WORK LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & TURNOVER INTENTION:

A STUDY OF EMPLOYEES IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR IN IRELAND

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Abstract

Work life balance practices are one of the key topics on HR agenda and are widely discussed by the scholar academics, employers and governments in the recent years.

Increased interest in this area is caused by the fast pace of technological innovations, globalization and growing concerns over unbalanced work-family relationships that may adversely influence health and performance outcomes for organizations and individuals.

The literature review presented in this study shows that work life balance programmes have multiple benefits for employees and organizations. They have bearing on job satisfaction, better productivity and improved retention. They also induce employee loyalty, engagement, commitment and support high performance culture. Companies encouraging use of work life balance policies to accommodate non- work activities in other life domains achieve better motivation from staff, reduced absenteeism rates and face lower recruitment and training costs in the organizational life cycle.

This paper seeks to examine effects of WLB practices on employee engagement and turnover intension in Further Education and Training sector in Ireland. It has been discovered that there is a gap in the literature that would specifically focus on Irish FET sector playing a significant role in the growth of Irish economy and business enterprises.

The author decided to use quantitative research methods for this study. Designated questionnaire was disseminated to a sample population comprised of female and male employees, single or in relationship, with or without children across all departments and grades within organization. Three scales deployed in the questionnaire are fully reliable instruments identified and adopted by the author following exhaustive validated research.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

Research Students Declaration Form

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(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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Material submitted for award

(a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.

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Signature of research student: *Iwona Waclawska*

Date: 29th August 2018

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List of Abbreviations

SOLAS	Further Education and Training Authority An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (
FET	Further Education and Training
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ETB	Education and Training Board
WLB	Work Life Balance
HR	Human Resources
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
LOA	Leave of Absence
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
CB	Career Break
SWY	Shorter Working Year
FWA	Flexible Work Arrangements

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Work life balance (WLB) has gained a lot of attention over the past 20 years due to rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape and work design changes, leading to extended business hours, tight deadlines and availability 24/7 to corporate clients (McCarthy et al., 2010). Globalization, fast-paced growth of ICT technologies and workforce diversity placed equal importance on work and family responsibilities (Dulk and Groeneveld, 2012).

WLB practices play prominent role in human resource management field and received a lot of attention from organizations, employees and policy makers in Ireland. It is important to stress that WLB issues have been identified as a core concern by the European Union and instigated wider discussions and policy intervention at national levels (Gregory & Milner, 2009).

In the current economic climate and ongoing competition for human resources, traditional model of the family shifted from joint family set up to nuclear family whereby both parents actively participate/contribute to the employment market (Shekhar, 2016). Demographic changes in the workforce reflected by the increase in the number of women in the workplace, dual earner families and aging population contribute to issues with management of work and non-work activities across the life span (Allen and Martin, 2017).

In the mainstream, WLB literature is advocated through policies and initiatives enabling employees to achieve greater balance between day to day work and family commitments. Deployment of WLB policies facilitates a better complementarity, address gender inequalities and have a positive impact on many aspects of work and personal/family life.

WLB instruments are aimed at working parents and other employees within organizations that may require additional flexibility for childcare, eldercare

arrangements, education, study, travel, volunteering, personal development, leisure or time off to reduce work in stressful environment. The semantic shift is derived from recognition that WLB can also be applied to other non-paid commitments and covers diverse range of employees like parents, non-parents, women, men, couples or singles (Redmond et al., 2006).

The literature review shows that consequences of WLB have a major impact on work and non-work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, engagement, absenteeism or performance.

The author of this research is going to undertake in depth analysis of work life balance practices in the context of Irish Further Education and Training sector and reveal what impact they have on employee engagement and turnover intension.

The FET Sector plays a key role in the Irish education system and retention of highly qualified workforce is crucial for the sustainable success of Irish economy (McGuiness et al., 2014).

1.1 The Rationale for the Study

Multiple comprehensive reviews on the topic of Work Life Balance (Lazar, 2010; Balunos et al., 2015; Allen & Martin, 2017; McCarthy et al., 2010; Hill, Grzywacz, Allen et al., 2008; Dulk & Groenweld, 2012; Ryan & Kossek, 2008; Hill, 2005; Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Grady et. al., 2007) have been published in the recent years. Research results clearly illustrate implications of conflicting work and personal life domains for the organizations and individuals. This study seeks to examine WLB practices in the Irish FET sector and their impact on employee engagement and turnover intention. There has been a lot of research undertaken in relation to Work Life Balance Initiatives, Employee Engagement and Turnover Intension as standalone concepts. However, there is a shortage of academic literature that would provide in depth analysis of those and HR practices within Irish FET sector. The author envisages that this research will benefit HR professionals pursuing studies on the public sector or individuals searching for it in the future.

1.2 Background and Context

The researcher decided to conduct a study of FET sector due to personal connection to SOLAS, a new state agency that was established as part of the wider government public services reform.

In 2013 the Department of Education and Skills (DES) announced momentous changes introducing Further Education and Training Act and setting up 16 Education and Training Boards which formally replaced existing 33 Vocational and Educational Committees (SOLAS, 2016).

The FET Strategy Plan for the years 2014 to 2019 developed a roadmap for integrated system of FET in Ireland focusing on provision of enhanced services to the learners and promotion of lifelong learning (SOLAS, 2014).

1.3 Research Title and Objectives.

Work and family interactions are embedded in the broader cultural, institutional and socio-economic context in which they exist, especially in the countries with high gender egalitarianism (Shockley et al. 2017). Gender and work roles have shifted in Ireland in the past few decades and nowadays in a strengthening economy the topic of WLB is one of the top challenges for HR professionals.

The author seeks to reveal how the implementation of WLB practices/policies impacts employee engagement & turnover intension in FET sector that has been recognized by the government as a cornerstone on which the economy recovery will be built over the next few years (SOLAS, 2017).

Literature published by the academics in the WLB arena shows that imbalance between paid work and family/personal life has negative effect on employee productivity, performance and job satisfaction and increased risks of health-related problems (Dikkers, 2008; Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Allen and Martin, 2017; Darcy et al. 2012).

Schilling (2014) concludes that WLB is strictly aligned with subscales of engagement (Shekhar, 2016, Anitha, 2014). This view is supported by Chandhok and Bhavet (2014) and their perception of employee engagement through equation of job satisfaction and job contribution. According to their findings a shift in this equation impact employee retention levels within organizations. Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) also show a strong correlation between satisfactory WLB, employee engagement and retention. Researchers pinpoint their importance for high organizational performance and competitive advantage (Ashton and Snug, 2005). Further evidence and various research perspectives are presented in the literature review chapter.

Recent years show that retention of highly valued employees and attraction of talent into FET sector is challenging in highly competitive labour market environment. With recovering economics, SOLAS faced departure of a valuable talent from the organization - see statistics on page 25. For this new agency, a highly qualified workforce with unique skillsets is essential for successful support of the Irish

education system and government policies. SOLAS and other entities forming FET sector during the past 4 years has undergone multiple changes that make this sector interesting subject of studies.

The overarching purpose of this investigation: *'Work life balance practices and their impact on employee engagement and turnover intention. A study of employees in the Further Education and Training Sector in Ireland'* is the answer to the following areas requiring examination:

1. To establish whether employees of FET sector achieve satisfactory levels of Work Life Balance.
2. To examine impact of Work Life Balance on employee engagement.
3. To examine impact of Work Life Balance on turnover intension.
4. To establish employee perception of managerial support towards WLB programmes.

Furthermore, the author of this study is also hoping to reveal:

- If SOLAS as representative sample of FET sector, has embraced organizational change and developed mechanisms supporting WLB culture.
- Are demographics affecting any of the areas?
- Are WLB programmes important component affecting employee engagement/turnover intension and leading to high organizational performance?

The author envisages that the current study will provide recommendations for HR Professionals in the Public-Sector organizations and encourage further research in this field.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Work life balance receives growing interest in the contemporary world that never switches off with its gruelling business hours and tight deadlines. Demographic changes since the early 1970s accelerated employer's and scholarly attention towards WLB and its effects on work family: conflict, stress, compensation, enrichment and balance (Gregory and Milner, 2009).

Constantly changing factors of internal and external environment brought a lot of new challenges for parents struggling to reconcile work and life commitments. Allen and Martin (2017) point out that in the US the number of women entering workforce climbed from 29 % in the 1950s to 47% in the 2015. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase of working mothers and dual earner families. This trend has spread to Europe and other continents across the globe. Barrette (2009) revealed that since 1996, 46% to 61% of parents experienced major difficulties with juggling work and home responsibilities.

In the light of concerns over labour market participation rates and aging society, research highlights increased desire for more balance between work life and family responsibilities amongst women and men (Gregory and Milner, 2009). As Heather Schuck said *''we will never feel truly satisfied by work until we are satisfied by life''* (Shekhar, 2016, p.32).

A study by McCrindle Research on 3,000 Australians showed that WLB practices are primary factor impacting turnover and job attraction in contemporary organizations and they stimulate employee engagement (Susi and Jawaharrani, 2010). It is one of HR challenges to respond to increased employee demands for WLB initiatives and incorporate them into company culture.

2.2 FET Sector

FET sector is one of the most strategic sectors in Ireland and aspires to upskill Irish learners and employees in line with changing socio-economic climate. Participation in FET programmes enables learners and jobseekers to gain qualifications aligned with National Qualification Framework and progress to higher level education programmes. It also fosters social inclusion, better communication, increases job prospects and productivity along with other mental and physical health benefits (SOLAS, 2016).

The 1999 Qualifications Act established the National Qualifications Act Ireland and amalgamated FÁS and CERT certification systems into FETAC, giving legislative status to FET sector in Ireland. Further Education and Training was conceptualized as *,, education and training other than primary or post primary education or higher education and training''* (McGuiness et al., 2014 p.14).

One of the flagship programmes includes Apprenticeship, E-college, Momentum, community education and blended learning courses. Another visible component of FET provision is 'Adult Education' that delivers part-time night courses and community education programmes.

In July 2011, the Department of Education and Skills announced the dissolution of FÁS and establishment of SOLAS, a new further education and training authority. SOLAS established in October 2013 was tasked with funding, planning and coordinating of wide range of FET programmes across Ireland. Apart from that SOLAS was given mandate to lead and co-ordinate change management and integration of all institutions and initiatives rolling under FET sector. The functions of SOLAS are listed out in the FET Act 2013 (McGuiness et al., 2014).

In the past, Vocational and Educational Committees were main provider of FET courses in Ireland. In June 2011 minister of education announced reconfiguration of the current system and in June 2013, 33 VECs were merged with the FÁS training centres into 16 Education and Training Boards (SOLAS, 2014).

Figure 1 depicts the key stakeholders of Irish FET System as follows (SOLAS,2016):

Figure 1. Irish FET System - Key Partners

It is important to mention initiatives like Technology Enhanced Learning developed for FET sector in conjunction with E-college to provide more enhanced and flexible services for the learners in the future (SOLAS, 2016).

In 2014 a new FET Strategy for the years 2014 – 2019 has been designed by SOLAS to enable unemployed to gain jobs, progress to higher/further education and upskilling other categories of jobseekers seeking social, personal and developmental supports or re-engagement in other learning initiatives (SOLAS, 2014).

It is evident that FET sector won't deliver its goal and mission without fully engaged workforce (SOLAS, 2017). FET Professional Development Strategy has been rolled out to support ETBs in embracing professional development culture along the way (SOLAS, 2017).

FET Sector Profile

A survey of FET employees (n= 4,400) conducted in 2017 showed that workforce is characterized by long service and extensive experience (SOLAS, 2017).
Figure 2 represents FET sector profile.

Figure 2. FET Sector Profile
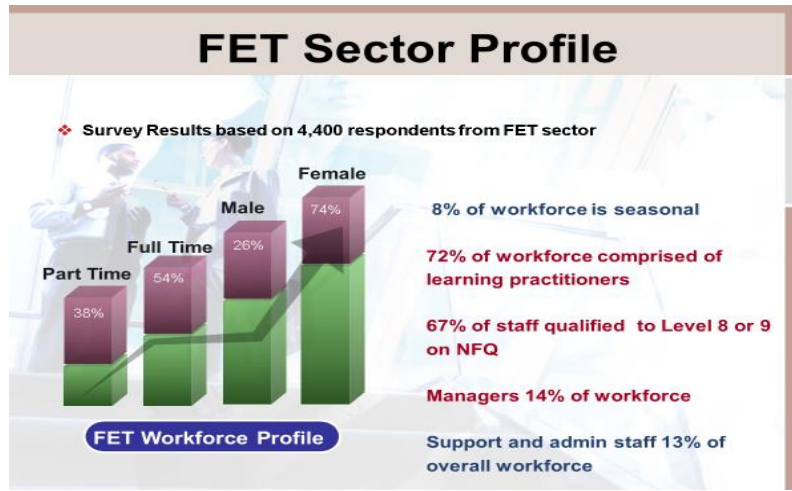
According to SOLAS (2017) majority of FET workers are represented by employees in older age categories and only 1 in 10 FET employees is under 35 years of age as per Figure 3.

Figure 3. FET Age Profile
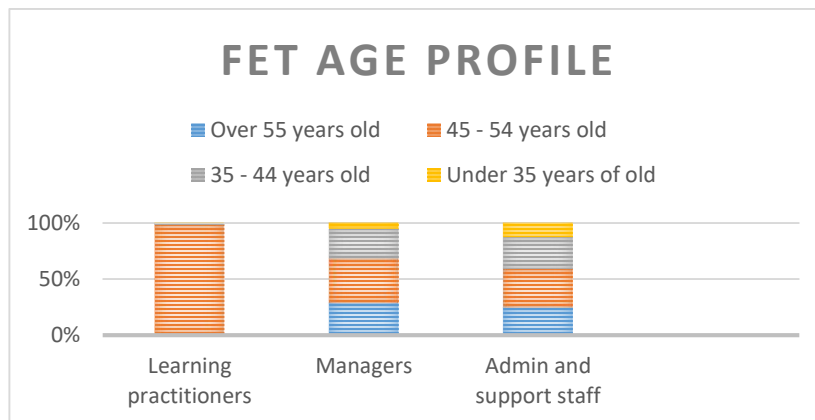
It is evident that practitioners joining FET sector are characterized by long service and stability of their jobs in comparison to other Irish sectors.

2.3 WLB Definition

There are many conceptualizations of WLB populated in the literature however there isn't one agreed definition or measure of what constitutes WLB practices. WLB definition goes beyond the scope of 'family friendly policies' and grants parents and non- parent's opportunity to reconcile in a satisfactory way their work and life commitments. Cascio describes WLB as *''employer sponsored benefits or working conditions that help employees to balance work and non-work demands''* (Cascio, 2000, p.166).

Hudson (2005) claims WLB is a fit between multiple roles that we perform in our life. This view feeds into role theory which concludes that multiple life roles lead to role stress and strain in the end. Clark defines a balanced life as *'satisfaction and good functioning at work and home with a minimum of role conflict' (Clark, 2001, p.349).*

According to Ryan & Kossek (2008) employers should alter their assumptions about ideal worker as an individual that doesn't have any family commitments. They also need to be mindful of the fact that family or personal demands can be easily carried into work life domains affecting in turn our health or job performance (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Fletwood (2007) argues that WLB can be perceived through the autonomy of individuals over their work pattern and work schedule. Grzywacz & Bass (2003) in their definition of WLB found positive relationship between family, work conflict and work facilitation. The work – family conflict construct is presented in the literature by Khan (1990) and extended by Greenhaus and Beuttell (1985) who have distinguished a time-based conflict, strain and behaviour-based conflict.

Matthews et al. (2014) provide evidence that work family conflict has a negative impact on wellbeing. Their findings support adaptation theory which views work family conflict as a main stressogenic factor negatively related to wellbeing. There isn't enough research produced on relationship between work family conditions and direct health outcomes however it is evident that positive work family enrichment has good impact on employee's health.

Kalliath & Brough (2008) points out that it's difficult to capture the meaning of WLB in a one simple measure. They also bring up an issue linked to the levels of WLB that change over time in line with changing life events. Therefore, their definition of WLB concludes *'' the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities''* (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p.326).

Lazar (2010) argues that work-life balance doesn't mean to allocate equal times to work and non-paid activities and refers to a satisfactory level of involvement between the multiple roles in a person's life. Apart from demographic trends that have accelerated risk of overlap between work and non-work domains during our life span, technical advancements and global economy contributed to development of WLB topic in the literature (Allen & Martin, 2017).

The topic of WLB has been a subject to various theoretical frameworks and few are worth of mentioning it.

Work Family Border Theory

Work Family Border Theory was created by Sue Campbell Clark (2002) and is based on the concept that work and family constitute different spheres and they influence each other. However, individuals can form the nature of work and home domains and adjust borders between them to achieve desired WLB. The theory itself explains the rationale behind work life conflict and provides framework for satisfactory resolution of any pressures from work and family domains.

Social Exchange Theory

It has been observed that relationships at work evolve into reliable and mutual obligation when all parties involved operate by repayment rules. If employees feel supported by their organization, receive an attractive salary, appreciation for the work they do, and training and development opportunities, they are more willing to pay it all back to the organization (Schaufeli, 2013).

Spillover Theory

This concept established by Staines (1980) concludes that work influences personal life of employees and positive or negative effects are induced in that relationship. In a positive spillover, employees operating in a positive, balanced environment have a more satisfactory outlook on the job. In a negative spillover, employees exposed to conflicting work and family issues will transfer those problems into workplace.

2.4 WLB Practices

WLB practices refer to various initiatives focused on reconciliation of employees work and non-work domains. Under that category roll up flexible leave arrangements that help staff to reduce their standard working hours such as part time work or job sharing (McCarthy et al., 2010). Flexible working increase employee autonomy and preferences for specific work arrangements whereby they can choose a start and finish times according to their personal needs (Milner & Gregory, 2009). They can also work from home or another office.

Organizations supportive of WLB practices provide access to whole host of family friendly policies and the most popular ones include the following:
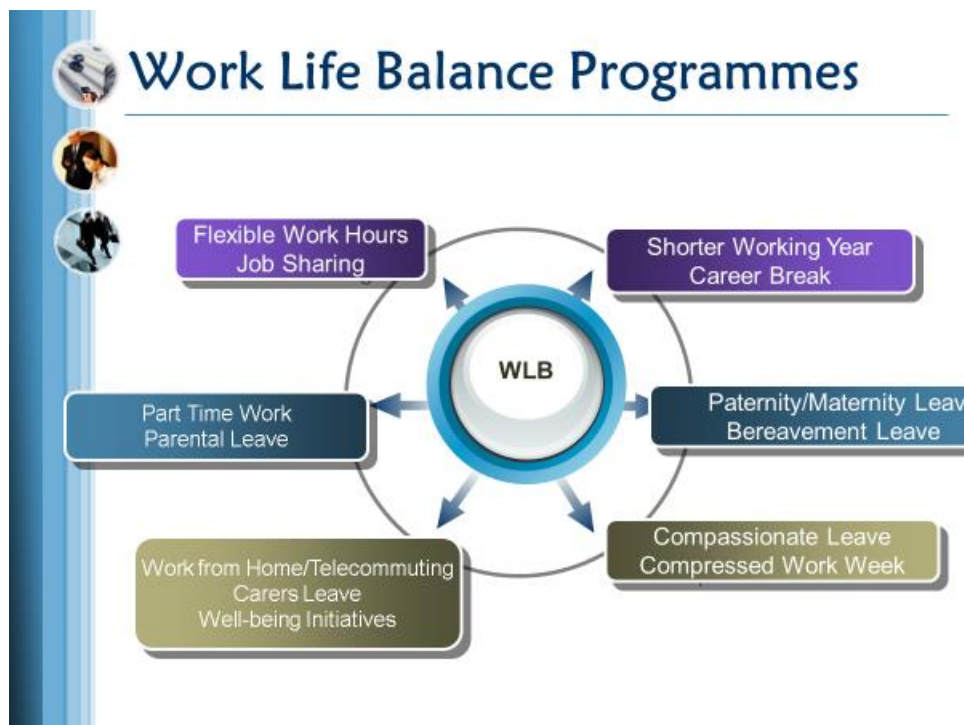
They also provide subsidised childcare in the workplace, initiatives and services supporting employee wellbeing through fitness, mental and physical health programmes (McGuiness et al., 2014). Some other work place activities under WLB can include phased retirement, educational supports or participation in volunteering campaigns (Lazar, 2010). Counselling and other employee assistance programmes or training such as stress/time management are also included by some scholars under WLB initiatives (McCarthy et al., 2010). Kopelman et al. (2006) made suggestion that contemporary companies should rather deploy more than fewer WLB practices for better organizational outcomes.

The most frequently executed WLB programmes in Europe identified by European Diversity Research & Consulting body are as follows (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2010):

Figure 4. WLB Practices in Europe
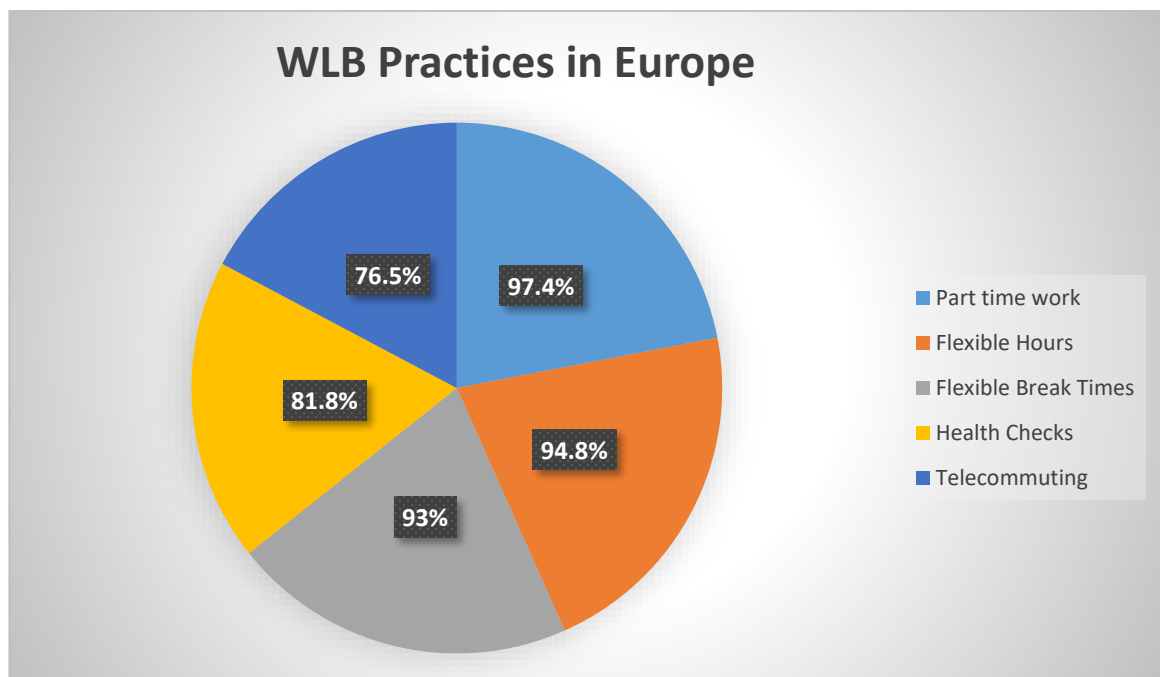
WLB programmes require workplace culture that mirrors the organizational norms and values from CEO down, good communication and ongoing support from well-trained management team in implementing these policies. (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2010).

2.5 WLB Benefits & Long-Term Outcomes

Literature on the topic of WLB has grown significantly over the last decade providing lots of evidence in support of effective WLB policies and their multiple benefits for the businesses run in the 21st century.

A study conducted last year by one of the most popular global companies – Microsoft showed that 71% of employees pinpointed WLB as one of the most significant aspects of their job (Stark, 2017).

Literature shows WLB practices as one of the key factors that can enrich or enhance WLB outcomes and give strong evidence towards introduction of those programmes in organizations (Blomme & Van Rheede, 2006, Brough et al., 2014, Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno and Tement, 2013). Studies on WLB show that flexibility is becoming more important for younger generation and aging workers across the world (Lewis, Rapoport, & Gambles, 2003; Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Nowadays corporate world is very focused on providing optimum WLB policies for enhancing employee retention, engagement, job satisfaction, mental health or productivity (Shekhar, 2016). Allen, Herst and Bruck (2000) divided up WLB outcomes into the following categories:

1. **Work related outcomes:** turnover intentions, job satisfaction, absenteeism, performance
2. **Non- work-related outcomes:** marital, family, life satisfaction and family performance
3. **Stress related outcomes:** burnout, psychological strain and substance abuse

Those findings are supported by Lazar (2010) whom adds to the above list enhanced organizational image – see Appendix A for Lazar's WLB benefits statement.

This study measures WLB through the lens of employee turnover intent and employee engagement. The literature suggests positive relationship of WLB with turnover intension. This strong connection is consequence of employee's decision-making process about leaving the organization or finding more accommodating

employer if they experience imbalance in work and family life domains (Allen at al., 2000, O'Driscoll et al., 2011). WLB practices are also positively related to employee's quality of life and their wellbeing (McCarthy et. al, 2013). Ongoing WLB conflict may lead to cardiovascular diseases, somatic complaints and other serious health disorders (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003).

Kossek (2005) in his research perceives work life bundling as indispensable part of larger, organizational strategies aimed at being seen as 'employer of choice', supportive and encouraging towards employee needs outside of work. Companies providing broad offer of WLB practices communicate to their staff that they care about them not only at employee level but they value employees as people as well.

Engagement vs WLB, another dependant variable of this research paper is only winning attention of academic scholars in the recent years. It is important to understand distinction between employee engagement and organizational commitment. However, those two terms are often used in the literature interchangeably. Some of the researchers are strongly convinced that employee engagement represents opposite end of the burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2008). They also embrace positive relationship of engagement and WLB and its significance for organizational success (Ellis & Sorensen, 2007). Global survey carried out by Ernst & Young across eight countries and 9,700 employees showed that for 1/3 of respondents WLB was unachievable goal due to increased working hours, amplified responsibilities, low flexibility and non-encouraging work environment (Shekhar, 2016).

Public sector employees by and large have more privileged access to WLB policies than private sector employees. Research conducted in this field outlines recruitment, retention, ratio of female workers, size and union density as very important factors affecting WLB practices in the public-sector organizations (Dulk and Groeneveld, 2012).

Drew at al. (2003) supports this view and points out that *''recruitment and retention of quality employees has become a major preoccupation of public and private sector employers''*. He argues that presence of WLB policies can be deciding factor in

choosing employment for some of the applicants. SOLAS - a representative body for FET sector has ongoing issues with retention of talent and recruitment of highly specialized employees. Statistics show that since 2016 there is a continuous trend of resignations and retirements in the organization. Back in 2016 SOLAS clocked up 4 resignations and 3 early retirements. In 2017 this has increased to 10 early retirements and 7 resignations. Are WLB policies good enough and is there anything else that organization could do to slow down this ongoing trend apart from new recruitment campaigns?

Donaldson and Feilder (2009) provide evidence that organizational culture moderators have an impact on satisfactory achievement of employee engagement, well-being and organizational outcomes. WLB policies can only be pursued through open and inclusive work environments. Workplace culture is factor determining successful implementation of WLB initiatives and accessibility of those initiatives to employees (Redmond et al., 2006).

Evidence presented in this study supports business case for implementation of WLB practices to reduce employee turnover intension and increase of engagement, productivity, absenteeism and job satisfaction as well. Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) in their study also showed a strong correlation between good WLB, retention and employee engagement.

Negative outcomes of implementing WLB practices are linked to increased managerial workloads in managing these policies, shortages of workforce at pick times or increased implementation costs for the organisation (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2010).

Economic theory stress that Flexible Working diverges across the sectors, organizations and jobs. Companies introduce WLB policies when they feature lower implementation costs or higher potential savings over the longer run (Sweet et al., 2014).

McNamara et al. (2012) recalls barriers in execution of WLB programmes associated with high financial costs of flexibility whereby implementation is too expensive or

other pressing issues exist that place WLB issues at the bottom of organizational agenda. Another barrier discovered by McNamara et al. (2012) across public and private sectors was related to employee equal treatment in accessing those policies.

2.6 Employee Engagement

Introduction

Amplified role of employee engagement in the 21st century is associated with growing importance of human capital and its psychological involvement in business (Schaufeli, 2013).

Employee engagement is nowadays at the focal point of HR agenda and important component of high-performance work practices (Attridge, 2009). Schaufeli (2013) stresses that survival of organizations is highly dependent on employees with advanced psychological capabilities. He perceives engagement as a desirable condition for employees and a critical driver of successful organizations operating in a highly competitive environment. Only happy and fully engaged employees can built positive company image, inspire, generate innovative ideas and create healthy and collaborative work environment.

According to evidence gathered by HR consultancy firms' high engagement translates into increased profits, better productivity, retention rates, proactive behaviours and customer satisfaction (Schaufeli, 2013).

2.7 Definition of Employee Engagement

The term employee engagement was introduced to consulting firms by the Gallup Organization in 1990s. At the turn of century major changes were taking place in the world of business. According to Schaufeli (2013) employee engagement and work engagement terms are used interchangeably however the first one is more popularized by the consultancy firms and policy makers in the businesses with the latter widely used by the academia.

Khan (1991) who popularized this concept widely in the literature perceived engagement at work as *''the harnessing of organization members themselves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances''* (Khan, 1990, p. 694)

Jawaharrani describes engagement as *''the state in which individuals are emotionally and intellectually committed to the organization as measured by three primary behaviours: Say, Stay and Strive''* (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2010, p.475).

Studies carried out by Rich et al. (2010) and Christian et al. (2011) confirmed that positive correlation of engagement with the above work-related attitudes constitutes standalone concept itself and doesn't outweigh its stronger relationship with job performance.

There isn't one recognized definition or dominant theoretical framework of what constitutes employee engagement. Shuck (2011) reviewed 213 publications differentiating 4 approaches to employee engagement:

A) *The Burnout Antithesis Approach.* According to this concept popularized by Maslach & Leiter (1997) employee engagement is understood as the positive antithesis of burnout. In this approach workforce high on engagement are low on burnout demonstrated by lack of achievement, cynicism and exhaustion. (Schaufeli, 2013).

Many publications exploring the topic of burnout vs engagement adapted Job Demands Resources model, depicted in Figure 5. In JD-R framework, resources

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facilitate engagement through vigor (energy), dedication (persistence) and absorption (focus). Work engagement has impact on the relationship between job and personal resources and positive outcomes e.g. job performance. Job characteristics recognized in JD-R model influence directly or indirectly relationship between employee engagement and WLB.

Figure 5. The Job Demands Resource Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008)
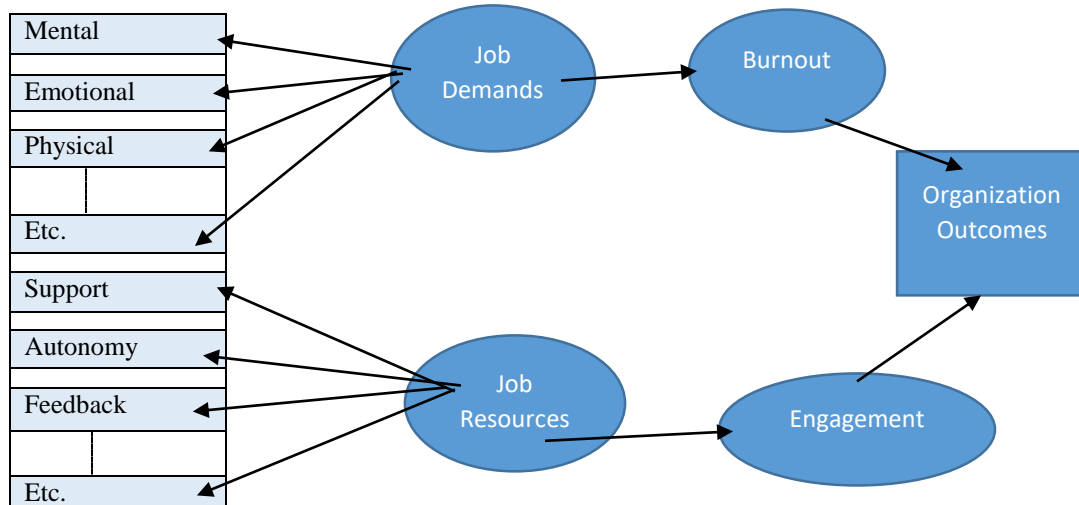
B) *The Needs-Satisfying Approach.* Khan (1990) conceptualized this approach however it never gained greater importance in empirical studies. Employee engagement is viewed through physical, cognitive, emotional and mental behaviours during role performances. Jobs that are properly resourced, meaningful, challenging for employees and carried out in a safe work environment bring engagement in return.

C) *The Satisfaction Engagement Approach.* This model popularized by the Gallup Organization placed its focus on employee's involvement and enthusiasm for work resulting in desired business outcomes such as productivity, customer satisfaction and value for money (Harter et al. 2002).

D) *The Multidimensional Approach.* This concept is defined by Saks (2006) and represents a similar approach to Khan's theory in highlighting unique construct of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components linked to

employee role performance in the workplace. However, innovativeness of Saks's approach is based on clear distinction between job and organizational engagement.

Anitha (2014) discussed Khan's theory and identified the following valid determinants of employee engagement:

Figure 6. Determinants of Employee Engagement

Schmidt (2004) perceives essence of employee engagement amongst public sector employees in recruitment and retention policies that enable organization to target right cohort of employees. They are nurtured by various health and wellbeing initiatives and other work support programmes that lead to high employee engagement. See Appendix B.

2.8 WLB & Employee Engagement

It is important to stress that there isn't much research measuring WLB practices in conjunction with employee engagement. The two topics are rather extensively studied as standalone concepts. However, literature evidence suggests that there is a clear path between WLB practices, engagement, employee satisfaction and well-being. WLB initiatives have an impact on employee perception of organizational support that in turn have a bearing on engagement and job satisfaction (Allen, 2001).

Susi and Jawaharrani (2011) make a strong statement about impact of WLB on employee engagement and turnover intension. Organizations that are more aware of employee individual needs have a better understanding of challenges around diversity in the workplace regarding age, gender etc. They also have a better scope towards designing and reinforcing policies and WLB practices engaging all groups within organization (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2011).

Schieman (2017) concludes that engagement levels are greatly reduced by work home conflict increased by employees answering e-mails and phone out of office hours and weekend work as well. He refers to Gallup survey indicating that 50 to 80% of employees are not fully engaged in their work responsibilities.

For Saks (2006) taking from social exchange theory, workers express gratitude for supportiveness and resources they get from their employer through increased levels of engagement. He also argues that turnover intension, organizational commitment or job satisfaction are consequence of employee engagement.

Most contemporary organizations striving for competitive advantage agree that benefits of engaged workforce translate into retention, high performance, increased productivity and top-class service (Purcell, 2014). Low engagement translates into high turnover rates, low performance and low efficiency (Schieman, 2017). Companies are under threat that their best talent will leave the organization. This negative in consequences tension can be narrowed down by enhancing internal policies and training management on how to facilitate employees in maintaining good work life balance.

The author leans towards more restrictive model presented by Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) whereby work engagement is perceived as psychological state mediating impact of personal resources and job resources on organizational outcomes. This concept is also supported by empirical and Khan's research as well as Christian et al. (2011) studies. Schaufeli (2013) makes a conclusion that definition of work engagement depends on one's perspective. When we follow a scientific approach work engagement can be explained as „ a *unique, positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption; that can be measured using a valid and reliable self-report questionnaire (the UWES); and that can be explained by the Job Demands-Resources model''* (Schaufeli, 2013, p.24).

Employees with high levels of employee engagement are better connected with their work activities. Dedication is characterized by strong involvement at work and is linked to sense of pride and significance (Shimazu et al., 2010). Vigor is reflected by high energy and resilience and is complemented by absorption referring to a state whereby individual is fully concentrated and happily immersed in work activities (Shimazu et al., 2010).

UWES - three-dimensional questionnaire designed by Schaufeli and Salanova (2006) is the most popular tool for measurement of employee engagement available in 22 languages worldwide.

Ulrich (2012) in study on WLB culture in Airbus discovered that employees satisfied with their work-family life were willing to go an extra mile and fostered high levels of commitment.

Anitha (2014) unveiled a close relationship between WLB and employee engagement. Organizational policies and procedures promoting flexible work arrangements and supporting employees in maintaining healthy work home balance seem to be crucial for high employee engagement. Even occasional use of flexibility in the workplace relates to increased retention and engagement (Richman, 2008). One of the studies showed that flexibility associated with location and work times was associated with employees' ability to work longer hours (Richman, 2008). Anitha (2014) also identified lack of organizational/managerial support, fear of negative

career consequences, gender policy outlook, wellbeing, work environment and co-worker relationship as the main themes surrounding WLB culture issues.

Gallup Organization research also revealed the link between employee engagement and successful business outcomes. Large study carried out on the sample of 955, 000 respondents in US showed that high work engagement translated into profitability at 78 percent and accounted for 94 percent of success rate across tested business units. (Schaufeli, 2013)

Above views are supported by Boyd et al. (2011) studies confirming that high levels of engagement translate into better organizational commitment, innovativeness, proactive behaviours and drives low turnover.

Rath and Harter (2010) suggest that disengaged employees drive high absenteeism rates, suffer from work related stress resulting in negative long-term outcomes for the organization.

CIPD (2014) provides evidence that employees are engaged with different aspects of their work life including the following locis: Management, Family life, Profession, key stakeholders, work colleagues. Organizations in FET sector like SOLAS aiming to maintain engaged workforce should look at suite of innovative strategies to create a positive and healthy work environment (Bhuvanaiah, Raya, 2014).

Bhalerao's (2013) publication reveals that through enhanced WLB policies HR can better address diversity within certain group of the workforce (female, X & Y generation) and better respond to their individual needs. Healthy, capable and engaged employees are company's capital in gaining competitive advantage. Linkage research has confirmed a significant correlation between employee engagement and desirable business outcomes like retention, high performance, and productivity (Bhalerao, 2013). Evidence gathered by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also shows that more resourceful jobs were directly linked to higher level of engagement and lower desire to leave the organization in return (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Same results were gathered by the meta-analysis carried out by Halbesleben (2010).

Bal and Lange (2015) in longitudinal study carried across the sample in 11 countries showed a positive relationship between flexible HRM practices and employee engagement. According to the presented results HRM flexibility was more significant for the engagement of younger cohort of employees valuing leisure and flexibility around work and non-work commitments. Results of Bal and Lange studies (2015) show that flexible practices amongst older workers enhanced better performance and were used to leverage adverse consequences of age deterioration process. What's interesting, outcomes of this research put more emphasis on availability of flexible practices than awareness of their existence by employees. Use of flexible programmes was found as unrelated to engagement.

Equal Employment Opportunities Trust in study from 2007 show that organizations encouraging WLB get in return increased employee engagement and better productivity rates. However, findings of this study make a valid point that policies and initiatives aimed at improvement of WLB & engagement to fully work have to be supported by management and staff at all levels within organization (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2011).

Myilswamy & Gayatri (2014) support statement that engagement has a big impact on workforce productivity levels, employee retention, customer loyalty and profitability. They show that engagement levels determine staff productivity and willingness to stay with the company they work for.

2.9 Employee Turnover Intension

The author is going to examine turnover intension in the context of WLB practices. Complexity of modern life, stressful work environments and technological advances enabling employees to stay online 24/7 are contributing to work and family life conflict.

Employee turnover isn't unavoidable, but it can become costly and disruptive concern for many contemporary organizations (Armstong, 2012). In a lot of studies turnover

intension is perceived as the final stage in the decision-making process preceding employee departure from the organization (Mowday et al., 1979). Kanwar et al. (2012) defined intension turnover as employee's voluntary decision to leave the organization. For Petriglieri (2011) turnover intension is a coping strategy used by employees to escape the current situation. It can be characterized as a permanent event whereby employee leaves the organization for good or expressed by horizontal mobility if employee awaits transfer to other departments (Kirpla, 2004). Brough & Frame (2004) view turnover intension as estimated probability of individual's departure from the organization in the near future. They also grouped variables associated with turnover intension into the following categories:

1) *Organizational variables* i.e. job satisfaction, work stress or gender discrimination
2) *Individual demographic variables* i.e. gender, marital status etc.
3) *External variables i.e.* availability of alternative jobs (Brough & Frame, 2004).

Research shows that WLB has a huge impact on employee turnover intension. According to Balunos et al. (2015) employees experiencing disharmony between work and home life are more likely to leave the organization. This thesis is also supported by Lambert & Hogan studies (2008).

Richman et al. (2008) also pinpoint that flexible work practices influence employee decision to join or quit the company and have an impact on job satisfaction.

Deery (2008) presents a framework of strategies aimed at reduction of employee turnover and increasing role of WLB initiatives. He concludes that work-family conflict and job stress along with long and irregular hours have bearing on turnover intent. Derry (2008) proposes strategic approach associated with provision of flexible rostering along with mentoring, coaching and staff training. He also emphasizes the role of Managers that should be trained up on stress management techniques e.g. relaxation methods along with counselling.

Researchers found association between gender and marital status in relation to turnover decision-making process. Early studies by Cotton & Tuttle (1986) discovered that married individuals don't leave employment as often as other categories of employees. This view was broadened by Mano-Negrin & Kirschenbaum (2002) who discovered that turnover intension apart from marital status is also affected by individual's work conditions of employment. This thesis was reflected in Martin's research (1989) and represents opinion that female turnover is linked to some stressogenic factors experienced on gender grounds.

The most efficient way of turnover reduction is realization of staff intension to leave the organization. High departure rates of talent and constant recruitment of new entrants can be destructive for organization's productivity and fulfilment of key business outcomes (Kanwar et al., 2012).

We are going to focus on voluntary turnover that occurs when employees file resignation to work in a different organization (Riggio, 2013). Available research shows that job satisfaction and organizational commitment have a major impact on employee turnover intensions (Carsten & Spector 1987, Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Harris et al. (2005) conclude that employees leave organization for a lot of various reasons and prove that voluntary turnover is an outcome of employee intent to leave the organization.

Apart from involuntary turnover caused by redundancies or other situations leading to contract termination i.e. disciplinary issues Taylor (2002) distinguishes ,, pull type'' turnover when employee leaves for better terms and conditions or ,,push type'' caused by disagreement with organizational work practices (Taylor, 2002).

Carbery and Cross (2013) believe that turnover doesn't always have a bad consequence for the organization. New entrants may act as a fresh breeze of air and enrich the company with fresh, innovative ideas. Boselie (2010) is of the same opinion and claims that turnover provides organization with better flexibility within organization.

Various studies show that the more frequent an employee uses an organization's WLB programmes, the lesser employee intends to leave the organization and the lesser an employee experiences work life conflict (Brough & Frame, 2004; Balunos, at al. 2015, Blomme et al. 2010). Burud & Tumolo (2004) also provide evidence that WLB practices reduce stress, absenteeism, turnover and increase employee engagement, productivity and job satisfaction.

Hill et al. (2008) deemed workplace flexibility as a key factor contributing to the retention of aging workforce. Under the term of workplace flexibility, we understand all HR practices that enable employees to achieve a balance between work and non-work activities with an emphasis on childcare arrangements.

Richman (2006) recalls national study carried out amongst mid to large size companies whereby proper management of work and family life translated into higher levels of engagement and retention. Final results of his own research conducted on a sub sample of 15 companies show positive relationship between engagement, retention and flexible work arrangements. He also proves that good package of WLB policies has larger influence on retention than flexibility itself.

Richman et al. (2008) suggests that higher retention is indirectly achieved through increased employee engagement. Meta-analysis of 155 studies exhibited that supportive workplace culture with caring management and good HR policies positively contributes to development of employee engagement.

Allen & Martin (2017) reveal that turnover intent rates were significantly lower amongst employees experiencing strong supervisory support. This view is supported by Schaufeli (2013) who confirms that turnover intension is moderated by relationship at supervisory and organizational levels. Evidently employees that were looked after by their line managers and felt genuinely supported by the company demonstrated more advanced citizenship behaviours and lower desire to leave the job.

According to Brough et al. (2014) WLB and turnover intension have a stronger relationship than WLB and job satisfaction. This association is caused by the decision

of employees experiencing WLB conflict to seek employer providing more flexibility around family friendly policies (Brough et al., 2008).

Turnover intension in the literature is also interrelated with employee engagement. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) tested 4 independent samples and revealed that highly resourceful jobs translated into advanced levels of engagement and subsequently lower intension to leave employment. This view was supported by study carried out by Schaufeli and Salanova (2008) on two independent European samples that highlighted importance of employee engagement for proactive behaviours. Highly engaged employees were displaying more independent and innovative attitudes in turn reducing attrition rate.

This view was replicated by Corporate Executive Board survey carried out on 50,000 employees within 60 organizations throughout the world. Results revealed that workforce with low engagement were more willing to leave the company than individuals demonstrating high levels of engagement (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2011). It has been found that turn from low to high engagement can increase employee performance by 21% which is important discovery in today's competitive world environment (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2011).

Saks (2006) and Anitha (2014) in her valuable research also find relationship between employee engagement levels and desire of employees to quit the organization. Outcomes of her studies confirm that high levels of employee engagement largely reduced turnover intent in the organizations.

Research conducted by Towers Perrin on 35,000 employees in 12 different companies also showed positive relationship between employee engagement and low turnover rates, sales growth and more customer-oriented service (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2010).

3.0 Role of Managerial Support in WLB practices

Manager's play a key role in maintaining WLB by their co-operation with staff in terms of adjusting job schedules and ongoing assistance with day to day job responsibilities. According to Thompson et al. (1999) managerial support is a critical factor for staff decision making process on use of those initiatives in the work place. McCarthy et al. (2010) point out that availability of WLB policies in the organization doesn't always translate into high take up due to poor company culture and negative attitudes of management and co-workers towards availing those policies.

This view has been supported by Murphy & Zagorski (2005) that emphasize role of Managers as gatekeepers in dissemination and take up of those policies within the organization. Their encouragement and positive attitude has been recognized as crucial factor for high participation rates. Managerial support has been recognized by Darcy et al. (2012) as one of the main variables in determining uptake of WLB initiatives. She stresses that employees availing WLB programmes may suffer in terms of lessened chances for career advancement.

Hammer et al. (2011) developed a model aimed at training supervisors in developing family supportive supervisor behaviours. They found that supervisors demonstrating family supportive behaviours had a positive impact on employee health, job satisfaction and turnover intention.

Casper and Harris conclude that availability of WLB initiatives in the workplace gives employees a feeling of strong organizational support that in turn translates into outcomes such as turnover and commitment intensions (McCarthy et al., 2013)

Research shows that supervisory support is associated with lower employee work family conflict and better balance (Lapierre and Allen, 2006, Hill, 2005). Supervisory support also translates into low turnover intensions (Thompson and Prottas, 2005).

McCarthy et al. (2013) informs that HR Managers engaged in formation of WLB initiatives are more willing to grant an access to these programmes. Line managers are gatekeepers and key stakeholders in influencing how WLB policies are enacted

and cascaded down to other layers within organization (McCarthy et al., 2013). It is challenging task as Managers are accountable for operational outcomes and high performance.

Researcher hopes to find out through this study how WLB challenges are dealt with by Managers in FET sector.

3.1 Literature Review Summary

Literature review has shown that there is a visible benchmark between WLB, employee engagement and turnover intent in high performing organizations with desire to be perceived as 'best place to work' and 'employer of choice' (Bhalerao, 2013). However, work places that are supportive of WLB initiatives will not reach desired outcomes without support from Management and organizational culture that fosters and supports use of same.

Darcy et al. (2012) are also of the opinion that some WLB initiatives are pricy and each organization should examine potential benefits before they implement those programmes.

Bhalerao (2013) concludes that organizations that develop culture encouraging work life balance will be rewarded with highly engaged workforce. He provides evidence that companies treating family friendly work practices with more strategic focus on fostering employee engagement noted better retention rates amongst female workers, reduced absenteeism, staff motivation and commitment.

Research by a university of Cambridge (Dex and Smith, 2002) concluded that 9 out of 10 participants has found those policies as an effective cost measure. The policies translated into increased performance for 5 out of 6 performance indicators. However, Konrad & Magnel (2000) hasn't found relationship between productivity and 19 WLB practices.

Richman's et al. study (2008) confirms positive influence of WLB practices on increased retention and employee engagement and provides evidence towards usage of flexible work practices by Managers in their businesses. WLB policies have a

bearing on business outcomes such us employee engagement, motivation, retention of talent, productiveness and employee satisfaction (Richman et al., 2008).

Bal and Lange (2015) emphasize importance of HRM flexibility practices in the organizations and put an onus on companies for balancing work activities with home life demands.

Nowadays it is organizations role to create compassionate work place cultures inclusive of people from all generations and backgrounds, valuing satisfactory work life balance (Susi & Jawaharrani, 2011). HR professionals have a lot of challenges ahead in responding to constantly changing employee needs and introducing WLB policies suitable for multigenerational workforce.

Chapter three: Methodology

This chapter will outline the research methodologies applied for this study. There are number of research philosophies and data collection techniques that determined methodology tools and instruments deployed by the author. Chapter will also examine qualitative and quantitative approach, research objectives, ethical considerations and limitations for this study.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Saunders et al. (2012) introduce ontology & epistemology as two fundamental concepts adopted in the research philosophy. They outline variances that will have an impact on the way we perceive the research process.

Ontology describes concern with the nature of reality that is reflected by objectivism *''portraying the position of social entities existence in reality to external and independent social actors''* (Saunders et al., 2012, s.131). Subjectivism is philosophical tenet concerned with knowledge limited to subjective experience of individual.

Epistemology puts high emphasis on acceptable knowledge in the field of study and has two principals: positivism and interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2012). Researchers adopting positivism method reject metaphysical and subjective ideas. Their focus is placed on tangible aspects of human activity and general laws that can be used to predict behaviour (Fisher, 2010).

Interpretivism as an alternative approach to positivism believes that reality is socially constructed and is strongly influenced by people values and their perception of the world (Fisher, 2010).

3.2 Research Framework

Researcher decided to examine research onion designed by Saunders et al. (2012) outlining layers of various philosophies and approaches. Saunders et al. (2012) argues that it is very unlikely to answer research question within one philosophical domain as each of them measures different outcomes.

Research onion is an effective tool in determining most appropriate research framework and gave the author explicit picture of various methods used in the research field for adopting the best strategy.

Figure 7. Research Onion
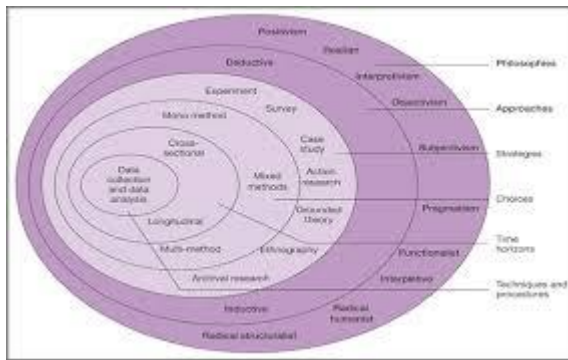
According to Harreveld et al. (2016) constructing of good research design requires deliberation of qualitative versus quantitative approaches and mixed method frameworks.

It is important to stress that research can have a deductive or inductive approach. Collis and Hussey (2009) inform that a deductive approach is testing conceptual and theoretical structure by empirical observation. Inductive research theory is developed after research.

According to Greener,, *a qualitative approach is associated with an inductive approach to generating theory, often using an interpretivism model allowing the existence of multiple subjective perspectives and constructing knowledge rather than seeking to find it in reality''* (Greener, 2008, p.17). Qualitative research is widely used in the literature as a synonym for any data analysis technique or data collection

procedure (interview) generating non-numerical data (Saunders et al., 2012). Quantitative methods reflect data collection technique such as survey or data analysis procedure (statistics) producing and using numerical data.

3.3 Research Strategy & Design

There are key differences in qualitative and quantitative research approaches. On close examination of past studies in WLB subject field and further analysis of strengths and weaknesses of constructivist and positivist philosophies, the author decided to adopt deductive approach for the measured research objectives. A deductive environment is more suitable for studies that wish to examine a relationship between variables and is concerned with quantitative methods of the research (Saunders et al., 2012).

Quantitative method will enable the author to reach bigger pool of participants within shorter time frame than qualitative strategy. This is very important for research arguments and author's desire of producing results representative of as many respondents within FET sector as possible. Results generated in the qualitative studies tend towards subjectivity and often reflect the expectations of the researcher (Greener, 2008).

The author aims to collect the data by staff survey designed in line with existing research on WLB initiatives and their impact on employee engagement and turnover intent as per deductive approach methodology. This relationship to be examined through a quantitative analysis and subsequent statistical analysis of the data in SPSS that leans towards Post-positivism philosophy.

According to Dul & Hak (2008) the survey is a method that examines instances in the real-life context where a single population is selected, and results obtained are analysed in a quantitative manner. The author feels that this technique will get a better insight into research objectives than qualitative study through various data analysis instruments. Another reason behind deployment of this method is linked to

time and money constraints. Researcher is currently not living in Ireland and survey enables her to reach out a big pool of respondents within short amount of time at minimal cost. (Saunders et al., 2012)

Survey to be disseminated to approximately 200 people through online Google docs gateway. Author of the research will undertake a pilot study that will pre- test the survey prior to releasing it to the selected sample.

Designing Survey/ Questionnaire

According to Greener (2008) properly designed questions are the skeleton of every research project. Bourke et al. (2016) argue that it is important to assess whether respondents can comprehend the questions that are being asked in the survey and whether they are capable and willing to give their answers. One of the golden rules in designing a good questionnaire is to avoid wordy and confusing questions. Participants should also get a clear direction on how to navigate through the questionnaire. The author explained to part takers the purpose and objectives of the research and guided them through the data collection process. See Appendix C for the full questionnaire accompanied by author's note.

The survey is comprised of the following sections:

3.3.1 Demographic Questions.

Single item questions were used to obtain data on gender, age, marital status, children, experience, tenure with FET sector. Selected demographic questions will help the researcher to obtain necessary data for evaluation of trends within FET sector and further statistical analysis. All questions were designed in line with guidelines set out in Bourke et al. (2016) chapter on building factual questions for demographic characteristics. This section of the survey plays a vital role for revealing the profile of FET employees in the research objective context. On closer examination researcher will be able to separate the data and provide information on WLB of full time vs part time employees or their engagement levels and turnover intension as well.

3.3.2. WLB Scale.

Researcher carefully reviewed publications on WLB scales assessing their eligibility for the objectives of this study. Shekar (2016) in his article argues that one conceptual scale measuring WLB directly doesn't exist. This is supported by Lazar (2010) who further points out that issue with evaluation of WLB practices is linked to problem with estimation of costs and outcomes for specific policies and programmes.

Likert scales

5- point Likert Scales were adopted to measure responses for the survey questions. Likert developed a set of reliable scales to measure views, attitudes and opinions linked to the questions contained within questionnaires (Forys and Gaca, 2016). The author used responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Quinlan highly recommends Likert scale that *"measures the direction of attitudes and measures the forces of the attitudes"* (Quinlan, 2011, p.327). Empirical evidence demonstrates a broad convergence of relative values of correlation coefficients obtained on application of Likert scales in conjunction with various calculation methods (Forys and Gaca, 2016).

To fill the gap Brough et al. (2014) developed a new WLB scale measure tested on multiple samples through cross sectional and longitudinal research designs. They evaluated WLB instruments following careful literature review by scholars such as: Greenhaus, Fisher, Bulger & Smith, Valcour, Grzywacz or Matthews, Kath and Barnes -Farrell.

Brough et al. (2014) built a new measure upon Kalliath & Brough (2008) theoretical definition of WLB and tested the new scale across several time frames and multiple independent samples. The researchers identified 19 scale items that were narrowed down to four items in line with their definition of WLB.

New WLB scale designed by Brough et al. (2014) is proved to be valid and effective instrument for the objectives raised in the subject of this study. The unidimensional

structure of the balance measure was progressed by researchers in four independent samples (N=6983) with proved criterion related validity. Both integrity and predictive ability were also deemed satisfactory. Work demands were found to be an antecedent of WLB. The study showed that family satisfaction, job satisfaction, psychological strain and turnover intension are WLB outcomes. The new WLB scale used in this study is comprised of the following items:

(1) 'I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities'

(2) 'I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities' (negatively worded item),

(3) 'I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right' and

(4) 'Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced'.

Participants were asked to give their agreement on 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The secondary data will be extracted from CORE HR information system through Business Intelligence reporting module – see Appendix D. Data will be a compilation of combined selected comparable WLB variables extracted from CORE HR on WLB programmes utilized in SOLAS.

This will enable the author to obtain data for 2016, 2017 and 2018. It is important to highlight the fact that secondary analysis of CORE records hasn't been recorded on CORE with the intention of exploring such a relationship (Saunders et al, 2009). Data that I'm going to be comparing has been documented through the same method at relevant points in time.

3.3.3. Turnover Intension Scale

The survey instrument utilises the turnover Intension scale originally developed by Camman et al. (1979). The scale is comprised of three items evaluating participants intension to leave their employment as follows:

1) I often think of leaving the organization.
2) It is very possible that I will look for a new job next year.
3) If I could choose again, I would choose to work for the current organization.

 Researcher decided to use this scale as above questions were replicated in many subsequent studies tackling turnover intension issue. The scale was proven to be a valid and reliable instrument useful for this study with responses rating statements from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

3.3.4. Employee Uptake of WLB Programmes

In this section employees are asked to respond 'yes' or 'no' to the list of WLB programmes in their organization. The author decided to measure individual participation rates in WLB programmes and itemized WLB programmes and policies that are currently available in the organization. Statistics recovered from BI module provide more insight into use of selected WLB initiatives in 2016, 2017 & 2018 at organizational level. This section will establish number of WLB practices utilised per individual to get a better picture of employee needs and organizational support in accessing these policies. The highest is the result obtained per employee then more WLB programmes are used by staff on individual basis. The following WLB initiatives were selected by the researcher:

1. Flexible Working Hours
2. Part Time Work/Work-sharing
3. Work from Home – This policy is under review and is not available yet.
4. Shorter Working Year
5. Career Break
6. Leave of Absence (up to 6 months)

7. Parental Leave

8. Maternity Leave/Paternity Leave

9. Carers Leave

10. Compassionate Leave

11. Force Majeure/Special Leave for Family Reasons

12. Study/Examination Leave

13. Travel Pass Scheme

14. Cycle to Work Scheme

15. Financial Support for Education

16. On site canteen facilities

17. Social Club Events

18. Well Being Committee Initiatives

19. Counselling (Employee Assistance Programme)

Researcher is only going to measure data on existing SOLAS WLB initiatives/programmes as per Appendix E. The sum of affirmative responses will be used as the overall score for each respondent. The higher the score, the more WLB programmes employee availed of.

3.3.5 Employee Engagement Scale

The author of the study will measure relationship between WLB and employee engagement - key dependent variable in this research. Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) designed by Schaufeli (2003) is the most commonly used self-report instrument questionnaire operationalizing employee engagement with excellent psychometric features (Shimazu et al., 2010). UWES three-dimensional questionnaire has been popularized worldwide and translated into 22 languages. According to Schaufeli's definition, work engagement is ,, a *positive and fulfilling work related state of mind reflected by vigor, dedication and absorption''* (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 702).

Original questionnaire is comprised of 17 items for vigor (six items), dedication (5 items) and absorption (6 items) scales (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). However,

Schaufeli also published a shortened 9 item reliable version for three scales with three items each followed by a student version as well.

Schaufeli et al. (2006) conducted evaluation of questionnaires used for the measurement of employee engagement. Meta-analysis of both versions confirmed reliable internal consistencies for vigor, dedication and absorption scales. Detailed analysis carried out in 8 countries across 33 samples returned psychometric features like Cronbach alpha ranging between .80 and .90 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Seppala et al. (2009) revealed that short version of UWES - 9 within 3-year time interval ranges from .82 to .86 confirming high rank order stability coefficients (Schaufeli et al., 2006)

The correlations between three engagement scales are highly reliable and the internal consistency of the shortened 9 item scale is satisfactory as well (Simazu et al., 2010). No systematic variations were detected in work engagement levels between female and male employees or across various age groups. However, in some occupational groups like management, engagement levels were evidently higher than blue collar workers (Shimazu et al., 2010)

Schaufeli highly recommended utilization of UWES as a screening and identification tool for employees requiring enhancement of levels of engagement (Schaufeli, 2013).

Following extensive research, the author decided to deploy shortened 9-item scale to assess employee engagement in FET sector. The scale items match author's concept of employee engagement in the broad context of WLB.

The author felt that 17-item version was too long and overwhelming for participants. Employee engagement section of the survey is comprised of the following statements:

1. *At my work, I feel bursting with energy. (VI1)*
2. *At my job, I feel strong and vigorous. (VI2)*
3. *I am enthusiastic about my job. (DE2)*
4. *My job inspires me. (DE3)*
5. *When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work. (VI3)*

6. I feel happy when I am working intensely. (AB3)

7. I am proud of the work that I do. (DE4)

8. I am immersed in my work. (AB4)

9. I get carried away when I am working. (AB5

Note: VI = Vigor scale; DE = Dedication scale; AB = Absorption scale.

Each statement is rated trough 7- point Likert scale from O – ''Never'' to 6 – ''Always''.

3.3.6. Managerial Support

This section is comprised of 5 questions adopted from Jahn et al. (2003) research exploring the role of supervisory support in WLB programmes. The above authors carried out a comprehensive analysis of perceived organizational family support. Researcher felt that the calibre of questions set up by Jahn et al. (2003) is ideal for the managerial section. However, researched decided to add question 1 & 2 from Thompson's, Beavuais and Lyness' (1999) study to get more insight into Managerial support in SOLAS. Thomson and his fellow researchers conducted studies on work-family culture measured on 21 item scale with managerial support items.

Participants are asked to express opinion whether managers are accommodating and understanding towards their work and non-work commitments. The following questions are being asked:

1. In general managers in this organization are quite accommodating of family related/personal matters.
2. My participation in WLB programmes results in being viewed by manager as less serious about my career than those who don't engage in these programmes.
3. If I or one of my co-workers needed time to attend the family/personal business (doctor or teacher appointments, school plays, etc.) my manager is very flexible about working it out.
4. My manager measures people on their overall productivity, not simply hours spent in the office.

5. The subordinates in my department feel free to discuss family/personal problems that affect work with my manager.

6. If I missed work due to a sick dependent, my manager would understand.

7. My manager supports company policies that help employees maintain WLB and approves requests for same.

Literature research provides evidence that managerial support plays a vital role in promoting and utilization of WLB initiatives in the workplace and researcher decided to include section on managerial support in this study to obtain more objective information about managerial support in FET sector.

3.3.7. Comments section

The survey also contains a comments section with open ended and closed questions to enable participants to voice their opinion about their personal needs in relation WLB programmes and suggest new WLB solutions to HR. The researcher felt it was important to include a question about career consequences for employees accessing WLB policies to reflect employee opinion on this matter and provide further recommendations for the organizations and FET sector. Participants were also given a chance to elaborate on their personal situation and support received from the organization at the time of conflict between family/personal related matters and work.

1. What could your employer do to improve your current Work Life Balance? (Please feel free to suggest any new WLB policies/practices that you would find beneficial)

2. As an employee accessing WLB programmes have you ever been subject to reduced career progression/promotion opportunities?

3. Has this organization made an active effort to help you when you experienced a conflict between work and family/personal life?

4. Other comments

3.3.8. Limitations of this study

This study like many others that have deployed quantitative research approach is subject to certain limitations. Most authors exploring topic of WLB or employee engagement in the available literature decided to adopt quantitative methods. Dul & Hak (2008) argue that survey outcomes might be perceived to be generalizable as often there is no clear distinction made between the survey population and the larger theoretical domain from which the sample is not drawn. This view is supported by Bryman & Bell (2007) who also query accuracy of surveys. Therefore, it is important to stress that the author hasn't exhausted all avenues in the topic of this research. Due to a time constraint it wasn't feasible to attain data from larger FET sector population. However, every possible effort was made to receive information from as many respondents as possible. Results gathered in this research cannot be generalized as true reflection of FET sector as the whole and need to be explored further. As per Dul & Hak (2008) findings if research outcomes haven't been replicated into domain of instances, other organizations or geographic areas they might be speculative in nature. Therefore, it is highly recommended that further studies are carried out on the higher percentage of employers under umbrella of FET sector.

Another limitation of this study is linked to convenience sampling which is a specific type of nonprobability sampling method targeting population meeting certain criteria e.g. geographical location, availability of participants to undertake survey, easy accessibility etc. (Saunders et al., 2012). Most individuals partaking in the research were known to the author which leads to conclusion that results are likely to be biased. Adams et al. (2014) argue that intensity of surveys in the organizations bring poor response rates putting a question mark over the reliability and validity of findings. Author had no control over personal interests in WLB subject of individuals who volunteered to answer the survey.

The data analysed was mostly statistical and reported percentages on each employee on each individual question.

3.3.9. Ethical Considerations

Every research activity must follow certain rules regarding ethical principles and protection of participants taking part in the research project. According to Saunders et al. (2012) authors conducting studies must ensure that partakers are not exposed to material disadvantage, harm or mistreatment throughout the process.

Any ethical concerns that have arisen at research design stage were quickly addressed by the author and rectified. Link to on-line survey was disseminated to selected sample. Participants were fully informed of the nature and objectives of the study and reassured that their involvement in research project is voluntary and fully confidential. First question of the survey asked respondents for their consent to voluntarily take part in the study.

Another ethical issue tackles report findings that according to Adams et al. (2014) should be accurate, truthful and available to other parties participating in the research. In line with those recommendations respondents were informed that study results will be disseminated to interested parties. On-line survey was designed in google documents domain and individual replies will be kept on that platform for another 6 months and are accessible by the researcher only.

Formal request was submitted to HR Manager outlining the purpose of the project, potential benefits for the organization and involvement of participants. The author commenced the study following ethical approval from senior management. Researcher's conduct was driven by best practice guidelines as per QA NCI Handbook (2011).

3.4.0. Data Analysis and Presentation

On completion of the survey by participants, results will be exported into Excel and uploaded into versatile statistical computer package – IBM SPSS that will enable the author to manipulate the data and calculate a wide variety of stats to answer all inquiries. SPSS supports researchers in building and validating predictive models and deciphering survey data (Saunders et al. 2012). It also provides tools for conducting

flexible and customizable analysis of complex data sets in statistical environment. SPSS allows for many types of transformations, correlations and factor analyses and is deemed as best package for non-statisticians (Bansal and Srivastava, 2018).

The variables obtained through the survey will be examined by the author and leveraged against each other throughout SPSS including methodologies such as Pearson correlation coefficient test. It is envisaged that statistical findings will enable the author to reveal relationship between WLB, employee engagement and turnover intension in support of research questions.

Comments section is comprised of few open-ended questions that will produce qualitative data sets. Content of responses obtained will be analysed against key words, themes, frequencies and sets of data carefully interpreted for the benefit of this study.

3.4.1. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability testing is the cornerstone of research and was applied by the author in the context of survey representing quantitative research method.

Validity in the survey is used to determine how well research measures components it intended to measure and examines accuracy of the measurement process. It is important to mention that we can differentiate four types of research validity such as: internal, external validity, construct & conclusion validity. Type of measure we use to check validity (construct, content, face and criterion) is associated with research objectives (Bourke et al. 2016). Adams et al. (2014) argues that validity plays more strategic role in the research process than reliability itself because if piece of research doesn't measure what it sets out to it shouldn't be applied even if it's reliable and consistent.

Reliability refers to quality of the measurement process and consistency of findings. Adams et al. (2014) mentions two methods that are usually used for measurement of reliability: repeatability and checking of internal consistency. According to Bourke et

al. (2016) we can also ask similar question in another part of our survey and if the results differ the item may be not accurate. It is extremely important for the research process to envisage whether assessment tools don't generate unpredictable and unstable results. Greener (2008) makes conclusion that every researcher should aim to design transparent and clear research study that can be easily followed by others trying to pursue study with the similar methods. If the results of replication study are intact with previous findings we can have more faith in the correctness of conclusions otherwise Dul & Hak (2007) argue that we can't be confident of the correctness of any results published in the literature if replication of results wasn't carried out.

Each of four scales used by the author of this study were examined by designated reliability and consistency test called Cronbach Alpha. Bryman & Bell (2011) argues that scale is deemed to be reliable and measures desired values between survey items if Cronbach Alpha exceeds 0.70.

Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

Chapter four presents result from the data tested in this quantitative study. The primary objective of this research is associated with outlining Work Life Balance practices and their impact on employee engagement and turnover intention in FET sector in Ireland.

Analysis of the data gathered by the author will be carried out by use of descriptive and inferential statistics and summarising qualitative data obtained from staff survey carried out on a sample from SOLAS - Further Education and Training Authority.

WLB, employee engagement and turnover intention are representing three main variables tested in this research. Validity and reliability for each of the scales used in this study will be carried out and Cronbach alpha calculated accordingly to assess internal consistency levels.

4.2. Respondent Demographic Profile

Researcher applied descriptive statistics to get a more accurate respondent profile. Initially the sample size for the subject of this study is comprised of 118 public sector employees representing FET sector in Ireland. Gender breakdown as per Figure 8 shows that over 2/3 of respondents' accounts for female employees.

Figure 8. Gender
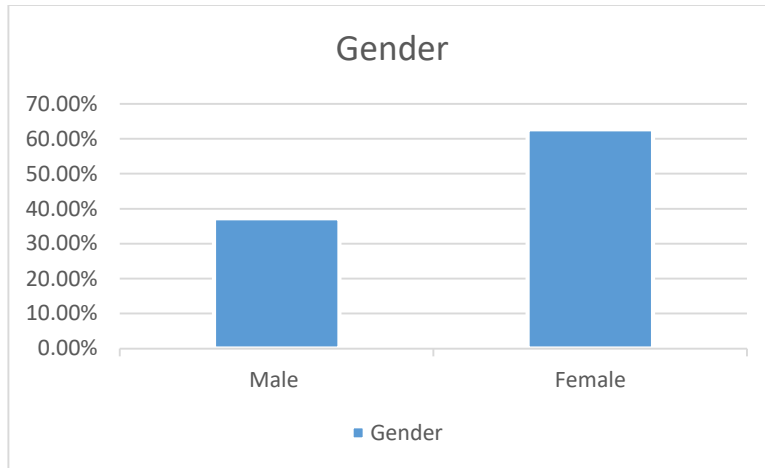
Table 1. processed in SPSS shows respondent age profile.

Table 1. Age Profile

	Value	Count	Percent
Valid Values			
1	18 – 29	3	2.5%
2	30 – 39	14	11.9%
3	40 – 49	47	39.8%
4	50+	54	45.8%

As can be seen in the Table 1 the largest proportion of FET respondents are over 50 years of age and 74.6% works full time. Data gathered in demographic section also demonstrates that 57% participants declared to have children and 68% respondents are married.

Table 2. Full Time vs Part Time

	Value	Count	Percent
Valid Values 1	Full Time	88	74.6%
2	Part Time	30	25.4%

We can read from Table 2 that our respondents are comprised of 75% of staff working in full time capacity versus 25% of part timers.

42 % of respondents works in the organization for the past 10 to 20 years and further 25% exceeded 30 years of service as per Table 3 below.

Table 3. Tenure with the organization.

	Value	Count	Percent
Valid Values 1	< 1 year	7	5.9 %
2	Between 1 to 4 years	8	6.8 %
3	Between 5 – 10 years	7	5.9 %
4	Between 10 – 20 years	50	42.4 %
5	Between 20 – 30	17	14.4 %
6	30+	29	24.6 %

4.3. Reliability Testing

4.3.1. WLB Scale

Table 4 outlines results of reliability test carried out in SPSS IBM for WLB 4 item scale. Test shows that scale reached a high reliability scoring well above required threshold of 0.70. High Cronbach Alpha of .930 confirms that scale is an excellent measurement instrument and can be deployed for further data analysis.

Table 4. Cronbach Alpha for WLB Scale

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.930	.930	4

4.3.2. Employee Engagement Scale

Table 5 depicts results of reliability test conducted for 9-item employee engagement scale. This scale is also deemed as highly reliable with the Cronbach Alpha of .889 and confirms a strong reliability of the questions used in this section.

Table 5. Cronbach Alpha for Employee Engagement Scale

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.889	.906	9

4.3.3. Turnover Intent Scale

Table 6 shows Cronbach Alpha of .639 for Turnover Intension scale that hasn't reached desired reliability test value above 0.7 in the first place and was adjusted accordingly to meet consistency and reliability requirements.

Table 6. Turnover Intension Scale Reliability

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.639	.593	3

Researcher removed item nr 3 to meet desired criteria and ensure that internal consistency and reliability for Turnover Intent are met. The new reliability test has brought the following satisfactory values:

Table 7. Cronbach Alpha for Turnover Intension Scale.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.820	.821	2

As per above results Cronbach Alpha value of .820 was reached, which represents a good consistency levels for the item measured in this section of the survey.

4.3.4. Managerial Support

Table 8 depicts results for the Cronbach alpha reliability test for Managerial support scale comprised of 7 items. The Cronbach alpha = .786 which proves that scale is a valid measurement instrument and produces consistent results.

Table 8. Cronbach Alpha for Managerial Support Scale

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.786	.770	7

According to Saunders et al (2012) decision rule on data sets measured through Pearson correlation should be interpreted as significant when $p \leq 0.5$.

If $p > 0.5$ the test is not significant. The correlation coefficient r which is always between $+1$ and -1, measures the strength of a linear relationship between variables. The closer the value is to 1 or -1, the stronger the linear correlation exists. Wilson (2009) proposed the following criteria for calculating the strength of relationship:

- 1.0 to 0.5 or -1.0 to -0.5 **Strong**
- 0.3 to 0.5 or -0.5 to -0.3 **Moderate**
- to 0.3 or -0.3 to -0.1 **Weak**
- - 0.1 to 0.1 **None**

4.3.5. Objective 1: WLB Satisfaction in FET sector

Researcher calculated perceived level of satisfaction for WLB policies in FET sector. Data collected from WLB scale has been critically analysed and evaluated to produce desired results.

Excel data for each of the respondents was processed and the average value produced accordingly. An average organisational score computed for WLB scale per individual amounts to 3.6 out of 5 which is positive. The overall percentage for the whole organization was calculated at 72%.

Utilization of WLB practices was most intense in the age group of 40-49 & 50+ that stayed with the organization between 10-20 years. The average number of WLB policies availed by respondents under that category reads as 9. Statistical analysis

shows that the number of WLB initiatives availed by participants with the lowest tenure in the organization: 1 to 4 years amounts to 1, 5, 6 and 10 items with the average of 5.5 which is positive. It wasn't possible to provide data on respondents within 18-29 age category as this population accounts for 2.5% respondents only.

Within 68 male/female respondents with children, 37 declared having difficulty balancing work and non-work activities with 7 'strongly agreeing' which gives combined total of 44 accounting for 65%. Only13 respondents with children felt they had a good balance between the time spent at work and time for non-work activities.

The following are the results for utilization of WLB initiatives within FET sector based on 118 respondents:

Figure 9. Part Time Work/Work-sharing, Flexible Working Hours
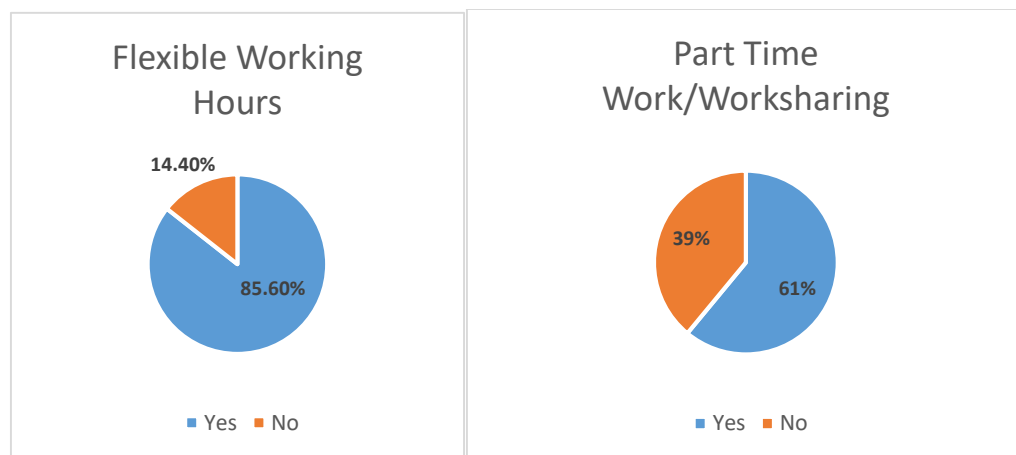
The above figure reflects excellent utilization of flexible working hours and part time work amongst respondents. Part time work option attracted mainly employees from age bracket of 40-49; 50+ and 80% of them were female employees which corresponds with FET demographic profile.

To get a more insight on work-sharing patterns and general stats for the organization, researcher used data retrieved from Core HR Business Intelligence module.

Figure 10. Part Timers vs Full Time Staff in the first quarter of 2018
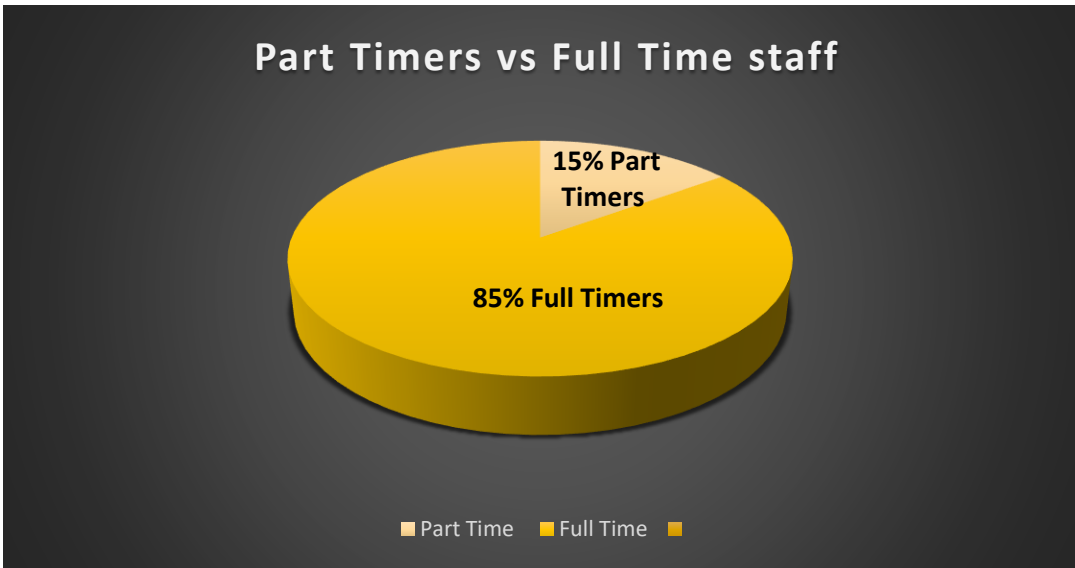
As we can read from figure 10 85% of SOLAS staff works in full time capacity and over 80% of those are female employees.

Figure 11. Part Time Staff Gender Breakdown
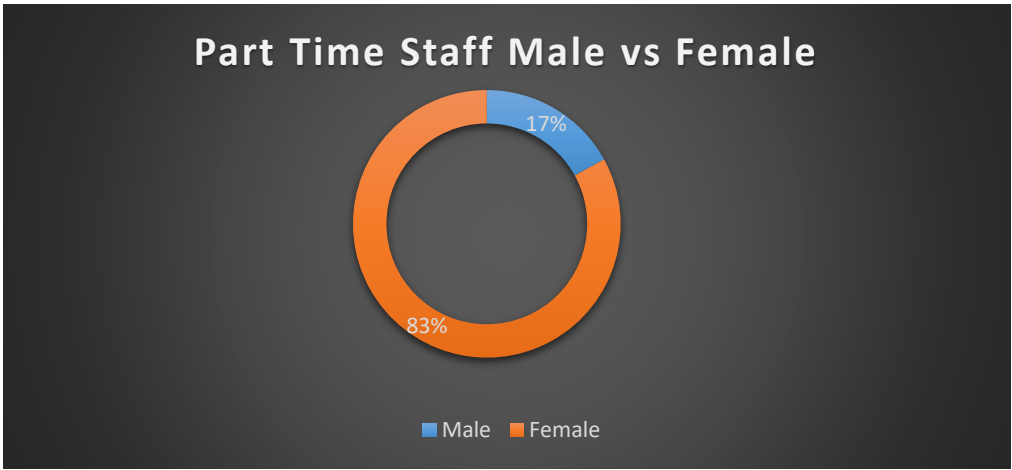
Figure 12. Part Time Employee Work Patterns
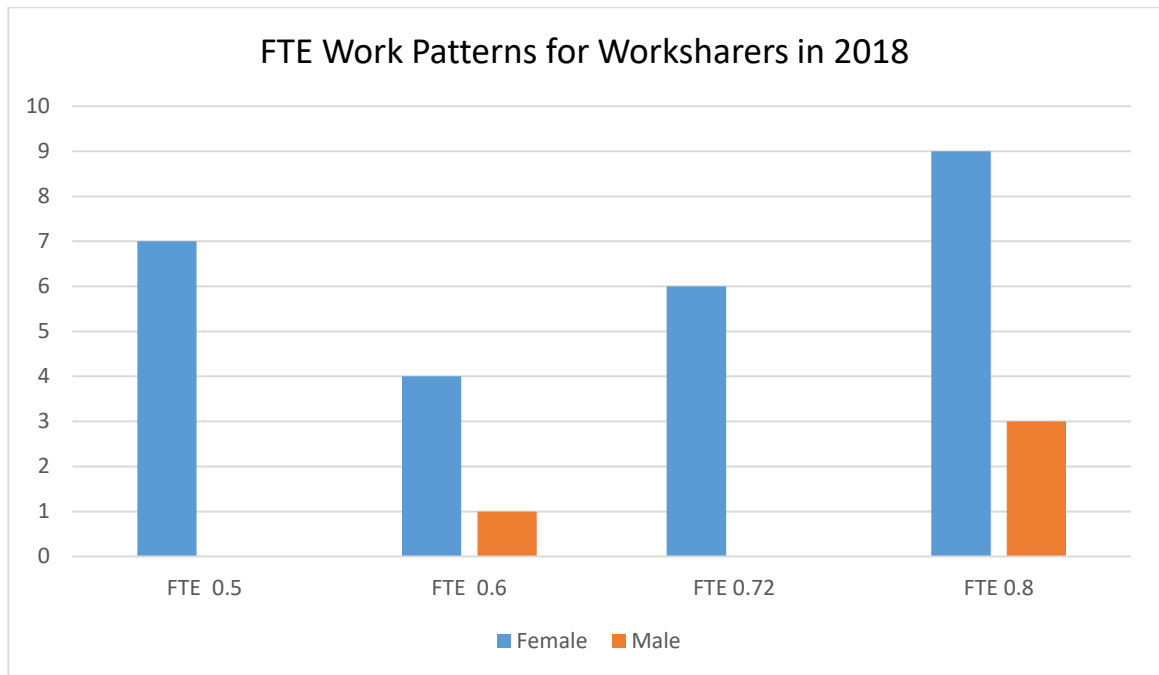
We can read from Figure 12 that SOLAS provides a good range of work-sharing patterns and they are mostly utilized by female employees. Researchers compared Core HR BI figures for 2017 and 2016 to get a more objective picture of the organization and utilization process for this policy.

Figure 13. Part Timers 2017/2016
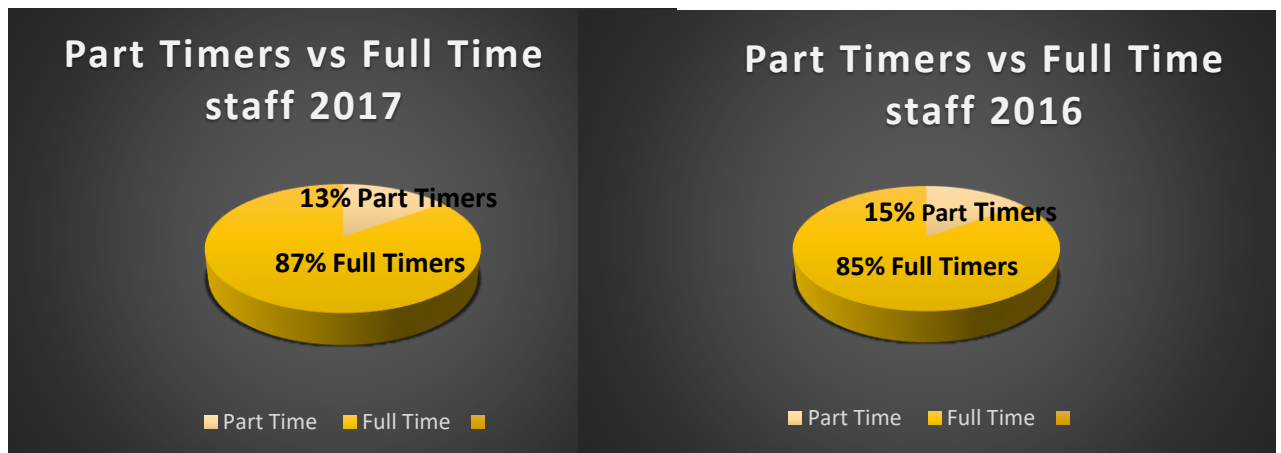
Figure 14. Work-sharing Patterns 2017/2016.
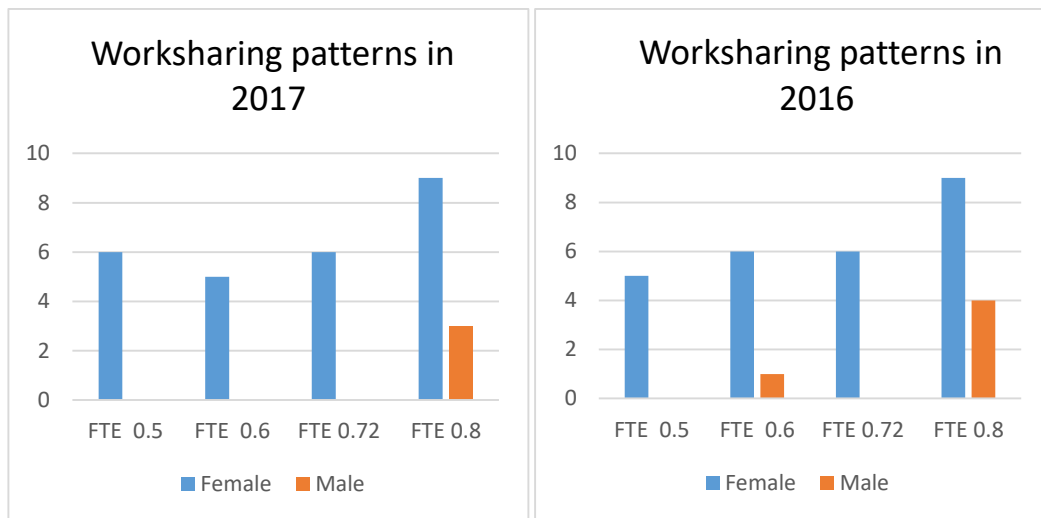
The above data shows that various part time work patterns (50%, 60%, 72% or 80% of full time hours) are utilized by staff and there is a very low percent of male workers in the receipt of these.

Figure 15. Shorter Woking Year, Career Break, LOA and Work from Home.

Leave of Absence	Work from Home
22% Yes / 78% No	39% Yes / 61% No
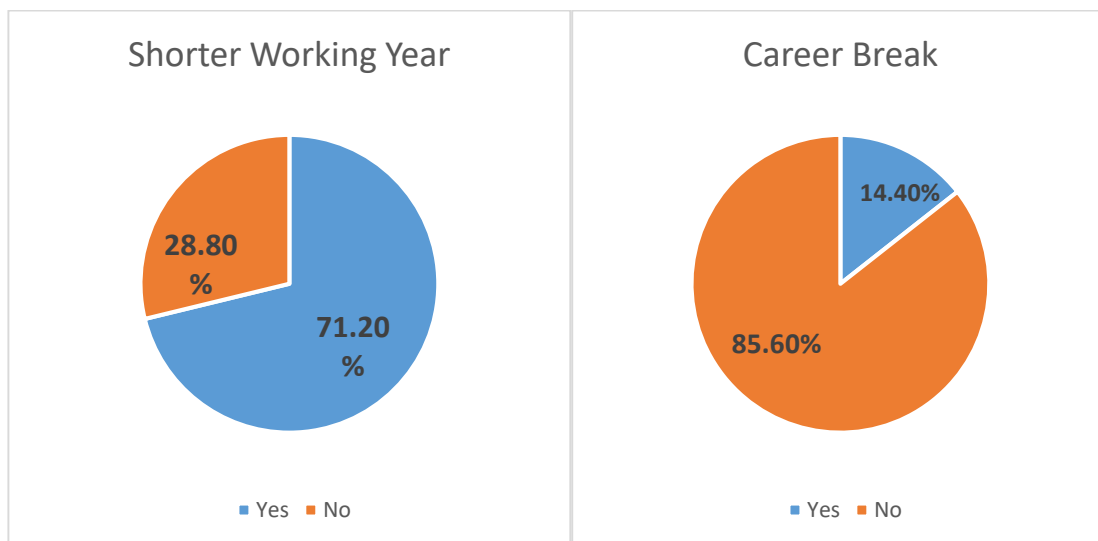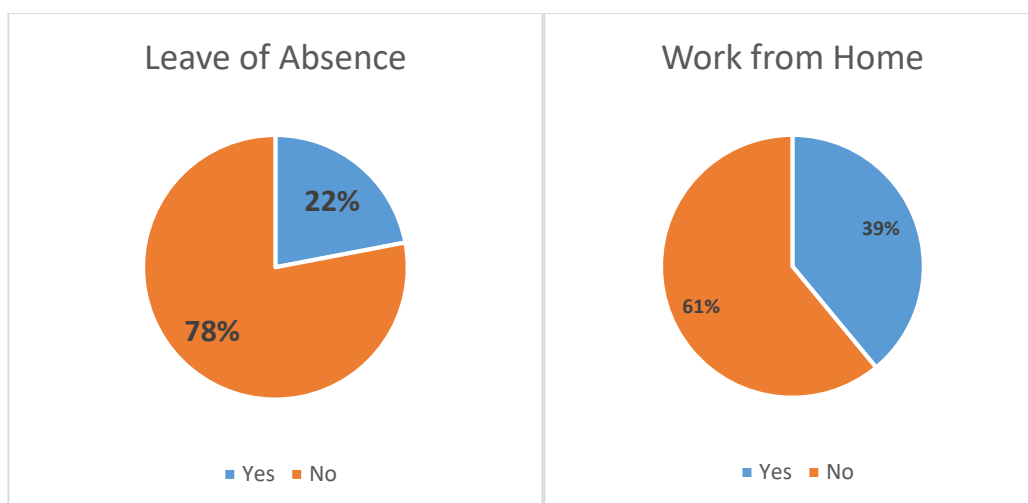
Apart from Work from home item, LOA, SWY and CB were taken up by staff at level exceeding 70%. 'Work from home' option was availed by 46 respondents with 50% individuals from age bracket 40-49, 50+. To provide more reliable data researcher retrieved Core BI data on Career Breaks and Shorter Working Year.

Table 9. Staff on Career Break between 2014 and 2021 (data from 1st quarter of 2018)

		Staff on Career Break		
	Gender	Female	Male	HC TOTAL
Grade Grouping				
01 - 7 MANAGEMENT STAFF		2	1	*3*
08 - 10 OPERATIONAL		2		*2*
11 - CLERICAL		3		*3*
13 - OPERATIVE		0		*0*
TOTAL		**7**	1	**8**

Core BI data on CB between 2014 and 2021 as per Table 9 demonstrates that 90% of recipients were female and this policy was accessed equally by Management and non-management grades.

Figure 16. Shorter Working Year 207
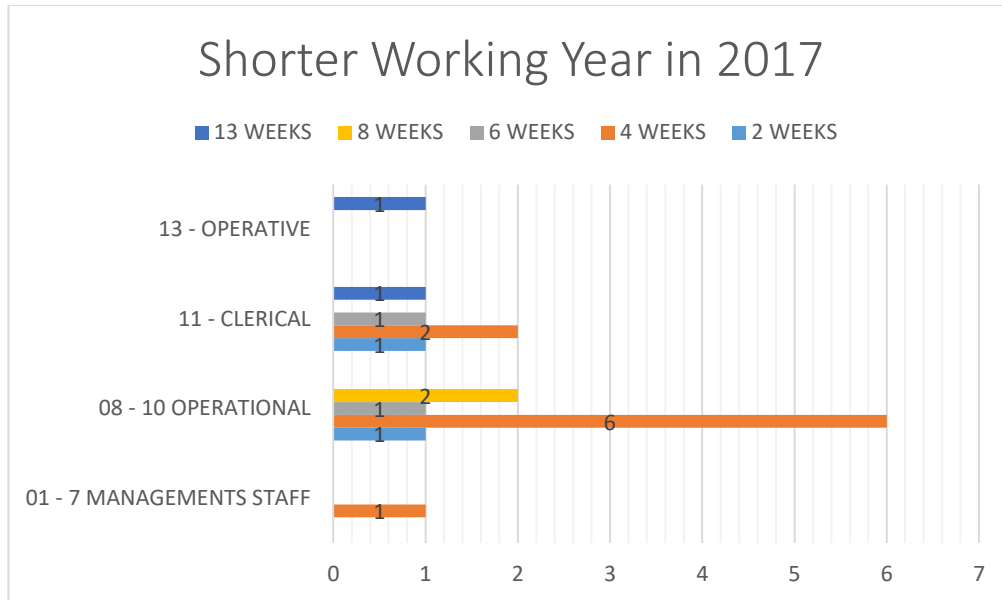
Figure 17. Shorter Working Year 2016
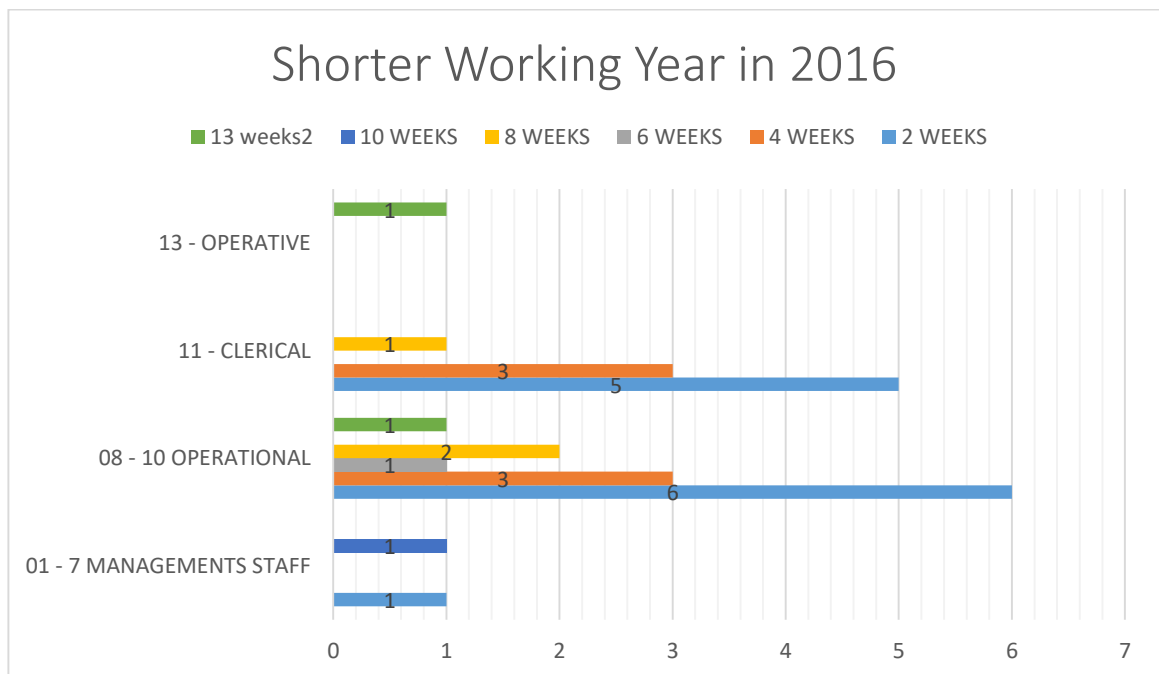
Figure 16 & 17 demonstrate a good range of options for Shorter Working Year and proves it's commonly used by staff especially amongst non-managerial grades.

4-week option appear to be the most popular SWY pattern for operational and clerical

grades in 2016/2017. 8-week option was used by operational grades, while 13-week option utilized by clerical and operative staff. Data analysis for SWY presents that overall 8% of staff availed this work arrangement in 2017 and 12% of staff in 2016 which is pretty good.

Figure 18. Parental/Maternity/Paternity/Carers Leave, Force Majeure/Leave for special family reasons.
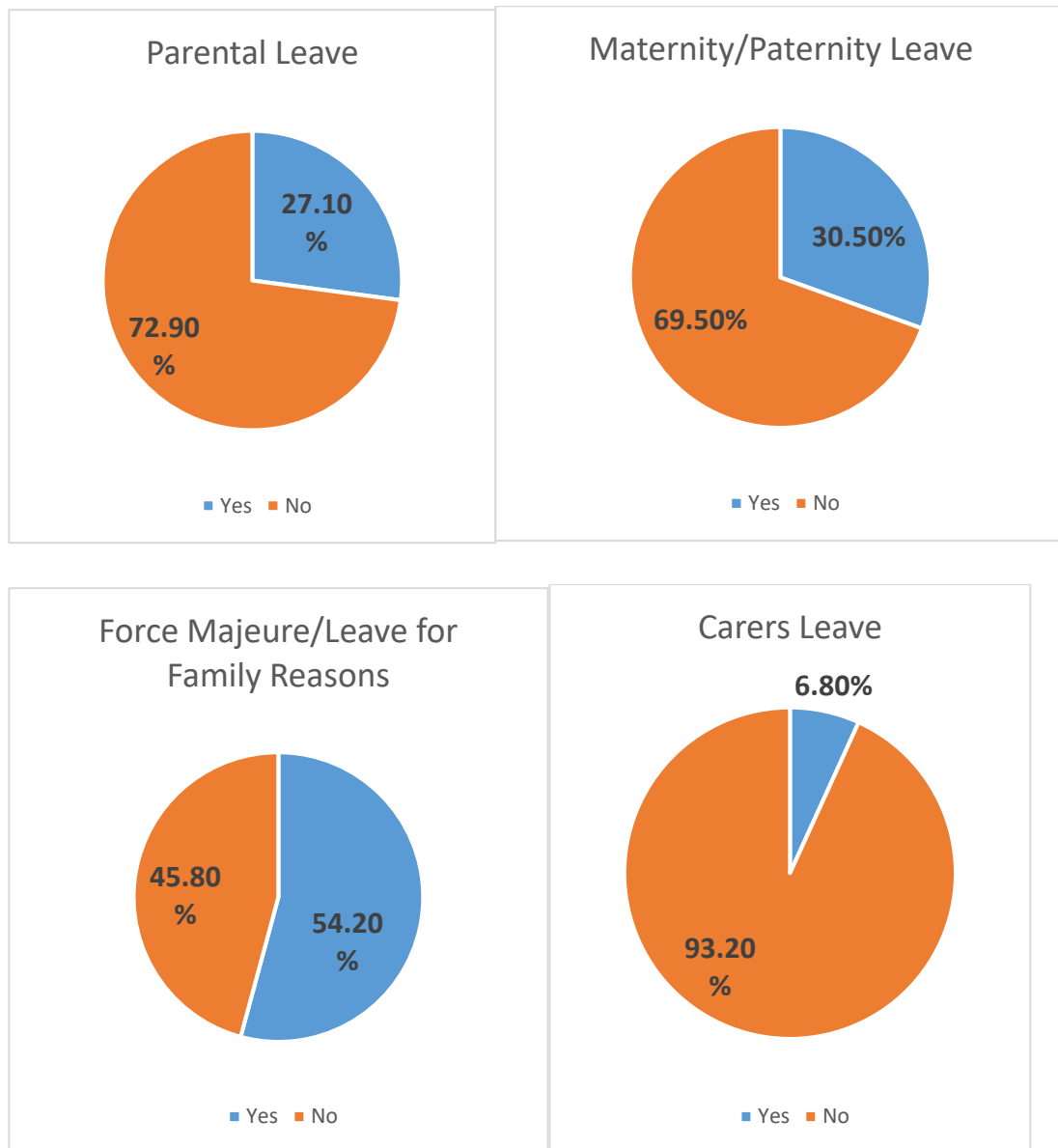
Figure 18 and data from Table 10/11 retrieved from Core HR BI module shows low percentage of Parental Leave & Carers Leave for the years 2016 & 2017

Table 10. Parental Leave Fixed Pattern/Carers Leave 2017

	Gender	Staff on Block of Parental Lave		Staff on fixed pattern of Parental Leave		Staff on Carers Leave	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Grade Grouping							
01 - 7 MANAGEMENT STAFF		1		*2*			
08 - 10 OPERATIONAL		1		*1*		*1*	
11 - CLERICAL							
13 - OPERATIVE							
TOTAL		**2**		**3**		**1**	

Table 11. Parental Leave/Carers Leave 2016

	Gender	Staff on Block of Parental Lave		Staff on fixed pattern of Parental Leave		Staff on Carers Leave	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Fem	Male
Grade Grouping							
01 - 7 MANAGEMENT				*1*			
08 - 10 OPERATIONAL		1		*2*		*1*	
11 - CLERICAL							
13 - OPERATIVE							
TOTAL		**1**		**3**			

Qualitative data shows that over 70% of respondents accessed Wellbeing Committee Initiatives and Social Club Events. Over 70% of employees accessed Travel Pass & Cycle to Work Schemes along with financial support for training programmes. For more detailed results see Appendix F.

4.3.6. Objective 2: WLB & Employee Engagement

The author used Pearson product correlation coefficient (r) to establish the relationship between WLB and Employee Engagement and reveal the association between those two variables for objective 2. The results outlined in Table 12 show positive relationship between WLB and Employee Engagement. Pearson correlation r = 364, n = 118 and p = 0.00 suggests significant relationship between the two variables with a moderate strength.

Table 12. WLB and Employee Engagement Pearson Correlation Coefficient Results.

Correlations

		WLB Scale	Engagement Scale
WLB Scale	Pearson Correlation	1	.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	118	118
Engagement Scale	Pearson Correlation	.364**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	118	118

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Overall the scatterplot for WLB vs Engagement as per Table 13 show a moderate pattern with some points being close to the line and others far from it. The line of our graph slopes upwards. SPSS calculated the p value as being .000 and therefore increases in WLB are positively associated with increases in employee engagement.

Table 13. Scatterplot WLB vs Employee Engagement
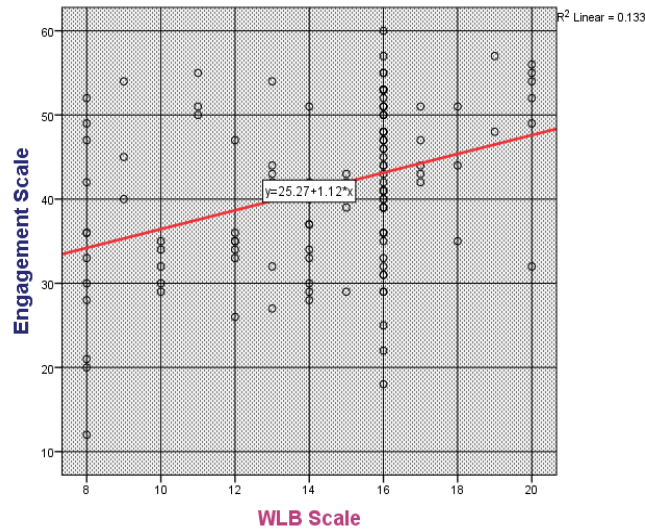
Average score of perceived employee engagement per individual reads as 4.59 out of maximum 7 which represents good value. The author also calculated engagement score for the whole organization by adding respondent's average results and dividing them by the number of respondents. Result of this calculation amounts to 4.55 out of a maximum possible 7 which gives an overall result of 65% for the whole organization.

Overall mean score for WLB scale.

Table 14 depicts average scoring for WLB 4-item scale calculated for 118 participants.

Table 14. WLB Scale Statistics.

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
14.38	10.272	3.205	4

Results show that average score of 14.38 was achieved by partakers of the survey from the highest number of 20 to the lowest of four available to them for the items measured on WLB scale.

4.6.1. Objective 3: WLB & Turnover Intention

Table 17 outlines result for perceived employee relationship between WLB and Turnover Intension. The outcome of data analysis shows statistical negative relationship between those variables. The Pearson's r for the correlation between WLB and Turnover Intent is r=-.200, n=118 which suggests weak relationship between those variables. The scatterplot in Table 18 indicates that increase of WLB translates into decrease of Turnover intent. This is also reflected by p value of .030 which leads to conclusion that there is a relationship between these variables but the

Table 15. WLB & Turnover Intent Pearson Correlation Coefficient Results.

Correlations

		WLB Scale	Turnover Scale
WLB Scale	Pearson Correlation	1	-.200[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.030
	N	118	118
Turnover Scale	Pearson Correlation	-.200[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	
	N	118	118

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 16. Figure WLB & Turnover Intent
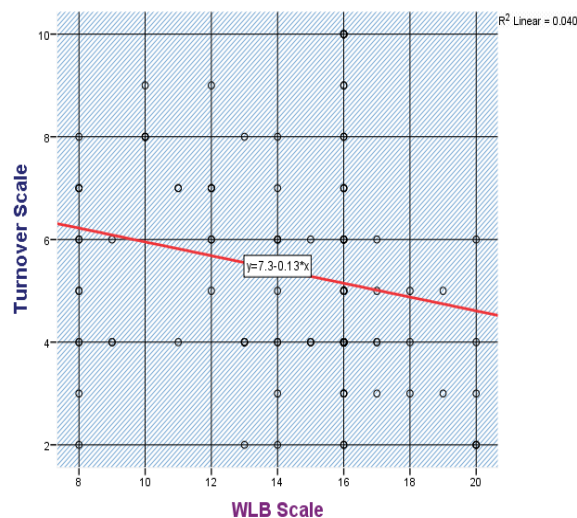
4.7.1 Objective 4: Results for Managerial Support.

Calculation of Managerial Support at organizational level

Researcher calculated the level of managerial support perceived by employees in SOLAS. Excel data gathered from the managerial support scale items was used and average score for each of the respondents produced. Researcher used those figures to calculate overall average result for the organization which amounts to 3.72 out of a maximum 5. This computes a result of 74.4% for the whole organization.

The following answers were given by respondents to the questions on managerial support.

1. **In general Managers in this organization are quite accommodating of family related/personal needs.**

Figure 19. Question 1
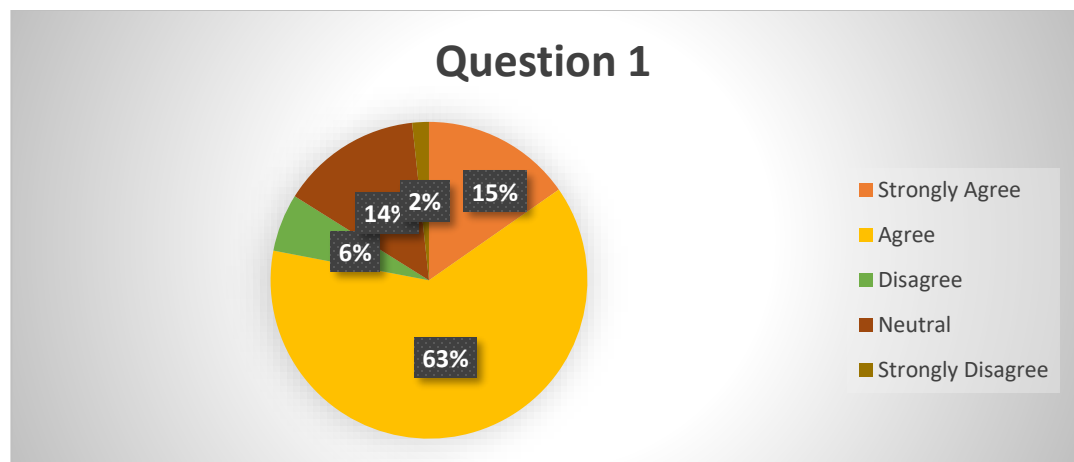
As per Figure 19. 63% of respondents agreed and 15% strongly agreed with above statement which gives high combined overall total of 78%.

2. **My participation in WLB programmes results in being viewed by manager as less serious about my career than those who don't engage in these programmes.**

Figure 20. Question 2
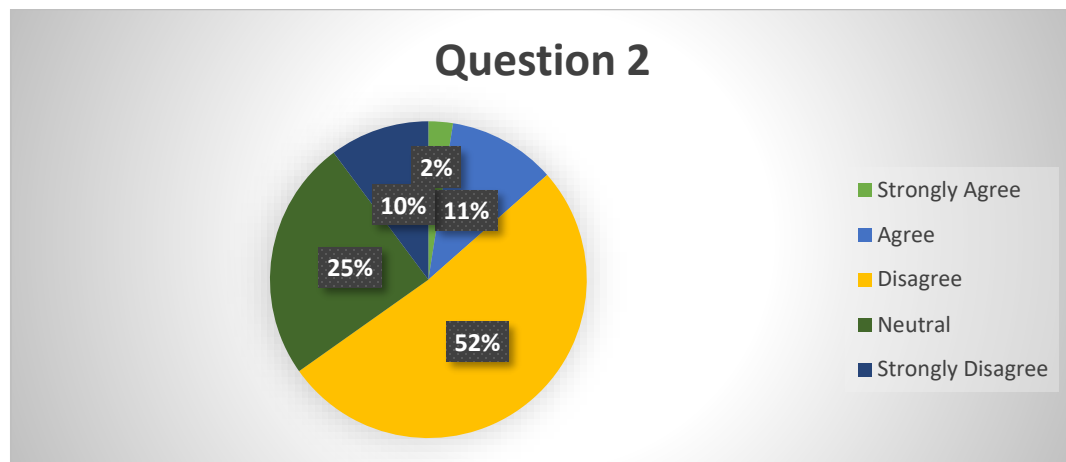
The highest proportion of respondents (52%) disagreed and 10 % strongly disagreed that Managers would be more favourable towards staff who don't engage in WLB programmes. However, 11% of participants agreed with the above statement and 25% of participants stayed neutral.

3. **If I or one of my co-workers needed time to attend the family/personal business (doctor or teacher appointments, school plays, etc.) my manager is very flexible about working it out.**

Figure 21. Question 3
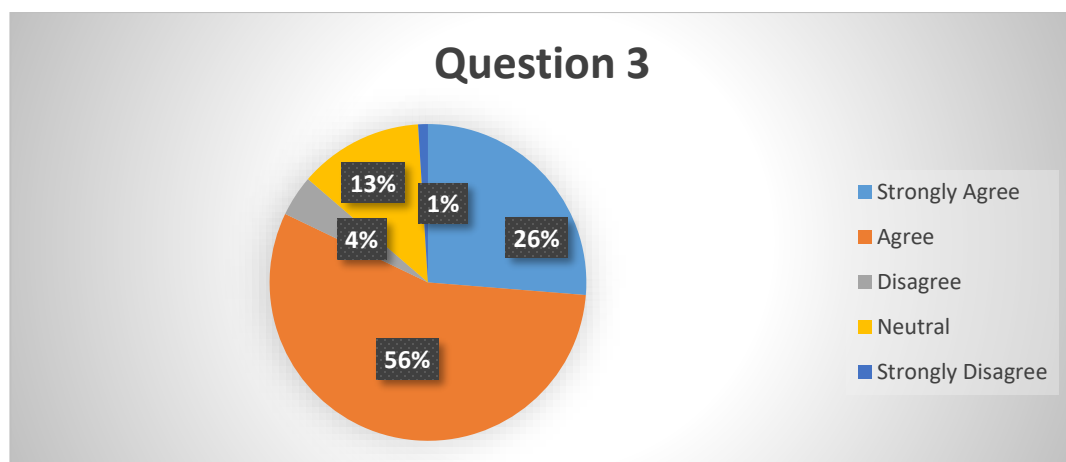
Results for this question confirm flexibility of line management in FET sector. 56% respondents hit 'agree' response and another 26% hit 'strongly agree' option which gives a combine total of 82% representing a significant value.

4. **My manager measures people on their overall productivity, not simply hours spent in the office.**

Figure 22. Question 4
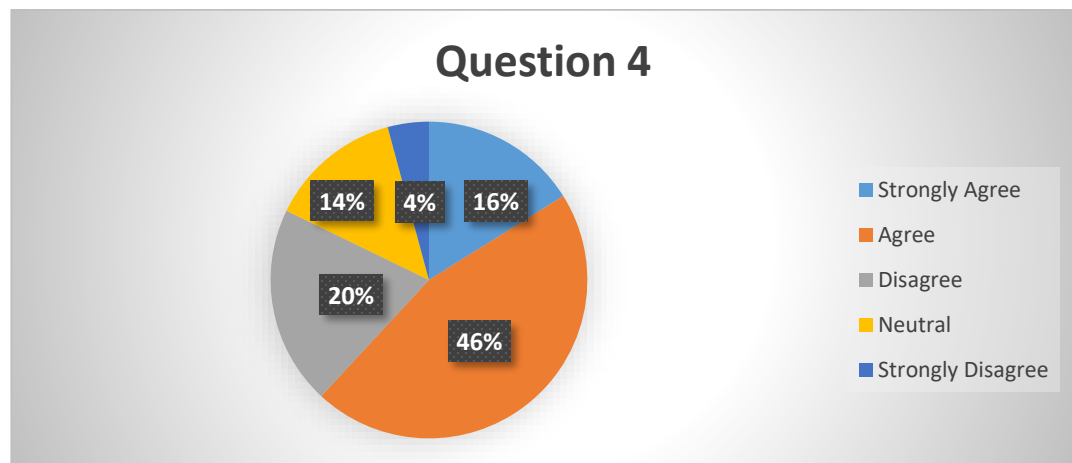
Figure 22 illustrates that 46% of survey respondents feel that their output is measured by productivity rather than hours spent in the office. This is supported by 'strongly agree' comment at 16% which gives an overall score of 62% in favour of strong managerial support.

5. **The subordinates in my department feel free to discuss family/personal problems that affect work with my manager.**

We can read from Figure 23 that 52.5% respondents hit 'Agree' response followed by 11% with 'Strong agreement'. However, it is important to mention that 25% gave neutral answer.

Figure 23. Question 5
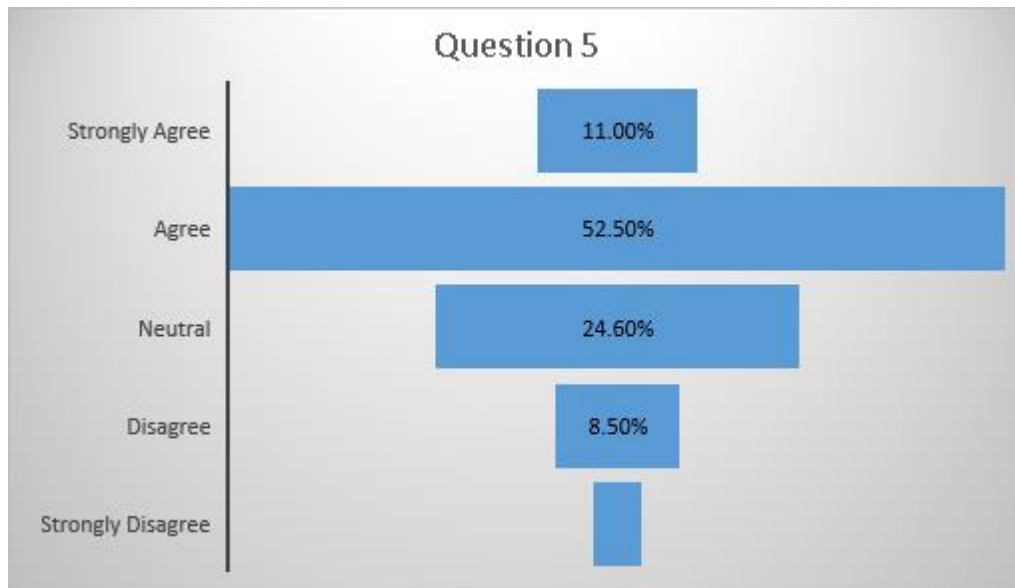
6. If I missed work due to a sick dependent, my manager would understand.

Figure 24. Question 6
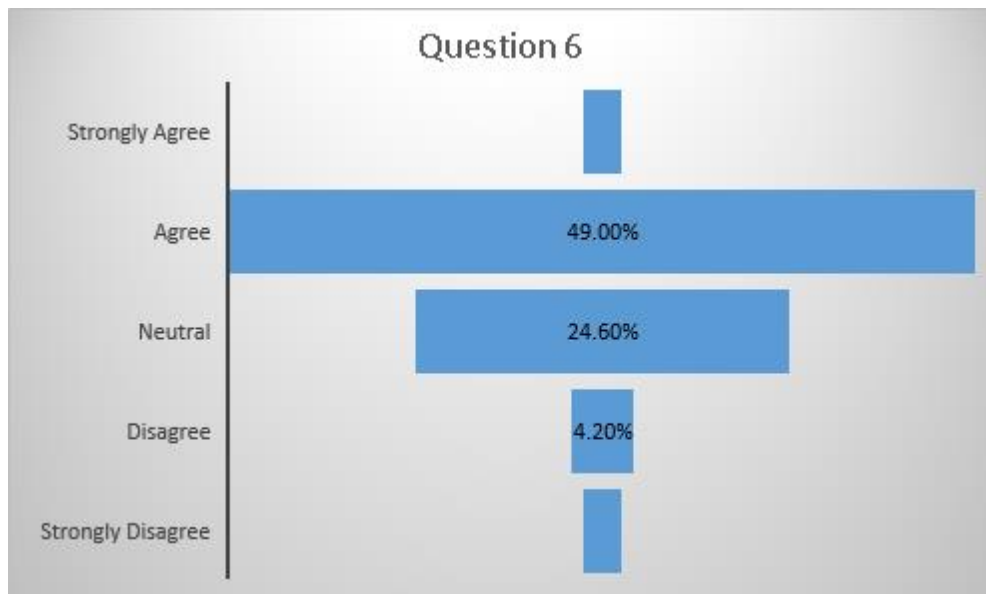
Figure 24 picture a good level of managerial support amongst tested participants. 'Agree' score from 49% and 'strongly agree' from 13.7% of respondents was achieved.

7. **My manager supports company policies that help employees maintain Work Life Balance and approves requests for same.**

Figure 25. Question 7
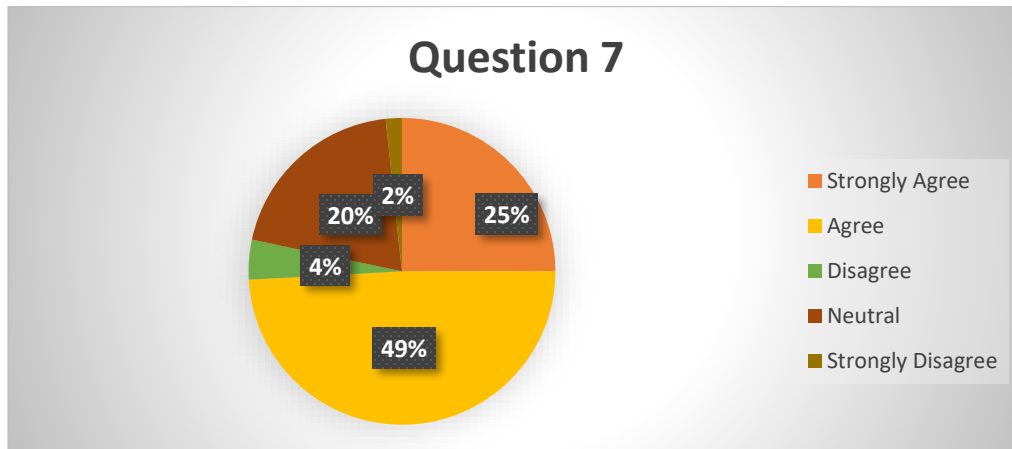
Results for question nr 7 confirm that FET Management provides a good level of Managerial support. Overall 75% score has been achieved for positive attitude towards WLB policies and approval of WLB requests. Author felt it was important to measure correlation between WLB and Managerial Support to get a bigger picture on this matter. Results outlined positive but not strong relationship between WLB and Managerial Support. Pearson coefficient r =312, n=118, p=.001which as per Table 19.

Table 17. Pearson Correlation WLB vs Managerial Support

		WLB Scale	Managerial Support
WLB Scale	Pearson Correlation	1	.312**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	118	118
Managerial Support	Pearson Correlation	.312**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	118	118

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 20 demonstrates that increase in WLB translates into increase in Managerial Support.

Table 18. Scatterplot for WLB vs Managerial Support
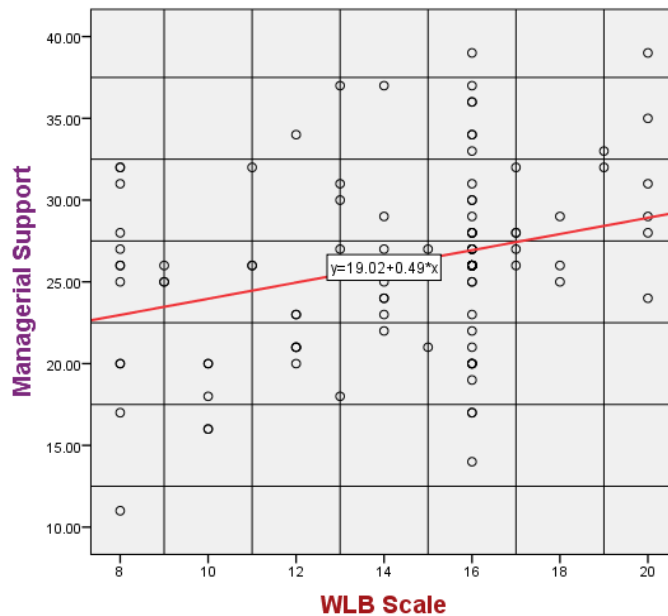
4.8. Qualitative Data on Comments Section for WLB Objective

Researcher included open ended questions at the end of the survey to give respondents a chance to voice their opinion. Qualitative data obtained through the comments section was sorted by theme and categorised accordingly. Question 1: *'What could your employer do to improve your current Work Life Balance? (Please feel free to suggest any new WLB policies/practices that you would find beneficial.'* The most common suggestions that stood out for this question are as follows:

> (1) *'official work from home policy',*

> (2) *'to look at widening the flexi band' and*

> (3) *'provide compressed working week''.*

SOLAS is currently working on 'Work from home' policy and there isn't official procedure in place so far. Some of the comments made by respondents have a negative connotation and suggest that there isn't fairness across the board in granting

this work arrangement, e.g. *'A formal procedure on working from home. Some of the Managers allow it, some of them don't'*, *'Working from home should be available to all'.* Majority requested work from home on regular basis to reduce heavy commute in Dublin and facilitate family/personal matters however, some respondents would be happy enough to access this arrangement on occasional basis or following good performance.

Second most popular comment requests widening flexi band. Most of the answers were in favour of having *'flexi bank opened until 7 pm'* or *'flexi start time changed to 7 a.m. and earliest departing time changed to 3.30 pm.'* Numerous comments indicated a need for review of flexi bands to support staff with children, elderly parents and cut commuting times as well.

Respondents also highlighted a need for a compressed working week. New policy would help to reduce working week when staff work above flexi time core bands. This issue was also pointed out by workshares that often work above contracted hours to fulfil business demands. Compressed working week would support employees in banking hours and reducing weekly working hours. If this policy existed some of the part timers could decide to switch into that.

Comments for question 2 - *As an employee accessing WLB programmes have you ever been subject to reduced career progression/promotion opportunities?*

24 respondents answered 'yes' which is quite concerning.

I would like to recall the strongest comments made as follows: *'it could be debated that many colleagues, especially female working mothers are discouraged to apply for promotion, especially when their kids are young in the believe they will loose some of the benefits of WLB initiatives.'* Another one states that *'there are no career progression/promotion opportunities for employees working less than full time hours'* or '*If you get promoted you have to work full time for a year which prevents most part time employees from applying'.*

Above comments show that all negative experiences come mainly from part-timers and highlights a burning need for a review of recruitment policy to accommodate staff on reduced work hours.

Question 3: *Has this organization made an active effort to help you when you experienced a conflict between work and family/personal life?*

Answers demonstrate a good organizational support for employees experiencing conflict situation. Majority of respondents were pleased with help received from the organization and found employer flexible enough. However, some negative comments were made as well indicating that there is no transparency in terms of granting approval for WLB policies and some managers are more accommodative than the others. HR department was criticized for low engagement with staff on family/personal matters and reduced flexibility.

Surprisingly enough male managers were found as more approachable and supportive than female managers

Overall Comments

Respondents in 'Overall Comment' box were provided with opportunity to give additional feedback on WLB issues they have experienced so far. Most of responses reflected a positive and appreciative attitude towards WLB offered by the organization. Amongst negative comments there were few tackling lack of communication on WLB programmes available in the workplace and how they impact pension. Some respondents were concerned that organization may loose some talent by the situation with part-timers required to work full time on promotion. There were few valuable comments made on the need for specific managerial training on WLB. As per findings above some employees found no transparency in accessing those policies and training for Managers on issues specific to WLB initiatives in the workplace was sought.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter will seek to undertake in depth analysis of findings and results in the context of 4 business objectives set out for this research project.

5.1. Objective 1: WLB satisfaction in FET Sector

Table 21 depicts average mean scoring for WLB 4-item scale utilized by the researcher.

Table 19. WLB Scale Statistics

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
14.38	10.272	3.205	4

Results show that the mean score of 14.38 was achieved by participants from the highest number of 20 to the lowest of four for the items measured on WLB scale. This figure represents a very good result.

Findings obtained through research reflect a good level of WLB in FET sector. WLB at organizational level was calculated for 72% therefore we conclude that employees in FET sector have a satisfactory level of WLB. Average score of WLB scale per individual amounts to 3.6 out of maximum 5 which confirms a good level of WLB.

Only 12% of respondents disagreed with statement: 'I *currently have a good balance between work and time available for non-work activities'* and 16.9% respondents picked neutral option.

The qualitative data also shows that the highest utilization of WLB practices was reported in the age group of 40-49 & 50+ within employee group with tenure 10 to 20 years. As per Figure 8, 60% of respondents were females. Average age was 50 and 70% of respondents were married or living with partner, with 62% of women versus 37% of men having children. This corresponds with data from CSO published in

SOLAS report (2017) stating that FET sector is mainly represented by staff in older age categories and only 1 in 10 employees is under 35 years of age.

The author found some gender differences in work related variables, e.g. the average tenure with the organization for male respondents was between 10 – 20 years while female averaged 20 – 30 years. Gender differences were also found in hours worked. Female held part time arrangement 4 times more often than male employees.

8 was the average number of WLB policies out of 19 availed by female respondents in 40 - 49 age category/10-20 years of tenure versus 6.5 items by male employees. 8 was the average number of WLB items utilized by female's respondents over 50 years of age versus 7 items exploited by males with 10 – 20 years tenure. This figure evolves to 6 items for female and 7 for male in over 30 years tenure respectively.

Results show that FET employees in older age brackets place a high value on WLB arrangements, but females need more flexibility than male co-workers. This corresponds with Shockley et al. (2017) findings suggesting that female on average spend more time on household duties and experience greater family interference with work than male counterparts.

Previous research findings were replicated for hypothesis one. Good utilization of WLB policies confirms a decent level of managerial support in this regard. McCarthy et al. (2013) argues that proximal support from line managers is positively associated with employee uptake of WLB programmes. This view is supported by Hammer et al. (2007) and Thompson et al. (1999) who conclude that supervisory support is one of the most critical variables impacting WLB uptake in the organization.

65% of respondents with children declared having difficulty with balancing work and non-work activities. This corresponds with literature findings stating that staff with children are most likely to suffer from work-family conflict. Only13 respondents with children felt they had a good balance between the time spent at work and time for non-work activities. Shockley et al. (2012) research show that mothers reported more family interference with work than fathers and women in the same job as men reported more work interference with family.

86% of respondents availed Flexible Working Hours or Part Time Work. Statistics retrieved from Core HR BI clearly show that SOLAS provide a wide range of patterns for employees on reduced working hours. 15% of staff in the 1st quarter of 2018 work part time.

Evidence shows that mostly female are in the receipt of reduced working hours. Percentage of males engaged in part time work is low and accounts for 17%. According to Sweet at al. (2014) there are differential preferences based on the gender component as female employees are defining themselves through work and family roles to the higher extent than males. Shockley et al. (2017) argues that gender differences in work family conflict are small and key factors determining the variation not well understood.

Qualitative data shows that SOLAS offers varied reduced work week patterns. As we can see in Figure 12, 4-day week (0.8 FTE) appears to be the most commonly used pattern by both male and female employees. Figure 14 outlines part time work patterns in 2016 & 2017 showing that there is a consistency in terms of patterns availed by staff for the years 2016 – 2018.

This trend indicates that staff who applied for work-sharing retained this arrangement over long periods of time to support WLB needs. It also suggests that there is a positive attitude towards staff working less than full time hours and Management accommodates flexible work arrangements. This is in line with Sweet et al. findings (2014) who states that gender ratios may have an impact on pressures to increase availability or intensity for certain Flexible Work Arrangements. In SOLAS, females are the dominating group, mapping their individual needs e.g. multiple part time work patterns in the work place. According to Sweet et al. (2014) this is controlled by the nature of the industry sector as well.

Responses given under 'Comments' section also highlighted a need for widening flexi bands from 7 am to 7 pm to facilitate not only working parents but staff with eldercare responsibilities as well.

These results corresponding with previous literature findings. Darcy et al. (2012) makes a valid point claiming that age is strongly associated with the employment relationship. She also recalls study carried out by Finegold et al. (2002) which shows that age is a factor responsible for differing needs in terms of people, their work context and their attachment to the organization.

40% of respondents are within 40 – 49 age brackets and according to career groupings introduced by Darcy et al. (2012) they are at career consolidation stage. Furthermore, Darcy's findings show that perceived managerial support, career consequence and engagement are significantly correlated with WLB.

46% of respondents from our survey were over 50 years of age and in line with Darcy's et al (2012) classification they are at pre-retirement career stage. Again, job involvement and career consequence are significantly correlated with WLB. However, regression analysis showed stronger association for perceived managerial support than engagement.

Survey results suggest that 39% of respondents availed work from home option with 50% of individuals accessing unofficial WFH arrangement being from the age bracket 40 – 49, 50+. Work from home was on the top of requested new WLB policies and respondents were concerned over lack of fairness in granting access to this work arrangement. Respondents stressed it would help cut heavy commuting and achieve a better balance between work and home responsibilities. This corresponds with Roger's (2011) suggestions that employees who reduce time constraints through work from home are making valuable savings on time and money. He argues that everyone is different, and employees' productivity can vary at certain times of the day. Flexibility around work schedules and destination of work helps staff fulfil their individual needs.

The comments section highlighted a need for compressed working week. This policy may give employees more control over their work schedules and enable reduction in the working week. Comments suggest that if this arrangement was available some of the part timers could possibly switch to that.

In 'Overall comments' section some of the respondents suggested that improved communication is needed from HR and management about WLB programmes and managerial training would be an advantage. This is consistent with McCarthy et al. (2013) they claim that *''the mere existence of WLB programmes offered within an organization will not ensure that employees will be aware of them, utilize them or report better WLB outcomes ''* (McCarthy et al., 2013, p. 1271). McCarthy (2013) argues that organizations should have a good understanding of relationship between WLB initiatives availability and their uptake, turnover intension, role conflict and job satisfaction as well. Sweet et al. (2014) believes that high levels of FWA are available in specific industries, especially those that are heavily dependent on highly skilled labour workforce. They offer those arrangements to attract and retain a talent.

McNamara et al. (2012) argue that some employees with strong public-sector motivation will choose organizations providing flexible work arrangement as this reflects their belief of public sector as more altruistic employer. This is supported by Dulk et al. (2012) findings stressing that good package of WLB programmes help to attract and retain public sector workforce and reverse decreasing labour supply trends.

It is evident that public sector and non-profit organizations are less focused on direct financial measures when evaluating of WLB practices (McNamara et al. 2012). Making an attractive workplace may not correspond with direct financial measures and private companies are under more scrutiny than public sector organizations.

5.2. Objective 2 - WLB & Employee Engagement

Results show that significant positive relationship exists between WLB and employee engagement. Pearson correlation of .364 between those two variables which represents a moderate relationship.

Researcher calculated an average score of perceived employee engagement per respondent at 4.59 out of maximum 7 which represents a good result. Employee engagement at organizational level brought an overall score of 65%.

This corresponds with global trends in employee engagement provided by Aon report (2017). According to their publication, employee engagement globally in 2017 amounted to 65%. However, engagement in Europe is bouncing back and forth between 58 and 60% (Aon, 2017). SOLAS result of 65% is above European benchmark.

Our findings are consistent with previous research in this arena confirming positive influence of WLB on employee engagement (Richman et al., 2008).

Good utilization of WLB programmes amongst respondents have a positive effect on employee engagement level in FET sector. However, relationship between those two variables is moderate. The author envisages this could be a consequence of FET sector demographic profile.

5.3. Objective 3 – WLB & Turnover Intent

Findings show a negative statistical correlation between WLB and Turnover Intention. The Pearson's r correlation amounts to r= -.200, n=118 which suggests negative relationship with weak strength between those variables. It is evident that increase of WLB translates into decrease of Turnover intent. This is also reflected by p value of .030 which leads to conclusion that there is a relationship between these variables, but the strength of this relationship is considered as low.

Above data is corresponding with previous literature findings that satisfactory WLB is negatively related to employee intension to leave (Thompson et al., 1999). Balunos, et al. (2015) concluded that employees exposed to work life conflict are more likely to leave. Researcher showed that respondents from the measured sample achieved a satisfactory level of WLB which translates into decreasing trend for turnover intent.

57% of respondents disagreed with statement that they will look for a job next year and over 50% are not thinking often about leaving the organization. This corresponds with a view on employee career stages, in our case consolidating and preretirement stages for our respondents that may have adverse impact on turnover intention (Darcy et al., 2012).

Grady et al. (2009) reported that when employee asked whether flexible working policies and programmes help to lower turnover, the agreement was more extensive when reporting as line manager as opposed to an employee.

Grady et al. (2007) findings also support hypothesis that WLB programmes assist in retaining employees with specialized skills which is important for SOLAS and its leading role in FET sector (SOLAS, 2017).

5.4. Objective 4 - Managerial Support

It has been found that WLB and Managerial Support are subject to positive relationship however Pearson coefficient r=312 suggests that has a moderate strength.

78% of respondents found Managers in SOLAS supportive towards personal/family needs which represents an excellent outcome. 62% of survey participants disagreed with statement that participation in WLB programmes has negative impact on their career.

This clearly shows that in general staff are satisfied with the managerial support available in the workplace. 75% of staff agreed with the opinion that Managers are supportive towards WLB policies and approve requests for same.

Comments section highlighted a need for more effective communication between management and staff on those programmes and asked for managerial training that would enhance consistency in granting access to WLB programmes.

As per McCarthy et al. (2013) findings, devolution of HR decision making process to line managers may result in inconsistencies and disparity between policies and final decisions taken by line managers. It is obvious that access to WLB programmes is associated with decreased working time and may affect operational effectiveness (McCarthy et al., 2013). However, utilization and varied patterns of WLB policies in SOLAS shows that Managers have a positive attitude towards flexible work arrangements.

For Thompson et al. (1999) managerial support is critical component of work-family culture and research findings show its association with high utilization rates of work family benefits. This view is supported by Grady et al. (2009) who believes that skillsets of managers and their attitude towards flexible work have higher impact on successful implementation of this arrangements in the organization than availability itself. Results section for uptake of WLB programmes confirms that SOLAS staff falls into this category.

Allen (2001) found that supervisory support had a direct and indirect effects on employee behaviours such as: turnover intension, organizational commitment, job satisfaction. This is supported by our findings. Pearson correlation for supervisory support and turnover intension demonstrated a negative relationship between those two variables at moderate level with r= -331.

Chapter six: Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to explore employee WLB practices in FET sector in Ireland. The study had 4 main objectives:

(1) To establish whether employees of FET sector achieve satisfactory levels of Work Life Balance. (2) To examine impact of WLB on employee engagement and (3) turnover intension (4) To establish employee perception of managerial support towards WLB programmes.

To date there isn't much research that would adequately investigate WLB practices in FET setting. Previous literature findings are tackling WLB issues in the context of public sector vs private sector employees. The research was carried out amongst a sample of 118 employees in SOLAS, Further Education and Training Authority. The author uncovered information that are not available to the wider public and gave an insight into WLB practices of this new state agency under umbrella of Department of Education and Skills.

This research is cross sectional in nature with some elements of longitudinal analysis through CORE HR BI statistics, providing an overview of same variables during years: 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The current study is limited by the sample size of survey participants. Due to time constraints it wasn't possible to reach out a bigger pool of FET respondents. Another limitation refers to picturing results from employee point of view only. Researcher believes that it would be beneficial to explore further repercussions of WLB initiatives and policies on multiple WLB outcomes. Future research should include perceptions of HR Managers and line Managers for better objectivity and more accurate findings.

As per Grady et al. (2007) WLB practices in the public sector may not be available to staff in certain roles. Author of this study investigated uptake of WLB programmes and policies however their impact on WLB outcomes per individual policy was

outside of remit for this project. Results gathered in this research should be explored further as convenience sampling is well known for data skewness.

It is evident from our findings that employees in FET sector reach satisfactory levels of WLB and employee engagement in line with European trends. 70% of employees indicated that they had a good balance between time spent at work and the time for non-work activities. We can benchmark this figure against 75% of public sector respondents in the study carried out by Grady et al. (2007). Assembled evidence shows that WLB has a positive impact on employee engagement and negative relationship with turnover intention. However, association of WLB and employee engagement has a moderate strength and the correlation between WLB and turnover intention isn't high.

Gathered evidence shows that the composition of workforce in FET sector is dominated by females and in general by employees in older age categories. This means that they might have different expectations and understanding attached to their work than young cohort of employees (Sweet et al., 2014). It is also linked to different motivators when choosing public sector as an employer (McNamara et al., 2012). Further investigation to be carried out to establish deeper connection between produced WLB outcomes and age determinant as well.

We can conclude that FET sector provides a wide range of WLB programmes that go far beyond reduction of working hours. This could be interrelated with SOLAS implementation of government policies aiming to improve overall performance of the public-sector employees (Dulk et al. 2012).

Research evidence also indicates that no matter how varied WLB programmes are offered, their use needs to be fully supported by friendly work life family culture and supportive line managers. It has been established that overall employees in FET sector have a good perception of managerial support and good access to those programmes. This corresponds with Thompson et al (1999) who suggests that managerial support is one of the most critical components associated with utilization of WLB initiatives. Increase in Managerial support is equal to decrease of turnover intension amongst employees.

As per Darcy et al. (2012) suggestions, organizations should ditch 'one size fits all' approach and shift their focus from working parents and young staff to other categories of workers as well. Broader outlook at relationships between utilization rates and career advancement for female and male employees would be beneficial as this issue was only highlighted in the comments section.

To date there is very little research on economic benefits / return on investment for WLB programmes in the public sector setting and author suggests that future investigation should cover this topic as well.

The above study has implications for public sector organizations that place a high emphasis on WLB Culture. As per Jawaharrani findings evolving economy and aging workforce should create environment which enables them to ''hang their hats '' and supports their work life balance needs (Jawaharrani et al., 2010, p.474).

Chapter seven: Recommendations

Research findings on WLB practices in FET sector in Ireland has led the author to the following recommendations:

1. Designated training programme to be delivered to FET Managers and supervisors across all levels of the organization. Managerial training will facilitate employee fair and equal access to WLB programmes, strengthen communication and support effective and consistent utilization of same in the workplace.

2. It is recommended that HR will further investigate and formalize 'work from home' and 'compressed working week' policies. HR to examine implementation costings along with business outcomes. Research results also indicate it would be beneficial to extend flexi bands from 7 am to 7 pm to provide more flexibility for staff with eldercare responsibilities, childcare arrangements and cutting commuting times. It is important to ensure that employees without such care responsibilities are not treated less favourably than their counterparts.

Limitations of this study point to a new direction for further research on work life balance programmes in FET sector.

3. It is essential to further examine impact of WLB practices in FET sector expanding the scope onto other employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance or burnout. It is recommended that existing and future variables be measured within bigger pool of FET employees, including HR manager and line management perspective. It would be beneficial to measure WLB outcomes in conjunction with specific policy/programme and induce longitudinal approach for more objective results.

4. Another recommendation coming out from this study is to further explore how age profile and career stage affect turnover intent and employee engagement in FET in Ireland. Research findings demonstrate positive, moderate strength between WLB vs employee engagement and negative but low correlation with turnover intension. Future findings would help to strengthen retention rates of highly specialized employees and gear HR policies in line with FET workforce needs.

5. It is advisable to support author's quantitative research findings by in depth interviews on the measured variables and longitudinal approach for better objectivity and more comprehensive results.

6. FET sector to conduct staff surveys on regular basis to review WLB arrangements and swiftly respond to changing employee needs. This project to be carried out by local HR departments.

7.2. Financial Implications and Time Frames

If future research is carried out it would involve significant budgetary implications. Allocation of salary costs per capita of €70 k for one senior research analytic to be considered. This would enable professional collection of data required for further analysis of WLB variables in FET sector. It is recommended that senior researcher will be seconded to Central Statistics Office for two days a week as well. This would generate some savings as our data specialist would gain an access to most up to date packages for statistical analysis e.g. SAS or R language and guidance on using same. Co-operation with CSO would have mutual benefits for both parties and provide more reliable information on FET sector in Ireland.

Apart from on-line surveys that are inexpensive, future research should involve interviews as well. Additional budget is required for travel & subsistence claims estimated at €10k per year. It is advisable that research analytic will reach out FET practitioners and managers from each irish county to produce results that are true

reflection of WLB practices in FET sector in Ireland. It would be valuable to observe WLB trends in longitudinal study over 3-year period. However, if longitudinal analysis is carried out it is necessary to add additional costs for every year involved.

7.3. Personal Learning Statement

The author found this dissertation project very challenging but rewarding at the same time. The whole process of gathering data has enabled researcher to develop new skills. Critical thinking and data analysis were advanced and new computer packages e.g. SPSS learnt during this study.

The whole research side of things has helped the author to get a better understanding of research methods and steps in data collection and verification process. Dissertation required extensive use of communication skills and provided the author with opportunity to connect with various stakeholders, critical for the success of this study.

Statistical analysis in SPSS IBM package was the most challenging aspect of this project. Author had to put significant amount of time to learn how to process, read and interpret data generated in SPSS.

Dissertation enabled researcher to get a better insight into WLB practices carried out in FET sector and provided with valuable knowledge, indispensable in future practice of HR professional. It is envisaged that findings obtained from this project will provide further guidance for FET sector and public-sector organizations in Ireland.

The author has learnt what are the qualities of good HR manager, familiarized with various theoretical HR models, high performance work practices and the characteristics of successful HR department. Researcher benefited hugely from this dissertation reading up a lot of interesting literature on HR matters and hopes that theoretical and practical knowledge gained throughout this study will support future projects in HR arena.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Benefits of WLB Policies
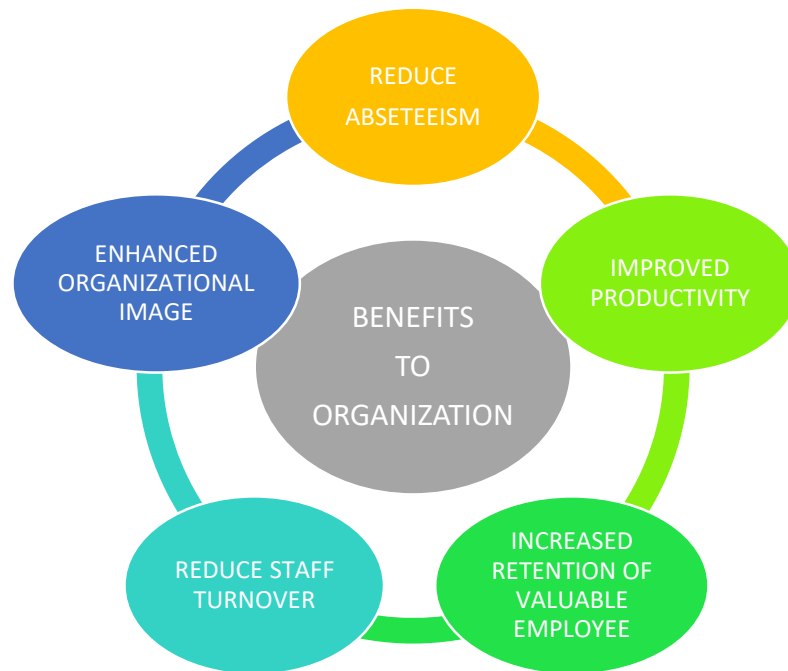
Lazar (2010, p. 207)

Appendix B – Schmidt Model of Employee Engagement (2004)

Advancing the Greater public good

High Levels of Organisational Performance

Employee Engagement

Workplace Well Being

Physical Health, Safety and Wellness and Work Supports

Recruiting and Retaining the Right Workforce

Appendix C – Research Questionnaire

Accompanying note to my research questionnaire:

Dear All,

I'm currently a postgraduate student at the National College of Ireland. I would like to invite you to take a part in the survey in fulfilment of my Master's degree in Human Resources Management. I'm researching impact of Work Life Balance practices on employee engagement and turnover intensions in FET sector in Ireland. The study also seeks to explore the role of managerial support in the take up of work life balance initiatives in the workplace.

The full questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. All responses will be anonymous and your participation in the survey is voluntary and entirely confidential. No personal data will be obtained from participants. The findings of the research will be included in my dissertation. Your participation and honest opinion is more than appreciated. If you have any questions about this research or would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at iwona.waclawska@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your time and your help by completing this survey.

Kind regards,

Iwona Waclawska

Do you consent to take part in the following survey in relation to Work Life Balance in FET sector?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Demographic Questions.

Please tick the correct answer.

1. **Gender**

   ☐ Female

   ☐ Male

2. **Employment Status**

   ☐ Full Time

   ☐ Part Time (Working fewer hours than full time employee)

3. **Age**

   ☐ 18 – 29
   ☐ 30 – 39
   ☐ 40 – 49
   ☐ 50+

4. **Marital Status**

   ☐ Single
   ☐ Married/Cohabitating
   ☐ Separated/Divorced
   ☐ Widowed

5. **Children**

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

6. **Indicate how long have you been with the organization**

- ☐ <1
- ☐ Between 1 – 4 years
- ☐ Between 5 – 10 years
- ☐ Between 10 – 20 years
- ☐ Between 20 – 30 years
- ☐ 30+

Section 2

Work Life Balance

When I reflect over my work and non-work activities (your regular activities outside of work such as family, friends, sports, study, etc.) over the past six months, I conclude that:

1. **I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. **I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities (negatively worded item).**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. **I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. **Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Section 3

Turnover Intention

Please tick the correct answer.

1. **I often think of leaving the organization.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. **It is very possible that I will look for a job next year.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. **If I could choose again, I would choose to work for the current organization.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Section 4

Employee Uptake of Work Life Balance Programmes

Please indicate which of the WLB Initiatives are you currently engaged in or used in the past:

1. **Flexible Working Hours (Flexible start and finish times, flexi leave)**

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

2. **Part Time Work/Work-sharing (Working fewer hours that full time employees)**

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. **Work from Home**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

4. **Shorter Working Year**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

5. **Career Break**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

6. **Leave of Absence (up to 6 months)**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

7. **Parental Leave**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

8. **Maternity/Paternity Leave**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

9. **Carers Leave**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

10. **Compassionate Leave**

□ **Yes**

□ **No**

11. Force Majeure/Special Leave for Family Reasons

□ **Yes**

□ **No**

12. Study/Examination Leave

□ **Yes**

□ **No**

13. Travel Pass Scheme

□ **Yes**

□ **No**

14. Cycle to Work Scheme

□ **Yes**

□ **No**

15. Financial Support for Education

□ **Yes**

□ **No**

16. On site canteen facilities

□ **Yes**

□ **No**

17. Social Club Events

□ **Yes**

□ **No**

18. Wellbeing Committee Initiatives

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

19. Counselling (Employee Assistance Programme)

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Section 5

Employee Engagement

The following 9 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross "Never" in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you felt it.

1. **At my work, I feel bursting with energy.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. **At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. **I am enthusiastic about my job.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. **My job inspires me.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I feel happy when I am working intensely.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I am proud of the work that I do.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. I am immersed in my work.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. I get carried away when I am working.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Section 6

Managerial Support

Please rate your level of agreement with each item below.

1. In general managers in this organization are quite accommodating of family related/personal needs.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. My participation in WLB programmes results in being viewed by manager as less serious about my career than those who don't engage in these programmes.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. If I or one of my co-workers needed time to attend the family/personal business (doctor or teacher appointments, school plays, etc.) my manager is very flexible about working it out.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. My manager measures people on their overall productivity, not simply hours spent in the office.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. The subordinates in my department feel free to discuss family/personal problems that affect work with my manager.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. If I missed work due to a sick dependent, my manager would understand.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. My manager supports company policies that help employees maintain Work Life Balance and approves requests for same.

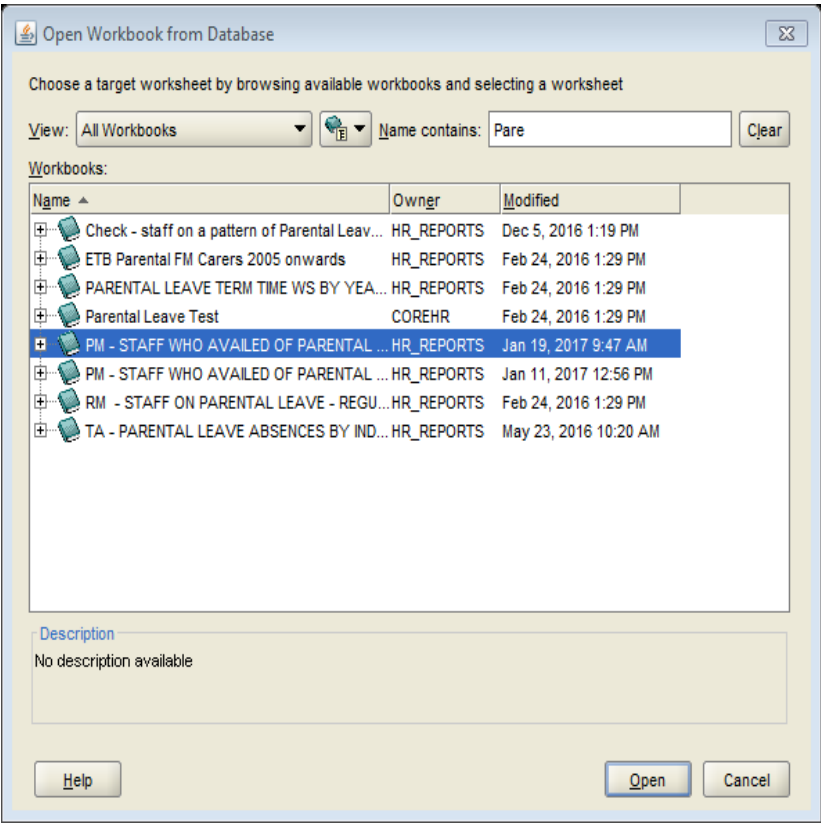| Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Section 7

Comments

Please leave your comments below.

1. **What could your employer do to improve your current Work Life Balance? (Please feel free to suggest any new WLB policies/practices that you would find beneficial)**

2. **As an employee accessing WLB programmes have you ever been subject to reduced career progression/promotion opportunities?**

3. **Has this organization made an active effort to help you when you experienced a conflict between work and family/personal life?**
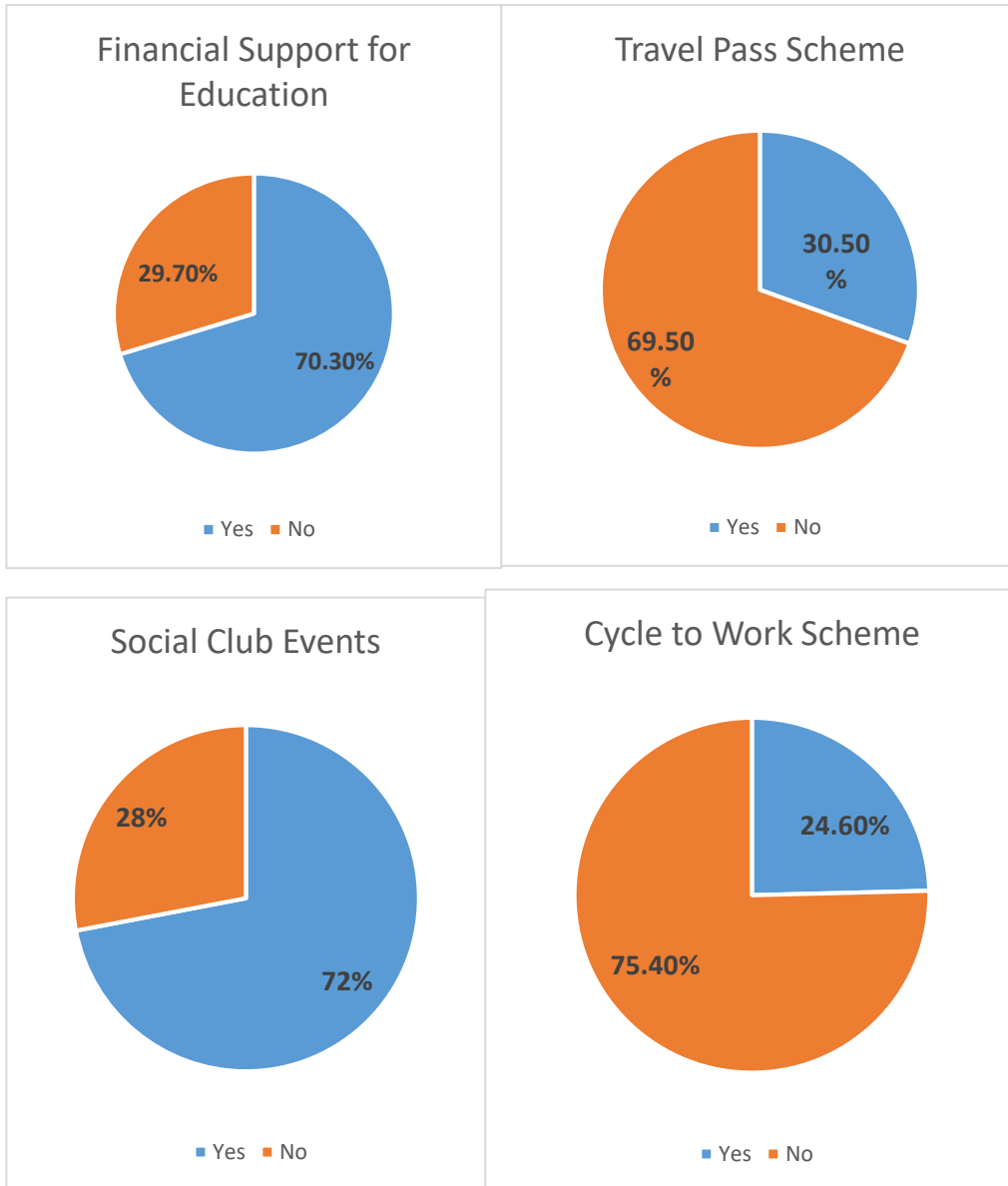
4. **Other comments (Optional)**

Appendix D - Screenshots of Core Business Intelligence Database

Open Workbook from Database

Choose a target worksheet by browsing available workbooks and selecting a worksheet

View: All Workbooks   Name contains: Pare   Clear

Workbooks:

Name ▲	Owner	Modified
Check - staff on a pattern of Parental Leav...	HR_REPORTS	Dec 5, 2016 1:19 PM
ETB Parental FM Carers 2005 onwards	HR_REPORTS	Feb 24, 2016 1:29 PM
PARENTAL LEAVE TERM TIME WS BY YEA...	HR_REPORTS	Feb 24, 2016 1:29 PM
Parental Leave Test	COREHR	Feb 24, 2016 1:29 PM
PM - STAFF WHO AVAILED OF PARENTAL ...	HR_REPORTS	Jan 19, 2017 9:47 AM
PM - STAFF WHO AVAILED OF PARENTAL ...	HR_REPORTS	Jan 11, 2017 12:56 PM
RM - STAFF ON PARENTAL LEAVE - REGU...	HR_REPORTS	Feb 24, 2016 1:29 PM
TA - PARENTAL LEAVE ABSENCES BY IND...	HR_REPORTS	May 23, 2016 10:20 AM

Description

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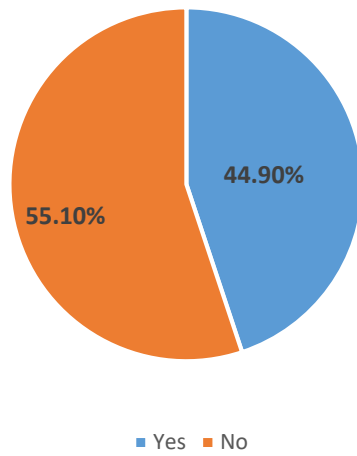
Help   Open   Cancel

Appendix E - WLB Policies & Initiatives in SOLAS

Career Break

Flexible Working Hours

Parental Leave

Worksharing

Leave of Absence

Study Leave

Shorther Working Year

Paternity Leave

Carers Leave

Compassionate Leave

Force Majeure

Travel Pass Scheme

Cycle to Work Scheme

Pre-retirement Courses

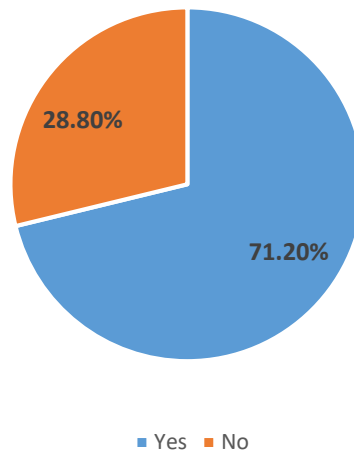Counselling

Well Being Committee Initatives

Social Club Events

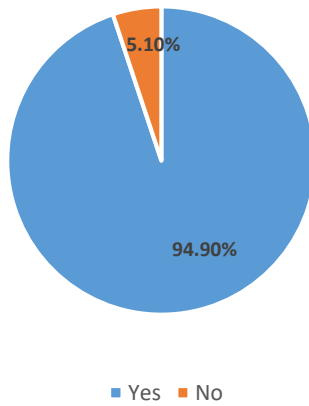# Appendix F – Results for utilization of WLB programmes

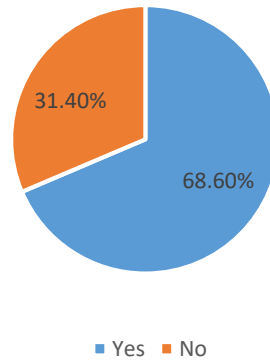## Financial Support for Education

29.70% No
70.30% Yes

- Yes
- No

Travel Pass Scheme

30.50% Yes
69.50% No

- Yes
- No

Social Club Events

28% No
72% Yes

- Yes
- No

Cycle to Work Scheme

24.60% Yes
75.40% No

- Yes
- No

Compassionate Leave

44.90%

55.10%

■ Yes ■ No

Study/Examination Leave

28.80%

71.20%

■ Yes ■ No

Onsite canteen facilities

5.10%

94.90%

■ Yes ■ No

Well being Committee Initiatives

31.40%

68.60%

■ Yes ■ No

Appendix G: Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library
National College of Ireland

Student name: **Iwona Waclawska**   Student number**: x13113631**

School: **Faculty of Business**   Course: **MA HRM**

Degree to be awarded: **Master of Arts in Human Resource Management**

Title of Thesis: **Work Life Balance Practices and their impact on Employee Engagement & Turnover Intention: A study of employees in the Further Education and Training Sector in Ireland.**

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.

Candidate Signature: **Iwona Waclawska**

For completion by the School:

The aforementioned thesis was received by_____

Date: 29/8/18

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school