and Lyness’s (1999) research showed that managers who took leaves of absence for family or other reasons received fewer subsequent promotions than did managers who had not taken leaves.
There is also research that shows varying opinions on the effect of work-life balance on an individual’s career. According to the enrichment theory, involvement in multiple roles (implying work–life balance) can be beneficial by expanding an individual’s attention and energy such that benefits of multiple roles outweigh the stress or other costs associated with multiple roles (Rothbard, 2001; Sieber, 1974). Furthermore, Barnett and Hyde’s (2001) expansionist theory suggests that multiple roles are advantageous because performance in each role is enhanced by involvement in other roles. Various theories have been suggested to explain why multiple roles might lead to enhanced role performance, such as cross-role transfer of energy, positive experiences, or resources like social contacts (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Sieber, 1974). Research suggests that more competent managers are better at handling demands of multiple roles, including both work and non-work activities, and thus are perceived as both more balanced and more likely to advance (Wayne et al., 2004). A U.S. study found that the personality trait of conscientiousness was negatively related to both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, and was positively related to family-to-work facilitation (Wayne et al., 2004). Conscientiousness includes attributes such as being well-planned, efficiency, organisation, responsibility, and achievement orientation (Judge et al., 1999; McCrae and John, 1992; Barrick and Mount, 1991), and it is positively related to job performance (Hurtz and Donovan, 2000; Barrick and Mount, 1991).

Consistent with expansionist theory, Ruderman et al.’s (2002) study of U.S. managerial women found positive relationships between commitment to multiple roles (work-life balance) and composite performance ratings by supervisors, peers, and subordinates. Similarly, Graves et al. (2007) found that parental role commitment was positively related to composite performance ratings for a sample of U.S. managers, and marital role commitment was indirectly related to performance ratings through self-reported family-to-work enhancement. It is also possible, however, that perceptions of work–life balance are not related to career advancement potential. Research conducted in eight U.S. organisations found that supervisors’ ratings of their managerial subordinates’ “balance between personal life and work” were not related to the supervisors’ promotion ratings, or to actual promotions 24–30 months later (McCauley and Lombardo, 1990; McCauley et al., 1989).

Gender has also been identified as a persistent challenge for female managers that can impede their career advancement, when combining work and non-work, particularly family,
responsibilities (Lyness and Terrazas, 2006). Heilman’s (2001, 1983) lack of fit theory, perceives an incongruence between stereotypic attributes of women, such as nurturance, and stereotypic masculine attributes, such as forcefulness and achievement orientation, believed to be required for success in management positions, particularly at senior organisational levels. Similarly, Eagly and Karau’s (2002) role congruity theory argues that prejudice against women in leadership roles is rooted in stereotypic perceptions of women that are inconsistent with male attributes believed to be required for success as a leader. Research has shown that parental status can affect women’s but not men’s likelihood of being judged as good candidates for promotion or advancement (Fuegen et al., 2004).

Gender role theory states that men are expected to assume the breadwinner role while women assume the homemaker role, and any deviations from these societal expectations can result in negative evaluations (Eagly, 1987; Nieva and Gutek, 1980). Lobel and St. Claire (1992) found that for employees with young children, merit increases reflected the traditional values of gender stereotypes, as family-oriented women received larger awards than family-oriented men, and career-oriented men received larger awards than career-oriented women. Research has also found that men who take parental leave or miss work due to family reasons are penalised with fewer reward recommendations or lower performance ratings than their male counterparts who don’t have family involvements, but women receive similar reward recommendations or ratings regardless of their family involvements (Butler and Skattebo, 2004; Allen and Russell, 1999). Judiesch and Lyness (1999), however, found that managers who had taken leaves of absence for family and other reasons were less likely to get promoted than were managers who had not taken leaves, but that promotion penalties did not differ for female or male managers who had taken such leave. The above research has shown that, over the years, the concept of work-life balance has slowly shifted into work-life integration. This change is further discussed in the following section.

2.9 The Shift to Work-life Integration / Work-life Fusion

Work-life integration refers to when professionals blend what they do both personally and professionally, and suggests that work and life are incorporated into one fulfilling purpose (Haeger and Lingham, 2011). Many professionals, especially “baby-boomers”, are not prepared for this major shift because it is happening so fast, which is due to the speed at
which technology is constantly improving, allowing such a shift to occur, and Generation Y, or “Millennials”, have already started to adapt to this reality (Anderson, 2016). This global trend of work-life integration is driven by the power of the internet, mobile technology, video conferencing and email communications, which allow people to work virtually anywhere with connectivity, and these developments in technology have led to more employees working remote than ever before (Anderson, 2016). Technology such as Skype, for example, social networking and Google Docs allow employees the freedom of being “always on”. Anderson’s (2016) article also suggests that it is also now expected, in many organisations, that work performance should be evaluated by outcomes and deliverables, rather than the number of hours clocked and physical presence in the office, as with the work-life integration philosophy, companies trust their employees to get their work done, regardless of how many hours they log in at the office or where they’re getting their work done.

Recent studies have also coined the term work-life fusion. In relation to the work-life management field of study, the disciplinary study of boundary management has its roots in the industrial revolution and the 19th century and assumes that two distinctly different domains exist for the experience and activity related to work and life management (Golden and Geisler, 2007). Contemporary studies, while still informed by boundary management, have become more closely focused in the work-life balance literature where individuals seek equilibrium in their management of work and life issues and organisations seek to understand activities and needs of employees in order to develop successful policies and programmes (Kossek and Lambert, 2005). Individuals continue to attempt to meet demands of both work and life on a daily basis, but boundaries are being blurred and there have been profound changes in the nature of work due to the development of sophisticated technology (Lewis et al, 2007). Haeger (2012) found that rather than redraw the boundaries between work and life, it is possible that clear boundary conditions have been subverted, and that work and life demands are managed through fusion. With inclusion of flexible work schedules, and the integration of technology into both work and personal life, Haeger (2012) found a movement from work-life balance and the search for an equilibrium state to a new paradigm with which people manage the demands of work and life. This new research is important for employers, as companies continue to be under pressure to aid workers in balancing work and life (Hughes and Bolton, 2002). If fusion is in fact occurring, employers will need to rethink policies and methods that support employees and related assistance with meeting demands of work and life simultaneously (Haeger, 2012).
A study by Haeger and Lingham (2011) indicated that management of work and life are becoming fused using technology as a means to concurrently manage this balancing act at work. It was found that this shift was particularly prevalent across the different generations, and that older generations are still becoming comfortable operating in the virtual world, but do see it as beneficial to managing work and life (Haeger, 2012). A cross-generational shift to work-life fusion was identified by Haeger and Lingham (2014, p.10), where they found:

A trend toward 'work-life fusion', which is salient and significant not only to the Millennials, but also to GenXers as they transition towards this shift.

Haeger (2012) found that Millennials have grown up as the “always on” generation, and so the virtual world is their norm for work and life management; they are already a fused cohort. Studies suggest that the younger the generation, the stronger the fusion, with Pew (2010) describing Millennials as a group with “technological exceptionalism” (Haeger, 2012). Haeger’s (2012) research also indicated that some older workers found supportive technologies being used to manage work and life issues at work were not an acceptable change in the workplace, crystalising the divergence of how Boomers and Millennials perceive the workplace, and how they manage their lives when at work. Spiglanin (2015) suggests that these studies show that Millennials in the workplace are, as a group, largely fused between work and life, but both GenXers and Boomers are adapting to this work style. It has been argued that the workplace of the future will be largely fused between work and life, and that this will have significant implications for learning and development departments charged with training employees, and the methods used (Spiglanin, 2015).

A recent study by Gemba Marketing (2016, online) showed that:

75% of Millennials want the ability to work flexibly and still be on track for promotion.

Flexibility, however, can be a double-edged sword, as while the bulk of employees say they work standard office hours, Millennials on the other hand are more likely to have "flexible hours", meaning they're expected to be on call whenever the company needs them (Ernst and Young, 2015) (See Figure 2.4).
hours”, meaning they’re expected to be on call whenever the company needs them (Ernst and Young, 2015) (See Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.4: Dual Career Dynamics.**

![Graph showing US spouse/partner work schedule, by generation](image)

Q. How would you describe your spouse/partner’s current work schedule?

Source: Ernst and Young (2015, p.17).

Working from home is a benefit that Millennials, and other workers, are now prioritising over factors such as higher salaries, because of their desire to integrate work and life. A recent study by Rapoza (2013) showed that 30 million Americans work from home at least once each week, a figure that will increase by approximately 63% in the next five years. There are approximately 3 million Americans who never go to an office, and 54% are happier working from home than in an office. This study also showed that 70% of employees work from alternative locations, not just home, on a regular basis (Rapoza, 2013). These statistics show that millions of people are working in a personal setting, and as such it is increasingly difficult to separate work and life. Therefore, both work and life are integrated, perhaps even without consent (Rapoza, 2013).
Research shows that employees are also now willing to give up their personal time in which to do work, while many have no choice. In a study conducted by Gyro and Forbes Insights (2012), it was found that 98% of executives check email during their off time and 63% check every one or two hours during their off time. Another study by TeamViewer and Harris Interactive (2013), found that 61% of employees are willing to work during vacation. While some employees such as managers and executives who have direct reports potentially have no choice, there are also those who do it because they feel like they have to. Then, there are also those employees who are simply passionate about their work and are excited about new emails coming in (Schawbel, 2014).

Schawbel (2014) further discusses some of the factors surrounding the work-life integration phenomenon, such as the boundaries between family and career becoming “blurred”. While work-life integration offers various advantages and flexibility to both the employer and the employee, there are also certain disadvantages to being “always on” which should be considered. A study conducted by the Association for Women in Science (AWIS) (2012), found that more than 50% of workers say that work conflicts with life responsibilities at least two or three times per week. The study also showed that approximately 40% of women have delayed having children for this reason (AWIS, 2012). Other research shows that there can be a fine line between work-life integration and “workaholism” (Wartzman, 2015). Researchers have shown that those individuals deemed to be “workaholics” have associated health issues such as sleep problems, weight gain, and high blood pressure (Weissmann, 2013). Studies have also found that those who work at least 49 hours a week were up to 13% more likely to engage in “risky alcohol use” (Kaplan, 2015). Indeed, psychotherapist Bryan Robinson (2014, p.101-118) has written that:

_Some workaholics... find themselves alone, unable to feel, and cut off from everyone they care about... Marriages crumble, and health problems hit crisis proportions._

While the term “work-life integration” suggests that an individual can bring together their personal and work responsibilities into one seamless whole, the above literature shows that there can be a point at which the notion of work-life integration tips into the all-consuming reality of overwork, and “workaholism” (Wartzman, 2015). In relation to the notion of employees being “overworked”, Wartzman (2015) also makes an argument, however, that it is a matter of perspective, and much of it comes down to how passionate an individual is
about their job. The term ‘passion’ is one that Wartzman (2015) uses to explore what makes people inclined to overwork. The company Deloitte has characterised the “dream employee” as someone who is filled with passion (Hagel et al., 2014). It is also noted by Hagel et al. (2014) that those who fit this profile work approximately 5 hours more per week and are 18% more likely than their non-passionate peers to offer ‘around-the-clock availability’ to their employers. Brower (2014) draws a distinction between work-life integration and “workaholism”, by collecting stories of people who appear to have mastered work-life integration. Brower (2014), however, also investigates why people may overwork, by asking questions such as:

Are you working hard because you love it, because you’re drawn to something? ...

Or are you running away from something, such as a troubled relationship at home?

Brower (2014) notes that it is “crucial to remember that we’re all different”, referring to the varied priorities of different demographic, social and cultural groups. One of the important facets of work-life integration is that each individual is free to make their own choice, with managers who respect and support their decisions (Brower, 2014). Friedman (2015) has a similar view to Brower (2014), but notes that in order to make the right choice, the employee must be honest with themselves and have a “true understanding” of what their values and interests are. This is not always easy in environments where money and status is celebrated above all else. In order to successfully integrate work and life, it is vital that the individual has this self-understanding to arrange their life accordingly; otherwise there will be a breakdown in their ability to manage the balance (Friedman, 2015). Friedman and Lobel (2003, p.87-98) also acknowledge that:

It might seem counterintuitive that you will perform better at work if you spend more time with your kids, leave work early... or take an hour out of your workday to go to the gym... But that’s just what happens... Meanwhile, some derive genuine pleasure and fulfilment from their work, and these people should focus on that.

Friedman and Lobel (2003) labelled this type of person “the happy workaholic”. It is prudent to note that the above research is not without its limitations, and a study examining the extent
of the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration, and the effects of that shift, is particularly timely and relevant.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter defined work-life balance, and investigated the background of the concept of work-life balance. The research also showed the effect of work-life balance on different factors, such as workaholism and the potential for career advancement, and how this can differ between genders and demographics. The shift from work-life balance to work-life integration was investigated, showing that while this change has advantages for many groups, there are also several negative consequences for employees. With the increasing pressure on organisations to be as supportive of new work-life arrangements as possible, a study examining the extent of the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration, and the effects of that shift, is particularly timely and relevant. The next chapter will focus on the methodology used for this study.
Chapter 3:
Methodology
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used while carrying out the primary research for this dissertation. For this study, the methodology chapter explains the link between theory and research, and other influences which affect the choice of research method and design. A quantitative research methodology was selected, utilising a questionnaire for collection of data. The questionnaire was used to target employees across various demographics and industries.

3.2 Research Question, Aims and Objectives

A research question is the fundamental core of a research project, study, or review of literature. It focuses the study, determines the methodology, and guides all stages of inquiry, analysis, and reporting (Biddix, 2017). The ultimate aim of any research is to generate measurable and testable data, gradually adding to the accumulation of human knowledge (Shuttleworth, 2008). The aims of a study are what the researcher hopes to achieve at the end of the project, statements of intent written in broad terms. Once aims have been established, the next task is to formulate the objectives. Objectives are the steps a researcher takes to answer the research question, and use specific statements which define measurable outcomes. Objectives are subsidiary to aims, emphasising how they are to be accomplished, and must be highly focused and feasible (Thomas and Hodges, 2010). The research question that guides the study is:

'Has there been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration?'

Furthermore, this research question posits two further sub-questions: 'to what extent has there been a shift?' and 'what effect has this change had on employees?'

A research aim is a statement indicating the general aim or purpose of a research project and the research project will usually have one broad aim (Thomas and Hodges, 2010). As such, the primary aim of this research is to explore the extent of the shift from work-life balance to
work-life integration. This research also investigates the effects of the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration. The primary research of this study explores a number of different areas. The study focuses on a cross section of different demographics, genders, occupations and personal circumstances. In this study, the researcher investigates if there has been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration, and if so, how this change has affected the employees studied. It is arguable, based on existing literature on work-life balance and work-life integration that differences between the varying groups may lead to varied results. The literature also poses the question of what effect the change to work-life integration is having on employees, their personal lives, and also their physical and mental health. Primary research, therefore, explores the differences in results, the concerns arising from the change, and also addresses issues such as the availability of, and the access to, shifting from work-life balance to work-life integration. The results of this study will provide an insightful view into the changing needs and wants of both Irish employees and organisations in a current context, and will be a useful tool for any Human Resources department when considering what is important for their changing workforce. Research objectives are a group of specific statements indicating the key issues to be focused on in a research project. A research project will have several specific research objectives (Thomas and Hodges, 2010). The objectives of this study are to:

- Establish if there has been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration.
- Establish the extent of the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration.
- Establish the effect that the change from work-life balance to work-life integration has had on employees.
- Review the impact of managerial support on the progression to work-life integration.
- Confirm whether varying demographics influence any of the areas.

The underlying research philosophy of this dissertation will be explored in the next section.

### 3.3 Research Philosophy

The underlying research philosophy is a key influence in the choice of research method (Saunders et al., 2012). There are two principal ways of thinking about research philosophies; ontology and epistemology (Blumberg et al., 2008). Ontology studies the nature of reality,
whereas epistemology studies the nature of knowledge and what is considered acceptable knowledge. The two most common research philosophies stem from an epistemological position; positivism and interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2012). Positivists take the stance of the natural scientist, preferring to collect data about an observable reality, and search for causal relationships that serve to create law-like generalisations. It is often suggested that a highly structured methodology is appropriate within the positivist philosophy, and as such, the emphasis is on quantitative data and statistical analysis (Gill and Johnson, 2010). Positivism is therefore generally associated and the deductive approach (Pereira Heath and Tynan, 2010). Quantitative research collects data in a standardised manner, and seeks to examine relationships between variables. Controls are often used to ensure the validity of data.

Interpretivists believe that the social world of business and management is too complex to be reduced to law-like generalisations, and emphasise the difference between conducting research among people rather than objects. People are ‘social actors’, interpreting their role and those of others based on their own meanings. This philosophy suggests that researchers have to be empathetic, seeing the problem from the research subject’s view. The interpretivist philosophy is therefore associated with qualitative research, as researchers need to draw conclusions from the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed in the research. Qualitative research is often associated with the inductive approach. It uses a range of data collection techniques and analysis procedures. The data collection is not standardised, and the research is more interactive and naturalistic (Saunders et al., 2012). The choice of research approach for this study is based on the works identified through the literature review. The vast majority of the studies use a quantitative approach, which as mentioned, is based on a positivist research philosophy, and is appropriate for survey research (Darcy et al, 2012, Scholarios and Marks, 2004, Haar et al, 2003, Finegold et al, 2002).

This study was approached with an objectivist epistemology that incorporated a post-positivist theoretical perspective. Data collected was analysed using survey research methodology. Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge (Crotty, 1998). According to Crotty (1998, p.8):

*Objectivism holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such, apart from the operation of any consciousness.*
In an objectivist worldview, subjectivity plays no role in research. In this study, parameter estimates and measurements were analysed based solely on the data collected. The subjectivity of the researcher has no influence upon data analysis. The theoretical perspective of post-positivists is described by Crotty (1998, p.8) as:

*A way of looking at the world and making sense of it...that is, how we know what we know.*

The theoretical perspective of this study is supported by published research related to work-life balance and work-life integration. Creswell (2009, p.7) suggested that:

*Problems studied by post-positivists reflect the need to identify and assess the causes that influence outcomes.*

This research was carried out through a cross-sectional study, using participants from various demographics, genders, occupations and personal circumstances, and will be further discussed in the following section.

### 3.4 Data Collection: Primary Research

There are two principal categories of research methods; quantitative and qualitative, and the choice between each method is often determined by the research strategy. Quantitative research is associated with experimental and survey research, whereas qualitative research is associated with a variety of strategies, including action and case study research. The underlying research philosophy is also a key influence in the choice of research method (Saunders *et al.*, 2012), as the research philosophy describes the assumptions the author has about the way they view the world. These assumptions influence the research strategy and the methods that the author uses (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

Quantitative research collects data in a standardised manner, and seeks to examine relationships between variables. Controls are often used to ensure the validity of data. Quantitative research is the study of numbers, and objective "hard" data, where the data
collection and measurement must be objective, quantitative and statistically valid (O’Donovan, 2016). Quantitative methods use numbers and hard statistics as its basis for making generalisations about a phenomenon. These numbers originate from objective scales of measurement of the units of analysis called variables (Regoniel, 2015). The data that will serve as the basis for explaining a phenomenon, therefore, can be gathered through surveys or questionnaires. Such methods of research use instruments that require numerical inputs or direct measurements of parameters that characterise the subject of investigation, and these numbers will then be analysed using appropriate statistical analysis to unravel significant relationships or differences between variables. The output serves as the basis for making the conclusions and generalisations of the study (Regoniel, 2015). Typically, quantitative research options are predetermined and a large number of respondents are usually involved. The sample size for a survey is calculated via formulas to determine how large a sample size will be needed to achieve findings with an acceptable degree of accuracy (O’Donovan, 2016). Quantitative research generates reliable population based, generalisable data, and is useful for establishing cause-and-effect relationships.

Qualitative research is often associated with the inductive approach. It uses a range of data collection techniques and analysis procedures. The data collection is not standardised, and the research is more interactive and naturalistic (Saunders et al., 2012). Qualitative research refers to collecting, analysing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. This method of research is concerned with the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of ideas and thoughts, and is more subjective than quantitative research (O’Donovan, 2016). Qualitative research utilises a variety of different methods of collecting information, for example, in-depth interviews and focus groups. The nature of this type of research is exploratory and open-ended. Unlike the quantitative method, in conducting qualitative research, small samples are engaged, and participants are asked to respond to general questions while the interviewer or moderator probes and explores responses. Cameron (1963, p.13) suggested that:

_Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted._
O’Donovan (2016) further proposes that the quality of findings from qualitative research is directly dependent upon the skills, experience and sensitivity of the interviewer or moderator. This type of research is often less costly than the quantitative method, and is considered appropriate for generating rich, detailed and valid data that contribute to in-depth understanding of the context. It can, however, be more time-consuming.

These two philosophies, however, are not mutually exclusive, and can also be combined for a mixed-methods study. Using multiple research approaches is also referred to as mixed method, multi-method, triangulation or pluralistic research. Mixed methods research is the type of research in which the researcher combines elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, for example, the use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis and inference techniques for the purpose of expanding the breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration of the study (Johnson et al., 2007). The field of mixed methods has only been widely accepted for the last decade, though researchers have long been using multiple methods, just not calling them “mixed.” Mixed methods research takes advantage of using multiple ways to explore a research problem. The mixed methods approach is also used in order to overcome the limitations of a single design. Mixed methods research has been described as the natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Some of the advantages of such include the ability to better inform research by using one method to add or support the other, increased validity and complementary expansion of findings. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) further propose that a key feature of mixed methods research is its methodological pluralism or eclecticism, which frequently results in superior research.

Based on the findings of the literature review, and also the philosophy underlying this study, the choice of research strategy for this dissertation was the quantitative method. Quantitative research conducted in this study was based on assessing relationships between variables which were numerically measured and analysed. Gill and Johnson (2010) argue that positivism researchers often use highly structured methodology to ensure replication. In order to enable generalisability, researchers can use probability sampling techniques which represent the population. Probability sampling in this study was impossible however, due to a lack of access to the whole population of employees in all sectors. Saunders et al. (2012) argue that probability sampling is often not possible within business research as it requires a sampling frame, or may not be appropriate to answer a research question. Therefore different
techniques of selecting samples, such as non-probability sampling, should be used. For the purpose of this research, a questionnaire was used, which will be discussed further in the following sections.

3.4.1 Data Collection: Secondary Research

Secondary data is research of literature that has already been published in books, newspapers, magazines, journals and online portals. There is an abundance of data available through these sources, and the application of appropriate criteria to select secondary data was used in this study, and plays an important role in terms of increasing the levels of research validity and reliability of the study. These criteria followed for the collection of secondary data in this study includes, date of publication, credential of the author, reliability of the source, quality of discussions, depth of analyses and the extent of contribution of the text to the development of the research area. The advantage of this data collection method is that it is less time-consuming and less expensive than extracting data from primary resources. The secondary data is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

3.5 Questionnaires

Surveys have been defined by Groves et al. (2004, p.6) as:

\[
A \text{ systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purposes of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members.}
\]

A questionnaire is a term used to describe all methods of collecting data, where each individual is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order (deVaus, 2002). Penwarden (2014) explores the difference between a survey and a questionnaire, suggesting that while these terms are often used interchangeably, surveys and questionnaires are both separate research tools. According to Penwarden (2014), a survey is a measure of opinions or experiences of a group of people in the form of asking questions. A questionnaire, on the other hand, is defined as a set of printed or written questions with a choice of answers, devised for the purpose of a survey or statistical study. Penwarden (2014)
concludes that when conducting a survey, the list of questions used is called a questionnaire. Using the above definition, the term questionnaire will be adopted for this dissertation.

A questionnaire was used to provide quantitative data in this research. Cameron and Price (2009) explain that this form of research is a cost-effective means of gathering large amounts of data. Questionnaires provide for quantitative analysis by using statistical information. A full record of the questions used for this study can be found in Appendix 1. There were a number of context specific needs that also influenced the choice of a web-based questionnaire:

- Given the geographically dispersed nature of the audience, the use of a web-based questionnaire allows each respondent to answer the questions posed in manner convenient to them (Albarren et al., 2007).
- Studies have shown that the used of web-based surveys allows access to populations who may otherwise not be accessible (Jones, 2014; Streiner and Norman, 2003).
- On the basis that respondents would be completing the questionnaire during working hours, this method reduced the level of effort required by the participants.
- Survey instruments are useful when seeking to gather a large quantity of data in a relatively short period of time (Biggs, 2010).

The limitations of this form of research, however, exist in the low response rates and the consequential lack of data that is obtained (Cameron and Price, 2009). Furthermore, Cameron and Price (2009) identify the time-consuming process of analysing open answers.

This research was undertaken using a quantitative approach, in the form of a web-based questionnaire. As previously mentioned, the research was carried out through a cross-sectional study, using participants from various demographics, genders, occupations and personal circumstances. The reasoning behind the choice of research approach for this study is based on the works identified through the literature review. Previous studies in this field have used surveys, specifically self-completion questionnaires. Questionnaires are appropriate for descriptive and explanatory research. As this study is descriptive in nature, the researcher used a web-based distribution method, which is more appropriate for the chosen participants than the common paper-based format. The benefits of using a self-completion questionnaire are that it allows the participant to remain anonymous, and also
participants can complete the questionnaire at a time convenient to them. These factors also contribute to a high participation rate.

In this study, an objective was set to obtain at least 80 responses to the web-based questionnaire. In a bid to encourage full and frank responses without fear of reprisal, the participants were not asked to provide their name, and were advised that all answers were to be collected in a fully anonymous manner, and also in compliance with Data Protection regulations. The questionnaire was distributed within the researcher's professional and personal network, to employees of varying organisations and sectors. A follow up procedure was implemented to increase the response rate (Saunders et al., 2012). Those who received the questionnaire were sent a reminder email after 7 days and then again after 14 days.

The main research tool used for this dissertation was an external Web Survey Tool, specifically 'SurveyMonkey'. This is a dedicated online survey tool which is used to deliver surveys globally. This research tool has been used extensively and provides a user-friendly interface, as well as having the ability to export data to Microsoft Excel, and use Pivot tables for data analysis. The primary objective for using this research tool was to gather the information needed for this study in a recorded, structured way, and that also provided for the further interpretation of the data collected.

Similar to other research methods, questionnaires contain some strengths and weaknesses which should be taken into consideration when analysing data. Saunders et al. (2012) argue that questionnaires are the most popular method of data collection in quantitative research, and are the most widely used within the survey strategy, as they enable a collection of responses from a large sample in an efficient way, at a relatively low cost. As previously mentioned, the questionnaire in this research was a web-based one, and questions were answered without the presence of the researcher. This form of questionnaires allowed anonymity, which according to Rubin and Babbie (2010) encourages honest and genuine responses. The main weaknesses of a questionnaire, however, are the difficulty and time needed for its creation, along with ensuring its validity and reliability (Saunders et al., 2012). Bell (2010) believes that producing a good questionnaire is a difficult process, as researchers need to collect accurate data that answers research questions and enables them to achieve objectives. Also, high validity and reliability are necessary to minimise research error. The questionnaire used for this study was carefully designed by the researcher, ensuring that the
validity and reliability was tested. Saunders et al. (2012) argue that in order to be able to assess the validity and reliability of a questionnaire, and to ensure that the collected data answers the research question; a pilot testing should be conducted. As suggested by Saunders et al. (2012) a pilot study was conducted by the researcher before the main study commenced. This will be further discussed in the next section.

3.6 Sampling and Gaining Access

The main purpose of sampling is to choose a subset of individuals from a population in order to estimate characteristics of the whole population (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Fisher, 2007). When choosing a quantitative research method such as questionnaires, using a sampling generates findings that are representative of the whole population (Saunders et al., 2012). In non-probability sampling techniques, generalisation is made about theory not about the population, therefore a sample size will depend on the study objectives and research questions (Saunders et al., 2012). Different methods of non-probability sampling can be used, including quota sampling, snowball sampling, purposive or convenience sampling (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Fisher, 2007). A convenient sampling method was used for this research, which means that individuals who were easiest to include in the research were selected (Saunders et al., 2012; Fisher, 2007). In this case individuals including friends, work-colleagues, co-students, and other people that were known to the researcher or easy to approach by the researcher were selected and invited to participate in the study.

Blumberg et al. (2008) and Bryman and Bell (2007) argue that even though convenience sampling is the easiest and the cheapest to conduct and can provide interesting data, it is the least reliable design due to a lack of ability to ensure precision, and due to limitations in relation to generalisability. Convenience sampling, however, can still be a useful technique as it is used to test ideas about a subject of interest (Blumberg et al., 2008). It should be noted that findings from this study are relevant to the sample population, and may not be relevant to the total population of employees in all sectors. Roberts (2007) suggests that sampling is the process for selecting a number of individuals for a study to ensure that they are representative of the larger group, also referred to as the population. It is the population that is of interest to the researcher, and the process for selection should be sufficiently robust to allow for generalisations.
A pilot study was conducted prior to distributing the questionnaire to the full research sample. The aim of the pilot study was to refine the questionnaire in order to avoid problems in answering the questions by partakers in the main study, and to avoid problems in recording data (Saunders et al., 2012). The pilot study for this research was conducted amongst a small number of the researcher's immediate network (5 individuals) in order to establish the partakers' understanding of the 40 questions, any problems in answering, clarity of the instructions, attractiveness of the layout, and time needed to complete the questionnaire (Fink, 2009). Individuals taking part in the pilot study were asked to share their impressions of the questionnaire content and design, and also to provide their recommendations. This information was important in deciding on whether any amendments to the questionnaire were necessary. All the suggestions were considered, and as a result minor amendments to headings and layout of the survey were implemented.

There are a variety of different distribution methods, and means of gaining access to study participants, each with different strengths, weaknesses and costs involved. These can include distribution by post, by phone, online, face-to-face, and individual or group distribution (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Fisher, 2007). In this study, the selected participants were introduced to the web-based questionnaire via email and social network messaging. The rationale behind the study and the questionnaire was explained in the message sent to each individual. Following completion of the pilot study, the questionnaire was distributed on April 12th 2017, amongst family, friends, work colleagues, and co-students in the researcher's immediate network. While a total of 120 questionnaires were distributed directly by the researcher, several of the participants that were contacted then forwarded the questionnaire to other colleagues in their own network. This gave the study further reach and access to participants not directly available to the researcher. A follow up procedure was implemented to increase the response rate (Saunders et al., 2012), and the questionnaire closed on April 30th 2017. A total of 103 completed questionnaires were collected. The overall resulting response rate was 85%.
3.6.1 Participants

In relation to the scope of the sampling, participants who were employed full-time and part-time were selected amongst different organisations operating in all sectors in Ireland. Those partaking were not limited to female employees with children only, as often occurs in work-life balance studies (Casper et al., 2007). Rather, the participants included male and female, married, in relationships and single employees, with and without children. The rationale behind this selection was the argument of Grzywacz and Marks (2000) that single and childless employees also have significant commitments towards their families, along with other personal commitments. A survey of 103 participants, performed anonymously of employees across varying industries, was used to understand how people work flexibly, whether they have a work-life balance, and the impact of this on both their work and personal lives. A full breakdown of the results can be found in Chapter 4. The sample of 103 total participants was compromised of 67 female (65%) and 36 male (35%) participants. A comprehensive breakdown of the total sample is provided below:

Figure 3.1: Sample Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>18 - 24</th>
<th>25 - 34</th>
<th>35 - 44</th>
<th>45 - 54</th>
<th>54 +</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Respondents</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Leaving Certificate</th>
<th>Diploma</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Master's Degree</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Respondents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Domestic Partner</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Separated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Respondents</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Respondents</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

Out of the 103 participants, only 13 respondents were parents. The breakdown of the number of children can be seen in the table above. Figure 3.2 below shows the breakdown of sectors in which the sample works. A broad range of participants were selected to give diverse results.
The aim of the sampling was to ensure that there was a representative spread of the key demographics, including:

- Men and women
- Parents / carers and non-parents / carers
- Older and younger employees

Roberts (2007) posits that sampling is the process for selecting a number of individuals for a study to ensure that they are representative of the larger group also referred to as the population. It is the population that is of interest to the researcher, and the process for selection should be sufficiently robust to allow for generalisations.
3.7 Validity, Reliability and Ethics

In order to make this research valuable, the processes used provide for internal validity and external validity. Internal validity is the extent to which the ideas about cause and effect are supported by the study. External validity is the extent to which the finding can be generalised to other settings. As this study was approached with an objectivist epistemology that incorporated a post-positivist theoretical perspective, the use of a quantitative method of research is a valid choice, as the data was collected in relation to an observable reality, searching for causal relationships that serve to create generalisations. While the researcher had considered using a mixed-method of research to provide extensive and in depth results, the choice to use only a quantitative approach was appropriate within the positivist philosophy, as the emphasis is on quantitative data and statistical analysis. In this study, the findings were analysed based solely on the data collected, and the subjectivity of the researcher had no influence upon data analysis.

Validity and reliability are major concerns in any research. When comparing validity from quantitative to qualitative methods, researchers who follow the qualitative framework reject the use of validity (Huberman and Miles, 2002). For a qualitative researcher, one strategy to gather unbiased results is to not overestimate or underestimate (Yin, 2009). Quantitative researchers tend to have concerns with internal validity in their research, where qualitative researchers focus on the credibility of their participants (Huberman and Miles, 2002). The credibility of participants is crucial in order to have a successful study with valid results (Kirk and Miller, 1986). As with qualitative research, those who use the quantitative approach face challenges with bias in the data. For both methods, bias can affect the validity and reliability of the findings and distort the truth (Kirk and Miller, 1986). A concern for quantitative researchers is to find bias and eliminate it, while qualitative researchers acknowledge it and understand that it will happen (Huberman and Miles, 2002). While some research bias is inevitable, a researcher must be able to show understanding of the dilemma while having tried everything possible to reduce the impact. Reliability is concerned with estimates of the degree to which a measurement is free of random influences and the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the instrument was a web-based questionnaire, which had been tested through a pilot study. The questionnaire was tested in order to avoid problems in answering the questions by partakers in the main study, and to avoid problems in recording data (Saunders et al., 2012).
Oliver (2010) posits that it is important to consider ethics early in the project. The basis for the research could depend on the ethical decisions made. As researchers spend long hours gathering and analysing data, following ethical values is crucial for the success of the study. Adhering to ethical standards in research is important for several reasons, for example, some of the ethical norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error, while other of the ethical norms help to ensure the research can be held accountable to the public (Creswell, 2009). Ethics is more than distinguishing between right and wrong, and is more about norms for conduct that help to define what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (Creswell, 2009). Some of the important ethical considerations applied in this study were confidentiality and consent. Prior to securing the participants’ consent, they were advised of the purpose of the study. All potential respondents are entitled to know what a researcher is doing, including the purpose and aims of the study, before participating (Orb et al., 2000). This strategy facilitates the understanding of the important details under evaluation, as well as the vital positions they hold for the research to be successful.

Ensuring confidentiality is an important component in research, in addition to the ethical concern of privacy and anonymity of respondents. According to Orb et al. (2000), researchers must keep the identity of the respondents and their responses anonymous and confidential. Every researcher has the duty to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality to respondents. If a researcher fails to provide anonymity and build trust among respondents, low response rates and biased answers can be a result. Data collected in the study will be stored on the researcher’s personal laptop for a period of two years following completion of the research. This time frame will enable the researcher to address future queries that might arise with respect to the completed research. Computer files will be then be deleted from the researcher’s personal laptop after a period of two years. The researcher will use the protection protocols of Microsoft Office Excel 2007 to further restrict access to participant contact information while such data is on the personal laptop. For the purpose of this study, it was decided that anonymous web-based questionnaires would be conducted in order to engage participants in a free divulgence of, what could be perceived to be, private data. All data was collected and retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1988). All participants were advised that their participation was voluntary, and confidential. Participants were also assured that the questionnaire is completely anonymous and does not include questions asking for any personal details, such as names of participants or names of employers. One
question included in the questionnaire asked the employees to state only what sector they worked in. Names of the organisations that the researcher approached may only be revealed, if necessary, to examiners during the presentation of the thesis; other than this, information will not be revealed to anyone else, it will not be available to the public and will not be stated in this paper. All participants were also advised that they will be provided with a copy of the collected results on request.

3.8 Measurement of Data and Data Analysis

There are four measurement scales, or types of data measurement: nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio. These are simply ways to categorise different types of variables. Nominal scales are used for labelling variables and values, while ordinal scales provide good information about the order of choices, where the order of the values is what is important and significant (Market Research Methods, 2013). For this study, nominal measurement of the data will be used when analysing the questionnaire data. While this type of measurement is one of the more basic processes, it allows the data to be broken down into categories, and also provides for the exclusion or inclusion of data as required, such as gender distinctions, demographic or working sector differences (Walliman, 2011). The nominal scale categorises people, places, events and perceptions based on a common trait (Garger, 2014). This data measurement approach is appropriate for this study as it looks to make logical correlations between gender, demographic, working sector, and the subsequent links to the impact of work-life balance and work-life integration.

In analysing the data collected, a multivariate analysis of the data was undertaken. Multivariate analysis comprises a set of techniques dedicated to the analysis of data sets with more than one variable (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003), exploring the relationship between two or more variables (Walliman, 2011). Essentially, this form of analysis models reality where each situation or decision involves more than a single variable. The information age has resulted in masses of data in every field. Despite the quantum of data available, the ability to obtain a clear picture of what is going on and make intelligent decisions is a challenge. When available information is stored in database tables containing rows and columns, a multivariate analysis can be utilised to process the information in a meaningful fashion. For this research, the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration was assessed, and regression
techniques were used. Regression analysis is a practice used to identify and sort the variables that have an impact, and those that do not (Gallo, 2015).

The process of coding and analysing data is a critical part of the dissertation process (Foss and Waters, 2003). Gibbs (2007) proposes that coding is how the data being analysed is defined. This process typically involves the linking of data in a thematic manner. Ezzy (2002) proposes that coding can be described as the process of disassembling and reassembling data. For this study, a thematic approach was used and the questions and answers were tabulated to allow for side by side analysis of the data. In order to develop key findings and themes, all responses collected were categorised by thematic element. Where questions related to flexible working, for example, these were further sub-divided into the availability, take-up and perception of flexible working options. This process ensured that as the data was analysed, appropriate reference was given to the pertinent information. While the majority of questions posed set out the key themes in a structured order, the answers from certain questions linked more appropriately to earlier sections. The cross tabulation of the data collected provided a means of extracting common themes and developing the research argument.

In this study, the original themes evolved in response to the data collected from the questionnaires, and the method of constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used to seek meaning and results from the data. Furthermore, the ‘flip-flop’ technique whereby extremes on any dimension can be explored was used in order to develop interdependencies within the data, such as the association of gender, age and family in relation to the need for flexibility and a work-life balance.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the link between the literature and the findings. Detailing the philosophical and methodological approaches, the use of a post-positivists theoretical perspective, with an objectivist epistemology approach was explained. This chapter also discussed the reasons for using a questionnaire form of research, in addition to providing an understanding of the audience and the reason for their selection. The next chapter, Chapter 4, introduces the findings of the study, and also provides an in-depth analysis of these findings.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this research. The objective of this study was to explore whether there has been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration, and if so, what the effects of that shift are. The data collected from the questionnaires is presented in this chapter and analysed for meaning. A comparison is made between the findings and linked to the literature in Chapter 2, and the themes represented by the findings are also analysed. This chapter explores the breakdown of data in the different areas affecting work-life balance, and investigates how the various factors are perceived by employees. A full breakdown of the results can be found in Appendix 2.

4.2 Job Satisfaction, Employer Loyalty and Being Valued at Work

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were in their current job, and out of the total 103 participants, 19% of people were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their current job.

Table 4.1: Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

In relation to employer loyalty, however, only 9 participants were not very loyal, and 6 participants were loyal on occasion. This finding suggests that job satisfaction and employer loyalty are not mutually exclusive, and raises the suggestion that while many people may not be happy in their current job, they are still somewhat loyal to their employer.
Table 4.2: Employer Loyalty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Not very loyal</td>
<td>8.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Loyal on occasion</td>
<td>5.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Somewhat loyal</td>
<td>15.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - Fairly loyal</td>
<td>33.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - Very loyal</td>
<td>35.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

These findings somewhat contradict certain literature however, as Allen et al. (2000), for example, proposed that higher levels of employee satisfaction build employee loyalty. The results of this study, however, show that job satisfaction and employee loyalty are not necessarily always linked. It is also interesting to note that when asked if they felt valued at work, 22 participants (21%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This could suggest a link between job satisfaction and recognition and appreciation at work. This is supported by the literature as studies have shown that when people exert a more extreme effort in a bid to achieve recognition, this can lead to reduced levels of job satisfaction due to increased working time and loss of work-life balance (Veenhoven, 1991). These results can be seen in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

Table 4.3: Valued at Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>7.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>43.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>26.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>17.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

Furthermore, it can be seen in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 that a total of 83 participants (80%) were either very satisfied or satisfied with their current job, while 70 participants (68%) stated they were loyal to their employers, with a lesser figure of 52 respondents (50%) feeling
valued at work. These findings show that being content in a job does not necessarily lead to employer loyalty. The data also shows that while some people may be satisfied in their job, and be somewhat loyal to their employer, they may not always feel valued at work. This poses a question as to why employees stay in roles where they are not particularly loyal to the organisation, and where they do not feel valued. It is interesting to note that these factors are not the sole determinants of overall job satisfaction, and suggests that there are other elements that may be more important to employees.

Interestingly, the literature in this area has also found a link between job satisfaction and other issues, such as work-family conflict, in respect of the traditional workweek (five 8-hour days) versus a compressed workweek (four 10-hour days) (Facer and Wadsworth, 2008). This study found that of the total 103 participants, there were 50 respondents (49%) who currently avail of flexible working arrangements, as presented in Table 4.4. The literature review supports these findings, suggesting that while employees may not feel valued at work, or have loyalty towards their employer, they are currently satisfied in their job as they can avail of some form of flexible working arrangement, and perhaps have a greater work-life balance. As outlined in Chapter 2, flexible working was found to be one of the most important facets of maintaining a good work-life balance (Facer and Wadsworth, 2008).

Table 4.4: Do you avail of Flexible Working Arrangements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>54.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Flexitime</td>
<td>22.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Work from home</td>
<td>18.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Compressed hours</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Part time</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - School term only</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Job share</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Annualised hours</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Reduced hours</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Reduced Summer hours</td>
<td>5.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Early finish on Fridays</td>
<td>18.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>8.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)
It is also noteworthy, however, that when asked how happy they were with their current working hours, only 56 respondents (54%) stated they were satisfied (see Table 4.10 in the next section). As 86 participants stated they were satisfied with their current job, this shows that 30 people consider factors other than working hours when evaluating overall job satisfaction. These findings are contradictory to Facer and Wadsworth's (2008) research above, and raise the question of what is most important to employees when they evaluate the factors that contribute to their job satisfaction. The next section looks at how the use of vacation, hours worked and overtime affects work-life balance.

4.3 Annual Leave, Hours Worked and Overtime

In relation to annual leave, 81% of respondents to the questionnaire stated that their annual entitlement ranged between 20 and 29 days, with 80% of respondents also stating that they utilise their full annual leave entitlement each year. It is interesting to note, however, that 20% of the participants do not take their full annual leave entitlement, and 61% of participants are not compensated if they do not use their full annual leave entitlement, as shown in Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

Table 4.5: Annual Leave Utilisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

Table 4.6: Annual Leave Compensation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>61.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)
The data suggests that while some employees know they will not be compensated for annual leave not taken, they still do not utilise their full entitlement. This finding raises a question as to why this is occurring, whether it is as a result of workload, which can ultimately lead to burnout and stress. This supports the contention of TeamViewer and Harris Interactive (2013) that some employees are not only willing to work during vacation, but there are also those who have no choice but to give up their personal time to do work, such as managers and executives who have direct reports (Gyro and Forbes Insights, 2012). These findings also add to the current literature which proposes that work addiction has been associated with burnout and stress, as well as creating conflict between work and family life (Tsoi, 2012).

Another important consideration is the cost to companies of unused vacation. While the majority of respondents are not compensated for annual leave not taken, 39% of participants are compensated for unused vacation days. This can lead to both a monetary cost for the organisation when they have to pay out unutilised annual leave, as well as the non-monetary factors outlined above such as employee burnout, stress and workaholism. If employees do not take adequate rest periods, the company is at risk of increased turnover and absenteeism, and reduced productivity and employee morale and motivation due to the lack of work-life balance (Hein and Cassirer, 2010). These findings also suggest that there may be elements of presenteeism in the workplace. Presenteeism has been defined by Hummer et al. (2002) and Whitehouse (2005) as reduced productivity at work due to health problems, or other events that can distract a person from full productivity, for example, office politics. By not utilising their full annual leave entitlements, there are 20% of respondents who raise a question as to why they are not taking adequate rest periods, and also why they feel the need to stay in the workplace rather than take a vacation. As previously mentioned, this could be due to various factors, such as workaholism, presenteeism, or certain office politics whereby they feel the need to "overwork" to perhaps progress or advance in their career. This can be particularly true for female employees, as suggested in the Chapter 2 by Lyness and Terrazas (2006), gender has been identified as a persistent challenge for female managers that can impede their career advancement, when combining work and non-work, particularly family, responsibilities.

As seen in Table 4.7, when asked how many hours they were contracted to work per week, over 72% of respondents stated between 36 and 41 hours. When asked how many hours they
actually worked per week, however, over 53% of respondents stated that they worked more than 45 hours per week (see Table 4.8). Out of the total 103 participants, 22 of the respondents work weekly hours ranging from 46 to 80 hours. Under EU legislation, the maximum working week is 48 hours per week. The data collected from this study, therefore, suggests that 21% of the employees are in contravention of this legislation. This finding presents a risk that Irish employers are not adhering to the Organisation of Working Time Act (1997), which states that an employee cannot work on average more than 48 hours per week when averaged out over four months. This could raise a question over the applicability of a law that was written in the last century, as both the generational changes and technological advancements put many of the work practices observed in this study at risk of being categorised as illegal. This also raises the question as to whether the Organisation of Working Time Act (1997) has become an out-dated piece of legislation that employees and employers deem not fit for purpose.

Table 4.7: Weekly Contractual Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 hours or less</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 hours</td>
<td>6.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-32 hours</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-35 hours</td>
<td>4.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-38 hours</td>
<td>39.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-41 hours</td>
<td>32.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-45 hours</td>
<td>5.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50 hours</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 hours or more</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

It can also be seen from Table 4.7, that 2 respondents are in clear violation of legislation, being contracted to work 51 hours or more. This is an area of concern for any organisation as there are several negative consequences, such as legal action, employee burnout and loss of productivity. These results can also be linked to later findings, where out of the 90 respondents who were asked if after work they come home too tired to do some of the things they would like to do, 91% said that they did. This shows that not only is there an element of over-work and possible workaholism evident, as 71% of participants work overtime, but in
the case of the 2 respondents above who are contracted to work more than 40 hours per week, their employers are breaking the law. This is a potential area for further investigation.

Table 4.8: Weekly Hours Actually Worked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 hours or less</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 hours</td>
<td>5.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-32 hours</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-35 hours</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-38 hours</td>
<td>10.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-41 hours</td>
<td>21.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42-45 hours</td>
<td>31.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50 hours</td>
<td>12.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-55 hours</td>
<td>5.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-59 hours</td>
<td>1.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-65 hours</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-70 hours</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80 hours</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 hours or more</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

It is also interesting to note that 71% of participants work overtime, with 60% of this overtime being worked on a daily and weekly basis, however only 17% of this overtime is paid overtime. When asked how many hours per week they felt would provide a good work-life balance, 100% of respondents answered 45 hours or less. These findings suggest that at least 21% of respondents (identified above as working more than 46 hours per week) do not have a good work-life balance. This is also compounded by the data attained by the study, as when asked if they believed they have a good work-life balance, 22 participants (21%) disagreed (see Table 4.9). These findings are suggestive that the employees questioned in this study link working hours with work-life balance. This is particularly interesting as the data collected also suggests that employees crave more flexibility in their working routines, shifting to the idea of having work and life integrated rather than balanced. In this instance employees can often end up working more hours than the standard office hours, as they can
"log on" at home, while commuting or during out of office hours. This shows that perhaps individuals do not fully understand the concept of work-life balance, or perhaps this notion means something different to everyone.

Table 4.9: Do You Have a Good Work-Life Balance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>47.78%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>21.11%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

These findings are in agreement with the literature, which has found that there can be a point at which the notion of work-life integration tips into the all-consuming reality of overwork, and "workaholism" (Wartzman, 2015). As previously mentioned, when asked, employees say that they want to have a good work-life balance, and feel that increased flexibility in their work will offer them this "balance". In reality, however, the very concept of having more flexibility means that work and life are inevitably becoming more integrated with each other, and it is this integration that can lead to overwork and workaholism, if not managed correctly.

Table 4.10: Level of Satisfaction with Current Working Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would prefer to work fewer hours</td>
<td>36.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with current hours</td>
<td>57.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would be happy to work more</td>
<td>6.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

In relation to being happy with their current working hours, only just over half of the respondents agreed they were satisfied with their current working hours, as seen in Table 4.10 above. Out of the 42% of employees who are not satisfied with their current working hours, it is interesting to note that 36% would prefer to work fewer hours. This could be facilitated by
an organisation by the implementation of more flexible working arrangements, as previously
discussed, 55% of participants do not avail of flexible working options. The next section
explores the availability and take-up of flexible work arrangements.

4.4 Availability and Take-Up of Flexible Options

When asked if they currently have a flexible working arrangement at work, 55% of
respondents stated they did not. Out of the 50 participants that did currently avail of a flexible
working arrangement, these options consisted of:

- Flexitime (23%)
- Working from home (19%)
- Compressed working hours (2%)
- Part time working (2%)
- Reduced hours (2%)
- Reduced summer hours (5%)
- Early finish on Fridays (10%)

It is also interesting to note that when asked which flexible working arrangement would be
most suitable, the most popular options were early finish on Fridays (58 respondents),
flexitime (45 respondents) and working from home (25 respondents). A full breakdown of
choices can be seen in Table 4.11. In relation to implementing an early finish on Fridays for
staff, this is a relatively simple request that organisations could grant in order to meet their
employees’ needs. This act could generate a lot of goodwill among staff, and be marketed as
one of the company’s benefits to potential new recruits. In relation to time lost, the company
could offer this benefit on the basis that the time is made up at the employee’s discretion
during Monday to Thursday. There are very little costs associated with allowing this
arrangement, and it builds trust between the company and its people. Trust between the
organisation and its employees is one of the key areas identified in this study as being
paramount to the success of the implementation of flexible working practices which can
allow the employee a more integrated work-life, giving them the opportunity and freedom to
find a routine which best suits their individual needs.
Flexitime was the second highest choice, with a total of 45 respondents (46%) choosing this option as a suitable flexible working arrangement for them. Again, flexitime is generally quite easy to implement, however this can sometimes be dependent on the role in question. Many client or customer facing roles, for example, require the employee’s presence for the core business hours. Allowing flexitime also requires an element of trust on behalf of the organisation, especially if there are no “clock-in” machines, and employees are allowed manage their own time.

Lastly, 25 respondents (25%) chose working from home as a suitable flexible working option. While new technology and the use of portable devices has led to an increase in working from home requests, these options do not always lead to a better work-life balance. As suggested by Tsoi (2012), new technology has created blurred boundaries between work and private life, and has resulted in more and more people becoming addicted to their work. If organisations grant every work from home request, this could in fact lead to more hours being worked than if the employee was in the office, and in turn lead to employee burnout and stress. As discussed in the previous section, 36% of respondents said they would prefer fewer working hours. While employees say that they want more flexibility and the option to work remotely from home, this can, in reality, often lead to working more hours, overwork and workaholism. It is prudent to note that in relation to achieving a good work-life balance, there is no “one size fits all”, and organisations must tread carefully when allowing such practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexitime</td>
<td>46.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work from home</td>
<td>25.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compressed hours</td>
<td>14.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School term only</td>
<td>7.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job share</td>
<td>3.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annualised hours</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced hours</td>
<td>12.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced Summer hours</td>
<td>30.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early finish on Fridays</td>
<td>58.79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)
In relation to the availability of flexible working options, 47% of participants stated that flexible working practices are not available in their places of work. A further 82% of respondents confirmed that they would use flexible working arrangements if they were available in their places of work, as seen in Table 4.12. The literature in this area interestingly suggests that access to flexible working is dependent on both the individual and the job characteristics. Golden (2009) proposes that educated workers have more flexibility in scheduling than lesser educated workers. Sales representatives, for example, managers/executives, and workers involved in select specialty professions are more likely to have discretion in choosing when to start and end working time. Golden (2009) concluded that in these cases, flexible work arrangements are likely to be facilitated through informal structures instead of formal policy mechanisms. This research is congruent with the findings of this study, as over 50% of the sample works in the professional services industry, as shown in Table 4.13. These results raise a question of the equity around flexible working options, and again whether or not there is a “one size fits all” solution when it comes to work-life balance.

Table 4.12 Availability and Take-up of Flexible Working Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are flexible working practices available in your place of work?</td>
<td>53.41%</td>
<td>46.59%</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If available, would you take them up?</td>
<td>81.93%</td>
<td>18.07%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

It is also noteworthy that 31 respondents (30%) in this study believed that taking up flexible working options would affect their career prospects. This finding suggests that those employees who are seen to have a good work-life balance, or perhaps are seen to have a life outside of work, are less often promoted over those who are not. An issue such as this raises a question of what the criteria are to be eligible for promotion or career progression. This view is echoed in the literature of Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), Goode (1960) and Rothbard (2001), who argue that participation in one role, such as work, is more difficult for employees who participate in another role, such as family, resulting in work–family conflict. This is also compounded by Acker (1990) and Kanter (1977), who posit that organisations give
promotions to employees who focus on task accomplishment and who do not let family or personal matters interfere. This is an area of concern for organisations, however, as equity and fairness needs to be shown in order to build trust with employees. This is potential area for further investigation.

Table 4.13 Industry Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailer</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services</td>
<td>52.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>15.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>7.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>15.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

The results of this study show that 82% of total participants would take up flexible working arrangements, if they were available in their place of work. It is interesting to note, however, that 80% of respondents have not requested a flexible working arrangement. This poses the question as to why employees are not requesting flexible options, when they would avail of them if they could. This could perhaps be attributable to the earlier findings that show some employees believe that working flexibly would affect their career prospects. When asked whether they would refuse a promotion if it negatively affected their work-life balance, the sample was almost evenly split, with 48% of respondents stating they would, and 52% stating they would not, as shown in Table 4.14. Interestingly, when asked if they would consider moving place of employment, or changing career, to improve their work-life balance, an overwhelming 86% and 72% respectively stated they would. These findings support the literature in this area, as per a report issued by Ernst and Young (2015), based on a survey of 9,699 employed adults around the world, the majority of employees said that increased flexibility and work-life balance policies would mean they would be less likely to quit their job, be happier in the workplace, and recommend their company to other. This proved particularly true for Millennials and Gen-X workers (Ernst and Young, 2015).
### Table 4.13 The Importance of Work-Life Balance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would you be willing to reduce your take-home salary to work flexibly?</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you refuse a promotion if it negatively affected your work-life balance?</td>
<td>48.31%</td>
<td>51.69%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider moving place of employment to improve your work-life balance?</td>
<td>86.36%</td>
<td>13.64%</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you consider changing career to improve your work-life balance?</td>
<td>71.91%</td>
<td>28.09%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

These findings can be seen as somewhat contradictory, as while employees would not be willing to request a more flexible working arrangement as it may negatively impact on their career prospects with their current employer, they would be willing to change job and also career to avail of a better work-life balance. There is certainly scope for further investigation in this area. The employee’s perception of work-life balance is analysed in the next section.

### 4.5 How Employees View Work-Life Balance

Respondents were asked if they believed having more flexible options available improved morale in the workplace, and a significant 99% of total respondents agreed. This shows that almost everyone who was questioned in this study believes that allowing flexibility in the workplace can lead to a happier workforce. This is an important finding for employers as they need to be in a position to listen to their people, and work with them to ensure employee satisfaction, and ultimately, retention. Furthermore, a full 100% of participants agreed that allowing flexible working arrangements enhances work-life balance, as shown in Table 4.14. These findings show the value that employees in this study place on the ability to work flexibly, and the benefit this has on work-life balance. It is also notable that 93% of those surveyed believe that flexibility should be given to all employees equally, rather than parents and carers only. This is particularly interesting as the literature in this area suggests that flexible working is a female-friendly initiative (The Guardian, 2014; The Irish Times, 2014). Evans (2001) and Dowd (2014) also identified a trend of flexible working being geared towards women and parents, and further research in the area of flexible working, conducted
by Kent (2015), has shown that there is a common opinion that flexibility is more important to women than men and that this, combined with being a parent, is often the reason for a need for flexible working.

There was a perception that women needed more flexibility than men, or non-parents (Kent, 2015). While this perception was evident in the last number of years, only 11% of the sample in this study believes that flexibility should be given to parents and carers only, showing that perhaps this view is continually changing as the workforce demographic is also changing. These findings, however, may also be attributable to the fact that almost 90% of the total sample for this study fell into the 18-34 age category, and 87% were neither parents nor carers. Nonetheless, it is prudent to note that however flexible options are viewed among employees or managers, organisations need to be seen to be fair and equitable when granting these requests and allowing flexibility.

**Table 4.14 Employees’ View of Work-Life Balance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having more flexible working options improves workplace morale</td>
<td>98.89%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who work flexibly create more work for others</td>
<td>35.56%</td>
<td>64.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility should be given to parents and carers only</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>88.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility should be given to all employees equally</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing flexible working options enhances work-life balance</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance is more important than work-life integration</td>
<td>78.89%</td>
<td>21.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life integration is more important than work-life balance</td>
<td>14.44%</td>
<td>85.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work life is integrated well with my personal life</td>
<td>66.29%</td>
<td>33.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal life is integrated well with my worklife</td>
<td>62.92%</td>
<td>37.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is beneficial to be able to integrate my work life and my personal life</td>
<td>82.02%</td>
<td>17.98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

A substantial 79% of total respondents stated that work-life balance is more important to them than work-life integration; however 66% of participants stated that their work life and
personal life were integrated well together. Furthermore, 82% of those surveyed stated it is beneficial to be able to integrate their work life and personal life. These findings are somewhat incongruous as while 71 employees would prefer work-life balance over work-life integration, 73 respondents believe it is beneficial to integrate both. This poses the idea that while completely balancing work and life is favourable, sometimes it is not wholly possible and realistic, and that integrating both work and life is a suitable alternative option. As discussed in Chapter 2, Schawbel (2014) suggests that work-life integration can be viewed as when the boundaries between personal or family life and an individual’s career becomes “blurred”. While work-life integration offers various advantages and flexibility to both the employer and the employee, there are also certain disadvantages to being “always on” which should be considered, such as stress, burnout and lack of productivity.

Furthermore, Brower (2014) notes that it is crucial to remember that everyone is different, referring to the varied priorities of different demographic, social and cultural groups. Similarly, Friedman (2015) proposes that in order to make the right choice, the employee must be honest and have a “true understanding” of what their values and interests are. It is prudent to note that while the findings of this study are true of this particular sample, there is no “one size fits all” solution in the area of work-life balance and integration, and this is an issue that will continue arise in all organisations and industries, and will be a particular focus of all HR departments.

Further findings in this area of how work-life balance is viewed among employees showed that 68% of those surveyed believe that people with a good work-life balance are more creative, with 86% of respondents stating that employees who have a good work-life balance are more productive in the workplace. While creativity and innovation in the workplace are important for any organisation, it is a productive workforce that is most beneficial to the company. Based on these findings, it is interesting that while the majority of participants believe that a better work-life balance leads to increased productivity, only 53 employees (51%) agreed that they had a good work-life balance. This is an area of concern for companies, and poses a question of how much importance is placed on productivity in the workplace.

When asked if allowing staff a better work-life balance reduces staff turnover, 97% of total participants agreed with this statement (see Table 4.15). These findings are supported by the
literature in this area which has outlined increased staff morale, productivity, innovation and retention as some of the benefits of promoting a good work-life balance among employees (Hén and Cassirer, 2010).

**Table 4.15 Impact of Work-Life Balance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People with better work-life balance are more creative</td>
<td>67.78%</td>
<td>32.22%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with better work-life balance are more productive</td>
<td>85.56%</td>
<td>14.44%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing staff a better work-life balance reduces staff turnover</td>
<td>96.67%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who work flexibly are less likely to be promoted</td>
<td>34.44%</td>
<td>65.56%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

It is interesting to note that while 55% of total participants in this study do not have flexible working options available to them, that almost all respondents (99%) felt that options such as these increased work-life balance and have several other benefits, to both the employee and the organisation, such as improving workplace morale, increasing productivity and decreasing employee turnover. These findings could be crucial for those organisations who do not offer flexibility, as they could be at risk of losing valuable people, as 86% of those surveyed stated they would consider moving place of employment for a better work-life balance. Employers cannot ignore that these issues are important to their people.

When promoting a good work-life balance, employers need to understand what areas they can improve. When asked if they have ever felt under pressure to work when unwell, 46 respondents (50%) stated that they did. Furthermore, 39 participants (43%) stated that they neglect other aspects of their life because of work. These findings are suggestive of presenteeism, and as previously discussed can lead to negative consequences for the company, as well as the employees. It was previously found that 20% of employees questioned do not utilise their full annual leave entitlement. While this finding is a cause for concern, it is unsurprising that 50% of respondents above feel the need to work when unwell. As such, these need to be areas of focus for employers when exploring how they can promote a positive work-life balance among their people.
Additionally, as seen in Table 4.16, when asked how they rated their employer overall in terms of work-life balance, only 12% of participants responded with “Excellent”. Out of a total of 90 respondents who answered this question, over half rated their workplace “Adequate” or “Poor” in terms of work-life balance. This is quite an unexpected statistic, considering only 19% of participants stated they were dissatisfied in their current job. Again, this suggests that there are several factors that employees consider when evaluating job satisfaction. Similarly, it is curious that 86% of respondents stated they would consider leaving their place of employment to avail of a better work-life balance, yet only 45% rated their current workplace “Good” or “Excellent” in terms of work-life balance. These findings are consistent with previous results as continually seen throughout this chapter, whereby employees consider a variety elements when assessing what a good work-life balance means to them.

Table 4.16 Company Work-Life Balance Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>12.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>34.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>38.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>14.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

Out of the 62 respondents who answered when asked to comment on how important flexibility is in the workplace, almost 100% of them said it was hugely important. There were, however, some varying answers which provided potential points of note for further investigation. One respondent answered:

*Flexibility is important when you have young children and both parents are working.*

This particular opinion is supported by the literature of Kent (2015) and Dowd (2014) who identify flexibility as being positioned more towards women and parents. In this study, however, over 93% of participants believe flexibility should be offered to everyone equally.
This could be due to the fact that only 13 out of the 103 respondents were parents. Another interesting comment touched on the element of trust between an employee and employer in terms of flexible working:

*Flexibility should be available to everyone, but should be monitored. For every 10 people who avail of flexible working, 1 person will probably take advantage so the practice needs to be clearly outlined and monitored.*

This view is a particularly cautious one, and emphasises the importance of trust between and employee and employer. It is important for an organisation that they do not lose productivity due to an employee taking advantage of a flexible arrangement. It is also prudent, however, that the company does not take away flexible working options for all staff, when it is just a minority who abuse the practice. This establishment of trust is imperative for an employer to successfully implement flexible working arrangements. Finally, the majority of respondents held the view that flexibility in the workplace has many benefits for the employee, with one participant stating:

*It is important to allow flexibility as it encourages greater productivity and acknowledges commitments of employees in their personal lives.*

Again, it can be seen that allowing flexibility in the workplace has advantages for both the employee and the employer. This view is supported by Russell *et al.* (2007) who have found that improved work-life balance has been seen as a way to reduce turnover and improve productivity among staff. The next section will investigate and analyse the findings in relation to the shift from work-life balance to work-life integration.

4.6 The Shift from Work-Life Balance to Work-Life Integration

When asked if they perform work-related tasks outside of the workplace, 64% of respondents stated that they did, with 38% of participants performing 1-10 hours of work-related tasks outside of the workplace on a weekly basis. Similarly, when asked if they ever undertake personal tasks during work hours, 65% of total respondents confirmed that they did. These
findings, as seen in Tables 4.17 and 4.18, show that approximately 65% of participants in this study have integrated their work lives and their personal lives.

**Table 4.17 Work-Related Tasks Performed Outside of the Workplace**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>36.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 hour per week</td>
<td>25.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 hours per week</td>
<td>30.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 hours per week</td>
<td>7.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 hours per week</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 hours per week</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 hours per week</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

**Table 4.18 Personal Tasks Performed During Work Hours**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>35.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>3.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times a week</td>
<td>14.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times a month</td>
<td>29.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 times a year</td>
<td>17.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

In this particular sample, these findings confirm that there has been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration, with over 60% of the participants in this study integrating work and personal tasks in both the workplace and at home. This integration could be as a result of increased flexible working options such as working from home, along with flexitime and technological advances, as previously discussed. In this study, just over 49% of participants avail of flexible working options. It is interesting to note, however, that given the choice, 82% of the respondents said that they would take up flexible working options, if they were available in their place of work. This proposes the theory that not only does the availability of flexible working arrangements lead to a more integrated work and personal
life, but that this is also what employees want now. This idea is sustained by the literature in this area, which has shown that work-life integration is driven by the power of the internet, mobile technology, video conferencing and email communications, which in turn allows people to work virtually anywhere with connectivity (Anderson, 2016).

Out of 90 respondents who were asked if after work, were they too tired to do some of the things they would like to do, 34 answered ‘Sometimes’, 31 answered ‘Often’ and 17 answered ‘Very Often’ (see Table 4.19). This equates to 91% of respondents feeling too tired when they come home from work to engage in non-work activities they would like to do. When asked if work takes up time that they would like to spend with family or friends, 72% of respondents agreed, and when asked if their job or career interferes with responsibilities at home such as cooking, cleaning or childcare, 72% of respondents said it did. These findings show that out of those participants who were surveyed, there is a substantial representation whose job negatively affects their home or personal life. Interestingly, however, only 36% of participants said they would like to work fewer hours, with the remainder of respondents happy with their current working hours, or happy to work more hours. This proposes that there may be other factors contributing to work-related fatigue, such as commuting, or perhaps high-pressure situations and stress while at work, that can lead to mental exhaustion.

Table 4.19 Work Impact on Personal Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I would like to do.</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
<td>7.78%</td>
<td>37.78%</td>
<td>34.44%</td>
<td>18.89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family / friends dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home.</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>27.78%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work takes up time that I would like to spend with family / friends.</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>24.44%</td>
<td>38.89%</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job or career interferes with my responsibilities at home, such as outdoor work, cooking, cleaning, shopping or childcare.</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>24.44%</td>
<td>31.11%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author of Study (2017)

Over 50% of participants work in the professional services sector, which is known for high-pressure situations, such as trying to meet client deadlines. Another 15% of respondents work in healthcare, which, again, is renowned for understaffing, fast-paced work where employees are constantly on their feet. The findings of this study show that 45% of respondents’ family and friends dislike how preoccupied they are with work while at home. This is suggestive that
even though they are not in the workplace, there are still work-related distractions negatively affecting their personal life, whether this is working from home, thinking about work when at home, or just being too tired from work to engage in home activities. These findings poses the notion that work-life balance has indeed shifted to work-life integration, but raises the question whether this shift is entirely positive, as the findings suggest several negative impacts for employees. The literature in this area compounds these results, as employees are now seen to be “always on”, with the boundaries of work and personal life being more and more blurred because of advancements in technology and increased work-life fusion (Anderson, 2016). It is interesting to note, however, that this is a feature seen particularly with “Millennials”, a generation that craves flexibility and freedom in relation to their work. Unsurprisingly, over 89% of participants in this study fall into the “Millennial” age category.

Finally, out of the total 97 respondents who answered when asked how they would use additional personal time if they had the choice to work flexibly, a staggering 73% said they would use the time on ‘Sport and Fitness’. This is a quite a stark statistic, considering the growing problem of obesity in Ireland. According to the World Health Organisation, Ireland has the highest cases of obesity and excess weight in Europe (Flaherty, 2015). The findings of this study suggest that a lack of flexibility at work, and a bad work-life balance may be contributory factors of the deteriorating health problems in this country. This is an area of concern for employers, as employee health and wellness should be of high importance to the company. This poses an opportunity for the organisation to act in the best interest of the employee, by perhaps offering onsite gym facilities or corporate discounts for fitness classes. The implementation of such services would in turn benefit the company with a healthier and happier workforce, who can achieve a better work-life balance. The key findings and recommendations will be posited in the next chapter.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided the analysis of the primary research, interpreting the results of the quantitative method research of questionnaires, and analysing the findings versus the literature. Overall, the results of this study offer a great insight for employers on how they can improve the work-life balance of their employees. The next chapter, Chapter 5, seeks further meaning from these key findings and offers some potential opportunities based on these findings.
Chapter 5:
Conclusion
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study. In particular, the key findings identified relate to job satisfaction versus work-life balance, how increased flexibility leads to increased work-life integration, and the importance of trust between the employee and the employer. In Chapter 4, these findings were analysed and this analysis will be used to derive conclusions and a proposed future state for the topics of work-life balance and work-life integration. In addition to discussing the key findings, this chapter will also note the limitations of the study.

5.2 Key Findings

According to the results of this study, the concept of work-life balance no longer exists. Balancing work and life indicates a separation of the two, and this is not the case any longer. It is clear from the results of this study that there has been a shift to work-life integration, where work and life overlap and are intertwined. This is evident in the findings whereby almost all of those who were surveyed either availed of flexible work arrangements, or sought flexibility, in a bid to manage their work and life in a manner that suits them best. The increase in flexible working options means that employees can undertake personal tasks during the traditional working hours, but can then undertake work tasks at home, while commuting or from another location entirely. This is made possible by the increased use of technology in and out of the workplace, and the "always on" factor. The results, however, have also shown a level of overwork and possible workaholism due to the very nature of having work and life integrated, for example many of those questioned worked overtime on a daily basis, some did not utilise all of their annual leave and many felt too tired when they came home from work to do things they wanted to do. The savvy employee is one who knows how to manage this fusion and meet their personal and business demands while being 'always available'. The risk, however, is to those workers who do not manage the integration, and can lead to burnout and stress through being 'always on'. There is a subtle distinction between these two types of employees, but it points to a growing mind-set in the modern workforce that there is a greater need to work smart rather than work hard.
The research question in this dissertation asked whether there has been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration. As discussed above, the findings of this study show that there has been a shift to a more integrated work-life, but that there are also negative consequences associated with this shift. These negative consequences concern stress, burnout and workaholism. It is interesting to note, however, that while this changing trend seems to be impacting negatively on some employees, this is a change that the employees want, at least in this study. There are increased demands for flexibility at work, flexible working options and the ability to complete work tasks when and where the employee sees fit, as long as service level agreements are met. The results show that even though certain levels of work and life fusion can lead to overworking, or work-related stress and fatigue, there are no negative correlations between these issues and job satisfaction. Employees are aware of the danger of blurring the lines between work and life, but are willing to accept this in order to choose a routine that best suits their needs. As previously discussed, it is the cases where there is total mismanagement of these tasks that can lead to detrimental impacts on the employee.

The findings also showed that there are some workers whose contracted working hours are in clear violation of Irish legislation, namely the Organisation of Working Time Act (1997). While this revelation is a concern for employers, it also raises the question in relation to the applicability of the law, which was created in the last century, before the expansion of technological advancements and increased roles for knowledge workers. This law is applicable to workers in the manufacturing industry, but it is clear that there is no provision in this law for the knowledge worker, or the trans-international worker. A law that is designed for shift rotation and the traditional nine to five working week becomes difficult to enforce when a worker who is based in Ireland is providing business solutions to both the United States and Singapore in the one day. As such, this out-dated law is not practical in the age of globalised business, where multinational companies are available to their clients or customers 24/7. The legislation needs to be reviewed in light of the modern business climate, and amended to include provisions for those workers who have integrated their work and personal lives through flexitime, working from home or telecommuting.

It is also clear from the study that employers need to address and support such a shift in order to accommodate the majority of workers and future workers who will also grow up fully integrated with technological tools, and who will not only crave, but demand this level of
flexibility. Additionally, it is also evident that there is a need for total trust between the employee and employer for any such initiatives to be successfully implemented. The limitations of this study will be discussed in the following section.

5.3 Limitations

There were some notable limitations in this study. The first limitation concerns the return rate. Of the 120 questionnaires distributed, 103 were completed, resulting in a return rate of 85%. Considering the various categories of employers in both the public and private sectors chosen for this study to gather data, and the sample size, it should be noted that the findings from this study are relevant to the sample population, and may not be generalisable to the entire workforce in Ireland. The findings may be relevant to similar occupations in similar businesses and organisations; however the results may not be relevant to the categories of employers not included in the sample. Furthermore, only 13 of the total 103 participants were parents. While the purpose of this study was not solely to determine the effects of work-life integration from a parent’s perspective, this is a point of note for future research, whereby the split between parents and non-parents would be more even. The size of the sample population (103 respondents) could also influence the statistical strength of this research. Therefore, future research on a larger sample population is recommended in order to increase the significance of the findings (Saunders et al., 2012). Furthermore, future research in this area should be conducted amongst different groups of employers using a bigger sample size, in order to obtain more information about different employment sectors in Ireland, which would lead to a better understanding of employment characteristics in the entire workforce in Ireland.

Another limitation relates to the sampling method. This study used a convenience sampling method, which means that individuals amongst those who were known to the author and who were easy to be approached by the author were included in this research. Blumberg et al. (2008) and Bryman and Bell (2007) argue that even though convenience sampling is the easiest and the cheapest to conduct and can provide interesting data, it is the least reliable design due to a lack of ability to ensure precision, and due to limitations in relation to generalisability. As a non-probability sampling method was used for this research, there was no system in place ensuring that everyone in the population had an equal chance to be
selected (McNabb, 2013). Therefore, characteristics of those who were not chosen for the sample remain unknown. It should also be noted that amongst the sample population chosen by the author, characteristics of the individuals who volunteered to take part in the research could differ from the characteristics of individuals who did not wish to take part in the research (Groves and Peytcheva, 2008). In order to increase generalisability and the significance of the findings that are representative of the whole population, it is recommended for future research to use a probability sampling method, for example, random sampling.

This research was based on data collected from a self-report questionnaire made up of multiple questions. The results of the data collected may have been limited due to responses bias (Groves and Peytcheva, 2008). Individuals who volunteered to take part in the research could have a stronger interest in the work-life balance and work-life integration topics than those who did not take part in the research. Furthermore, an individual’s circumstances while answering the questionnaire could have influenced the results. For example, if the questionnaire was completed at work, participants could have limited time allocated, and may not have read questions properly in order to fully understand what they were asked for. This could have led to questions not being answered correctly. While completing questionnaires at work, answers may also have been influenced by the presence of participants’ colleagues, managers or business owners. This could have prevented partakers from answering questions honestly, in particular questions asking about levels of work satisfaction, and how employers could improve work-life balance.

Lastly, time constraints were a limitation on this study, which meant that some areas of research were not developed to their fullest. Specifically the area around the impact of work-life integration on all aspects of the employee’s life would have benefitted from a longer term study. It was not possible to analyse the growth of how work-life balance has shifted to work-life integration as there was not sufficient time to baseline current work practices and observe the trend. Observationally, the shift towards work-life integration and fusion is apparent and the results of this study, though purely quantitative, do provide evidence of this trend. Conclusions on how this shift has impacted on employees could have been made had the time been available to observe a more specific trend. Additionally, the duration of this research spanned five months, which was necessary to satisfy the requirements of the course it was written for. This meant, however, that the time needed to complete the study had to be used
efficiently and processes such as random sampling, multiple survey points, or in depth interviews were not feasible.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Further research opportunities exist after this study. Work-life balance literature incorporates comprehensive research of flexible work practices and workaholism, and their effects on employees’ wellbeing, personal lives and career advancement. There seems to be limited research conducted exclusively on work-life integration or fusion, and its effects on employees. Therefore further research on this topic is recommended. Longer term research on the effects on health and family life as well as a productivity analysis would help organisations to understand if integration of both work and life is a positive or negative practice. Similarly, analysis could be undertaken to assess what the optimum conditions for effective work and life harmonisation are.

It was predicted in the current study that increased work-life integration would have a negative relationship with work satisfaction due to the “always on” factor. The interaction between work-life integration and job satisfaction, however, was not wholly negative. While the majority of respondents said they would prefer to have a work-life balance over work-life integration, the study showed that the same amount of participants did in fact have an integrated work and home life. The results also showed the majority of those questioned, were satisfied in their current job. This shows that future research is necessary to establish when and how work-life integration impacts employees’ in terms of work satisfaction. As the current study used objective, quantitative measures, it is recommended that subjective, qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews are used in future research in this area.

The current study used deductive research approaches focusing on using data to test theory. Quantitative research methods were used in order to establish if there has been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration. Overall, the results from the research conducted were consistent with past research. In order to gain more nuanced results that were not obtained in the quantitative research methods used in this study; more subjective, qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews are recommended for future research.
Grady et al. (2008, p.3) argue that the term ‘work-life balance’ is more comprehensive and includes “family, community, recreation and personal time”. The current study focused on individuals’ personal lives, family and workplaces only, and excluded aspects of recreation, communities and society. Future research should use work-life balance in its broader sense, where aspects of community membership and leisure are included.

Based on the key findings in relation to Irish legislation, the applicability of the Organisation of Working Time Act (1997) should be researched. It has been shown, in this study, that there are gaps in the applicability of this legislation and a deeper study across multiple employment sectors should look to understand the scale of relevance of the legislation.

A study on the impact of work-life balance and flexibility on career advancement would also be significant to this topic. As employees continue to avail of flexible arrangements, is their lack of visibility in the workplace having an impact on their prospect of promotion? Certain areas of past research touch on this topic, but a deeper comparative analysis would need to be undertaken to look at career progression of employees who are seen to have a “good” work-life balance versus those who do not, in order to understand and quantify the impact. Are those who are availing of flexibility reducing their prospect of career advancement? Furthermore, the type of flexible arrangement being availed of by the employee should be assessed. Does an employee who works from home, for example, have the same accessibility to promotion as a worker who completes their standard working week in the office? Such a study would give an insight into organisations true attitude to flexibility and work-life balance. If it is accepted that an organisation supports and promotes a good work-life balance and flexibility amongst its employees, then a logical inference is that the flexible worker would have equal opportunities for progression.

As previously discussed in the study limitations section, one limitation identified was the size of the sample population. A convenience sampling method was used, which means that individuals who were known to the author and who were easy to be approached by the author were included in this research. The sample population consisted of 103 respondents amongst different categories of employment in both the private and public sectors. Future research on a larger sample population is recommended in order to increase the significance of the findings (Saunders et al., 2012). Similarly, as posed in the limitations of this study, it is recommended for future research in this area that a sample with an even split between parents.
and non-parents is chosen. Also, probability sampling, such as random sampling, should be used to increase generalisability and the significance of the findings that are representative of the whole population. This means that future research conducted amongst different groups of employers using a bigger sample size will allow the obtaining of more information about different employment sectors in both the public and private sectors, which would lead to a better understanding of employment characteristics in the entire workforce in Ireland.

Finally, an extension of the research findings in this study is possible and the ability to perform this without the time restrictions of a Masters dissertation would allow further scope for research. Additional qualitative research, such as a wide interview process, would give a more in-depth analysis of the topic. The recommendations for practice will be discussed in the next section.

5.5 Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study have several practical implications that should be of interest to Human Resource professionals, employees, organisations, managers and business owners in terms of a deeper understanding of the significance of a healthy balance between work and personal life demands, and their effects on the employees’ wellbeing and organisations’ performance. From an employee’s perspective, a better understanding of the importance of balancing work and personal life demands should help in recognising the areas that negatively affect them, and allow the addressing of these issues by seeking access to work-life balance initiatives that would improve their work and personal life satisfaction, and overall wellbeing, whether this is through work-life integration or not. From the company’s point of view, this study should give employers better insights regarding connections between work-life balance and employee wellbeing, and the resulting impact on employee commitment, absenteeism, turnover, productivity and overall performance. This information should be useful to organisations in developing and implementing work-life balance policies.

The results of this study show a correlation between increased work-life integration and increased working hours, with a resulting negative effect on employee work-life balance. This is compounded by the advancement and increased usage of technology in the workplace, which also allows work to be done outside of the workplace, for example at home or while
commuting. This can have a negative effect on employee wellbeing, in particular negative impacts on personal life conflict due to stress, fatigue and burnout. This in turn leads to higher dissatisfaction with the employer, lower job commitment and productivity. Lower personal-life satisfaction can influence work performance (Hill, 2005). Stress and burnout can result in decreased productivity and higher absenteeism (Layous et al., 2011), higher staff turnover, and poorer work quality (Seligman, 2011).

Organisations, managers and business owners should take into consideration the consequences of poor work-life balance as stated above, as it impacts business productivity and performance. Some employers may be reluctant to implement family-friendly and increased flexibility initiatives due to costs; however, over the long term, implementing such initiatives may reduce costs of sick leave, staff turnover and low productivity, and be more favourable to the business in terms of costs, productivity and performance. It should be noted that work-life balance has been recognised by employees and employers as an important factor in achieving optimum wellbeing and job performance (Clark, 2001). Findings from this study should help organisations, managers and business owners to recognise the importance of employee wellbeing and job satisfaction, as these factors are closely interlinked with staff motivation, commitment, loyalty and retention, which impact the organisation’s productivity and overall performance.

It is prudent to note, however, that increased work-life balance initiatives and flexibility can go bad when weighted too much in one particular direction. If the employee is using a flexible working arrangement to create a scenario where they are absent from the workplace with permission, and not working toward the goals of the organisation, then there is a clear breach of trust and no Return on Investment to the company, and the arrangement should cease. Furthermore, if certain flexible options and increased work-life integration are creating stress or anxiety for the employee but are of great benefit to the employer, they are limited in their effect and could well lead to resignation. While the term ‘flexible’ does not lend itself to formality, it is crucial that the arrangements are monitored and regularly reviewed for efficacy. It is also important that the options available are communicated clearly to employees. Many organisations have resisted the implementation of formal policies in relation to flexibility, due to its very nature it is not a “one size fits all” arrangement. While this is understandable, the uncertainty regarding the availability and application needs to be further addressed.
The issue of trust between the employee and employer plays a fundamental role in the success of achieving a healthy work-life balance. If achieving a better work-life balance means increased flexibility and work-life fusion, then the company needs to place trust in its employees that they will maintain whatever service level agreements are required of them. Similarly, employees need to trust in their employer, that they are willing and making an effort to enhance their work-life experience. Realistic demands and targets need to be set, and all necessary supports should be in place. The results of this dissertation also have an important bearing for the Human Resources department in organisations, as HR have a role to play in being a point of contact for employees and management, offering support and advice on local implementation of such policies, and also ensuring that guidelines are being followed. While it is the company that needs to back these new working arrangements and initiatives, it is the local HR teams that are the driving force behind such policies, and they too need to be aware of the benefits as well as the potential negative consequences. The role of HR has shifted in recent times, as these issues of employee engagement and retention are at the fore of many business decisions. As previously mentioned, it is essential that all such arrangements are monitored and continually reviewed.

5.6 Overall Conclusion

This study contributes to work-life balance and work-life integration literature, particularly in the Irish context. It was identified in the study that there has been a shift from work-life balance to work-life integration, and this finding is seen through increased flexibility and advancements in technology. This study also confirmed that this shifting trend has had a negative impact on work-life balance, due to increased levels of work-life integration and the "always on" factor. Demands and pressure from work were found to have an adverse impact on employees' personal lives, for example being too tired to undertake personal tasks after coming home from work. Interestingly, however, the results showed that these issues did not have a negative impact on job satisfaction. This shows that employees do want a level of flexibility and integration when it comes to balancing their work and personal lives, but the balance is more like a compromise, as trying to balance work and life will invariably mean taking something from one and moving it to the other. Regardless, the results highlight that
employees want flexibility and the freedom to choose how and when they work, even though this may have a detrimental effect on their personal lives.

Essentially, it is important that employees get this “balance” right. It is clear from the findings of this study that blending work and life can often lead to issues such as burnout or workaholism. It was also found that legislation surrounding work time is out of date, as it was developed by a different generation, for a different generation. Given how out-dated current legislation is, it is evident from the data collected that employers appear to be allowing their employees to regularly break the law by staying late or logging in at home.

Finally, it is clear from the findings of this study that a solid foundation of trust between the employee and the employer is crucial in facilitating and implementing any practices or policies around work-life fusion and integration. When an employee feels trusted they will give everything to the task at hand, often choosing to prioritise a work task over a personal task. The trust an employee has in their employer is when they know that not only will they be appreciated for a job well done, but there will also be a flexibility afforded to them, allowing them to balance their work and life however they see fit. An organisation who has built a relationship of trust with its employees often reaps greater benefits through performance and engagement. An employee who is willing to demonstrate their flexibility to the company should be rewarded with the same flexibility in return. This relationship, like any, needs both trust and honesty in order for both employees and employers to succeed together.


Moorhead, J. (2004). ‘For decades we’ve been told Sweden is a great place to a working parent, but we’ve been duped’, The Guardian, Vol. G2, p.10.


Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

**Survey Questionnaire - Annie Butler**

1. What is your age?
   - 18-24
   - 25-34
   - 35-44
   - 45-54
   - 54+

2. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male

3. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
   - Leaving Certificate (or equivalent)
   - Diploma
   - Degree
   - Masters degree
   - Doctorate degree
   - Other (please specify)

4. What is your marital status?
   - Single
   - Domestic Partner
   - Married
   - Divorced
   - Separated
   - Widowed
5. Are you a parent or carer?

- Parent
- Carer
- N/A

6. How many children do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- More than 5

7. What type of industry do you work in?

- Manufacturer
- Retailer
- Research
- Professional Services
- Education
- Healthcare
- Services
- Other (please specify)

8. How long have you worked for your current employer?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-4 years
- 5-10 years
- 10 or more years
9. What is your basic annual salary?
- Under €25,000
- €25,000 - €34,999
- €35,000 - €49,999
- €50,000 - €69,999
- €70,000 - €99,999
- €100,000 +

10. How satisfied are you with your current job?
- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

11. How many employees work in your company / place of employment?
- Less than 10 employees
- 11-50 employees
- 51-250 employees
- 251-1000 employees
- More than 1000 employees

12. Do you work from home?
- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

13. How loyal are you to your current employer?
- 1 - Not very loyal
- 2 - Loyal on occasion
- 3 - Somewhat loyal
- 4 - Fairly loyal
14. What is your level of agreement with the following statement: "I feel valued at work."
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. How many days annual leave are you entitled to excluding bank holidays?
- 10 days or less
- 11-19 days
- 20-24 days
- 25-29 days
- 30-35 days
- 36 days +

16. Do you take your full annual leave entitlement?
- Yes
- No

17. If you do not take your full annual leave entitlement, are you compensated?
- Yes
- No
18. How many contracted hours SHOULD you work per week, excluding lunch breaks?
- 20 hours or less
- 21-30 hours
- 31-32 hours
- 33-35 hours
- 36-38 hours
- 39-41 hours
- 42-45 hours
- 46-50 hours
- 51 hours or more

19. How many contracted hours DO you work, excluding lunch breaks?
- 20 hours or less
- 21-30 hours
- 21-32 hours
- 33-35 hours
- 36-38 hours
- 39-41 hours
- 42-45 hours
- 46-50 hours
- 51-55 hours
- 56-59 hours
- 60-65 hours
- 66-70 hours
- 71-80 hours
- 81 hours or more

20. Do you work overtime?
- Yes
- No
21. If you do work overtime, is this:
- Every day
- 1-2 times a week
- 1-2 times a month
- 1-2 times a year
- N/A

22. Is this overtime paid, unpaid or a mixture?
- Paid
- Unpaid
- Mixture
- N/A

23. What would you consider to be an acceptable amount of overtime?
- None
- Less than 3 hours a week
- 3-10 hours a week
- 11-15 hours a week
- 16-20 hours a week
- More than 20 hours a week

24. How happy or unhappy are you with your current working hours?
- Would prefer to work fewer hours
- Satisfied with current hours worked
- Would be happy to work more hours
25. What working hours per week do you feel would provide a good work-life balance?
- Less than 21 hours
- 22-30 hours
- 31-37 hours
- 38-45 hours
- 46-50 hours
- 50 hours +

26. Do you currently have a flexible working arrangement? Select all that apply.
- No
- Yes - Flexitime
- Yes - Work from home
- Yes - Compressed hours
- Yes - Part time
- Yes - School term only
- Yes - Job share
- Yes - Annualised hours
- Yes - Reduced hours
- Yes - Reduced Summer hours
- Yes - Early finish on Fridays
- Other (please specify)

27. Do you ever perform work-related tasks outside of the workplace? If yes, how much time is spent on these tasks?
- N/A
- Less than 1 hour per week
- 1-5 hours per week
- 6-10 hours per week
- 11-15 hours per week
- 16-20 hours per week
- More than 20 hours per week
28. Do you ever undertake personal tasks during work-hours? For example: appointments, dealing with a school or carer.
- N/A
- Daily
- 1-2 times a week
- 1-2 times a month
- 1-2 times a year

29. Given a choice, which flexible working arrangement would best suit you? Select all that apply.
- Flexitime
- Work from home
- Compressed hours
- Part time
- School term only
- Job share
- Annualised hours
- Reduced hours
- Reduced Summer hours
- Early finish on Fridays

30. How would you use additional personal time if you had the choice to work flexibly? Select all that apply.
- Childcare
- Caring for a dependant
- Spend time with family
- Take up a hobby
- Domestic tasks
- Education / Training
- Leisure
- Sport & Fitness
- Other (please specify)
31. Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:

- Are flexible working practices available in your place of work?
- If available, would you take them up?
- If in place already, do current flexible working practices meet your needs?
- Have you requested a flexible working arrangement?
- If so, was this agreed with management?
- Do you believe having flexible working arrangements will affect your career prospects?

32. Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:

- Would you be willing to reduce your take-home salary to work flexibly?
- Would you refuse a promotion if it negatively affected your work-life balance?
- Would you consider moving place of employment to improve your work-life balance?
- Would you consider changing career to improve your work-life balance?

33. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Having more flexible working options improves workplace morale
- People who work flexibly create more work for others
- Flexibility should be given to parents and carers only
- Flexibility should be given to all employees equally
- Allowing flexible working options enhances work-life balance
- Work-life balance is more important than work-life integration
- Work-life integration is more important than work-life balance
- My work life is integrated well with my personal life
- My personal life is integrated well with my worklife
- It is beneficial to be able to integrate my work life and my personal life
34. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- People with better work-life balance are more creative
- People with better work-life balance are more productive
- Allowing staff a better work-life balance reduces staff turnover
- People who work flexibly are less likely to be promoted

35. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about your company / place of work:

- They promote a culture of ‘working smart, not long’
- They ensure that jobs are manageable within the time allocated
- They encourage employees to consider work-life balance
- They support employees if work demands are too high

36. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- I have a good work-life balance
- I currently work the right number of hours per week to have a good work-life balance
- I have felt under pressure to work when unwell
- Technology allows me to better balance my work and life
- I work longer hours because technology makes me more contactable
- I neglect other aspects of my life because of work
37. Please rate how often the following statements apply to you:

After work, I come home too tired to do some of things I would like to do.

My family / friends dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home.

My work takes up time that I would like to spend with family / friends.

My job or career interferes with my responsibilities at home, such as outdoor work, cooking, cleaning, shopping or childcare.

I find myself too tired at work because of my responsibilities at home.

My personal demands are so great that they have a negative effect on my work.

My superiors and peers dislike how often I am preoccupied with my personal life while at work.

My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work, such as punctuality, accomplishing daily tasks, or working overtime.

My home life keeps me from spending the amount of time I would like to spend on establishing / furthering my career.

38. How important to you is flexibility in the workplace? Please provide details.
39. Overall, how would you rate your company / place of employment in terms of work-life balance?
- Excellent
- Good
- Adequate
- Poor

40. If you would like to comment or provide any additional information, please do so here: