AN INVESTIGATION INTO WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND BURNOUT IN A SOFTWARE COMPANY IN IRELAND

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A dissertation presented for the MA in Human Resource Management

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, September 2015

Abstract

Work-life balance has been a key topic for both businesses and academic researchers for a number of years. Improving work-life balance has been seen as a way to reduce turnover and improve productivity. To date, no study has focused on the software industry in Ireland, which is not only important for employment and national exports, but possesses unique characteristics. Previous research points to managerial support and working hours as two of the most important factors for satisfactory work-life balance. Some research has also shown a link between work-life balance and job burnout. This study thus seeks to investigate the link between work-life balance and burnout, as well as the importance of managerial support and working hours, in a software company in Ireland.

Quantitative research methods were used for the research. Data was collected from 70 participants using the self-selection method, and the sample included both males and females, of all ages, with and without children, and from all areas of the business. A questionnaire was used to gather data, using four reliable and tested scales which were identified in the literature. The data was analysed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

The results presented a clear negative link between work-life balance and burnout, while also demonstrating that work-life balance is only a small factor contributing to burnout. The positive impact of managerial support was confirmed, however the negative impact of long working hours was not confirmed. The research also showed that a wide range of policies were perceived to be available, and the perceived usefulness of each policy varied largely. Further research is recommended to uncover the factors leading to both satisfactory work-life balance and burnout.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisor Dr. Rosalind Beere for her excellent support and advice throughout this project. I would also like to thank the participants in the study for their time.

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1. Introduction and background

Work-life balance strategies aim to help employees better balance their work with their personal lives. A recent CIPD (2013) study reported that as many as 43 percent of employees are failing to achieve a satisfactory balance between their work and personal life. The number has remained high for a number of years, which shows that companies are not succeeding in improving the work-life balance situation for their workforce. One of the most significant negative impacts of a lack of satisfactory work-life balance for employees is stress. This results from either the work or nonwork domain interfering with the other, and can cause a loss in productivity and reduced performance (Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1993, Watson, Goh, and Sawang, 2011).

Poor work-life balance has also been linked to burnout (Brauchli, Bauer and Hämmig, 2011; Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998), and is also associated with stress and reduced mental health (Maslach, Leiter and Michael, 2001). Burnout has numerous negative effects on the workplace, such as reduced performance, job satisfaction, and increased conflict levels. It is particularly important to consider these impacts bearing in mind that stress related absence and mental health problems in the workplace are on the rise (CIPD, 2014). Both issues can represent significant cost for employers, as well as potential legal risk through the duty of care employers have for their workers.

Traditionally, both past work-life balance research and company practice have focused on working parents (Yuile, Chang, Gudmundsson, and Sawang, 2012). This means initiatives were often created with parents in mind, as opposed to the wider workforce. In more recent years, some research has looked at the work-life balance needs of the older workforce (Gardiner, Stuart, Forde, Greenwood, MacKenzie, and Perrett, 2007). Less research has been carried out focusing on other employee segments, such as young employees, currently the Millennial generation. This cohort, born between the mid-80s and early 2000s, is believed to value a satisfactory work-life balance more than the previous generation, Lewis, Smithson, and Kugelberg, 2002, Smith, 2010). There is a possibility that the policies currently available are not adequate for the needs of all employees.

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In Ireland, the IT sector makes up an important part of the Irish economy, employing over 100,000 workers, and representing 40 percent of national exports (ICT Ireland, 2014). The sector is experiencing high growth, and finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain talent (BDO, 2013). On average 22 percent of graduate candidates turn down a job offer, almost 50 percent more often than the all sector average (Manpower 2013, CIPD, 2015). Considering the fact that Millennials will represent the majority of the workforce within the next few years (Universum, 2014), an effective work-life balance strategy may serve as an incentive in the recruitment process.

Based on these theories and facts, this study investigates work-life balance and burnout in a software company based in Ireland. The aim of the study is to test whether findings from other research holds true also in the IT sector, and to gain an understanding of the current work-life balance and burnout situation. The results of the study confirm the link between work-life balance and burnout, and the importance of managerial support. However, no relationship was found between long working hours, and poor work-life balance and burnout. The study also mapped out the current availability and perceived usefulness of work-life balance policies in the organisation, and found that although a range of policies were available, the perceived usefulness varied between employees. No significant differences were found between different demographic groups.

2. Literature Review

The aim of the literature review is to provide an overview of the research that has been conducted in the area of work-life balance. The focus is on the factors which are believed to have particular impact on work-life balance. As much of the literature has focused either solely or largely on working parents and their needs, the review will begin with the broader definition of work-life balance that will underpin this particular research, followed by an introduction to the concept of work/nonwork conflict. Next, the characteristics of the Irish IT sector are discussed. This is followed by a review of the job-related factors impacting work-life balance, such as long hours and managerial support, and an overview of the demographic factors thought to influence work-life balance. The impacts of poor work-life balance are then discussed, including job burnout, before concluding with an examination of the current status of work-life balance policy.

2.1 Definition of work-life balance

The topic of work-life balance has received a lot of attention by academics in recent years, and as a result there are a number of different definitions of work-life balance. One of the more popular versions was made by Clark (2000), who 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 nonwork commitments. Achieving a satisfactory work-life balance should therefore have a positive impact on job performance. In contrast to some definitions, Clark's definition allows for work-life balance to be interpreted more broadly, to include individuals without family responsibilities. It was therefore chosen as the guiding definition for this study.

Wallace (1999) introduced the concept of work and nonwork conflict. The nonwork component encompasses all areas of a person's life outside of work, such as learning activities, community work, and fitness, while still including family and care responsibilities. When an individual fails to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance, this is referred to as a work-nonwork conflict. This conflict can take two forms, work to

nonwork conflict, or nonwork to work conflict. The first describes a situation where an individual's personal life is interfering with their work life, and the latter describes when a person's work interferes with their personal life. Research has shown that work factors are by far the largest cause of conflict (Haar, Spell, O'Driscoll and Dyer, 2003). It has hence been suggested that work-life balance strategy should focus on reducing work factors.

2.2 Work-life balance in the IT sector in Ireland

The characteristics of the IT sector makes for an interesting area to research work-life balance and burnout. Companies in the sector tend to have a fast-paced environment, demanding and complex work, and typically young, highly qualified and engaged employees. Consequently, the boundary between work and nonwork is often blurred. This suggests that work-life balance could be an issue, as employees who report strong boundaries tend to have an increased level of work-life balance satisfaction (Scholarios and Marks, 2004). In addition, in Ireland almost 20 percent of the work-force in this sector are non-nationals, and this proportion is growing steadily year on year (CSO, 2013). Multinational companies in the sector, such as Paypal, hire 50 percent or more of their workforce from abroad (Keogh and Hilliard, 2012). Foreign workers could be more likely to lack the social support shown to relieve work stressors, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Despite these factors, only few researchers have looked at this sector in particular in terms of work-life balance (Scholarios and Marks, 2004).

2.3 Job-related factors influencing work-life balance

Among the research carried out to determine which factors impact on work-life balance satisfaction, a high number of hours worked is consistently shown as having the most negative impact (White, McGovern, Mills and Smeaton, 2003, Frone, Yardley and Markel, 1997). A recent study by the CIPD (2014) reported that almost 20 percent of employees work more than 45 hours per week. This means the impact of long working hours is greater due to the high volume of employees it affects. An excessive workload, supervisory pressure, and company culture are all common reasons contributing to working long hours (White *et al*., 2003). This further supports the argument that

companies should first aim to resolve work factors, as a strategy for improving work-life balance, before implementing other work-life balance policies (Haar *et al*., 2003). However, a reduction in workload seems to not yet form part of work-life balance strategy.

Another contributing factor to employees working too hard, is the psychological contract. The psychological contract is a concept which refers to the unwritten expectations that an individual employee has of the employer and the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1989). One common expectation might be that employees will be rewarded for their hard work, which may cause the employee to have a more positive perception of their work-life balance. If the expectation does not materialise, any work/nonwork conflict would be made worse as it would be seen as a breach of the psychological contract (Sturges and Guest, 2004). A typical example of this is the employee who expects to work long hours in return for career progression. If the progression does not materialise, the employee might experience a lower level of satisfaction with work-life balance than if the expectation had been fulfilled.

The second key factor for work-life balance satisfaction is perceived managerial support, also referred to as supervisory support. Perceived managerial support is the perception an employee has of their direct supervisor caring about their work-life wellbeing. This important impact stems in part from how employees see supervisors as representatives for the organisation and a reflection of its support towards work-life balance (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, and Hammer, 2011). Supportive manager behaviours include emotional support, acting as a role model and creative work-life management. (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, and Hanson, 2009). Employees who perceive their managers as supportive of work-life balance will generally have a higher work-life balance satisfaction, and are more likely to avail of work-life balance policies and initiatives (Smith and Gardner, 2007, Thomas and Ganster, 1995).

In addition to working hours and managerial support, there are another two factors that have been shown to be strongly linked to work-life balance; job involvement and social

support. Job involvement, refers to the psychological extent that an individual identifies and participates in their work. A high level of job involvement is positively related to work-nonwork conflict, although it is also linked to increased job satisfaction (Adams, King and King, 1996). Social support can stem from both colleagues in the workplace, or family and friends. A strong social network can reduce stressors and thus improve perceived work-life balance (Carlson and Perrewé, 1999). However, colleague support has not been shown to have the positive impact on uptake of work-life balance policies as might be expected (Smith and Gardner, 2007, Thomas and Ganster, 1995).

2.4 Demographical factors

The most impactful demographic factors identified in the research are life and career stages, and cohort effects. Age is often considered to influence employee needs for achieving a satisfactory work-life balance. In reality, it is not merely aging that causes change in employee's needs, but rather the events related to different stages of an individual's life. It can therefore be said that age acts as a denominator for life stage and career stage effects (Finegold, Mohrman and Spreitzer, 2002). Life-stage, or life course, models aim to depict these effects through creating a set number of stages that employees will experience during their life. Roehling, Roehling and Moen's (2001) model proposes six life stages based on age, parental status and the age of their youngest child. Darcy, McCarthy, Hill and Grady (2012) built further on this model, reducing it to four career stages by removing parental status, and thus age becomes the key factor determining the different career stages in this amended model. Their study found that the factors impacting on work-life balance were largely constant throughout all the career stages. This further supports the idea that companies need to broaden their work-life balance strategy to also include solutions for non-parents.

Employment preferences and perceptions have been shown to differ for employees depending on the economic and social conditions of their birth cohort (Hess and Jepsen, 2009, Sullivan, Forret, Carraher, and Mainieiro, 2009). The cohort effect should not be confused with life or career stages, as it remains constant throughout, as something an employee carries with them throughout their life. As such, the cohort effect is understood

to be longitudinal, whereas the career stage research has largely been cross-sectional. The birth cohort theory could support the theory that Generation Y, also known as Millennials, place a higher value on work-life balance than other generations (Finegold *et al.*, 2002).

2.5 The impacts of poor work-life balance

It has been thought that work-life balance is an important factor driving organisational commitment and in turn, retention. However, academic research has not been able to demonstrate a strong link. Sturges and Guest's (2004) study of 280 graduates in the early career stage found no strong connection between the intention to remain in the organisation and the level of work/nonwork conflict. This result stands in contrast to the fact that participants in the same study reported that work-life balance is a key factor in their decision to remain in the organisation. Parkes and Langford's (2008) study also showed no significant positive relation between work-life balance and intention to stay in the organisation. This study instead went on to suggest that work-life balance is more likely to indirectly benefit an organisation through its association with wellbeing, which in turn has been linked to reduced work-related stress and burnout.

There are numerous studies that show increased work-family conflict as related to increased job burnout (Aryee, 1993; Bacharach, Bamberger and Conley 1991; Brauchli *et al.*, 2011; Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998). Job burnout, or simply burnout, has been defined as a "(...) psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" (Maslach *et al.*, 2001, p.399). It is closely linked to work-related stress, and consists of three dimensions; exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Exhaustion is the most central component of burnout, and the most frequently reported. It is important to note that the exhaustion dimension alone does not necessarily indicate job burnout, but should be present together with the other dimensions. The cynicism dimension is linked to the emotional relationship people have with work, cynicism is a mechanism used to distance oneself from emotional demands. The last component, inefficacy, can be seen as both a consequence of the other two dimensions, but can also develop independently, as a result of a lack of resources. In terms of drivers of burnout, similarly to work-life

balance, long working hours and a lack managerial support have been are linked to burnout (Maslach *et al*., 2001).

The negative consequences of burnout do not only affect the employees, but the business overall. Reduced job performance is one of two main negative consequences of burnout (Collins and Murray, 1996). Employees experiencing burnout can have reduced productivity and effectiveness, and the phenomenon also contributes to lower job satisfaction. Employees experiencing burnout are also more prone to conflict and disruptive behaviour, and as such can have a negative impact on others in their surroundings. The second important consequence is reduced employee health, which can result in increased absences. Burnout is typically considered to cause mental dysfunction, such as anxiety, reduced self-esteem and depression. It has also been suggested that burnout is a form of mental illness in itself. An argument has been made however, that those with good mental health are better equipped to cope with chronic stressors, which reduces the likelihood of them experiencing burnout (Maslach *et al*., 2001). Thus the link between burnout and mental health is rather complex.

2.6 Work-life balance policy

There are a number of different policies or practices that are, and can be, used to improve work-life balance in organisations. A key success factor for any work-life balance policy is the presence of managerial support, which is strongly linked to the perceived availability and uptake of work-life balance policies (McCarthy, Cleveland, Hunter, Darcy and Grady, 2013). Work-life balance policies were historically introduced for employees with caring responsibilities, as opposed to the employee population at large. Over time, the offering has broadened somewhat, but many organisations have yet to make all policies available to the employee population at large. Traditional work-life balance policies would aim to either reduce working hours or organise working hours in a way that better suits the needs of the employee (Grady, Kerrane, Darcy, and McCarthy, 2008). Examples of such policies include part-time working, working from home, job-sharing and flexible hours.

The academic discussion and government agenda is slowly opening for a more inclusive approach. A recent study recommended that companies should make a wide range of policies available to its full workforce (Yuile *et al.*, 2012). Even so, most companies have yet to internalise the need for all employees to lead a fulfilling nonwork life, and reap the benefits of a more inclusive work-life balance strategy (Wise and Bond, 2003). Generally only a few practices have been introduced that benefit other employee groups, often aimed at improving health in a convenient manner for employees, through on-site counselling and gym facilities. These are often also referred to as wellness initiatives. The IT sector in particular has been known to introduce broad ranges of initiatives for the wider employee population. Examples include food services, concierge services, additional vacation days and financial support for education (Messieh, 2012). Some startups have gone even further, offering a four day working week for all employees (Fisher, 2014). Other policies which have also been introduced in some sectors, include paid sabbatical leave, paid time off for volunteering and paid study leave (McCarthy, Darcy and Grady, 2010).

2.7 Summary

The literature review defines work-life balance, and introduces the IT sector in Ireland, and its unique characteristics, such as a young, largely non-national workforce. It also shows the lack of research focusing on this particular sector. Next, it explains that the different factors that can either positively or negatively impact on work-life balance. Factors with negative impact include a blurred boundary between work and nonwork, a high level of job involvement, and long working hours. Positive factors include managerial and social support. The role of demographics has also been explored in the literature. The research has shown that work-life balance remains important for employees at all life stages. However, some generational differences are thought to exist; the generation referred to as Millennials is believed to value work-life balance more highly than other generations.

Although it was previously thought that work-life balance was a key factor in driving organisational commitment and in turn, retention, this has not been proven in research.

Instead, poor work-life balance has been linked to job burnout. Burnout in turn can cause a reduced performance and poor mental health. Work-life balance policies and programs may help to improve work-life balance and burnout. However, work-life balance policy still tends to have a narrow scope. The IT sector is one of few that has introduced some more innovative policies for the workforce at large, mostly centred on wellness. However, there is a general gap in the research for the current availability and perceived usefulness of work-life balance policies in this sector.

3. Research Question and Objectives

As a result of the literature review, it is clear that work-life balance and burnout are important issues in organisations today. It is also clear that there is a lack of research focusing specifically on the IT sector in Ireland. Research on work-life balance policy in this sector is also limited. The literature indicates that poor work-life balance is linked to increased job burnout (Aryee, 1993; Bacharach *et al.*, 1991; Brauchli *et al.*, 2011; Kinnunen and Mauno, 1998). It also shows that working hours and managerial support are the two most important factors contributing to work/nonwork conflict (White *et al.*, 2003, Frone *et al.*, 1997, Smith and Gardner, 2007, Thomas and Ganster, 1995). This study will aim to investigate whether these outcomes hold true also for the particular group mentioned, which will help organisations to set a more effective work-life balance strategy. The proposed research question that will guide the study is therefore: '*What is the current work-life balance and burnout situation in a software company based in Ireland?*'

The objectives related to this question are listed below.

1. Establish the extent to which employees achieve a satisfactory work-life balance
2. Establish the extent to which employees experience burnout and whether there is a link between burnout and work-life balance
3. Review the impact of managerial support and working hours on work-life balance and burnout
4. Explore the availability and perceived helpfulness of work-life balance policies
5. Confirm whether demographics influence any of the areas

4. Methodology

There are two principal categories of research methods; quantitative and qualitative. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have their merits, 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, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2012).

A 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). There are two principal ways of thinking about research philosophies; ontology and epistemology (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 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 thus 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 (Haar *et al*, 2003, Scholarios and Marks, 2004, Darcy *et al*, 2012, Finegold *et al*, 2002). The research was carried out through a cross-sectional study in one organisation, which is described in section 5.

4.1 Research strategy

Previous studies in the field have used surveys, specifically self-completion questionnaires. Questionnaires are appropriate for descriptive and explanatory research, which describes the past research. This study will be descriptive in nature, and adopt the same approach, using a web-based distribution method, which is more appropriate for the chosen demographic and sector than the common paper-based format. The benefits of using a self-completion questionnaire are firstly that it allows the participant to remain anonymous, and secondly participants can complete the questionnaire at a time convenient to them. These factors should contribute to a higher participation rate, as opposed to administration by a researcher in situ, as well as avoid interviewer bias, and should provide richer and more accurate data as a result (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

The questionnaire consists of five sections, covering the topics of each of the objectives of the study:

1.   Demographic questions
2.   Work-life balance satisfaction
3.   Managerial support
4.   Burnout
5.   Availability and perceived helpfulness of work-life balance policies

The questionnaire is entirely based on tested items and scales used and validated in previous research. These are therefore reliable measures, with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient above 0.7. Section 1, which aims to collect demographic information, is based on Sturges and Guest's (2004) study, and as such include age, gender, marital status and parenthood status. A question on broad company function was also included in order to allow for an additional layer of analysis.

Section 2, which looks at work-life balance satisfaction, uses Valcour's (2007) five-item scale known as the 'Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance Scale'. The items are measured with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Very dissatisfied and 5 = Very satisfied. A sample item from this scale is '*Your ability to balance the needs of your job with those of your personal or family life*'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale in the original study was 0.93. The section also includes a one-item scale to measure total hours worked, reported in hours per week based on Haar *et al.* (2003). Section 3 uses a five-item scale to measure managerial support, from Mauno, Kinnunen, and Piitulainen, (2005), with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree. An example of an item is '*In the event of conflict, managers are understanding when employees have to put their personal lives first*'. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale in the original study was 0.83.

Section 4 measures burnout with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). The inventory consists of 22 items, and is measured with a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 = Never and 6 = Every day. Some of the items which refer to clients

were adapted to include the words '*and/or colleagues*', to reflect the many roles in an IT organisation that are not client-facing. Sample items include '*I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at work*' and '*I feel emotionally drained from my work*'. In tests carried out to the scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this ranged from 0.76 to 0.9 (Iwanicki and Schwab, 1981). Section 5 seeks to measure the availability and usefulness of Work-life balance policies. The approach is based on Yuile *et al.*'s (2012) approach, which was again based on Gudmundsson's (2003) study, listing policies identified in the literature review and asking participants to indicate whether the policies were available and whether they were helpful. 18 work-life balance policies were identified and included.

4.2 Sampling method

The self-selection sampling method was used for this study. The benefit of this method is that it requires a low time commitment, while offering a slightly more representative sample than the convenience method. The use of the intranet for publishing, as opposed to an internet survey, should allow for up to three times more responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). The survey was thus published on the company intranet of the organisation, which also triggered an email notification to be sent out to all employees who had this feature activated. The survey was open for a time period of 4 weeks. A sample size of 70 participants was achieved using this method. It is important to note that the self-sampling method often results in participants with particular thoughts or feelings about the research topic (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). This can be considered positive, as it should allow for complete data, but it can also skew the data if these participants are self-selecting due to high or low satisfaction in the areas.

4.3 Participants

Through the chosen sampling method, 70 participants completed the questionnaire. Participation was not limited by any factor, but open to the entire organisation. The sample of 70 participants consisted of 37 females (53%) and 33 males (47%). Participants were from all four age categories, 29 participants (41%) were in the 18-29 years category, 38 participants (54%) in the 30-39 category, 1 participant (1%) in the 40-

49 years category and 2 participants (3%) in 50+. 26 participants (37%) stated that they were single, 43 participants (61%) were married or cohabiting, and 1 participant (1%) was separated or divorced. 16 participants (23%) had children and 54 participants (77%) did not have children. 20 participants (29%) indicated that they worked in a sales function, 30 participants (43%) in an administration function, 7 participants (10%) in a technical function, and 13 participants (19%) in other functions.

4.4 Pilot study

All the surveys in the questionnaire were chosen from previous, peer-reviewed, and validated research from the literature, so that both the survey items and scales are solid and applicable to this study. There was also only limited preparation involved of the questionnaire format, of which the author is familiar with. Therefore the need for a large pilot test was deemed unnecessary. Instead a handful of the author's peers were asked to test the questionnaire, to check for any errors and to verify the functionality of the tool.

4.5 Method of quantitative data analysis

Google Doc's online survey software was used to design and complete the questionnaire. After the data collection was completed, the results were translated into appropriate numerical code. The scale used to measure Burnout contained both positively and negatively framed questions and therefore required reverse coding, which was also carried out. Statistical analysis was then applied through the use of IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for all sections of the data set.

5. Organisational context

As previously stated, the research was carried out in a software company in Ireland. The company provides a range of software products, and has its headquarters in the US. The company was established in the 2000s, and has experienced high growth and currently employs over 1000 employees in its office in Dublin. All major areas of the business is represented in its Dublin office; technology, sales and administration. As with many technology companies in Ireland, the majority of the workforce consists of foreign workers, largely from other EU countries. Employees are highly educated, and many are recruited as graduates. The workforce is accordingly largely young.

The organisation has a fast-paced culture, where employees are encouraged to innovate, and change is constant. High standards are expected at all times and from all employees. It is an informal atmosphere, where communication is open and there is no dress code. The company offers competitive pay and career development opportunities. The company has introduced work-life balance and wellbeing programmes, and generous benefits packages. The culture and package offered to employees, along with the brand of the company makes it an attractive place to work, and employees normally take pride in being part of the organisation.

6. Findings

The objective of this study was to explore work-life balance and burnout, and the impact of working hours and managerial support. It also sought to establish the availability and helpfulness of work-life balance policies, and confirm if any demographical differences exist. The work-life balance satisfaction scale measured individual's satisfaction with how they balance their personal and working life. The managerial support scale measures employee's perception of how supportive their manager is of their need to balance their personal and working life needs. A high score in these two scales indicate a high level of satisfaction. Working hours were measured in numerical values, a higher number suggests the participant works long hours. Some participants indicated a very low number of working hours. It may be assumed that these participants have a part-time working agreement. The burnout scale measures employee's current level of burnout. Positively worded questions (indicating the absence of burnout) were reverse coded, so that a high score on the burnout scale indicates a high level of burnout. Lastly, the survey items related to the availability and usefulness of work-life balance policies were measured as nominal data.

A reliability analysis was carried out for each of the three multiple item scales used in the survey; work-life balance satisfaction, burnout and managerial support, in order to assess the internal reliability of each scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used for this purpose, which measures the overall correlation among all the indicators in a scale, with the goal to assess whether all items are measuring the same psychological construct. It is generally considered that a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or above is acceptable (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Each scale of the study had a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7. The results are presented in Table 1.

Scale	Work-life balance	Managerial support	Burnout
Cronbach's alpha	.894	.843	.835

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha of questionnaire scales

The normality of the distribution of the data of the three scales was also assessed, along with the single item measuring working hours, through the use of skewness and kurtosis values. These values present the normality of the distribution of scores for continuous variables (Dancey and Reidy, 2008). Data is considered to have a normal distribution when skewness value is less than +3 or -3.0, and a kurtosis value of less than +10 or -10 (Kline, 2005). All scales are within these ranges for both tests, and consequently the values are normally distributed. Descriptive statistics for all three scales are presented in Table 2.

Scale	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work-life balance satisfaction	-.594	-.298
Burnout	.778	.092
Managerial support	1.83	5.618
Working hours	-1.3	-4.575

Table 2: Descriptive statistics indicating normality for questionnaire scales

In addition to these tests, central tendency and the dispersion within the data was examined for each of the five sections from the questionnaire. This included the mean and standard deviation for continuous variables, and frequencies for categorical variables. The results of these calculations are described in later sections, covering each research objective in depth, along with the two tests that will be explained next.

In order to determine relationships between variables, significance testing was carried out. The results of such testing shows whether there is a likelihood of a relationship occurring by chance alone, or whether there was no actual difference in the sample population (Robson, 2011). As the data is numeric, and showed normal distributions, parametric statistics were used. In addition to the normality of data, there are an additional two prerequisites for the use of parametric statistics; equal variances within the population and random sampling (Blumberg *et al*., 2008). These requirements were also satisfied.

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used as the specific test tool. This coefficient can have any value between +1 and -1, with +1 representing a perfect positive correlation, and -1 a perfect negative correlation. Correlations are considered to have statistical significance when $p < .05$ (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). In order to analyse correlation with multiple item scales, a Principal Factor Analysis was carried out in SPSS, converting the three multiple item scales; work-life balance satisfaction, burnout and managerial support, into three individual composite scores.

To further test the relevance of these relationships between the variables, linearity was examined. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) was used for this purpose. This tool indicates how well the estimated multiple regression equation fits. The number multiplied by 100 gives the percentage of the total variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

6.1 Work-life balance and burnout

The first research objective of this study was to establish the current level of satisfaction with work-life balance in a company in this sector. Work-life balance satisfaction was measured with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= Very dissatisfied to 5= Very satisfied. Participants reported moderate levels of work-life balance satisfaction with a mean of 3.54, and a standard deviation of 0.92. This means the average level of work-life satisfaction was closer to Satisfied. The second research objective was to establish the level of burnout in the organisation, and whether there is a link between burnout and work-life balance. Burnout was measured with a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 = Never to 6 = Every day. Participants reported low levels of job burnout with a mean of 1.86, and a standard deviation of 1.54. The mean translates to feelings of burnout on average was closest to once a month or less.

The link between work-life balance and burnout was tested with Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. A statistically significant medium negative correlation was found between work-life balance satisfaction and burnout $r = -.369$, $n = 70$, $p = 0.02$.

This means poor work-life balance is likely to be connected to experiencing higher levels of burnout. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) was however only .136. As such, the work-life balance factor appears to only make up for 13.6% of the factors contributing to burnout. Accordingly, it would seem that work-life balance is only a small contributor to burnout.

6.2 Working hours and managerial support

The third objective of the study was to investigate the impact of managerial support and working hours on both work-life balance and burnout. Managerial support was measured with a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree. Participants reported moderate levels of perceived managerial support with a mean of 5.68, and a standard deviation of 1.23. The average score translates closer to employees stating that they 'Agree' to have managerial support for work-life balance. Higher feelings of managerial support was thought to be linked to a higher level of work-life balance satisfaction and lower levels of burnout. These beliefs were confirmed. A statistically significant large positive correlation was found between work-life balance satisfaction and managerial support = .543, n = 70, p > 0.01. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) for this relationship was .295, meaning managerial support was responsible for 29.5% of the work-life balance satisfaction level score. A statistically significant medium negative correlation was found between burnout and managerial support r = -.477, n = 70, p < 0.01. .The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) for this relationship was .227, meaning managerial support drove 22.7% of the burnout result. This confirms the importance of managerial support to drive work-life balance in the organisation, and reduce burnout.

Working hours was measured with a one-item scale reporting working hours in numerics. One entry was excluded, as it had been entered in a negative number, which the format of the survey allowed for. 6 respondents indicated that they work less than 40 hours, which is the standard working week at the organisation. These responses ranged from 9 to 39 hours. It is likely that some of these respondents have a part time working arrangement, which was not captured. Descriptive measures were applied first to the full

data set in Table 3, and then to an alternative data set excluding 4 data points which appear to more clearly refer to a part-time arrangement, with working hours ranging from 9 to 32 hours per week, in Table 4. It was thought that a high average number of working hours would be linked to lower levels of work-life balance satisfaction and higher levels of burnout. Surprisingly, no correlation was found between working hours and the other two variables in this study. Only a small negative correlation was found between work-life balance satisfaction and working hours, but this was not statistically significant = -.197, n = 69, p > 0.104.

Measure	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Value	9.00	65.00	56.00	46.304	45.00	9.899

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for working hours for full data set

Measure	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Value	37.00	65.00	28.00	47.969	46.00	6.98

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for working hours excluding lower data points

6.3 Availability and perceived helpfulness of work-life balance policies

In line with the fourth research objective, participants indicated whether each of the policies listed were available in the organisation, and whether they considered them helpful. The work-life balance policies listed were identified in the literature review. The results are displayed in Table 5 on the next page, ranked in descending order by frequency of helpful responses. As shown, the range of responses was quite wide, with helpful responses ranging from 33% to 79%, and availability between 7% and 90%.

Work-life balance policy	Helpful (Frequency)	Available (Frequency)	Helpful (% of population)	Available (% of population)
Flexible start/finish times	55	49	79%	70%
On-site food facilities	53	63	76%	90%
Time off in lieu	49	48	70%	69%
On-site gym facilities	49	62	70%	89%
Work from home	47	54	67%	77%
Flexi-work schedule	46	33	66%	47%
On-site health services	46	55	66%	79%
Work from another office	44	51	63%	73%
Financial support for education	41	56	59%	80%
Time off for study	37	44	53%	63%
Telecommuting	37	10	53%	14%
Unpaid leave	35	48	50%	69%
Part-time work	33	27	47%	39%
Paid time off for volunteering	33	43	47%	61%
Option to buy vacation days	32	5	46%	7%
Paid sabbatical leave	28	19	40%	27%
Carer's room	23	24	33%	34%
Job sharing	23	24	33%	34%

Table 5: Frequency table for work-life balance policies

6.4 Correlations between demographic groups of employees

To fulfil research objective number 5, tests were also carried out to determine whether there were significant differences between groups of participants, based on demographic information. The Independent Samples t-test was developed to test if there were significant differences between the means of observations between two groups. In order to reject the null hypothesis which assumes there are no differences between the groups,

and have statistical significance, p must be less than 0.05 (Saunders *et al*., 2012). The test was applied to determine differences between males and females, and parents and non-parents. It was also used to compare singles and married/cohabiting employees, as there was only one employee in the third category of separated/divorced.

For gender, there was a mean difference = -.467 in the burnout measure, with males experiencing a higher level of burnout than women. However, p = .051, which renders the result just marginally over the 0.05 mark to make it not statistically significant. There was also a difference in managerial support =-.318. This was however again not statistically significant with p=.187. No notable differences in work-life balance satisfaction scores or working hour averages between genders were found.

Parental status also lacked any statistically significant differences. Nevertheless, for the burnout measure, there was a mean difference = -.424 with p = 0.137. For managerial support, there was a mean difference = .458 and p = .108. There was no notable difference in work-life balance satisfaction scores or working hour averages between parents and non-parents. There were also no notable or significant differences between single and married/cohabiting employees in any of the measures.

The Single Factor ANOVA test is designed to test for significant differences between the means of observations between multiple groups. Like the Independent Samples t-test, p must be less than 0.05 to allow the null hypothesis to be rejected (Saunders *et al*., 2012). This test was applied to investigate any differences between age groups and company functions. There are two preconditions that must be met in order to apply this test; normal distribution of the sample and homogeneity of sample variances. Both conditions were satisfied for all results included in the study.

There were no notable or statistically significant differences in any of the measures between the age groups. For company functions, there were also no statistically significant differences in any of the measures. There were, however, two results worth noting. The burnout measure showed p = .072, indicating potential differences between functions, but that cannot be considered statistically significant. Working hours showed

p= .068, which again does not allow for the null hypothesis of homogeneity to be rejected.

7. Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to explore the current status of work-life balance and burnout in a software company in Ireland. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding, two factors thought to have particular impact on these areas, managerial support and working hours, were also analysed. Demographical differences were reviewed, which if had been found existing, could argue for differentiated work-life balance strategies based on demographics. Lastly, it sought to map out the availability and perceived helpfulness of work-life balance policies. In this section, the results from each of these areas will be discussed, in light of the literature review.

7.1 Work-life balance and burnout

Work-life balance was the key variable of the study, and was defined as satisfaction and functioning both at work and at home (Clark, 2000). A key goal of this study was to uncover the current level of work-life balance in the organisation. The software sector is known for its fast-paced environment, and the boundary between work and nonwork is often blurred (Scholarios and Marks, 2004). Employees are also often hired from abroad, which leave them without a solid social support system. For these reasons it was thought that work-life balance could be an issue for employees in the organisation. The findings imply that most employees were either unsure or satisfied with their work-life balance. Although this result does not show immediate cause for concern, it does imply that there are some issues with work-life balance in the organisation. The study thus supports the ideas from the literature review.

Past research showed that increases in work-life balance are related to job burnout. This study therefore also looked at levels of burnout in the organisation, and its relationship with work-life balance. Burnout was defined as a psychological syndrome closely related to stress. Work-life balance issues would understandably increase levels of stress, and as such there is a plausible clear link between the two concepts. Burnout in the organisation was relatively low, with employees on average experiencing symptoms of burnout around once a month or less. This result in itself is similar to the work-life balance

results, showing that there is room for improvement in the organisation, although there does not appear to be an acute issue.

Where previous studies investigated increases in work-life balance conflict and burnout, the current study reviewed the link between work-life balance satisfaction and burnout directly, providing a new perspective on the relationship between the two concepts. Through the use of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, a statistically significant medium negative correlation was found between work-life balance satisfaction and burnout. These findings show that an increase in work-life balance satisfaction would likely see a reduction in burnout, and vice versa. It thus supports previous studies suggesting that burnout is one of the consequences of poor work-life balance. However, work-life balance is only a relatively small factor contributing to burnout. As such, improving work-life balance would likely not be a sufficient strategy in itself to reduce burnout.

7.2 Working hours

The literature consistently reported long working hours as the most detrimental factor for work-life balance (White *et al.*, 2003, Frone *et al*., 1997). It has also been linked to job burnout (Maslach *et al*., 2001).The literature also suggested excessive workload, supervisory pressure, and company culture as common reasons for employees to work long hours. Thus, it was expected that the study would show a strong negative relationship between work-life balance satisfaction and working hours. The findings of the current study did not support this. No correlations were found between working hours and work-life balance. Tests were also carried out between working hours and burnout, which were also expected to be linked, due to the relationship between work-life balance and burnout, but no correlations were found between these two concepts either.

Working hours are also much above average in the organisation, according to the results. In the literature review, it was noted that a CIPD study showed 20% of employees work 45 hours or more per week. In the current study, 69% of employees reported such

working hours. This is a significant difference, and may indicate the presence of a long hours culture in the organisation, and potentially in the sector. With such high working hours, it would normally have been plausible to expect poorer results in work-life balance satisfaction and burnout. However, the more positive results are reasonable, since it was found that working hours had no correlation with these areas in the study of this organisation.

The lack of correlation between working hours and work-life balance is by far the most surprising finding of the current study. It is possible that this finding to some extent relates to the psychological contract. As described in the literature, employees' perception of work-life balance may be influenced by an expectation that working hard will result in a reward, such as a promotion. The finding may also be linked to an intrinsic reward experienced by employees by the nature of their work. Alternatively, it could also be a result of successful work-life balance policies or a culture specific to the organisation.

A recent study carried out among young construction industry professionals in the UK, found that a high percentage of the participants associated work time with enjoyment (Sturges, 2013). The study suggests that these individuals work long hours as long as they have interesting work to do, and consider work time as an indulgence in an enjoyable activity. The idea is that some individuals may not consider working longer hours as something interfering with their personal lives, but rather as part of it. This could also help to potentially explain the lack of correlation between long working hours and work-life balance satisfaction in the present study, but further research is required in order to determine any relationship between work-life balance satisfaction, long hours and perceptions of long hours.

7.3 Managerial support

Managerial support has repeatedly been found to be an important factors for work-life balance in the literature (Smith and Gardner, 2007, Thomas and Ganster, 1995, McCarthy *et al*., 2013). It has also been linked to job burnout (Maslach, *et al*., 2001). It

was consequently thought that there would be a significant correlation between managerial support and work-life balance satisfaction in the study. This was confirmed in the study. Moderate levels of perceived managerial support were reported, with a large positive correlation between work-life balance satisfaction and managerial support. As work-life balance and burnout was shown to be related, the relationship between work-life balance and burnout was also tested, and confirmed the expectation that managerial support are linked to reduced levels of burnout.

7.4 Work-life balance policy

The current study sought to give insights into the work-life balance policies offered in the organisation, and the perceived helpfulness of each. The data regarding availability is not absolute, which means that it reflects the perceived availability as opposed to the actual availability. In a scenario where all policies were offered to all employees, and all employees had perfect knowledge, the scores would be either 100% or 0%. As such, the results were interpreted not as merely an overview of the policies offered in the organisation, but also as a reflection of awareness, and potentially the gatekeeping done by managers. As an example, a part-time policy may be in place, but it could be the case that not all managers are as willing to grant requests, or this may be the perception of the employee.

The results showed that a wide range of policies were considered to be available and useful. The most helpful policies were on-site facilities and services, flexible working schedules, time off in lieu and occasionally working from other locations (at home or another office). These policies were also among the most frequently reported available, together with financial support for education and unpaid leave. The least helpful policies were job sharing, paid sabbatical leave and carer's room. The least frequently reported as available were the option to buy more vacation days, telecommuting and paid sabbatical leave. As less than a third reported these as available, it is likely that they are either not offered, or only on an exceptional basis. The option to buy more vacation days and telecommuting stand out as both policies were reported as helpful by around half of the

population, and as such it shows a gap between employee preferences and the current offering.

Although the results showed many helpful and available policies, there was a wide range in frequencies for both. This indicates firstly that the needs of employees are individual, there is no one set of policies that will provide a solution for everyone. It also indicates that not all employees are eligible, or perceive themselves to be eligible, for each policy, or that further communication might be needed to promote the policies that are available. Contrasting the amount of policies offered and considered useful, with the mediocre work-life balance satisfaction results, it appears that the key to improving work-life balance in the organisation may not lie in formal policies.

7.5 Demographic impacts

The literature review showed that the factors that influence work-life balance remain largely constant throughout all career stage (Darcy *et al*., 2012). However, some research also considers the birth cohort phenomenon, which shows that employment preferences and perceptions differ depending on the conditions of the employee's birth cohort (Hess and Jepsen, 2009). This rather conflicts with the career stage research, but can be explained by the fact that the cohort effect is understood to be longitudinal, whereas the career stage research has largely been cross-sectional. As the current study is also cross-sectional, no large differences were expected. This belief was confirmed, as the findings showed no significant differences between any of the demographic factors in the research areas.

7.6 Practical implications

There are a few key practical implications of this study, which can help organisations, particularly in the software sector, to improve the current work-life balance and burnout situation for their employees. These also serve to provide employees with a better understanding of the importance of work-life balance and the detrimental effects that poor work-life balance can have. In the following paragraphs, these practical implications will be described.

The results showed that work-life balance satisfaction in the organisation was only moderate, despite the existence of a number of work-life balance policies that were considered useful and available by employees, and a general agreement that managers are supportive of work-life balance needs. This suggests that there are other important areas that impact on work-life balance that are not currently being addressed. As such, organisations may need to look beyond the traditional focus on work-life balance policies and manager support in order to increase work-life balance satisfaction. Organisations should seek to gain a better understanding of the pain points for their workforce in particular, and seek to tackle these directly.

The policy section of the study also showed that the perceived usefulness of work-life balance policies varies rather widely, and also that demographic factors did not have an impact on these preferences. This indicates that work-life balance needs are unique for each employee, and the work-life balance policies need to reflect this. Consequently, organisations should strive to offer a variety of programs that meet the exact needs of their employees. This again would require an analysis of employee needs, as well as determining the operational requirements of the organisation, before implementation (Grady *et al*., 2008).

The results of the current study also showed a link between work-life balance and burnout, with poor work-life balance in an organisation being associated with higher levels of job burnout. Job burnout can affect performance, lead to reduced job satisfaction, as well as mental health problems and related absences. It is therefore an important issue, and organisations should seek to monitor signs of burnout among their staff, as well as review the specific causes of burnout in the organisation. Maintaining good levels of work-life balance can help somewhat as a preventative tool.

The literature review suggested that working hours and managerial support were the most impactful factors for work-life balance, but only managerial support was shown to be linked with work-life balance in the study. This could be characteristic of the organisation, suggesting a culture where longer working hours are accepted. The

psychological contract, benefits and policies offered may also contribute to the lack of negative impact that longer hours have been shown to have in other organisations. Nonetheless, these can only be speculations. The most important implication is that managerial support continues to be key to work-life balance satisfaction, and organisations should strive to educate their managers to support work-life balance for their reports.

7.7 Limitations of the study

The current study has a number of limitations. Firstly, the study was conducted in one organisation alone. It can therefore not be said to represent the entire software sector in the country. The size of the sample population (70 respondents) is small, and were chosen through the self-selection sampling method. The self-selection method can result in data being collected from individuals with strong feelings about the research topic, which can make it less representative of the population (Saunders *et al*., 2012).

The research used data collected from a self-report questionnaire. As such, there is a risk of misunderstanding of questions and subjectivity in the interpretation of the scales. The individual's circumstance at the time of completing the questionnaire may also have influenced the results. As the questionnaire reached the participants during their working hours, it is thought that it was completed during the working day, which can mean that the time allotted to complete it was limited, which in turn could have led to participants not fully reading the questions and answer options.

The findings are therefore not generalisable to the entire IT sector in Ireland, but are relevant to the sample population, and may serve as an early exploration of the perceptions of employees in the particular company. Future research is hence recommended on a larger sample population and in a number of organisations, using objective measures in order to gain a better understanding of work-life balance and burnout in the entire IT sector in Ireland. To gain findings that are representative to the whole population, it is recommended to use a probability sampling method.

8. Conclusion

This study makes some new contributions to the work-life balance research for the Irish IT sector. The study confirmed the link between work-life balance and burnout, and as such shows that poor work-life balance may indirectly negatively impact job performance and absence levels as a result from this psychological syndrome. It also showed that there is room for improvement in both work-life balance and burnout levels, as results were only moderately positive.

This study showed that managerial support is a key factor for good work-life balance and reduced burnout levels, but rejected the impact of long working hours as established in previous research. This may be an indicator of a unique characteristic of the software sector or the particular organisation, and indicates that there may be other more important factors influencing work-life balance that were not the focus of previous research. These may include other work-related factors. The study also reviewed which work-life balance policies are currently available to employees in the organisation. A number of policies offered were considered useful by employees, such as on-site facilities and flexible working measures. Even so, there was a wide dispersion in perceived availability, and some policies, such as the option to buy additional vacation days, was not considered to be available although a large part of the sample population found them useful. This indicates that the policy offerings and availability could be improved further to cater for the individual needs of employees.

The findings also showed that there are no demographical differences in work-life balance satisfaction, burnout or policy preferences. This does not mean that a one size fits all approach is an adequate strategy for work-life balance, but rather that work-life balance is highly individual, and needs will differ based on other factors. A customised approach is preferable, to ensure these different needs are met in an effective manner, in order to improve work-life balance satisfaction and reduce the instances of burnout.

The results of this study should aid both employees and employers to gain a better understanding of work-life balance in the sector, and what actions could be taken in

order to improve upon the current situation. Such actions should aid both job satisfaction and job performance, in addition to reducing stress and potentially mental health related absences.

9. Recommendations for further research

The research on work-life balance is vast, but nonetheless there are some gaps. There is a lack of research focusing on the Irish IT sector in particular. This study sought to address this, but only surveyed employees in one particular organisation, using a self-selection sampling method. More large-scale research using a random sampling method is recommended in order to determine the significance of the findings (Saunders *et al*., 2012). This includes the link between work-life balance and burnout, which was confirmed in this study. As stress related absences and mental health issue have been seen to increase (CIPD, 2014), more research is recommended to confirm that this holds true for the sector at large, and also to explore which other factors may be contributing to burnout.

Previous research had shown that long working hours was an important negative factor for work-life balance and burnout (White *et al*., 2003, Frone *et al*., 1997). This study did not uphold this link, which suggest that further research is needed to determine the true impact of working hours on these areas in the IT sector in Ireland. If confirmed, this research should also aim to explore whether policies and perceptions of work explain the lack of impact of long hours.

Although this study successfully mapped out the perceived availability and usefulness of policies in the organisation, further research is required to establish the effectiveness of these programs. Particular attention should be paid to those which can also be classified as wellness initiatives, as research is particularly limited in this area. The results found that on-site facilities were considered helpful by the majority of the sample, so that these should be included in future research in determining its effectiveness as part of a work-life balance strategy.

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Appendix

1. Questionnaire

How work-life balance impacts on burnout

Hi there,

I'm a postgraduate student at the National College of Ireland. This survey is part of my Master in Human Resource Management, and focuses on the impacts of work-life balance on burnout among people working in the IT sector in Ireland. The study also seeks to assess the perceived usefulness of work-life balance policies in the workplace.

The full questionnaire should take around five minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and entirely confidential. No personal data will be collected. The broad findings of the research will be included in my final dissertation.

If you have any questions about this survey please contact me on signekristina.kellman@gmail.com

Thanks so much for your participation!

-Kristina

Section 1: Demographic questions
Gender*
- Male
- Female

Age*
- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50+

Marital status*
- Single
- Married/Cohabitating
- Separated/Divorced
- Widowed

Do you have children?*
- Yes
- No

Which broad company function does your role sit in?
- Sales
- Administration (HR, Finance, similar teams)
- Technical
- Other

Section 2: Work-life Balance Satisfaction

Please rate your level of satisfaction with each item below.

The way you divide your time between work and personal or family life*

- 1 - Very dissatisfied
- 2 - Dissatisfied
- 3 - Unsure
- 4 - Satisfied
- 5 - Very satisfied

How well your work life and your personal or family life fit together*

- 1 - Very dissatisfied
- 2 - Dissatisfied
- 3 - Unsure
- 4 - Satisfied
- 5 - Very satisfied

Your ability to balance the needs of your job with those of your personal or family life*

- 1 - Very dissatisfied
- 2 - Dissatisfied
- 3 - Unsure
- 4 - Satisfied
- 5 - Very satisfied

The way you divide your attention between work and home*

- 1 - Very dissatisfied
- 2 - Dissatisfied
- 3 - Unsure
- 4 - Satisfied
- 5 - Very satisfied

The opportunity you have to perform your job well and yet be able to perform home-related duties adequately*

- 1 - Very dissatisfied
- 2 - Dissatisfied
- 3 - Unsure
- 4 - Satisfied
- 5 - Very satisfied

Working hours and workload: How many hours do you spend working each week on average? (including any work done outside the office, such as checking emails)*

Section 3: Managerial Support

Please rate your level of agreement with each item below.

In general, managers in this organisation are quite accommodating of personal needs*

- 1 - Strongly disagree
- 2 - Disagree

- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 7 - Strongly agree

Senior management in this organisation encourage supervisors/line managers to be sensitive to employee's personal/nonwork concerns*
- 1 - Strongly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 7 - Strongly agree

Middle managers and executives in this organisation are sympathetic toward employee's responsibilities/commitments outside work*
- 1 - Strongly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 7 - Strongly agree

In the event of conflict, managers are understanding when employees have to put their personal lives first*
- 1 - Strongly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 7 - Strongly agree

In this organisation, employees are encouraged to strike a balance between their work and nonwork lives*
- 1 - Strongly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 7 - Strongly agree

Section 4: Burnout

Please rate your level of agreement with each item below.

I feel emotionally drained from my work*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel used up at the end of the day*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at work*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I can easily understand how clients and/or colleagues feel about things *
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel I treat some clients and/or colleagues as if they were impersonal objects*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

Working with people all day is a real strain for me*

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- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I deal effectively with the problems of clients and/or colleagues*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel burned out from my work*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel I am positively influencing other peoples' lives through my work*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I have become more callous toward people since I took this job*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month

- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel very energetic*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel frustrated by my job*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel I am working too hard on my job*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I don't really care what happens to some clients and/or colleagues*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

Working with people directly puts too much stress on me*
- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with clients and/or colleagues*

- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel exhilarated after working closely with clients and/or colleagues*

- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job*

- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel like I am at the end of my tether*

- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly*

- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

I feel clients and/or colleagues blame me for some of their problems*

- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less

- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

Section 5: Work-life balance policies

Please indicate whether each of these policies are available, and whether you consider them helpful. If the policy is not available, or not helpful, please just leave the fields blank.

Work from home
- Available
- Helpful

Work from another office
- Available
- Helpful

Telecommuting (working from home on a more permanent basis)
- Available
- Helpful

Flexible start/finish times (e.g. late starts)
- Available
- Helpful

Part-time work
- Available
- Helpful

Flexi-work schedule (shifting the number of hours you work between days)
- Available
- Helpful

Job sharing
- Available
- Helpful

Carer's room
- Available
- Helpful

Time off in lieu
- Available
- Helpful

Time off for study
- Available
- Helpful

Unpaid leave
- Available
- Helpful

Paid sabbatical leave
- Available
- Helpful

Paid time off for volunteering
- Available
- Helpful

Option to buy more vacation days
- Available
- Helpful

On-site health services
- Available
- Helpful

On-site gym facilities
- Available
- Helpful

On-site food facilities
- Available
- Helpful

Financial support for education
- Available
- Helpful