

**Flexible Working as an effective tool of Organisational Commitment, Motivation
& Productivity. The Quest for Employee Engagement & Work Life Balance using
Flexible Work Arrangements.**

Sinead Wisely

MA in Human Resource Management

National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland August 2017

Abstract

The study explores the advantages of flexibility in organisations and asks the question of “is flexibility in the workplace of benefit to employees and employers?” Employee engagement was a main focus while also this study considered work life balance. The research will focus on flexibility in the workplace and how this influences employee engagement. The research was based on an anonymous organisation and the interviews were carried out on employees within the company. Qualitative research was chosen for this study as it allowed opportunity to explore the research aims in greater detail by conducting semi-structured interviews which also allowed for further questions or probing to seek and gain insight to more information. This method was also the best approach to find and analyse any trends among the participants in the research by using the interview questions and gathering the data. The research focused on six employees establishing and focusing on employee flexibility within the organisation and their work life balance and their engagement and commitment towards work. The main aims of this research was to explore the advantages of flexibility within the organisation and to investigate the relationship between flexible working and employee engagement. The challenges that were faced throughout the research included gaining trust from the interviewees.

Work life balance and flexible working hours contribute significantly to many employees in the workplace and benefits greatly to many employees. Employees work must be valued and recognised by employers. Recognition by employers is very important in organisations as it shows its employees that they are valued, trusted and recognised for the work that they do.

The findings suggested that the employees who availed of flexible working hours were highly engaged. Employee engagement links back to previous literature and according to Truss et al (2006) engagement not only benefits the organisation but also the employees and organisations that have their employees engaged. The interviews clearly indicated how important engagement is within the organisation.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

**National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)**

Name: Sinead Wisely

Student Number: 15006441

Degree for which thesis is submitted: MA in Human Resource Management

Material submitted for award

- (a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.
- (b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.
- (c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects)
- (d) I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Signature of research student:

Date:

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland

Student name: Sinead Wisely

Student number: 15006441

School: National College of Ireland

Course: MA HRM Part Time

Degree to be awarded: MA in Human Resource Management

Title of Thesis:

Flexible Working as an effective tool of Organisational Commitment, Motivation & Productivity. The Quest for Employee Engagement & Work Life Balance using Flexible Work Arrangements.

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (<http://trap.ncirl.ie/>), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access.

I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate: _____

For completion by the School:

The aforementioned thesis was received by _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to everyone who participated in this research.

I would like to thank all the staff in NCI and particularly, I would like to say thank you to my supervisor Rebecca Maguire for all of her help, understanding, guidelines and prompt responses during my research.

I would also like to thank the participants who took part in this research dissertation, without their participation, this research would not have been possible.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Sean and Mary, for their continuing support, guidance, encouragement and love without which I would have never had the opportunity to attend higher level education and complete a Master's degree. I am deeply grateful for all of the opportunities I have had in my life because of them. Finally to my boyfriend Michael for his full support throughout this process and for his encouragement every day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Research Aims.....	2
1.2	Research Objectives.....	2
2.	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
2.1	Introduction.....	3
2.2	Employee Engagement	3
2.3	Work Life Balance	7
2.4	The Benefits of Flexibility within an Organisation.....	8
2.5	Conclusion	14
3.	METHODOLOGY.....	16
3.1	Introduction.....	16
3.2	Research Objectives.....	17
3.3	Reasons for this Research.....	17
3.4	Research Approach.....	17
3.4.1	Quantitative Research	18
3.4.2	Qualitative Research	18
3.5	Participants throughout the Study	19
3.6	Research Instrument	20
3.6.1	Procedure.....	21
3.6.2	Research Framework	22
3.6.3	The Methods of Collecting Data	22
3.7	Ethical Considerations.....	23
3.8	Limitations of the Study	24
3.9	Strengths and Weaknesses of Semi-Structured Interviews.....	24
4.	RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	25
4.1	Introduction.....	25
4.2	Employee Background and Work Background.....	26
4.3	Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction	27

4.4	Promotion of Flexible Working	28
4.5	Work Life Balance	29
4.6	Value	30
4.7	Motivation	31
4.8	Culture of Engagement.....	31
4.9	Stress Levels at Work	32
4.10	Job Satisfaction	32
4.11	Commitment to the Organisation	33
4.12	Conclusion	34
4.13	Flexible Working Hours	34
5.	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	36
5.1	Introduction.....	36
5.2	Employee Engagement	36
5.3	Flexibility within the Workplace	37
5.4	Work Life Balance	37
5.5	Value	38
5.6	Motivation	38
5.7	Satisfaction & Commitment to the Organisation	39
5.8	Conclusion	39
6.	CONCLUSION OF THESIS.....	41
6.1	Introduction.....	41
6.2	Research Question	41
6.3	Limitations of the Research Study.....	42
6.4	Recommendations & Cost of Recommendations	43
6.4.1	Timelines for implementation of recommendations	43
6.5	Personal Learning and Reflection	43
6.6	Final Conclusion	44
7.	APPENDICES	46

7.1	Appendix 1 – Letter to Participants	46
7.2	Appendix 2 – Consent Form.....	47
7.3	Appendix 3 – Interview Questions.....	48
8.	REFERENCES.....	49

1. INTRODUCTION

This section includes the framework for this research including the background of the research and reasons for undertaking this research. This section will also outline the aims and objections of this study and research.

Throughout this piece of research it will focus largely on how flexibility in a working environment and organisations affects employees and engages employees. It will focus on how flexibility contributes satisfaction in the workplace and it will also look at flexibility from a broader context including culture, behaviour, motivation, commitment and work life balance. The challenges that will be explored will include those of employer trust, cost of equipment to facilitate working from home and there are many more factors that need to be considered and managed correctly.

The research will be based on an anonymous financial organisation. The research will focus on a group of employees establishing and focusing on employee flexibility within the organisation, their work life balance, engagement and commitment towards work. More and more global companies are implementing flexibility in the workplace as they are finding that the benefits far outweigh the risks. According to Hill & Civian, (2008) workplace flexibility has been identified as central to research on the work-life interface and a key strategy used by work-life policy makers in their attempt to cope with today's global economy. Employees work must be valued and recognised by employers. Recognition by employers is very important in organisations as it shows its employees that they are valued, trusted and recognised for the work that they do. Brun and Dugas (2008) stated that most employees like to be recognised and appreciated. Kowalewski & Phillips, (2012) advised that employees have consistently ranked items such as “full appreciation for work done,” “feeling ‘in’ on things,” and “interesting work” as being more important to them than more traditional incentives. This research will focus on and explore a range of areas around flexibility including the new flexible working pilot framework that was introduced within the organisation in August of last year 2016. This research will provide and show how flexibility within the workplace impacts on employee engagement and to show how flexible working hours increase employee morale and commitment to the company. This research is important as it will ensure that work life balance is promoted within organisations and to show why this is so important and vital for employees.

The area of employee engagement has gathered a lot of attention in recent decades. The reason behind this is that engagement is important for the success of an organisation.

1.1 Research Aims

The main aim of this research is to explore the advantages of flexibility within the organisation and to investigate the relationship between flexible working and employee engagement. This research will identify the benefits of promoting a flexible working environment within organisations and this can impact on work life balance. The research is focused on a financial institution as this organisation has introduced flexible working hours to their employees. The research will also focus on employee engagement and commitment and identify if there are any trends or issues with the flexible working arrangements. Finally this research project will also go into depth on work life balance and the research will identify and explore if flexibility significantly improves work life balance.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To explore the benefits of flexibility within an organisation and how this impacts on employee engagement, job satisfaction and work life balance.
2. To investigate demographic differences in employee tendency to avail of flexible working arrangements.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review will examine the concept of employee engagement and the benefits to employees of a flexible working environment. Employee engagement is vital to all organisations and to the employees and this research will show how vitally important employee engagement is to an organisation. This chapter will also go into detail in relation to work life balance and the importance and advantages of flexible working arrangements in one's daily work life routine. The review will also explore the research into job satisfaction and how an employee who is engaged and content within their job is satisfied in their role and within their organisation and it will focus on the benefits of promoting a flexible working environment for both the employer and the employees within the organisation.

Throughout this piece of research it will focus on how flexibility in the workplace engages employees and contributes satisfaction in the workplace and it will also look at flexibility from a broader context including culture, behaviour, motivation, commitment and work life balance. The challenges that will be explored will include those of employer trust, cost of equipment to facilitate working from home and there are many more factors that need to be considered and managed correctly.

2.2 Employee Engagement

“Engagement has been found to be good not only for the organisations but also for the individuals experiencing it as well, and so having an engaged workforce should be win-win situation” (Truss et al. 2006, p.2).

“The level of employee engagement, both emotional and intellectual, is the key.” (Howe 2003) Kahn's (1990) definition of employee engagement is used widely throughout research. He defined employee engagement as the 'harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employee and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances' (Kahn, 1990; 694) CIPD define employee engagement as “being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to other” (www.cipd.co.uk, 2015).

Howe defines employee engagement “as the state of emotional and intellectual involvement that employees have in an organization. Engaged employees are those individuals who want to and do take action to improve the business results of their organization” (Howe, 2003). There are also those who believe that there is not a definition for employee engagement, however employee engagement is something you will know when you see it. (Bridger, 2015) Armstrong (2007) and MacLeod and Clarke (2009) have argued that retaining and maintaining employees who are engaged is the key to increasing organisational benefits.

‘Man is a wanting animal and rarely reaches a state of complete satisfaction except for a short time. As one desire is satisfied, another pops up to take its place. When this is satisfied, still another comes into the foreground. It is a characteristic of the human being throughout its whole life that he is particular always desiring something. We are faced then with the necessity of studying of the all the motivations of each other and we are concomitantly faced with the necessity of giving up the motivational units in isolation if we are to achieve the broad understanding that we seek for.’ (Maslow,1954)

According to Maslow, there are five levels of motivation; starting from the bottom there are basic needs which Maslow defines as psychological needs such as food, water and warmth, next he described as the safety needs which include a feeling of safety and security, belongingness and relationship needs which involves relationship, love and friendships, esteem needs which includes achievements, recognition and appreciation and finally at the top of the pyramid is self actualisation which Maslow believed to be one’s potential to achieve goals and accomplishment (Maslow, 1954).

Organisations that focus on employee engagement have had significant results within improving the organisation and improving the employees who were engaged. Organisations are now coming to the conclusion that an engaged workforce has positive benefits not only for the employees but for the overall organisation and the organisations customers (Bridger, 2015). Human behaviour is shaped by its consequences and providing positive consequences for employee performance is one of the most powerful ways to enhance performance (Podsakoff, Todor, & Skov, 1982).

Engaged employees show emotional attachment to their organization (Markos and Sridevi, 2010), in ways that they are enthusiastic about their role and the work they do each day, and more productive (Seijts and Crim, 2006), more focused in their role

(Albrecht, 2010), deal better with the demands of their job (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2006) and they tend to stay in their jobs longer (Kruse, 2012). Research suggests that the more engaged employees are, the more likely their employer is to exceed the industry average in its revenue growth (Markos and Sridevi, 2010). There are research studies that show a correlation between employee engagement, quality, staff retention, business sales, business profit and total shareholder returns (Kruse, 2012). Engaged employees show emotional attachment to their organization.

“Companies must win in the workplace to succeed in the marketplace” (Conant, 2015). The former CEO of Campbell’s soup was indicating the importance of employee engagement in an organisation with this quote (Increasing Employee Engagement, 2015). The financial situation of an organisation is significantly affected when employees are not engaged in what they do each day. Employee engagement produces an increase in performance levels and output. The level of satisfaction of employees who are engaged is very high therefore these employees are less likely to search for another job elsewhere than those who are less engaged or not engaged at all. There are six dimensions of employee engagement; leadership and culture, work satisfaction, work relationships, employee well-being, employee value proposition and personal professional growth. Employee engagement is the creation of many emotional, mental and cognitive conditions including meaningfulness which refers to an employee’s opinions and views that they feel valued as a person and that their work each day is recognised by their employer. Availability is another condition which portrays the emotional and physical hold back that an employee compels to work without distraction or interruption and finally an employee’s safety within the workplace whereby an employee can voice their own opinion to contribute positively and to have positive relations with other work colleagues that involves trust and respect. These factors all nurture one’s safety within a work organisation (Increasing Employee Engagement, 2015).

Leadership is described as one of the most fundamental factors in employee engagement. Throughout organisations today, the focus of priority is more on leadership rather than management (Increasing Employee Engagement, 2015). Employees who are engaged feel more connected to their organisation. A workplace can be a place of stress,

tension, overload of work, deadlines and many more obstacles on a day to day basis. Employees who are less engaged will feel the daily stress and tensions of work much more than an employee who is engaged. Leaders within organisations need to focus on engagement and ensuring all employees are engaged as much as possible in the work that they do. An employee who is engaged will be better prepared physically, cognitively and emotionally to deal with any possible stressful situations at work (Hansen, Byrne, and Kiersch (2014). *"An employee who is engaged is positive about their work being meaningful, their workplace being safe and the availability of sufficient resources for completing any tasks they may have."*(Kumar & Pansari.2015). Employee satisfaction is an affirmative opinion that employees have to their overall job situation. Employees who are satisfied are generally more committed to their work and organisation and have less absenteeism to those who are not satisfied which therefore has a positive influence on the service that they deliver. Employees who are satisfied also join in with the organisations values and goals see themselves as being part of the organisation (Kumar & Pansari.2015). Employee commitment and loyalty to the organisation creates an overall positive outcome about the company and this can then be a motivator to employees. Commitment to an organisation is a very important aspect of employee engagement as it compels employees to do an extensive amount of work other than what is in their job description (Kumar & Pansari 2015). When employees are engaged they show signs of commitment to the company, motivation, collaboration, involvement and performance of duties. Kahn's research specifically focused on the psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement within a working environment. Throughout the article Kahn spoke about personal engagement as the extent to which people employ and express their personal selves at work, and disengagement as the extent to which people withdraw and defend their personal selves at work. Kahn identified meaningfulness, safety and availability as psychological conditions that impact personal engagement at work and these are themes very often in employee engagement (Kahn, 1990).

Organisations must create a workplace where people want to show up for work, work hard and know how to manage employees so that they can be more productive in what they do each day. Employee engagement significantly improves the productivity and profitability of organisations. Employees who are disengaged have added no benefit to

an organisation and consequently find it difficult to go to work and do their work each day. Positivity in people's lives is important. People need to have positive goals and outcomes in their daily life to succeed and be happy. Scholars have argued that how positivity relates to job-related outcomes “*represents a critical question since it may lead to more effective interventions and to successful strategies for employees to fully develop their potentials*” (Alessandri, Borgogni, Schaufeli, Caprara, & Consiglio, 2015).

2.3 Work Life Balance

Work life balance is a concept that supports the efforts of employees to balance time between work and their own important aspects in their lives. Work life balance includes “*employees time management, inter-role conflict and care arrangements for dependents*” (Gregory, Milner and Windebank, 2013). Work life balance serves as a major attraction due to its deep impact on all aspects of a person's life (Dave, J; Purohit, H). The importance of work life balance has significantly increased in recent years.

Work life balance is an important involvement within human resources in all organizations. Work life balance has developed more importance in recent years due to many reasons, mainly competitiveness, the changing demographics, the increasing participation of women in the workforce, ever-changing technology and the increasing number of dual income households (Shoemaker, J, Brown, A, Barbour,R, 2011). Greenhaus (2010), defines work life balance as activities which lead to satisfaction and smooth functioning in both the domains with minimum amount of conflicts in their roles (Jeffrey H. Greenhaus Gary N. Powell & 2010). As Greenhaus has related work life balance to satisfaction, it makes the fact important that satisfaction is based on individual perception. Example- for one employee, getting a good salary can be a reason for satisfaction and for the other, satisfaction would mean recognition at workplace and lot of respect. Work life balance is hence directly related to perception (Jeffrey H. Greenhaus Gary N. Powell & 2010).

Shobitha Poulouse & Sudarsan N (2014), define that work life balance is all about getting fully engaged in the two domains and giving out the best performance, that is expected in each role. Gulbahar, Amjad Ali, et al., (2014) define work life balance and state that it is related to the priorities that a person chooses. Most employees face the challenge of balancing work and personal demands (Baltes, Clark, & Chakrabarti, 2010).

Work life balance is a central issue that affects family, wellbeing and work as these are all very important elements in everyone's lives. Employees are trying to juggle work demands and home life expectations. Employees look for a work life flexibility balance. Employers can assist in work life balance by introducing policies and procedures that enables employees to pursue work life balances.

Work life balance involves well being which consists of five measurable elements; positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and purpose and accomplishment. Each of these elements contribute to well being therefore it is extremely important that an employee is engaged within their work place, feels that they have a meaning and a purpose to their work, have good relationships with the team and manager and feel they have accomplished the work that they do whether on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Work life balance is important in everyone's daily life routine and it is important that the organisation ensures that each employee feels engaged and feels valued in the work that they do each day. It reduces stress and enables employees to feel more productive in their work and at home.

Time management is an important factor related to work life balance for all employees no matter what the role is. *"There are only twenty-four hours in the day. They should not all be devoted to work, but if you don't manage the work piece, you can't balance the personal piece. Start immediately. Manage your time, don't let it manage you."*(Dowd, T, pg 5). Time management can influence others therefore it is critical to manage time efficiently and effectively and overall time management can lead to a better work life balance as it reduces stress levels and the day to day rushing in a person's life. Time management should be managed by not only employers but the employees too as it creates a more efficient day to day plan that reduces stress levels, anxiety and pressure and increases times efficiency, work deadlines and a better day to day routine within a workplace.

2.4 The Benefits of Flexibility within an Organisation

The literature that exists around the current research topic suggests various definitions of the term "flexible working". Arge, Steiner and Hassanain have researched the subject from different standpoints: flexibility in terms of flexible building design and physical office and flexibility in the sense of time flexibility and location mobility (Steiner, 2005,Hassanain, 2006, Arge, 2005). Thus, Arge (2005) defined flexibility as part of

building adaptability, the function which enables to face changing user or owner needs by changing its property easily. Steiner's (2005) explanation of flexibility is very similar to Arge (2005). He defined flexibility as ability of the building to easily accommodate reorganization. Hill et al. (2004) found that job flexibility was related to lower work-family conflict in a 48-country global sample. The sample was then divided into four groups, the East, West-Developing and in the United States showed that this relationship was true. Throughout Western Europe and Australia, job flexibility was associated with greater work and family conflict. Work life balance and flexible working hours contribute significantly to many employees in the workplace and benefit greatly to many employees.

Throughout this research it will focus on what makes a good employee and also how do employers trust their employees by allowing and introducing flexibility into their work pattern? Do organisations benefit from this? All of these questions must be answered and it is of the best interest of the organisation to ensure that flexibility works for both the employer and the employee involved. Implementing flexibility must not be treated as an accommodation but as a broader systemic organisational change empowering individuals and teams within organisations. Integration of flexibility of strategic processes within any organisation at a range of perspectives of the organisation becomes very important. The area around flexibility and organisation strategy evolving and developing and it requires an amount of focus from senior stakeholders to conclude the impact that flexibility has on a variety of management processes within an organisation which then leads to better performance from employees. In Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, flexibility is defined as "*the quality of being capable of responding or conforming to changing or new situations*". Flexibility is a multi-dimensional concept-demanding agility and versatility; associated with change, innovation and novelty; coupled with robustness and resilience, implying stability, sustainable advantage and capabilities that may evolve over time. (Bahrami 1992).

This research is important as it will focus on and explore the benefits to the organisation's employees of flexible working arrangements and how this impacts on both the employer and the employee. The themes that will be discussed will include an employer's perspective on flexibility and that of the employee and how it factors into

personal life and wellbeing. There will be a huge focus on the benefits for the employer and how the organisation benefits from flexibility. The above themes will be discussed to understand, recognise and interpret the benefits and prosperity that a flexible environment or organisation can offer to their employees and how this will relate to their own well being and healthy lifestyle. The themes chosen link to existing scholarly literature from theorists and this will be discussed throughout the findings chapter.

Flexible working is grounded in autonomy and this requires mutual trust. Flexibility in organisations is a negotiation rather than a structures arrangement and it depends on the needs and requirements by the individual and the company. Flexible working is dependent on mutual trust gained between management and employees. Flexibility in organisations also promotes a culture of trust and this is evident within the chosen organisation. (The Benefits of Flexible Working Arrangements) For effective human resource management, a knowledge and understanding of human motivation is essential. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a very popular theory of motivation. The theory identifies five levels of needs that an employee has and it assumes that employees want to work their way up to reach their full potential, physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization (Datta, Y (2010)).

Maslow's theory relates to this research as employee flexibility relates to many topics including motivation and people who want to work their way up to their fullest potential and by doing so they require help and recognition from their employer and workplace. Organisations who promote and ensure their employees can be flexible within their working arrangements allow employees to strive to their best achievements in life. When an employee's basic needs are met within an organisation, the employee is then motivated to meet higher level standards. According to Maslow, the deficit principle claims that once a need is satisfied, it is no longer a motivator because an individual will take action only to satisfy unmet needs and gains, and according to Maslow, before a person can take action to satisfy a need at any level on this pyramid the needs below it must already be satisfied.

Flexibility for employees allows employees to have a choice over how they work which enables them to balance their work and non-work lives effectively. In 1985, John Atkinson developed the model of the flexible firm which has had a huge influence to the approach of flexibility in the workplace (Atkinson, 1985). The model identified a range of strategies that employers use to achieve organisational flexibility. According to John Atkinson, broad categories of flexibility were identified: Numerical flexibility which allowed for labour to be utilised when needed and then disposed of when it was not required and this particular category of flexibility may include using part time employees. Functional flexibility allowed for staff in an organisation to be deployed among several activities in accordance with the demand levels and this type of flexibility may include multi tasking. Temporal flexibility includes the time in which labour is employed. This type of flexibility involves shift work. Spatial flexibility is linked with location of work and allows employers to position work in various locations (Contemporary Human Resource Management, pg 517).

It is important for employers to consider employees working arrangement and organisations should include a policy whereby it allows employees to be given the opportunity to work flexible in order to assist them in achieving a more satisfactory balance between their work and non-work activities in their daily lives. Flexible working arrangements will only suit certain occupations that do not involve day to day contact with other stakeholders in the business, meetings on a daily basis or any communication face to face. Employees must understand that it may not be possible in the particular role that they are in to work remotely as the role does not allow them to do so.

According to the theoretical and research based model of change in promoting effective and flexible workplaces which dates back to the early 1990's. The research around "When Work Works" proves that flexibility in the workplace is not only a perk to employees but also it can be a powerful strategy that promotes a more desirable outcome for both employers and employees. A change within an organisation does not take immediate effect and requires a long term strategy in place to ensure that it is designed and works effectively and efficiently. Organisations must have a well developed network of partnerships to develop this particular change within organisations and there must be a clear strategy outlined (Galinsky E, 2013).

Throughout a rapid and competitive business environment the function of the human resource department is vital in all aspects within such a dynamic environment.

Flexibility can include formal flexibility policies which are officially approved human resources policies as well as any official policies that give supervisors discretion to provide flexibility such as flexible start and finish times, the option to work remotely/from home or informal flexibility which refers to policies that are not official and not written down but are still available to some employees, even on a discretionary basis. Work life balance and flexible working hours contribute significantly to many employees in the workplace and benefits greatly to many employees. Flexible working hours in the workplace will increase employee engagement, improve staff retention, improve employee morale, reduce commute time and commitment to the company. Other benefits involved with flexible working hours include: reduced employee stress, reduced employee absenteeism, reduced staff turnover, an increase in productivity, high return on investment and increased job satisfaction. Introducing flexible working hours in an organisation is a great incentive to employees as it allows flexibility to those with young children or to those who travel great distances to work.

Research on flexibility has been conducted generally at three different levels, organisational, group and individual. The research on organisational flexibility was the most influential and effective. (Evans, 1991; Hitt et al., 1998). Flexibility has also been discussed at the group level of organizations, where scholars have suggested that the key advantage of organizing work in groups is the ability to be flexible. (Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Cohen, Ledford, & Spreitzer, 1996; Cordery, Mueller, & Smith, 1991; Langfred, 2007; Okhuysen & Waller, 2002) The chosen organisation introduced a People Strategy and Introduction of Flexible Working Pilot Framework in 2016. The organisation introduced a flexible working survey to their staff. The employees requested flexible working options and the flexible working framework was launched in August 2016. The flexible working options that the organisation introduced to their employees include: remote or eworking, career breaks, unpaid leave, flexible start and finish times. The organisation has advised their staff that the flexible working arrangements will not be an automatic right and it will need to be requested. Each department within the organisation may implement differently based on the business needs and roles within the team. The organisation has promoted remote working

however this will not be suitable for all roles. The eworkplace project will further enhance remote working. *“It’s all about quality of life and finding a happy balance between work, family and friends”*(People Strategy and Introduction of Flexible Working Pilot Framework, August 2016).

The increasing pressures in one’s working life between managing both work and life responsibilities all at once is becoming very stressful for many employees both old and young. Many employees state that this can impact and affect their personal life. (Balanced Workplace Flexibility, pg5). The current workplace movements consist of an ageing population, increasing elderly care demands and a growth in dual care and single parent families. A resolution to overcome these difficulties that have arisen is workplace flexibility policies. Flexible work arrangements that are now offered by employers for a work life balance and performance related explanations are very common within many organisations (Balanced Workplace Flexibility, pg5). It’s critical for an organisation to have a structure in place in relation to flexibility as some employees can find too much flexibility a bad thing within an organisation and can feel that there is no real structure in place.

Organisations must implement flexibility initiatives effectively in order for the employees to appreciate and factor in the benefits of flexibility in a workplace. According to the “Balanced Workplace Flexibility” article; “members of their research team have investigated flexibility, examining many different types such as part-time work and flexi-time across different hierarchical levels and social classes and there is a common trap within flexibility in the workplace. The traps referred to in the article include flexibility policies and practices will fail in time if all the stakeholders interest are not respected and balanced in their implementation. There are three common flexibility traps that can emerge according to article Balanced Workplace Flexibility. The potential for changes in work-life dynamics and unintended consequences for the flexibility user is the first flexibility trap acknowledged. Secondly, the potential negative equity and fairness effects of flexibility programs for both co-workers and non users of flexibility and how this may lead them to engage in backlash against flexibility programs and users and finally the possible larger effects of flexibility programs on organisational culture where the presence of flexible work was perceived to undermine

corporate culture (Balanced Workplace Flexibility, pg6). Flexibility implementation requires balance and it must be considered and respect the needs and preferences of all the interest groups that are differently affected by the policy. (Balanced Workplace Flexibility, pg6). Flexibility can also help to change work life relationships by ensuring the role of the employee is not carried into the home on a regular basis at times when the employee would prefer it not to be. This can affect family life and this can be addressed in the workplace with some support from a manager/supervisor. Flexibility within a workplace links with employee engagement as employees who are engaged within their work often tend to be engaged due to the benefits of the company and how the company treats their employees. Employees who feel they have the option to work flexible hours are therefore more engaged as they are happy within their work (Croucher and Kelliher, 2005).

2.5 Conclusion

While there is sufficient evidence that employee engagement is highly beneficial to an organisations performance and drive there is also the evidence that organisations can trust employees who choose to have flexible working hours in their performance towards work. Employee engagement is also a very important aspect to both employers and employees. Employees who are engaged are of great benefit to an organisation as they are more focused, organised and enjoy the work that they do each day. Employers must show appreciation and recognise their employees as this impacts on work ethic and employee engagement and motivation.

Organisations that focus on employee engagement have had significant results within improving the organisation and improving the employees who were engaged. Work life balance is extremely important in everyone's lives and it is important that an organisation ensures that each employee feels engaged and feels valued in the work that they do each day. It reduces stress and enables employees to feel more productive in their work and at home with their personal life. Flexible working arrangements are proven to be of benefit to many employees with many different circumstances. Similarly, flexibility for employees allows employees to have a choice over how they work which enables them to balance their work and non-work lives effectively.

Overall, it is evident that employee engagement is a top priority within organisations as it benefits both the organisation and the employee. It is evident that work life balance is an important aspect of an individual's day to day routine and it is important that a workplace promotes work life balance and ensures they are doing the best that they can for their employees. Finally, workplace flexibility can contribute greatly to an employee's work life balance and it is very important that an employer builds that trust with the employee and promotes flexible working where possible. This research project adds to existing literature as it relates to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory which states that employee flexibility relates to motivation and people reaching their full potential and in doing so, the employees require full support and recognition from their organisation. This research also links in with what Truss et al (2006) who indicated that engagement in a workplace has been found to be good not only for the organisation but also for the employees involved as well.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section of the dissertation aims to explore the various methods of collecting data and the specific methods that have been used throughout the research. This chapter also demonstrates how the research was conducted throughout this study and the reason for the choice of method. The research method that was chosen to suit the study of the topic and which was most practical for the time frame that was involved. It is important for the piece of research that the right method is chosen correctly in order to give the best results for the analysis. These particular methods have been used to explore the research area. After considering the research involved in this piece of work, the researcher chose to use qualitative research as this suited the particular type of research and gave the answers and results that the researcher required to conduct the piece of research. The researcher used a qualitative approach to obtain the results.

Qualitative research was the best research method for this study as it allowed opportunity to explore the research aims in greater detail by conducting semi-structured interviews which also allowed for further questions or probing to seek more information. Interviews are a strong research tool that includes strengths and weaknesses, generating the results to the interviewee's opinions and trends against the questions asked. The interview questions will be very concise and clear to gain the best results possible for the research.

This method also was the best approach to find and analyse any trends among the participants in the research by using the interview questions and gathering the data. The qualitative methodology was best suited to the aims and objectives of this research as it captured all relevant information required in the interviews to conduct this research and allowed for further information and trends to be gathered. The qualitative research also allowed the researcher to gain an understanding the context and the environment of the organisation.

This research methodology had reliability and validity concepts. "*Qualitative research is an effective way of collecting data as your participants are being involved in research in their natural environment*" (Robson 2005, p.456) The chapter will discuss further into the chosen research method and why this method was chosen for this research. This chapter will also discuss the sample chosen for the research why this sample was

chosen. The research will discuss how the researcher conducted the research for the participants involved and how the results were gathered and analysed.

3.2 Research Objectives

The research title of this study is: Flexible working as an effective tool of organisational commitment, motivation & productivity. The Quest for Employee Engagement & Work Life Balance using Flexible Work Arrangements.

The below objectives have been designed in order to achieve the aim of this research:

1. To explore the benefits of flexibility within an organisation and how this impacts on employee engagement, job satisfaction and work life balance.
2. To investigate demographic differences in employee tendency to avail of flexible working arrangements.

3.3 Reasons for this Research

As mentioned earlier in this text, the aim of this research is to identify the benefits of promoting a flexible working environment within organisations and to identify employee engagement and work life balance. This research is focused on a financial institution as this organisation has introduced flexible hours to their employees. The researcher will also focus on employee engagement and commitment and identify if there are any trends or issues with the flexible working arrangements. Finally this research will identify and explore if flexibility significantly improves work life balance.

3.4 Research Approach

When conducting research, there are two approaches that the researcher can choose to conduct their study. These approaches are inductive and deductive research. The inductive approach is carried out when a researcher conducts a qualitative piece of research whereas the deductive approach is carried out on a quantitative study.

Both research approaches will be discussed next in this chapter and the researcher will also discuss why the chosen research was decided for this study. The researcher had to decide on what research approach would work best for this study and also had to decide what research would outcome in the best possible results to conduct the research and this study overall.

3.4.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. (Babbie and Muijis, 2010)

Quantitative data is numerical data analysis using statistical methods such as questionnaires. (Quinlan, 2011, p. 380)

Quantitative research is usually used for theory testing through precise measurement of something, such as measuring consumer behaviour and opinions, to answer questions regarding when, who, how much, how many and how often; meanwhile, it requires researcher keep neutral and distant from the research to avoid bias; on the other hand, qualitative research is often labelled interpretive research as it aims to achieve in-depth understanding and build theory through detailed description. (Cooper and Schindler, 2014)

3.4.2 Qualitative Research

‘Qualitative research can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data’ (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative research uses an inductive approach. An inductive approach is concerned with the generation of new theory whereas deductive approach is concerned with the testing on an existing theory. There are four main types of qualitative research; phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study. Qualitative data is commonly collected using interviews face to face or over the telephone and focus groups. Qualitative methods are rooted in ‘interpretivism’. Interpretivism is the view that a strategy is required that acknowledges the differences that exist between people and the objects of the natural sciences; the research should look outside their own preconceptions. (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

According to Mello & Flint (2009) *“a qualitative method of research can be particularly effective in understanding the nature of personal experiences, providing insights that are difficult to obtain from quantitative methods, understanding underlying meanings in human interactions and relationships in organizational settings, and in researching areas where there is little previous knowledge.”*

The qualitative research method was appropriate in this study as it provided data required to conduct this research based on employee's opinions within the chosen organisation. Another benefit of utilizing a qualitative method was the flexibility to develop open-ended questions. With quantitative methods study, such as surveys and questionnaires, the questions are close-ended or fixed and leave no room for flexibility (Swanson & Holton, 2005).

The qualitative method chosen for this research was semi-structured interviews as this was a primary source for my research with raw data and subjective data from employees within the organisation. The semi-structured interviews was a good option for this research as it reduced any insecurities people may have in relation to the questions as it was an anonymous and confidential interview. The qualitative questions in the study included semi-structured questions to identify employee engagement, work life balance, job satisfaction and flexibility within their work environment. The interview consisted of fifteen questions relating to an employee's work status, age, marital status, engagement, motivation, flexibility, value and work life balance. These questions were put in place to test employee engagement, satisfaction and work life balance. The interview questions were developed around the research aims and objectives and designed in order to achieve reliable, comparable data. The structure of the interview questions was designed into three different stages focusing on the employee's background and work background, employee engagement, flexibility, value and motivation, and work life balance. The questions were developed by identifying the research aims and objectives and then designing questions that would aim to answer the aims and objectives. The data collected from the interviews will be outlined and discussed further in the findings chapter of this research project.

The researcher also discussed the ethical issues and the personal role as a researcher and this will be discussed in this chapter of the project.

3.5 Participants throughout the Study

The overall aim of this research dissertation is to understand the organisations strategy regarding flexible working hours and to explore the benefits of flexible working to the employees involved within the study. This study also focuses on employee engagement and work life balance and how this impacts on an employee's day to day life. The semi-structured interviews in which the researcher conducted to gain an insight into the

employees own interpretation of the flexible working agreements within the organisation and to gain an insight into their feelings regarding the promotion of flexible working by the company.

The researcher used a sample of six people from the financial organisation. The participants throughout the study include employees, managers and directors of an anonymous financial sector that the research is based upon. The participants included a mix of male and female from the age range of 21-44, parents/non-parents, part time/full time employees, and these participants worked over a range of disciplines within the financial sector. These employees came from different departments within the organisation and were in different job positions within the company. The data analysed in this study is based on only six people within the company and the researcher is aware that the data may be different if a larger number of employees were interviewed.

The participants were approached by an internal email with an introduction as to why the interviews were important to the research and why the research was being conducted and also the contribution the interviews would provide to the research and its results. The interviews were designed in May 2017 and the results from the majority of the interviews were conducted in June 2017. The interviews were recorded via mobile phone and the researcher then listened back to each interview to gather data and any trends or opinions that may have been missed during the interviews. The answers to the questions were then examined by the researcher and any trends or similarities were recorded down on paper for the findings chapter of this research thesis.

3.6 Research Instrument

The research method that was chosen for this research was semi structured face to face interviews as this type of research was the most appropriate for this study and it allowed the researcher to engage with the interviewees and to get their own personal opinions and feelings in relation to the research. Semi structured interviews also allow the researcher to understand what is happening, identify general pattern and to gain insight to the employees perspective, assumptions and actions. Interviews are a flexible type of research therefore giving the researcher the flexibility to ask more questions and to probe answers.

The interviews were conducted within the financial organization with six employees in total. The interviews were conducted in a meeting room away from the distraction of

other colleagues and noise levels and also for the privacy of the interviewees that participated.

The questions in the interview were based around the information that the researcher required to conduct the research and to gain a greater insight into employee's own work life balance, motivation, engagement factors, flexibility, home life, gender and age.

Semi structured interviews were designed for this research in order to develop an insight into an employee's thoughts and opinions and with this particular approach it allowed employees to elaborate further on the question and it also provided scope to the adaption of the questions. The interviewees were advised to speak openly about their opinions and once again the interviewees were advised that all answers would be anonymous for the purpose of the analysis results. The answers to the interview questions were excellent and it provided information as to how an employee feels in their current employment and how the employees felt about flexibility within their organisation.

Saunders, et al (2008) stated that when conducting semi-structured interviews the researcher will have themes and questions to be covered but these may differ from interview to interview.

“The defining characteristic of a semi structured interview is that they have a flexible and fluid structure, unlike structured interviews, which contain a structured sequence of questions to be asked in the same way of all interviewees. The structure of a semi structured interview is usually organised around an aide memoire of interview guide” (Lewis-Beck, et al., 2012).

3.6.1 Procedure

The interviews conducted with the participants were of a confidential nature and all interviewees were made very aware of this from the beginning. The researcher requested permission from each participant prior to conducting the interviews and a confidentiality and consent form was also signed by each participant prior to proceeding. Each interviewee's consent was also requested in relation to hand written notes taken during the course of the interviews. The six interviews were recorded via mobile phone. Each interviewee's consent was also requested in relation to hand written notes taken during the course of the interviews. To develop further thoughts and opinions from the interviewees, open ended questions were asked in order to achieve

better results for the findings section of this dissertation. Each of the interviews was conducted for approx. 35-40 minutes in total. The interviews were then transcribed for the researcher's own use to listen back on anything that may have been missed and the transcribed interviews were also saved and stored in a confidential file on the researcher's laptop. The interviews were recorded for the purpose of this research in order for the researcher to listen back to the interview in the case that any question was missed or specific answers were not noted and the second reason for recording the interviews was to transcribe them. To analyse the interviews most efficiently, they needed to be recorded. The main objectives of this research was employee engagement, work life balance and flexible working arrangements, therefore it was very important for the researcher to listen back to the recordings to identify any trends or similarities among the interviewees opinions and answers in case any of this information was not captured in the actual interview.

3.6.2 Research Framework

The purpose of this study is to explore the benefits of flexibility within an organisation and how this impacts on employee engagement, job satisfaction and work life balance and to investigate demographic differences in employee tendency to avail of flexible working arrangements.

The research framework that was chosen has considered the time constraints involved in this research and also the nature of the research topic chosen.

3.6.3 The Methods of Collecting Data

The methods of collecting data were decided by researching and investigating suitable means of gathering the data. The researcher must find the best possibly way of gathering and collecting the data as there are many ways of collecting the data.

Data collection is important because it allows the researcher to "build an archive of data that may be used as evidence" (McNiff et al 2003, Lomax, P and Whitehead, J, 2003, Pg114). Robert-Holmes (2005 pg.157) states that "knowing the literature in your topic area will greatly assist you with the process of identifying the significant data you have collected". The choice of data collection is vital to the research. The methods in which the researcher has used in this study include research through many academic books, journals and articles to find quality information and to analyse this for the research to be effective and concise. This research also includes semi-structured interviews which

were carried out with six people within the organisation. Interviews can be associated with both the positivistic and phenomenological methodologies; they can be highly formalized and structured or can be free ranging conversations. (Easterby-Smith et al, 1997). The most fundamental of all qualitative methods of data collection is the in-depth interview and can be semi-structured or completely unstructured and are most appropriate when it is necessary “*to understand about the constructs that the interviewee used as a basis for his/her opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation*” (Easterby-Smith et al, 1997,p74)

The data gathered from the interviews had a great impact on the research.

In conclusion, throughout this chapter the most appropriate methodology approach was used in order to gain the best results possible for this research. The approach and strategy chosen for this methodology was qualitative research to gain the best results and data.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Due to the nature of this research, it was very important that the researcher fully informed the participants involved that the interviews were strictly confidential as the questions may have intruded their privacy in relation to how they felt in the organisation. All employees were treated equally and fair and the information collected and their answers to the interview questions would be solely used for the purpose of this study. The researcher received permission from the organisation to conduct the interviews and consent forms and letters including the nature of this study and reasons for conducting interviews were distributed to the participants and the HR Director. The letter and consent forms are located in appendix 1 and appendix 2 of this study.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

The limitations that were encountered throughout this research included a questionnaire was considered for this research however semi-structured interviews were deemed more appropriate and suitable to the research aims and objectives as it allowed for open ended questions to be designed with the option to probe and ask further questions if needed in order to gain the best results possible for this research.

Secondly, due to the time constraints of this research, by conducting interviews, transcribing and analysing the data, this was an overall limitation to the research.

Further research may be required using a quantitative approach as this will give the researcher a much broader result from participants.

3.9 Strengths and Weaknesses of Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are a subjective form of data for research. The strengths involved with semi-structured interviews are that they are flexible and adaptive allowing room for further probing, further questions and the researcher can be flexible with the sequence of the questions asked. The interviews also allow personal contact with the participants therefore the interviewer can pick up on body gestures in relation to the questions asked that may give an indicator to their response. The weaknesses that may be involved with interviews include time consuming as interviews can take up a lot of the researchers time by finding the right time to conduct the interviews with the participants, transcribing the interviews and then conducting the findings from the interviews in relation to the research aims and objectives.

The next chapter will discuss the findings in depth of this study.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the data collection and information gathered from each of the semi-structured interviews and discuss the results implemented by the researcher's actions. The discussion in this chapter will be sectioned into the following topics; employee background, employee work background, promotion of flexible working, work life balance, value, motivation, culture of engagement and job satisfaction. This chapter will provide the background to the respondent's interviews by analysing the interview questions in detail. The interview was targeted at both male and female participants, parents and non parents and full time/part time employees from each division of the financial organisation. The respondents were asked various questions in relation to employee engagement, work life balance, stress levels, challenges in work, job satisfaction and commitment.

Throughout this chapter, the main aim is to present the findings of the semi-structured interviews that were undertaken within the financial organization. The questions that were included in the interview were designed to meet the aims and objectives of this research project:

1. To explore the benefits of flexibility within an organisation and how this impacts on employee engagement, job satisfaction and work life balance.
2. To investigate demographic differences in employee tendency to avail of flexible working arrangements.

The semi-structured interviews were targeted at employees within the financial organisation and the questions throughout the interview referenced workplace flexibility, work life balance, employee engagement, employee satisfaction, value and motivation within the workplace.

4.2 Employee Background and Work Background

The researcher asked four questions at the beginning about the employee's background including their job title, duration of time with the company, full time/part time employment, if they had any dependent children and their marital status. These questions were asked for the researcher to gain an understanding and to learn a little bit about the employees. This information was important to gather when conducting the results as it gave an insight into each employee's personal circumstances. The length of time they were with the company as this was a clear indicator if an employee was motivated and engaged. Employee's length of service with the company varied from one year up to eight years. This personal information gave the researcher an indication as to whether or not employees who had dependent children felt more or less engaged and if these employees felt a great advantage from the flexible working agreement or not. The background of the employee's varied from both male and female participants, age range from twenty one to forty four, married employees and non-married employee and parents versus non parents. There was quiet a mixture between the participants.

The researcher asked each employee "what is your current job title and how long have you been with the company for?" Each employee had different job titles ranging from administrator level to head of a department. Each employee was also with the company from a range of different years ranging from one year to eight years. Participant A, 44 years old, male and working for the company for eight years was Head of a Department within the organization. Participant B, 38 years old, male and working for the company for five years was in the position of Marketing Manager within the company. Participant C, 36 years old, female and working for the company for just over four years. Participant D, female 29 years old and working for the company for four years was in the position of Compliance Specialist. Participant E, 24 years old, male and working for the company for two years was in the position of Customer Service Advisor and Participant F, 21 years old, female was employed by the company for just one year in the position of Customer Service Administrator.

The next question the researcher asked the employees was “Do you have any children? If so, may I ask how many?” Participant A responded saying “Yes, I have three children, the youngest is seven and the eldest is twelve”. Participant B responded “Yes, I have just one daughter, lucky me”. Participant C answered “yes of course you can ask that question, I have one child and I am due my second child in October”. Participant D responded “No I have no children as of yet”. Participant E replied “yes I have a one year old daughter” and Participant F replied “No, I have no children”.

The researcher then asked the participants “Are you married/cohabiting?” Participant A replied “yes I am married fourteen years”, Participant B replied “yes I’m married”, Participant C responded “I am engaged and due to get married next Summer”, Participant D, E and F all responded advising that they were not married. Five of the employees were full time employees and only one employee out of the six interviewed worked part time hours. Four of the employees worked flexible working hours within the organisation and this was due to the nature of their roles.

4.3 Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction

The next two questions focused on employee engagement and satisfaction within the organisation. These questions were open-ended giving the researcher options to probe further or to ask any further questions if needed. The findings did indicate that employee engagement and job satisfaction is very evident within the organisation among the employees who participated in the interviews. The employees were very engaged within their workplace and felt that their roles were rewarding in ways which they felt valued and appreciated. One question was based on the employee’s engagement levels within the organisation and if they felt engaged or not within the work that they do. The questions were important as they gave the researcher an idea as to what level job the employee had within the organisation and the engagement levels within the company also varied from four of the employees being highly engaged compared to two of the employees who felt they were less engaged due to their role within the company. These two employees felt less engaged as their role was not very rewarding and they felt less valued and appreciated within the organisation. No employees felt disengaged completely.

The researcher asked the participants “What category do you think you fall under-engaged, actively engaged or disengaged?” One employee said “I have been working for this company for over eight years now and I honestly have no intention to leave or look for other jobs, they are a brilliant company to work for and brilliant to their staff”. The researcher then probed the employee further by asking “could you please give an example of where you felt the company was a great place to work?” The employee advised “About four years ago, a new CEO stepped into the company and he has made great changes regarding employee retention and introduced a reward scheme with excellent benefits to all employees who joined.” The other five employees all enjoyed going to work each day and they felt the organisation was a great place to work with many opportunities such as promotions and benefits.

The researcher then asked the participants “is your level of engagement affected by your work environment?” The employees felt engaged in their roles and very satisfied with the culture of the organisation and how the overall organisation operates. Participant B said “it is very important that employees are engaged as it impacts on their overall work and relationships with colleagues”. Participant D also said “it is extremely important that employees are satisfied in a workplace as this also impacts on themselves and the organisation.”

4.4 Promotion of Flexible Working

The next two questions were related to flexible working. The employees were asked “to what extent does your organisation promote flexible working arrangements?” The response to this question was answered very similarly by the interviewees.

The researcher asked the interviewees “are you working flexible hours in your employment?” The responses to this question were mixed as two of the employees were employed on more junior roles therefore flexibility within their role was not possible as their roles were more phone based and administration. The four employees who worked from home on a casual basis felt this was a massive benefit to them and they really appreciated this flexibility from their employer. Participant A said “I choose to work from home one to two days per week and this is a massive help to my family life as it reduces the stress of getting my children out extra early in the morning times”.

Participant B said “My work does not restrict me to be in the work building at all times and when I have no meetings on, I generally work from home, it is less distraction and I actually get more work done”. The employees felt this encouraged them to be more productive and motivated in the work that they do and they felt very loyal to the company for this. The employees who worked from home also felt valued and appreciated and felt they had built a level of trust with the company. This resulted in them being very committed and satisfied and they had no intention of looking for another job opportunity any time soon. They all felt that the organisation promoted flexible working arrangements as much as possible to the employees.

The next question asked the employees if they were currently working flexible hours. Four of the employees answered yes, they work from home 1-2 days per week depending on any deadlines they had. The two employees who answered no were the two employees who worked in the administration and phone based role. The participants who were married and had children felt more engaged in the workplace when they had the flexibility to work from home and support from their employer in comparison to those who were not married but also felt more engaged in the work that they do each day when allowed to work flexible working hours. Both the married and non married employees felt satisfied in their work in comparison to only two employees who felt less satisfied within the organisation as they were not married and could not avail of the flexible working arrangements due to the nature of their roles.

4.5 Work Life Balance

The next question related to work life balance. The interviewees were asked “Generally, are you satisfied with your work life balance and do you feel a healthy work life balance can affect employee engagement levels within the organisation?” All of the six employees answered yes to this question as they all felt that having a healthy work life balance can have a major effect on engagement levels within the workplace and they all felt this was highly important. Participant B added “I feel work life balance is extremely important in one’s life and it very important to get that balance between work and personal life however I feel that this organisation as a whole has promoted work life balance and tries to engage staff members regularly regarding flexible work hours, healthy eating, being active etc.”The employees felt that a healthy work life balance

led to more engaged and motivated staff and this was a very important factor for each of the participants. Two of the employees believed it was important to take time off, take a break each day and not just eat at your work desk and have a healthy balanced diet involving exercise. When the researcher listened back to the interview recordings, it was very evident that the employees felt happy with their work life balance and they all felt this was a key driver to employee engagement within their work environment. The employees that were parents felt very motivated within their work when they had the option to work from home as it took the pressure off them in the morning when trying to get out for work and get their children ready so early. Two of the employees felt that when they have training days that are related to work they felt this was a positive contributor to their work life balance as they felt they were not actually working while enjoying a day out of the office with work colleagues was a positive factor in their work. The employees also felt that they enjoyed getting their work done within work hours so that they could enjoy their evenings and weekends without having to think about work. They all felt that this was also key to a work life balance.

4.6 Value

The next question in the interview asked the participants “do they feel valued within their workplace and if so could you please elaborate and give an example?” The responses to this question were mixed as four of the employees felt that they are valued in the work that they do each day by their managers and supervisors compared to two of the employees who felt their work is less rewarding therefore they just come into work each day and do the same thing day in day out and this type of work is not very valued by their managers and supervisors. Participant B replied “Yes I mean I guess I feel valued at work as my job would be one of the more senior jobs and therefore I have to report on a weekly basis on the previous week which is value in itself” Participant E, responded to this question to say “My particular work is not very valued as there is a lot of the same positions on my team, we just arrive into work each day, do our job and go home, there’s no real value in my job at all”

4.7 Motivation

The interviewees were asked “do you feel motivated going to work each day?” The responses to this question were also mixed as three of the employees answered “yes absolutely”. Participant A,B,C and D all felt motivated within their workplace with Participant C adding “I feel motivated each day because my role is at a management level and I have two people reporting into me so to ensure the whole team is strong we all need to be motivated and support one another in the work that we do”. Two of the employees felt they were not motivated in any way with Participant D saying “I don’t really feel motivated as my job is very repetitive so it’s hard to be motivated when you’re doing the same thing every day, it is just an income to pay bills and Participant F said,” I feel my role does not make me feel motivated however I do want to pursue my career and climb the ladder within the company therefore I would stay within the company on that basis.”

4.8 Culture of Engagement

The next question the researcher asked the participants was “Do you think your organisation is creating and maintaining a culture of employee engagement within the organisation and could you please give an example?” Similarly to previous answers, the answers were of mixed responses. Four of the employees felt that the organisation is doing as much as they can to maintain a culture of employee engagement compared to two of the employees who felt that the organisation could do more with this matter. Participant A said “Yes I feel the organisation continues to create a culture of engagement as there is always new strategies being introduced around this matter, for example at the beginning of this year, the company introduced a new platform whereby employee engagement was a main focus and the platform was for all managers and senior people in the business to ensure that all their employees who worked below them were engaged and the platform also included how to fully engage employees that were not fully engaged in a workplace. The platform also included a survey link for employees to complete and it included questions such as “do you feel engaged on a day to day basis?” The answers were anonymous however each manager sent the link out to their team and therefore received the results, so overall the manager could go through the engagement levels from the survey results with the whole team overall and this was more effective than individual as employees tend not to want to give their honest

opinion to their manager directly. There were great results from this platform and it was very beneficial overall.

4.9 Stress Levels at Work

The next question was aimed at finding out whether the employees felt stressed at work as this gave an indication to the work life balance section of this research thesis. The question asked employees “Can you give me an example of times or a time when you feel stressed at work?” Participant A, in particular answered “I feel stressed in work on a regular basis due to demanding pressure and deadlines within my role, however given the fact that I can work from home takes a little pressure off me as it allows that extra work in the mornings and evenings where I would spend commuting on a daily basis”. Participant C answered “I sometimes feel stressed when it’s month end and I have a lot of work to submit and complete in a short period of time, this is a stressful time for me”. Participant E said “I don’t feel stressed at work at all as my role is very repetitive and I do the same thing day in, day out so there is never a time when I get really stressed, not that I can think of anyway”. Participants D and F said they do not feel their roles are stressful. Overall the interviewees feel stressed at different times and for different reasons and this did not impact on the organisation or on their feelings towards the organisation as a whole.

4.10 Job Satisfaction

The researcher then probed a further question after the job satisfaction question and asked the participants about their job satisfaction. The researcher asked “Do you feel satisfied in your job overall and could you please elaborate on your response?” Participant A replied “Yes overall, I am quite happy and satisfied in my role. I enjoy coming to work and I enjoy the overall duties and requirements that my role entails. I work in a great team and I think that helps too.” Participant B replied “I am very satisfied in the company and in my own role and I feel that there is lots of opportunity for every new starter to progress their career here, there is always opportunities and many programmes regarding work life balance, healthy eating, job opportunities, flexibility, subsidised canteen, pension and healthcare. So really we have good benefits in this organisation and good management, therefore I am very satisfied”. Participant C responded “This organisation has many things to offer to its employees and it’s very

rewarding and satisfying to work here.” Participant D replied “There are many opportunities in this organisation and I am very satisfied with the opportunity I have been given to work here. My job is very satisfying in some ways, once I complete a task or project, I feel satisfied that I have completed that work and I feel achievement over that project. I would say yes I am satisfied in the work that I do and with the organisation overall, I hope that answers the question for you”. Participant E responded “Yes I am satisfied working here as I know there is always opportunity to apply for new roles to try and progress further within the company” and participant F said “My job as described earlier can be very repetitive on a daily basis so sometimes I don’t feel very motivated and satisfied however I do know there are opportunities to apply for other roles and I do think that’s what I should do when I see a suitable opportunity as I will feel more motivated and satisfied if I move into a new role”.

4.11 Commitment to the Organisation

The last question asked the employees “do you intend to look for a job within another organisation within the next year?” The answers to this questions were very mixed as two of the employees thought they would possibly search for a new role within the year, two of the employees said that they would apply for internal roles and if not successful then apply elsewhere and two of the employees answered no to this question as they felt they were very happy and content within the organisation and had no intention of moving to another company. Participant A and C were very happy within their roles and had no intention of searching or applying for any new role any time soon. Participant B replied “I may apply for an internal move within the next year to develop my career here in this company but other than that I am quite happy here. However if unsuccessful for internal roles, I might have no other option but to search elsewhere.” Participant D responded “I will be looking to move into my next role once a vacancy opens however if there is no further opportunity within the business and for me to develop my career, I might have to apply with other organisations.” Participant E responded “Yes I will possibly apply for a new role in the next twelve months as I want to pursue my career further and get a feel for different organisations”. Participant F replied “My role is very junior in the organisation and it is very possible that I may job search in the next year”. This question gave the researcher an indication as to how many of the employees were really engaged within their workplace and the researcher felt this was a strong question

to ask as it gave more of an insight to how satisfied the employees were and this question also allowed for further probing if needed.

4.12 Conclusion

The aims and objectives of this research were set in place by the researcher to explore a number of different theories, definitions, models of employee engagement, workplace flexibility and work life balance in order to gain a better understanding of employee engagement, work life balance and flexibility in a workplace prior to conducting the research required to achieve the aims and objectives outlined in this research thesis.

The researcher noticed how engaged the employees were within the organisation when they felt valued and respected in their work. The researcher also noticed how the flexibility within the workplace engaged employees more as they felt they could be trusted to do their own work and felt a lot of ownership in their own workloads therefore the employees took accountability over their own work. The researcher also noticed how the employees who were parents felt less stressed due to the fact that they had the option to work from home during the week which had a massive impact on their work life balance. The common themes and trends between the employees was that they all felt the organisation was a good place to work and it promoted flexibility where possible. Four out of six employees felt engaged in their work and agreed that work life balance is very important for everyone.

4.13 Flexible Working Hours

Flexible working hours was one of the main objectives of this research and from the interview responses it has proven that flexible working is of benefit to employees within the organisation. From the participants who completed the interviews, four of participants worked flexible hours and the participants felt more engaged within their workplace and felt more motivated when they were given the option to work flexible working hours. It is evident throughout this research piece that flexible working is of benefit to employees and can lead to a better work life balance where employees are more engaged in the work that they do and more motivated and committed to the organisation.

The findings suggest that there is significant employee engagement and job satisfaction within the organisation and employees feel very engaged in the work that they do and

appreciate the flexible working scheme that the organisation has. Two of the participants felt less engaged and this was due to their roles being very repetitive each day as they were phone based roles.

The results did support the research question and objectives of this research thesis. The findings did indicate that employee engagement and job satisfaction is very evident within the organisation among the employees who participated in the interviews. The research contributes to the literature review and to the area of employee engagement, workplace flexibility, job satisfaction and work life balance.

The interviews will be concluded together and it will be discussed how the findings relate to previous literature in the next chapter.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter, the researcher will discuss in detail the findings that are described in the previous chapter and this will be linked back to previous literature and the literature throughout this research.

The main objective and purpose of this research study was to explore the benefits of flexibility within an organisation and how this impacts on job satisfaction and work life balance and to investigate demographic differences in employee tendency to avail of flexible working arrangements. The results of the analysis from the interviews produced many particular categories; opinion on work life balance, employee engagement within the organisation, job satisfaction and feeling valued and appreciated within their workplace. This research piece has identified both job satisfaction and employee engagement within organisations and it has identified the benefits of flexibility within the workplace for many people with many different work life arrangements. Employee engagement is extremely important for all organisations for both the benefit of the employee and the company. Flexible working arrangements are important for many employees with different work life situations and implementing a flexible working arrangement within an organisation can have many benefits.

5.2 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement was very evident throughout the research and throughout the qualitative research using semi-structured interviews. Employee engagement links back to previous literature and according to Truss et al (2006) engagement not only benefits the organisation but also the employees and organisations who have their employees engaged can be an overall win situation for the organisation and the employees. It is clearly evident in the organisation that the research that was conducted with the interviewees clearly indicates how important engagement is within the organisation. The participants in the research felt that employee engagement was very important and it is important that organisations do as much as possible to create a workforce that are highly engaged as it is of benefit to both the organisation and the employees. Similarly, Kumar & Pansari stated that employees who are engaged have positive attributes towards their work, their work environment and to have sufficient resources for

completing any tasks they may need to carry out each day. Employee engagement leads to employee satisfaction and therefore commitment to the company which agrees with Kumar & Pansari (2015) article that employees who are satisfied also join in with the organisations values and goals and see themselves as being part of the organisation. The employees who are engaged within the organisation are more committed than those less engaged and this agrees with Kahn (1990) article that when employees are engaged, they show a sign of commitment to the company, motivation, collaboration, involvement and performance of duties. The employees interviewed also felt that it is important to be engaged as it impacts on colleague's relationships and overall performance in the working environment.

5.3 Flexibility within the Workplace

Flexibility within the workplace was one of the main topics of this research piece and the researcher asked questions to the employees based on flexibility and flexible working hours that the organization promotes. Flexibility links with previous literature to the theoretical and research based model of change that dates back to the early 1990's and the research proves that flexibility in the workplace can be very powerful and it can promote a more desirable outcome to both the organisation and the employees according to the "When Work Works" article. (Galinsky E,2004) According to Maslow, "the deficit principle claims that once a need is satisfied, it is no longer a motivator because an individual will take action only to satisfy unmet needs and gains". This theory implies that an individual's needs should be met and introducing flexibility in a workplace will satisfy an employee's needs therefore producing more motivation and satisfaction in work.

5.4 Work Life Balance

Work life balance was thought of very highly by all the interviewees throughout this research and this is a common theme that the employees who interviewed felt the organization promoted a very good work life balance for all employees. The employees felt work life balance was a driver to their overall engagement levels and they believed it was very important to get the right balance between work and personal life. Work life balance links back to previous literature as referenced in Dave, J; Purohit,H, that work life balance serves as a major attraction due to its deep impact on all aspects of a

person's life. Dowd,T stated that the twenty four hours in the day should not all be devoted to work, one must manage their time effectively between work and their personal life, this time does not manage itself, it must be managed by the individual. Dowd, T then stated "*manage your time, don't let it manage you*". It is clear from previous literature and research that a work life balance is extremely important in everyone's lives and it must be managed by the person. Work life balance evidently increases engagement levels and ensures that employees are more motivated and happy in their lives and this agrees with Maiya & Bagali (2014) that state that "*work-life balance is not merely related to work and life; it is a positive state of mind*".

5.5 Value

The majority of the employees felt valued within their organisation and within the work that they do each day and this is very important. The employees who felt less valued were those that worked in repetitive roles and did not feel that they achieved much each day. To feel valued in a workplace is important to employees which agrees with Griffith, R, & Hom,P (2011) "*Hug your high-potentials because if you don't, someone else will,*" Woolford advises, "*Make them know that you would not want to run your business without them.*" that employees are likely to be more engaged when they feel valued and appreciated in the work that they do.

5.6 Motivation

The researcher found that many of the participants felt it was important to be motivated in their work and to support each other. Two of the employees felt that they were not motivated at all due to their role as it was very repetitive however one of these employees mentioned that they want to climb the ladder within the organisation therefore they would be happy to stay with the company on that basis. Motivation is a very important aspect of an employee's day to day routine and it is important for engagement levels too and this agrees with Maslow (1943) "*For many millennials, the level of motivation can be largely influenced if they truly believe what they are doing meets a desirable goal and adds a sense of value. Meaning and purpose in a person's career can enhance self-esteem and self-concept. Many millennials believe that this formulation of purpose and meaning is the underpinning for a satisfying and successful career.*"

5.7 Satisfaction & Commitment to the Organisation

The researcher found that the employees all believed it was very important to be satisfied within their work and how this links back to an employee being engaged at the same time. The researcher also found that the employees agreed that it was important to have some level of commitment to the organisation otherwise an employee is not satisfied and happy in their role. Job satisfaction is highly important within organisations and it is essential in ensuring commitment to the organisation from the employees. This links in with previous literature whereby Davidman (2004) indicated that 'motivation' views the commitment of the individual to work and to their work place from the point of view of factors originating within them self, from the point of view of individual needs, likes and preferences'. The extent of people's commitment to their work is believed to be linked to the rewards that they expect from the organisation. People expect rewards and these rewards are not only concerning money but relate to the satisfaction of self esteem which is also emphasised in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

5.8 Conclusion

The main aims and objectives of this research thesis were designed to be achieved by the researcher. The researcher explored many different theories, definitions and literature in order to achieve these aims and objectives. The researcher identified many interesting subjects and themes while conducting this research and the researcher has gained a greater insight and the importance of employee engagement, work life balance and workplace flexibility.

Even though the researcher only interviewed a small number of employees within the organization, it is very clear and evident from the findings that the four employees who availed of flexible working hours were highly engaged within their workplace and feel valued and appreciated in the work that they do. From the qualitative data collected through the interviews, employee engagement was very consistent among employees.

The employees also felt that flexibility was extremely important within any organization and they felt it led to a better work life balance for those who worked from home on a casual basis. Two of the employees did feel less engaged as their roles were very repetitive and they did not have an option to work flexible hours due to this. In spite of this, they did feel that the organization was one that they did enjoy as they felt it did

promote flexible working hours to most of the employees who were in positions that flexible working hours could be availed due to the nature of the roles.

The six employees interviewed felt that work life balance is very important in everyone's lives. It is important to distinguish between work and home life and there needs to be a balance with this. The employees all felt they had quite a good work life balance with only two of the employees advising that sometimes they did need to work a little extra in the evening to get some work done.

Overall, the interviews conducted in this research were of great value to the research piece and contributed significantly as the researcher gained insight into an employee's thoughts and feelings in relation to their organization and their engagement to the company, work life balance and workplace flexibility opinions.

The journals and articles researched for this research project also gave the researcher a better understanding and knowledge of the importance of employee engagement, work life balance and promoting flexibility in a workplace.

The results confirmed that the employee's interviews and personal responses were very informative indicating a positive correlation between flexibility in the workplace, employee engagement and work life balance.

6. CONCLUSION OF THESIS

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter the researcher will conclude the overall research and reflect on the overall aim of the study. This chapter will also include the overall conclusion to this research project and discuss the limitations to this research. This chapter will also discuss the opportunities for further research, recommendations for the future and the estimated costs involved for future research. This chapter will then be closed out with the researcher's personal reflective learning piece that will include the experiences and education that has been interpreted with completing this research dissertation. The researcher will reflect on how this research benefited and what recommendations could be made for the future. Throughout this research thesis the main objective established was employee engagement and workplace flexibility within the organisation. This was very clear and evident from the participant's interviews.

6.2 Research Question

The research title was "Flexible working as an effective tool of organisational commitment, motivation & productivity. The Quest for Employee Engagement and Work Life Balance using Flexible Work Arrangements."

This title focused on flexibility within the workplace and employee engagement, job satisfaction and work life balance within organisations and how employees benefit from flexibility. There were many positive results from the research and the interview results in relation to employee engagement and how employees felt about a workplace that promoted flexibility.

The research showed that employee engagement is extremely important within organisation for both the organisation and the employees. The promotion of flexibility in an organisation is greatly appreciated by employees and promotes a better work life balance. This research has emphasised the benefits of flexibility in a workplace and employee engagement.

6.3 Limitations of the Research Study

This study has several limitations. In completing the research thesis, the researcher gained extreme knowledge in many different areas. There were many limitations throughout this study but one of the main issues was the time constraint as it is very difficult working full time and to complete a research dissertation to the highest standard possible.

A limitation throughout the study was that although all the interview participants had been made aware that any information given would remain fully confidential, it is still their organisation and their job and some of the participants may have been reluctant to give their honest opinion as it may come back and affect their career in the future. If conducting this research again, the researcher would base the research on more than one organisation as this was also a limitation due to the fact that it was solely based on a financial organisation of my choice. If the research was based on a few organisations and sectors, the results may have been different and there would have been more of a controversy.

The findings of my overall results in the research have been very positive and the researcher is very pleased with the end results. One of the most fundamental recommendations that the researcher can make in the future is that future studies should include employees from different job sectors and also a larger sample to examine work life balance as a mechanism of employee engagement. A possible limitation was that the data collected from respondents in relation to their work-life balance were self-perceived in that experiencing work-life balance was subjective. Future studies should include a sample of the employee's actual working hours within the company and possibly a report from the employee's family/relatives or co-workers.

The time constraint was very pressurising as the researcher had to collect and research all the data, implement, reflect and analyse and put all the research together in such a short time space however this was manageable given the timeframe and the interview participants were extremely helpful in committing time for the interviews which was of great help to the findings chapter.

6.4 Recommendations & Cost of Recommendations

The first recommendation the researcher has for the organisation is to introduce a new policy that allows all employees to work from home even for one day per week as it was very clear to the researcher that the employees who do not have this option feel less engaged and less valued in their work. This may involve changing their role into administration work only for that day as these employees are in phone based roles.

The costs involved with this may include the purchasing of laptops for these employees. This would engage all employees more and reduce turnover within the company.

The next recommendation the researcher has for the organisation is to identify a process that will engage all the employees to ensure that they feel valued and appreciated in their work. The researcher recommends that the organisation look at introducing Key Performance Indicator's that is rewarding and once an employee achieves the KPI that is put in place, they should be rewarded by something such as half days or an extra annual leave day. This KPI would really engage employees and therefore reduce unhappy employees within the organisation. This recommendation would very low cost implications for the organisation. The researcher feels this is a very important recommendation for the organisation as the employees will be more engaged and this will benefit the organisation.

6.4.1 Timelines for implementation of recommendations

The timelines that would be involved with implementing the recommendations for the organisation would depend on the organisations budget regarding ordering new laptops so this may take some time. The second recommendation should not incur too much of a timeline as a strategy needs to be put in place and then implemented immediately to ensure employees are engaged and to reduce the turnover therefore this could all be complete and in action within one to two months.

6.5 Personal Learning and Reflection

From completing this research project and reflecting on the research findings, I have gained extensive knowledge regarding employee engagement within an organisation and how engaged employees lead to a successful business. I have also gained a great insight into people's opinions and feelings in relation to work life balance and the

appreciation employees have for their workplace if flexible working hours are promoted. Employees need to feel involved, valued and appreciated in the work that they do within their organisation and to ensure that employees are engaged and motivated. From the process of my research and my literature review I have extended my knowledge around qualitative research and how implementations should be put in place when conducting any research project and this will be of great benefit for any future studies. From gathering the data required to complete this research piece, I have improved my skills in collecting data, analysing the data and then reflecting on this data to gain findings from the research and literature. As a researcher this project has been beneficial in many ways including time management, research, collecting data, analysing data, approaching participants, ethical considerations, limitations and focusing on reaching the original research aims and objectives of the research piece. Finally this qualitative research has improved to develop my own personal skills within an organisation and I would recommend that internal surveys are submitted internally within organisations and the results to be analysed by the organisation regarding work life balance, employee satisfaction and employee engagement as this will provide the company with feedback from the staff and may improve overall staff retention, profits of the company and an enjoyable place to work.

6.6 Final Conclusion

This research dissertation was conducted to achieve specific aims and objectives. The researcher explored different theories and literature to achieve the aims and objectives and conducted qualitative research to gain further insight and understanding of the overall objectives. The research had a great interest in employee engagement, work life balance and employee flexibility and this is what the research was based upon. The researcher was always aware that some organisations offer flexible working arrangements to their employees and the researcher wanted to get an employee's opinion and perception on the subject. The researcher also wanted an employee's thoughts and opinion in relation to engagement within the workplace and the importance of it. Finally, the researcher linked in work life balance and the importance of this in a person's life. The researcher wanted to also include an employee's individual response to how important they felt work life balance was and if they felt they had a good work life balance in their own life. The researcher suggests and thinks

that there could be more research completed on work life balance and ways to improve this within organisations. To conclude, the researcher identified interesting information from conducting this research piece.

Although the researcher only interviewed a small number of employees from the organisation, it is evident that those in more senior roles are more engaged within their work. Work life balance and workplace flexibility is of a high standard within this organisation and the employees value and appreciate the benefits the company has to offer. It should be in the interest of the organisation to ensure all employees are engaged even in the more junior roles by introducing a new strategy around meeting KPI's and rewards to engage and motivate that staff.

From completing this research project I feel I have developed further within my knowledge and workplace of the advantages of flexibility in an organisation. This research has proven that flexibility within an individual's work life is the key to a work life balance and has great benefits to both the employer and the employee. Employee engagement has proven to be extremely important for not just employee performance but for overall business performance Through my research interviews, the results analysed showed that the majority of people were happy within their organisation who had flexible working arrangements and the group of that people were happy and motivated in their workplace compared to those who did not have flexible working arrangements and were looking to move on to another company. Although the results of this dissertation indicated that employee engagement is very important within an organisation for both the employer and the employee's benefit and work life balance is an important factor within everyone's daily lifestyle, further research with a much larger sample size should be undertaken in work life balance and employee engagement satisfaction.

I have now developed a further wide range of understanding about qualitative research and this will be of great benefit in any future research projects that I will complete. Finally this qualitative research has improved to develop my own personal skills within an organisation and I would recommend that internal surveys are submitted internally within organisations and the results to be analysed by the organisation regarding work life balance, employee satisfaction and employee engagement. After all the results are analysed, the organisation can then bring into place policies and procedures that will benefit both the organisation and the employees within.

7. APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1 – Letter to Participants

12 June 2017

Dear Interviewee,

I am currently completing my dissertation for my Masters in Human Resource Management in the National College of Ireland.

The title of my dissertation is “Flexible working as an effective tool of organisational commitment, motivation & productivity. The Quest for Employee Engagement and Work Life Balance using Flexible Work Arrangements”

The main objectives of my dissertation are to explore the benefits of flexibility within an organisation and how this impacts on job satisfaction and work life balance and to investigate demographic differences in employee tendency to avail of flexible working arrangements.

All information gathered will be completely anonymous and no names will be recorded on file. My supervisor at NCI and I will be the only people that will have access to the information. I expect the interview to last approximately 35-40mins at a maximum.

Thank you very much in advance for your cooperation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at sineadwisely@hotmail.com

Kind Regards,

Sinead Wisely

7.2 Appendix 2 – Consent Form

Title of Research Project:

“Flexible working as an effective tool of organisational commitment, motivation & productivity. The Quest for Employee Engagement and Work Life Balance using Flexible Work Arrangements”

Name of Researcher

Sinead Wisely

MA Human Resource Management

- I confirm that I have read and fully understand the information sheet provided which relates to the study of this project
- I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and I can withdraw from the process at any time
- I give my permission to record the interview through audio recording measures
- I give my permission to the researcher to use direct and indirect quotes in their research project
- I agree to take part in this interview solely for the use of this research project and I understand that it is completely confidential and anonymous

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Name: Sinead Wisely (Researcher) Date:

Signature:

7.3 Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

1. What is your current job title and how long have you been with this company?
2. Do you have any children? If so, may I ask how many?
3. Are you married/cohabiting?
4. Are you currently working full time/part time?
5. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, actively engaged or disengaged?
6. Is your level of engagement affected by your work environment?
7. To what extent does your organisation promote flexible working arrangements?
8. Are you working flexible hours in your employment?
9. Generally, are you satisfied with your work life balance and do you feel a healthy work life balance can affect engagement levels?
10. Do you feel valued at work and if so can you please elaborate?
11. Do you feel motivated going to work each day and if so why?
12. Do you think your organisation is creating and maintaining a culture of employee engagement within the organisation and could you please give an example?
13. Can you give me an example of when you feel stressed at work?
14. Do you feel satisfied in your job overall and could you please elaborate on your response?
15. Do you intend to look for a job within another organisation within the next year?

8. REFERENCES

“How to increase employee engagement”, 2014, *Development and Learning in Organisations: An International Journal*, vol. 28, no.6, pp. 24-26.

“Increasing employee engagement: The role of interpersonal leadership”, 2015, *Strategic Direction*, vol. 31, no.2, pp.34.

Abdul Mutalib Mohamed Azim, Aminah Ahmad, Zoharah Omar 2011: “ Work Family Psychological Contract as a mediator in the relationships between Work Family factors and Organizational Commitment”, *International Journal of Business & Social Science*, Vol.2, No. 22, 228-235.

Albrecht, S.L. (2010) *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice*. 1st ed. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

Alessandri, G., Borgogni, L., Schaufeli, W. B., Caprara, G. V., & Consiglio, C. (2015). From positive orientation to job performance: The role of work engagement and self-efficacy beliefs. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 16, 767-788. doi:10.1007/s10902-014-9533-4

Allen, T. D., & Shockley, K. (2009). Flexible work arrangements: Help or hype? In D. R.Crane & E. J.Hill (Eds.), *Handbook of families and work: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 265–284). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Arge, K. (2005). Adaptable office buildings: theory and practice. *Facilities* , 23 (3/4), 119- 127

Armstrong, M. (2007) *A handbook of Employee Reward Management and Practise*. 2nd ed. London: Kogan Page.

Babbie, Earl R. *The Practice of Social Research*. 12th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage, 2010; Muijs, Daniel. *Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS*. 2nd edition. London: SAGE Publications, 2010

- Baltes, B. B., Clark, M. A., & Chakrabarti, M. (2010). Work-life balance: The roles of work-family conflict and work-family facilitation. In P. A. Linley, S. Harrington, & N. Garcea (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology and work* (pp. 201-212). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bridger, E. 2014;2015;, *Employee Engagement*, 1st edn, Kogan Page, London
- Bridger, E. 2015, Chapter 01: What is employee engagement? Kogan Page Ltd, London
- Brun, J. P., & Dugas, N. (2008). An analysis of employee recognition: Perspectives on human resources practices. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19, 716–730. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585190801953723>
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2011) *Business Research Methods*, 3rd Ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Byron, K. (2005). A meta-analytic review of work-family conflict and its antecedents. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 67, 169–198. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2004.08.009
- CIPD (2017) “Employer Brand” available from: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/employer-brand.aspx> [Accessed 30 June, 2017].
- Cooper, D. R. and Schindler, P. S. (2014) *Business research methods*. 12th; McGrawHill international, International student, ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Croucher, R. and Kelliher, C. (2005), "The right to request flexible working in Britain: the law and organizational realities", *European Journal of Comparative Law and Industrial Relations*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 503-29.
- Datta, Y. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Basic Needs: An Ecological View. *Oxford Journal*[series online]. September 2010:9(1);39-57. Available from: Business Source Complete, Ipswich, MA. Accessed July 24, 2017.

Dave, Jyoti; Purohit, Harsh. *Clarion: International Multidisciplinary Journal*. 2016, Vol. 5 Issue 1, p98-104. 7

DAVIDMAN, M. (1981) *The Will to Work, Remuneration, Job satisfaction and Motivation -what people strive to achieve*. Social Organisation Ltd. pp 6- 15

Dowd, TB 2014, *Time Management Manifesto: Expert Strategies to Create an Effective Work/Life Balance*, Thomas B. Dowd III, [Place of publication not identified].

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Lowe, A., (1991), “Management Research: An Introduction”, Sage, London

Gajendran, R. S., & Harrison, D. A. (2007). The good, the bad, and the unknown about telecommuting: Meta-analysis of psychological mediators and individual consequences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97, 1524–1541. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.92.6.1524

Galinsky, E, Matos, K, & Sakai-O’Neill, K2013, ‘Workplaceflexibility: a model of change’, *Community, Work & Family*, vol. 16, no.3, pp. 285-306. Available from: 10.1080/13668803.2013.820094.[26June2017]

Gregory, A., Milner, S. and Windebank J. (2013) ‘Work-life balance in times of economic crisis and austerity’. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. 33(9/10): pp. 528-541

Griffeth, R, & Hom, P 2001, *Retaining Valued Employees*, Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc, eBook Business Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost, viewed 24 July 2017.

Hansen, A. , Byrne, Z. and Kiersch, C. (2014), “How interpersonal leadership relates to employee engagement”, *Journal of Managerial Psychology* , Vol. 29 No. 8, pp. 953-972. [[Google Scholar](#)] [[Link](#)], [[ISI](#)] [[Infotrieve](#)]

- Hassanain, M. A. (2006). Factors affecting the development of flexible workplace facilities. *Journal of Corporate Real Estate* , 8 (4), 213-220.
- Hill, E. J., & Civian, J. T. (Eds.). (2008). Investigating **workplace flexibility** using a multi-organization database: A collaboration of academics and practitioners [Special issue]. *Community, Work, and Family*, 11, 1–242. doi:10.1080/13668800802172576
- Hill, E. J., Yang, C., Hawkins, A. J., & Ferris, M. (2004). A cross-cultural test of the work-family interface in one corporation in 48 countries. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 1300–1316.
- Howe, C. What makes an organisation a great place to work? *Employee Benefits Journal*, 03614050, Jan 2003, Vol. 27, Issue 2, Accessed EBSCO 10th July 2017
- Jeffrey H. Greenhaus Gary N. Powell & 2010 : “Sex, Gender, and the Work–to-family interface: exploring negative and positive interdependencies”, Vol. 53, No.3, 513-534.
- Kahn, W.A. (1990) Psychological Conditions Of Personal Engagement And Disengagement At Work .*Academy of Management Journal*, Vol 33,No 4, 692-723.
- Kossek, E.E., Thompson, R.J. & Lautsch, B.A. 2015, “Balanced Workplace Flexibility: Avoiding the Traps”, *California Management Review*, vol. 57, no. 4, pp. 5-25.
- Kowalewski, S. J., & Phillips, S. L. (2012). Preferences for performance-based employee rewards: Evidence from small business environments. *International Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, 5, 65–76.
- Kruse, K. (2012) What Is Employee Engagement. [ONLINE] Available at:<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2012/06/22/employee-engagement-what-and-why/>. [Accessed 30 April 17]
- Kumar, V. & Pansari, A. 2015, “Measuring the benefits of employee engagement”, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, vol.56, no.4, pp.67

- Lewis-Beck, M. S., Bryman, A. & Liao, T. F., 2012. Semi Structured Interview: The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods. [Online] Available at: <http://srmosagepub.com/view/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-social-science-researchmethods> [Accessed 20 June 2017].
- MacLeod, D. and Clarke, N. (2009) Engaging for Success: Enhancing performance through employee engagement. London, Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) [Online]. Available from <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1810/1/file52215.pdf> [Accessed 24th June 2017].
- Maiya, S. & Bagali, M., 2014. An Empirical Investigation into Work-Life Balance in an Organization. *International Journal of Organizational Behaviour and management Perspectives*, 3(2), pp. 955-964.
- Markos, S. and Sridevi, M. S. (2010) Employee Engagement: The Key to Improving Performance. *International Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 5, No. 12, 89-96.
- Maslow A. *Motivation and Personality* (1954)
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychology Review* 50 (4), 370-396.
- Mello, J. & Flint, D. J., 2009. A refined view of Grounded theory & its application to Logistics research. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 30(1), pp. 107-125.
- Mesmer-Magnus, J. R., & Viswesvaran, C. (2006). How family-friendly work environments affect work-family conflict: A meta-analytic examination. *Journal of Labor Research*, 4, 555–574.
- Podsakoff, P. M., Todor, W. D., & Skov, R. (1982). Effects of leader contingent and noncontingent reward and punishment behaviors on subordinate performance and satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal*, 25, 810–821. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/25610>

- Quinlan, C. (2011) *Business Research Methods*. 1st ed. South Western: Cengage Learning.
- Rana, S. 2015, “High-involvement work practices and employee engagement”, *Human Resource Development International*, vol.18, no.3, pp. 308-316.
- Ross, J.P., Intindola, M.L. & Boje, D.M. 2017;2016;, “It Was the Best of Times; It Was the Worst of Times: The Expiration of Work-Life Balance”, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 202-215.
- Saunders , M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., 2008. *Research Methods for Business Students*. 5th ed. Great Britian: Pearson Education.
- Schaufeli,W.B, Salanova,B. González-Romá, V. Bakker, A.B. (2001) The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness studies*, Vol 3 No 1, 71-92.
- Shobitha Poulouse & Sudarshan N 2014 : “Work Life Balance: A conceptual Review”, *International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics*, Vol.3, Issue 2, 1-17.
- Shoemaker, J, Brown, A, Barbour, R: A Revolutionary Change: Making the Workplace More Flexible, *The Solutions Journal*, {2011}, Pages 52--62, available: <https://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/article/a-revolutionary-change-making-the-workplace-more-flexible>
- Steiner, J. (2005). The art of space management. Planning flexible workspaces for people. *Journal of Facilities Management* , 4 (1), 6-22.
- Swanson, R. A., & Holton, E. F. (2005). *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Truss, C., Saone, E., Edwards, C., Wisdom, K., Croll, A. & Burnett, J. (2006) *Working Life: Employee Attitudes and Engagement 2006*. London: The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development