



THE EFFECT WORK-LIFE BALANCE HAS ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE RETAIL SECTOR IN IRELAND

[Document subtitle]



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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect that work-life balance plays on employee engagement levels with a specific focus on the retail sector in Ireland.

The research was based on anonymous survey results which focused on employee engagement and work-life balance. Quantitative research was chosen as the researcher felt that the response rate would be higher than if a Qualitative method was applied. The quantitative method was useful as it was able to identify if there was a particular trend that was occurring in the survey responses. The research focused on eighty anonymous responses who are currently or who have worked for the retail industry in Ireland at some stage. The questions included in the survey focused on examining employee satisfaction with work-life balance whilst also exploring the engagement levels. In this research, the main aims were to discover how employees in the retail sector in Ireland feel about their work-life balance and consequently how engaged they are in the work environment.

This research study instilled a quantitative research method approach and obtained survey results from 93 participants. Having a larger sample size was to ensure a high level of understanding on the research topic and to have a diverse sample.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In today's society competition to retain employees between different organisations is on the rise, this is vital to the overall success of the organisation as it is ultimately the employees who develop and expand the business. In a study by Ongori (2007) it was shown that it is the employees themselves that are considered to be an organisation's most valuable asset. Therefore, organisations tend to invest heavily in their employees as they want a skilled and confident workforce who have the necessary knowledge to perform the job well. If the organisation was experiencing high turnover rates all of the time and energy that was invested in the employees would be lost to a different organization (Covella *et al.*, 2017). The negative effects of high employee turnover can lead to a decreased level of motivation and engagement in the employees who remain working for the organization (Ogidan & Leo, 2015).

This study was undertaken to examine the effects of work-life balance on employee engagement levels in the retail sector in Ireland. There has been plenty of studies done which examines the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement but there has been little research with a particular focus of looking at the retail sector in Ireland. Employee engagement appears to be vital for any growing business' success, and it can be linked to having a good work-life balance. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding as to whether this is true within the retail industry in Ireland.

In recent years the importance that work-life balance plays on employee engagement has risen, consequently more and more organisations are looking into how they could adopt various methods which would increase the balance between work and life (Pandita & Singhal, 2017). In today's society, the importance of having an engaged workforce is on this rise, consequently how one can achieve this has also been examined. One such way that can improve these engagement levels is through work-life balance. This work-life balance is fundamentally finding a happy medium between time spent in work and quality time spent outside of work (Simpson, 2016). Various different methods can be introduced to implement work-life balance within the workplace such as flextime, work from home scheme amongst others (Oludayo *et al.*, 2018). The way in which an organisation uses these methods determines how engaged their workforce will be and how committed they are to organisational success. It is important here that an organisation's employees care about the

company's success, by having a workforce that feels valued and apart of this success will motivate them further and ensure that they are giving their all into this growth (Pandita & Singhal, 2017).

1.1: Background and Context

The retail sector was the chosen industry for this study as the researcher had personal connections to individuals working within the field and felt that work-life balance and employee engagement was a commonly spoken about topic within the industry. As the researcher had these personal connections within the industry it was highlighted that some individuals felt they had little to no work-life balance and as a result said they felt unhappy and unmotivated within the workplace, also they felt they had more pressure and stress placed on them to find the time to spend with family and friends. As such the researcher felt that having these connections would help with the researchers the commonly spoken about issues from employees working within the retail sector could help to guide the study in relation to work-life balance and employee engagement. The researcher felt that by focusing the research on the retail sector in Ireland it would give an original approach to the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement that has not yet been looked at. Furthermore, it appeared to be the right time to investigate this angle as the researcher had access to individuals within the industry.

1.2: Research Rationale and Justification

The researcher felt that by looking into the relationship between the work-life balance and employee engagement within the retail sector in Ireland it would shine a light on the current situation throughout this particular industry as there has not been a lot of research carried out on this area at the present date. The researcher also felt that the retail sector would be a good industry to choose as many individuals have worked in the retail sector at some point in their career and as such the researcher felt that it would easier to find individuals to participate in the study and complete the survey. The researcher knew that this was important to the success of the study as the more individuals that participated in the study, the more accurate the results would be. The larger the sample group the more diverse the responses would be also.

1.3: Research Aim

It is the research question that will highlight the main reasoning behind carrying out this research. The researcher felt that there was little previous research conducted on work-life balance and employee engagement with a special focus on the retail sector in Ireland. Therefore, this research is aimed at investigating the relationship between this work-life balance and employee engagement within the chosen sector. Another aspect that will be examined by the researcher is how various leadership styles can influence both work-life balance practices within the organization and how this leads on to influencing the engagement levels amongst the employees. The author does not plan to explore how work-life balance can affect other aspects of an individuals' life other than within the work place. Furthermore, the author will not explore other influencing factors on employee engagement levels other than work-life balance and leadership styles.

The main aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement in the retail sector in Ireland. A key area to this study was to examine the main contributing factors to employee engagement with a particular focus on work-life balance. The researchers aim was to also examine how various different leadership styles can affect employee engagement and work-life balance, the ways in which employee engagement levels can be increased and lastly the effects of work-life imbalance.

1.4: Research Objectives

For this study the researcher wanted to investigate the previous studies that have been conducted and employee engagement and work-life balance with a particular focus on the following objectives:

- Objective 1: To investigate the work-life balance amongst employees in the retail in Ireland.
- Objective 2: To explore the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement levels
- Objective 3: To explore how the leadership style can affect work-life balance and employee engagement

1.5: Research Significance

The significance of this research is to gain an understanding into work-life balance and employee engagement and the relationship between the two. An insight into how various different leadership style will also be examined to discover if there is a link between the chosen style and the work-life balance procedures that are present within the organisation and if this consequently influences employee engagement. As this research takes a particular focus on the retail sector in Ireland, the completion of the study would help to fill the research gap of work-life balance and employee engagement in the retail sector in Ireland.

1.6: Overview and Structure of the Research Project

1.6.1: Chapter 1- Introduction

This chapter includes a brief discussion on the research topic, it also gives an outline on the research structure. The justification of the study is highlighted, stating that there is a gap in the research relating to the topic with a particular focus on the retail sector in Ireland.

1.6.2: Chapter 2- Literature Review

In this chapter, an in-depth examination of previous literature relating to the research topic is discussed. As the research examines the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement both of these will be discussed. This includes touching on the various different definitions and theories. Another key area that is examined is how leadership styles can influence employee engagement levels, this can include supporting a healthy work-life balance. The effects of having work-life imbalance is also explored.

1.6.3: Chapter 3- Methodology

In this chapter, a light is shone on the researcher's main aims and objectives of the study. This also includes what methods were used and why they were applied to the research. The chosen sample will be looked at and how the research was carried out is explained. Any ethical considerations involved in the research is highlighted along with any limitations found throughout the study. Finally, the chosen method of analysing the data is discussed.

1.6.4: Chapter 4- Findings

It is in this chapter that the researcher will discuss all of the findings that were obtained from the data through the use of the survey. It is at this point that the researcher will link the findings of the research to what was highlighted in the literature review and determine if there were any similarities.

1.6.5: Chapter 5- Discussion

In the discussion chapter, an extensive examination is made on the data collected and presents in the findings, Chapter 4. The author will compare what was discovered in the literature review to the results of this research. It is at this point where the researcher will decide if there is are similarities between the findings in this study and those found in similar studies previously.

1.6.6: Chapter 6- Summary and Recommendations

The final chapter of this research topic will sum up what has been discovered from conducting this study and to determine whether the aims and objectives have been accomplished. Lastly, any recommendations for further research into this topic will be discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is to discuss the most relevant and recent literature that has been published on this research topic. The researcher will examine the various different definitions of employee engagement. The different influencing factors on employee engagement will also be explored. The author will then explore the various interpretations of work-life balance and work-life imbalance. Lastly, the relationship between employee engagement and work-life balance will be reviewed.

2.1: Employee Engagement

According to Simpson (2016) employee engagement can be defined as the level of involvement and employee loyalty that exists in an organisation. It is critical for an organisation to have an engaged workforce as this helps to increase the competitive advantage which is vital in the current difficult climate for growing businesses (Bedarker & Pandita, 2014). Having an engaged workforce ensures that a business has the best chance of survival and also creates a positive outlook for growth in the future. In situations of low engagement levels businesses will struggle to stay afloat as motivation and productivity are low. Therefore, in today's working society it is an organisation's main objective to ensure that their workforce is engaged (Pandita & Singhal, 2017). How an organisation achieves this can differ depending on what their employees' value. This will help to set up future success for the company. In order to gain the most from its employees an organisation needs to ensure that they are receiving the best quality of life, this will result in a faithful workforce who are interested in the organisation's success (Polo-Vargas *et al.*, 2017). An engaged workforce needs to be maintained by developing and supporting its employees' skills (Taneja *et al.*, 2015).

It is key for a successful organisation to have a workforce that is a part of and striving for organisational growth and development, this is achieved through their continuous productivity and commitment. According to Pandita and Singhal (2017), it is this employee engagement that is found to be the main factor in having a productive, profitable and customer focused workforce. Having a workforce which has these three competencies will ensure maximum success for the organisation. It is vital in today's society to use employees to their highest potential as well as retaining these highly skilled workers (Bhuvanaiah &

Raya, 2014). It would prove to be a waste of time and capital if an organisation failed to retain these workers after investing in their training. This is one of the reasons why employee engagement is rising to be a fundamental topic in organisational strength and competitive advantage.

2:2: Ways of Increasing Employee engagement

Increasing the level of employee engagement can be achieved in a number of ways. An organisation can choose which method is best suited to their environment in response to its employees' needs. By effectively changing the employee engagement strategy that is currently in an organisation it can boost the competitive advantage by creating new and fresh ideas (Teneja *et al.*, 2015). Planning is an important part to any proposed improvement of employee engagement, without sufficient planning any actions used in increasing productivity may fail due to ignorance on any obstacles that might occur (Parke *et al.*, 2018). Employees need to have a plan of action in the workplace to help them to focus and stay motivated, without these plans the constant interruptions in the workplace can have adverse effects and employees could quickly get frustrated and give up (Parke *et al.*, 2018).

One of the most common ways of increasing engagement levels is through peer communication as this will boost morale and heighten both social and environmental aspects in the workplace (Potoski & Callery, 2018). The way in which an organisation is ran by its leaders as well as the culture that is prevalent will affect how employees behave (Lee *et al.*, 2017). The leaders in these organisation's are influencing staff morale levels and engagement levels. Therefore, by examining each of these aspects an organisation could determine where they need to make improvements and changes within the company in order to increase employee engagement levels overall. Being the leaders of an organisation means that it is up to them on how the business is ran and they are responsible for any changes within the company, therefore, it is important that they know how to increase and support engagement levels throughout their employees (Teneja *et al.*, 2015). This can be highlighted in their overall organisational strategy. The ability to keep a workforce engaged is a powerful tool when it comes to increasing productivity and retention rates (Serrano & Reichard, 2011). The leadership style adopted by an organisation is a key way of increasing engagement levels; and equally in implementing good work-life balance strategies.

2.3: Valuing Employees

A method which can be applied by an organisation's leaders to increase engagement levels is to show that they value their employees (Simpson, 2016). Those who feel valued by their leaders are more likely to show signs of high productivity and commitment to the organisation. As a result of feeling valued and a feeling of importance within the organisation, employees are more likely to continue working for the company. This results in higher retention rates, maintaining a highly skilled workforce which is beneficial to the future success. Another positive attribute which results from a good leadership style is through valuing their employees and as a result they become an employer of choice. This in turn increases the diversity of potential employees who apply to work for the organisation, bringing with them new skills and knowledge. Diversity is necessary in the workforce as globalisation is on the rise; therefore, people from various parts of the globe are now working together (Bertelsen, 2011). In order for an organisation to advance themselves in the current economic climate they need to have a diverse workforce.

2.4: Leadership Style

The type of leadership style found within an organisation can have a great influence on how engaged its employees are. Studies have found that one of the most effective leadership styles when it comes to increasing employee engagement levels is through transformational leadership (Breevaart *et al.*, 2014). According to Breevaart and Bakker (2018), employees in a transformational style of leadership tend to be more inclined to be highly motivated and satisfied in the workplace. Both of which are attributes which result in a strong and healthy business. An organisation cannot achieve a highly engaged workforce without firstly examining their leaders as this is the ultimate influencing force on the employees (Lather & Jain, 2015). By creating a leadership that encourages and communicates with the employees will result in a clear understanding of what is being expected of them in regard to performance and will clearly outline where the organisation hopes to be in the future (Lather & Jain, 2015). Once the organisation has achieved this, the overall performance and productivity levels of its employees should increase greatly. However, transformational leadership is mostly effective in workplaces which have a high focus on their leaders, it is less effective in cultures where self-leadership is the norm (Breevaart *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, before deciding on what style of leadership an organisation should adopt it is important to

examine the culture that is present in order to select the most suitable style. It is the selected style of leadership that will be an influencing factor on the level of engagement throughout its employees. Within the retail sector, the use of a transformational leadership could boost the morale and engagement levels of its employees; resulting in a customer focused workforce. Those in the management aspect of the retail sector need to evaluate how they are leading their staff and ensure that they are communicating with them effectively to ensure that they are engaged and aware of what they need to be achieving in their job role.

2.5: Retail Sector and Employee Engagement

In regard to the retail sector, due to the fact that it is a customer focused industry it is paramount that the workforce is engaged. This is how the company can compete against competitors who provide the same products or services (Vinodhini & Lakshmi, 2015). It has been found that by having a positive leadership style the workforce itself will be more inclined towards positivity, increasing the chances of higher engagement (Lee *et al.*, 2017). This positivity will reflect in the employees as they are content and comfortable in the workplace and are therefore able to carry out their job role effectively. By adopting a transformational leadership approach where by the leaders of the organisation hold an optimistic outlook which influences their employees to hold this same view, can make the high demands that are associated with working in the retail sector less stressful (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018).

According to Mozammel and Haan (2016), transformational leadership is needed in today's society to increase levels of engagement and productivity in its employees. Through implementing a transformational management approach, it has been shown to result in higher than average performance levels in its employees; it is down to these transformational leaders to inspire their employees into thinking outside of the box and to become more creative in their ideas that may help to further the organisation competitively (El Badway & Bassiouny, 2014). By supporting their employee's, they will see a more confident and driven workforce who want to excel and succeed along with the company. This will help to keep employees engaged as they will have their own goals and feel that they are a contributing factor to the organisation's competitive advantage.

2.6: Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is considered to be the second most sought after factor employees look for in a potential employer, only after the rate of pay (Garczynski *et al.*, 2013). Those companies who show that they encourage their employees to find a balance between work and their social life are considered to be an employer of choice for any new or potential employees. This will ensure that the organisation receives a high number of diverse applicants to any current vacancies that may exist. The diversity here will create a workforce with various different skills and ideas. Work-life balance in this sense is when individuals are able to split their time between personal life and their work life, this ensures a happy and content worker who is stress free (Parkes & Langford, 2008). This is quickly becoming a popular topic of discussion in today's economic climate as generation X and generation Y are more concerned with how their time is split between work and their outside life (Shankar & Bhatnagar, 2010). Therefore, it is vital that an organisation has a balanced work-life view if they wish to attract a broad selection of new employees as well as retaining those staff who currently work for them. Pandita and Singhal (2017) have shown that generation Y are now more than ever looking for more benefits in their employment package, they will no longer accept work-life imbalance and therefore organisation's have to evolve and accept this if they wish to succeed in the future. This work-life balance has become such a sought-after attribute in employment as it plays a big role in how content that employee is in every aspect of their life (Dave & Purohit, 2016).

2.7: Work-life imbalance

A study by Gropel and Kuhl (2009) showed that there is a strong link between work-life balance and an individual's overall well-being. In order to ensure that an organisation's workforce are fit and able to do their job to the best of their abilities, the organisation needs to create a happy and healthy work environment. Being able to balance ones' time equally will ensure minimal levels of stress which has benefits on the individual's mental health. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the link between work-life imbalance and the negative effects it can have on an individual. Benefits of having a good balance between work and social life can include an enriched quality of life, higher productivity in the workplace and overall increased satisfaction levels (Makabe *et al.*, 2015). Some studies have shown that employees who experience work-life imbalance are more prone to resigning from

their job as they experience low levels of job satisfaction and feel that they have a decreased quality of life (Makabe *et al.*, 2015). A study by Ren and Caudle (2016) introduced a new idea whereby employees feel that when they experience work-life imbalance it becomes the main stress factor in their lives. Therefore, it is worthwhile for an organisation to examine the levels of work-life balance amongst its employees if they hope to achieve a productive and engaged workforce. By ensuring that there is a sufficient balance between work and personal life, the organisation are ultimately showing that they care for the health and happiness of their employees; this will be seen as a responsible leadership (Mousa, 2018). This is an area worth exploring in the retail industry as unsociable hours are common and could have a detrimental effect on an individual's ability to balance work and personal life. This can especially be said during peak seasons such as Christmas.

Human resource management acknowledges the importance that work-life balance plays on employee engagement as well as on job satisfaction (Kaliannan *et al.*, 2016). This is especially important during the current economic boom where it is the employees who choose who it is they want to work for, hence why it is key to be seen as an employer of choice. As discussed earlier, having an engaged workforce ensures maximum productivity and profitability for an organisation, therefore, it is vital for the future success of the company that they understand how to create this engagement throughout their employees. This can be achieved by creating a work environment which supports a healthy work-life balance, where employees carry as little work-related issues home with them. This results in quality time spent with friends and family, with no unnecessary work-related stress (Pandita & Singhal, 2017). According to Virga *et al* (2015), when an individual is experiencing high levels of work engagement it is frequently found to be linked to a healthy balance between work and life, this then results in higher levels of motivation and an increased identification from the employees with the organisation itself. There are a number of factors that can be associated with implementing work-life balance as well as employee engagement, these can include the type of management within the company, the culture and values that are upheld (Kaliannan *et al.*, 2016). Whether an organisation's culture is found to be supportive or unsupportive of work-life balance, it is going to affect and influence how employees are (Adisa *et al.*, 2017).

A study by Au and Ahmed (2017) showed that it is important for management to support this work-life balance as those who are seen to be unsupportive will have a negative effect on the

number of potential employees applying to work for the organisation, mainly due to the fact that these employees are looking for an employer who values the happiness of their workers and supports a healthy balance between work and life. An organisation that does not possess these ‘employer of choice’ traits may find themselves facing high employee turnover rates which proves to be very costly for the business. It also results in highly skilled workers leaving the organisation in the hopes of finding a more fulfilling career, taking with them their talent and any training they may have done whilst being employed with the company. There are certain qualities that make an organisation attractive to a potential employee. These could include prospects of career growth, equality in the workplace, caring about employee health and well-being and travel opportunities, Rampl (2014) goes on further to discuss that salary expectations are not as high up on the list as other job expectations. It may be the salary that draws an individual to a company, but it is the qualities of the job that holds onto these employees. It is worthwhile for an employer to examine their company and make any necessary modifications in order to make them an employer of choice. It is from having these loyal employees that the company will start seeing organisational growth and success that comes with a motivated and engaged workforce (Elving *et al.*, 2013). In today’s society, it is becoming more difficult to recruit highly skilled workers, therefore, if a company wishes to succeed they must first create an atmosphere where an employee can grow and be supported (Elving *et al.*, 2013). This links back to employee engagement, by creating a work environment which supports the growth and development as well as the health of its employees, it will create a loyal and engaged workforce, who value the organisation and its success.

2.8: Retail sector and Work-Life Balance

Many organisations try to install a good work-life balance for their employees in order to boost productivity and loyalty (Zulch *et al.*, 2012). This can be achieved by using various different styles of working-time arrangements, the method used will be specific to the organisational requirements as situations will vary (Zulch *et al.*, 2012). These working-time arrangements will be different in the retail sector than say an office based organisation. It is up to management to observe and understand what type of flexible work arrangement could work in their environment. There is a large amount of stress that is related to working in the retail sector as the working hours can be long and unsociable, it can prove difficult for management to find a method of working-time preferences that fit into the business plan whilst still keeping the employees happy (Zulch *et al.*, 2012). Flexible working arrangements are fast becoming one of the most popular methods of working-time preferences used by organisations which helps to boost work-life balance amongst its employees (Swanberg *et al.*, 2008). These flexible working arrangements can allow employees to work around their family commitments all while still meeting any requirements from work. These flexible working arrangements are considered highly important when employees are looking for a new organisation to work for; it is a key factor in maintaining a healthy work-family balance (Zulch *et al.*, 2012). The retail sector generally has nontraditional working hours and thus is seen to be a main contributing factor to work-family conflict (Swanberg *et al.*, 2008). Experiencing these conflicts between work and family can result in inter-role conflict and the individual might begin to struggle with the stress this conflict brings (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2017). This can also bring about low levels of motivation and life-satisfaction which will reflect in the individual's work. According to Mousa (2018), work-life balance should no longer be looked upon as a bonus but as a key method to retaining talented employees, this should be no different when applied to the retail sector. If retention rates are low the organisation will experience high staff turnover rates; this will include seeing those highly skilled workers seeking new employment in the hopes of having a better working environment and a management who values their well-being.

2.9: Relation between Employee Engagement and Work-Life Balance

Research has shown that organisation's who use methods of work-life balance such as flexible work arrangements tend to see higher levels of employee engagement as these staff members experience a good balance between their work life and social life (Ruldolph & Baltes, 2017). This is beneficial for the organisation as it results in a highly motivated and productive workforce. It also gives the organisation a competitive advantage against others. Therefore, organisation's are putting more of a focus on employee engagement than in previous years (Shankar & Bhatnagar, 2010). As competition is rising between organisation's it is important that they look after their employees both physically and mentally as this will affect how well they are able to conduct their work and ultimately their engagement levels (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Therefore, by ensuring that the workforce has a balance between work and personal life they are more likely to be stress free resulting in more engagement. For an organisation to achieve a happy workforce they need to ensure that the employee carries as little issues related to work home with them and vice versa, this ensures quality time outside of work to be spent how they wish (Pandita & Singhal, 2017). In other terms, by creating a work-life balance where the employee does not worry about work issues outside of working hours or family issues during working hours, the employee will be more engaged and productive in the organisation, contributing to the organisational success.

It is seen that organisation's who offer various different flexible work arrangements that helps the employee balance their work commitments with personal life can gain a competitive advantage over different organisation's (Pandita & Singhal, 2017). It is a given that working in the retail sector means unsociable working hours especially during peak periods, this means sacrificing time from personal and family time. Therefore, it is vital that management understands the importance of work-life balance programs which will help to alleviate any stress employees may have in regard to their work and social life (Oludayo *et al.*, 2018). By creating a programme which may rotate weekend duties or late-night shifts could result in a happier, more engaged workforce. By implementing strategies such as these the employees may feel that the workload is being split evenly and that everyone gets a chance to have a weekend off to spend with friends and family. From using methods such as these the employees, as a whole, may feel more satisfied and stress free resulting in higher engagement levels. In today's society organisation's want the best from their employees, they will not be satisfied with minimal work efforts, therefore, the organisation needs their

employees to be motivated in order to get the most out of them (Polo-Vargas *et al.*, 2017). When organisation's are considerate of their employee's well-being, especially their work-life balance, the results benefit both sides (Polo-Vargas *et al.*, 2017).

In relation to the retail sector it is vital in maintaining a competitive advantage that the workforce is focused on delivering a quick and professional service to the customer (Vinodhini & Lakshmi, 2015). It is this professional service that will see customers returning to the store time and time again. It is thought that having a strongly engaged workforce can help influence the overall sustainability of the organisation (Saratun, 2016). Therefore, it is an area that management should be focusing on if they wish to succeed in the future. A happy workforce will result in higher productivity and engagement. By ensuring that the employees have a happy balance between work and personal life can help to achieve this.

2.10: Conclusion

It is through the completion of the literature review on the topics of employee engagement and work-life balance that the researcher has been able to gain an understanding into these topics as well as meeting the two main objectives of this study. The literature review has succeeded in explaining and exploring the two main topics of this research topic: employee engagement and work-life balance. A look into the definitions and various theories on employee engagement and work-life balance has been explored and developed. The researcher has been able to conclude what the key drivers of employee engagement are in relation to work-life balance. The various different methods employed by different organisation's to boost engagement levels have also been discussed in depth. It is only through the literature review that the researcher was able to gain an understanding of what the key drivers of employee engagement are, and it is from this that the survey questions were based. In the literature review the key drivers of employee engagement are work-life balance, leadership style, work environment, relations with co-workers, compensation and employee value.

There is a lot of evidence that having an engaged workforce is vital for a strong performing organisation and there is also evidence that this can be increased further by having a good work-life balance amongst the employees. Having an engaged workforce is beneficial to the

organisation as they tend to have higher motivation levels and are more focused on the job. These high engagement levels can also result in increased levels of work satisfaction throughout the workforce. This can be increased through management showing the employees that they value their hard work as this gives an overall good work environment and work ethic.

It is in those organisation's who target and prioritise employee engagement levels that see the benefits associated with this; including a highly productive and motivated workforce which will create a strong organisation as a whole. Having a good work-life balance is a main priority for most individuals, therefore, it is a key area for management to focus on in order to guarantee that the workforce is engaged and motivated when they come into work each day. Having this balance allows employees to split their time between their work commitments and personal commitments, as a result employees tend to feel more relaxed as they are able to get sufficient rest and relaxation between work duties. When management believes in giving their employees a good work-life balance it shows that they value their employee's well-being both in the work environment and in their outside life. This would appeal to any potential employees as they would consider the organisation to be an employer of choice, this could also help in retention rates as current employees would feel comfortable and content working for the company and would not be inclined to search for employment elsewhere.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1: Introduction:

In this chapter a detailed discussion of the methodological procedures used in this study will be included. This discussion will include the aims of the study as well as the objectives. The following areas will also be discussed: the chosen research method, Quantitative, the reason why this method was chosen, an analysis of the sample, the chosen method of analysing the data, any ethical limitations and any overall limitations of the research study.

The methodology section of this research aims to take a look at the chosen method of collecting the data, along with any other methods utilised throughout the duration of this research. In this section of the research an explanation of how the study was conducted throughout the duration of the study will be looked at along with any other methods that may have been chosen. The quantitative method was chosen for this particular research as it was best suited to the research style, it is vital to the success of the research that the correct method is used here as it determines how well the results are gathered which will then be used for the analysis. The researcher gave the chosen research method careful consideration and concluded that the best method for this research would be quantitative. The quantitative method proved to be an efficient and accurate way of gathering the results needed for the research.

The quantitative approach appeared to be the most suitable method for this research as it gave the participants complete anonymity. Participants were able to answer the questions without the pressure of the researcher knowing who they are. The researcher felt that this level of security would benefit this research as it would reduce any stress experienced by the participants and could result in the survey answers being more accurate and honest. The survey questions were chosen as they were clear in what they were asking and would stop any confusion in the interpretation by the participant. The quantitative method allowed for a large sample size to be examined as it proved to be a quick method of collecting data compared to the qualitative method.

By choosing this style of research an identification of any trends in the data collected would be apparent to the researcher. The quantitative method was the most suitable choice for this

research as it fit in with the overall aims and objectives of the study. All of the necessary data was gathered through using this research style and also provided trends that were discovered throughout the research, this could lead to future studies being made on this topic. The researcher was able to understand how well the retail sector values a good work-life balance for their employees and how it influences engagement levels. The chosen survey also allowed the researcher to gain an understanding into how various different leadership styles can influence work-life balance and employee engagement

This methodology will also explore the reasoning behind choosing the quantitative method along with a discussion into why the sample was used for this study.

3.2: Research Philosophy

In a study by Saunders *et al* (2009), a definition of research philosophy is the belief that there are different methods of collecting data, analysing this data and how it is put to use. There are a number of variables that can help in determining what style of philosophy is the most suitable for the research that is being undertaken. A researcher who values facts and figures are more likely to adopt a different research philosophy than someone who is concerned with an individual's feelings or their behaviors (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Those individuals who are more drawn to a style where data can be quantified or whether they prefer to explore the feelings and thought process of an individual will all reflect in the chosen philosophy method. The philosophy adopted will be influenced by practical considerations. There is no method here that is more correct than another, the researcher will ultimately choose the most suited method for the study. In some cases, the researcher may choose to use a mixed method of research philosophy, this will depend on the researcher and what it is they are looking to achieve in conducting the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

Within this philosophy there are two main approaches which can be utilised by the researcher, they include Ontology and Epistemology, or they could be interpretivist or positivist approaches (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). When choosing the correct approach for the study the researcher must consider the objectives of the study, careful consideration must be made at this point to choose the most suitable method for the research in question. The research question of the study can help in guiding the researcher to pick the most suitable

philosophical framework for the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). It is the chosen philosophical approach that will set out the main aims and objectives of how the research is going to be conducted and laid out.

A study by Quinlan (2011) includes descriptions of the numerous different methods of research philosophy. It is through gaining an understanding of each of these philosophical approaches that the researcher can then make an educated choice on which approach is most suited to their research. Ontology and epistemology are the two most commonly occurring methods of research philosophy. The approaches of each philosophy will determine how the research study will be carried out. If ontology is the chosen approach a focus on what is true within the study will be looked at. While epistemology goes further into this truth, the researcher will look to gain an understanding into why this is true and develop a further understanding into these truths. Epistemology works by examining three aspects: interpretivism, positivism and realism. The author of this study chose epistemology as their approach using positivism as the study was concerned in finding the relationship between work-life balance and levels of employee engagement in the retail sector in Ireland. Also, the study is interested in seeing the relation between different leadership styles and how this influences work-life balance and employee engagement.

3.2.1: Interpretivism

An interpretivist approach to research is having a good level of understanding of human behavior and any social situations. An interpretivist researcher will be conscious and aware of all surroundings and actions happening around them. With an interpretivist outlook, the researcher will be interested in gaining an understanding in any differences within the human behavior. Having this approach allows the researcher to have a full understanding of why situations can occur. The interpretivist approach will be chosen if the researcher feels that the topic being examined is too complex to be summed into data. (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

3.2.2: Positivism

A positivist approach means that the researcher needs to maintain a non-biased approach throughout the duration of the study. This will ensure that the results achieved will be accurate and hold no influence from the researcher. As the author has no history of working in the retail sector, this approach could be used in this study as the author will have no thoughts on the issue prior to conducting the study (Gill *et al.*, 1997). The author could choose to use both an interpretivist and positivist approach for their research if they feel that they would achieve the most accurate results by doing so. For this research, the author felt that by gaining data from the survey an understanding could be gained into the link between work-life balance and employee engagement and that the data could provide proof into how retail workers around Ireland feel about this in their organisation.

3.2.3: Realism

When a researcher adopts a realist approach, they feel that by conducting the research there is a reality that can be found that is entirely independent of an individual's actions or how they behave (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). By choosing this realist method the researcher is aware of the fact that there are certain influencers that can affect a person's behavior and thought process which can ultimately determine how content they are in their present-day lives.

3.3: Research Approaches

When it comes to research approaches, the researcher has a choice between two methods, either deductive or inductive. This is an area that should be considered carefully by the researcher as it will play a fundamental role throughout the research. If the deductive method is used throughout the study, then a quantitative outlook will persist; if an inductive approach is used then qualitative will dominate the study.

Within this research the regulatory perspective will be utilized as it will work in finding out why a problem is occurring within an organisation. It will also aim to give recommendations on how these problems could be solved (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Through the duration of this

research an understanding will be gained into whether there is a problem with work-life balance and employee engagement levels in the retail sector in Ireland. This research will be carried out in such a way that a number of different retailers can be examined through the use of an anonymous survey. The author will also note any improvements that could be made within the organization to boost engagement levels.

A deductive approach will be applied to this research as it focuses mainly on events that are occurring within the organisation itself (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Having a deductive approach will assist the researcher in gaining a logical and factually accurate conclusion to the research question. In this case it can help to prove if work-life balance affects employee engagement levels in the retail sector in Ireland. It is vital to the success of the study that the correct research approach is applied. The research approach can influence how valid and reliable the data is. Therefore, the deductive approach appeared to be the most suitable for this study as it involves a strict methodology that should be followed (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The researcher in this study will use a quantitative approach when calculating the survey results to determine if there is a link between work-life balance and employee engagement levels, along with how leadership styles can influence this. According to Saunders *et al* (2009), the use of a survey in research methods is linked to the deductive approach.

The reasoning behind collecting this data is to test the hypothesis; those who experience a good work-life balance will have higher engagement levels in the retail sector in Ireland. The second hypothesis being tested is how the various leadership styles adopted by organisation's can play a key influencing role into how balanced an individual's life is between work and personal responsibilities are and ultimately their engagement levels within the work place as a result of this.

3.4: Advantages of Survey Research

In this research, the use of a survey as the chosen method to collect the data was to accommodate for the large sample size of various retail workers across Ireland. In a study by Saunders *et al* (2009) it was highlighted that when a survey is used in a study it enables the researcher to collect large amounts of data all the while remaining cost efficient. The chosen survey for this research was based off of a typical five-level Likert scale. This allowed the researcher to measure both positive and negative responses to the survey questions. The use of a survey-based research approach was chosen by the author as it was the most efficient on both time and cost. One negative of using this method however was that the participants were unable to expand on their thoughts and feelings on the research subject as they were only able to select one answer that was already provided on the survey. This could lead to a misunderstanding of the research collected (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). If a mixed research method had been applied, a survey and interviews, a more accurate data base could have resulted with more detailed responses.

3.5: Research Strategy

It is important that the author weighs up the pros and cons of the quantitative and qualitative research method in order to determine which method is most suited for the study in question. In a study by Saunders *et al* (2009) a system was created known as the “*research onion*”. This system allows researchers to examine each of the layers or methods of research, to conclude which method is most appropriate for their research (**Figure 1.1**). This “*research onion*” helped the author of this study as it was used to determine which method of research should be applied. The researcher chose a quantitative approach to this study and used a survey method of collecting the data. The author chose this method as it allowed for an investigation into how retail workers in Ireland felt about their work-life balance and how this effects employee engagement. This was achieved as the survey provided reliable information from the results through evaluating and interpreting the responses from the participants.

As the research focused on the data, a deductive approach was used by the researcher. The survey was uploaded onto a popular social media platform in order to reach a large sample

size. At the beginning of the survey there was an introduction section which stated that the research was being conducted on retail workers in Ireland only. It also informed the participants that the study was completely confidential and voluntary and that they could cease participation at any stage (See Appendix 1.1). Within the survey itself the beginning contained demographic questions such as gender, age, marital status and whether the participant had any children. These questions required an answer to ensure that the results obtained were valid and that the research findings were reliable.

The primary data that is gathered within this research sample is through the use of a survey. Through using a quantitative approach, all of the data can be analysed from the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This package is used so that the author can identify any trends within the data and then discuss in detail the research findings.

Furthermore, the author was able to link the findings within the conducted research with those discussed in the literature review section of this study. This enabled the author to create a framework which can describe the findings of the research topic from the valid and reliable findings.

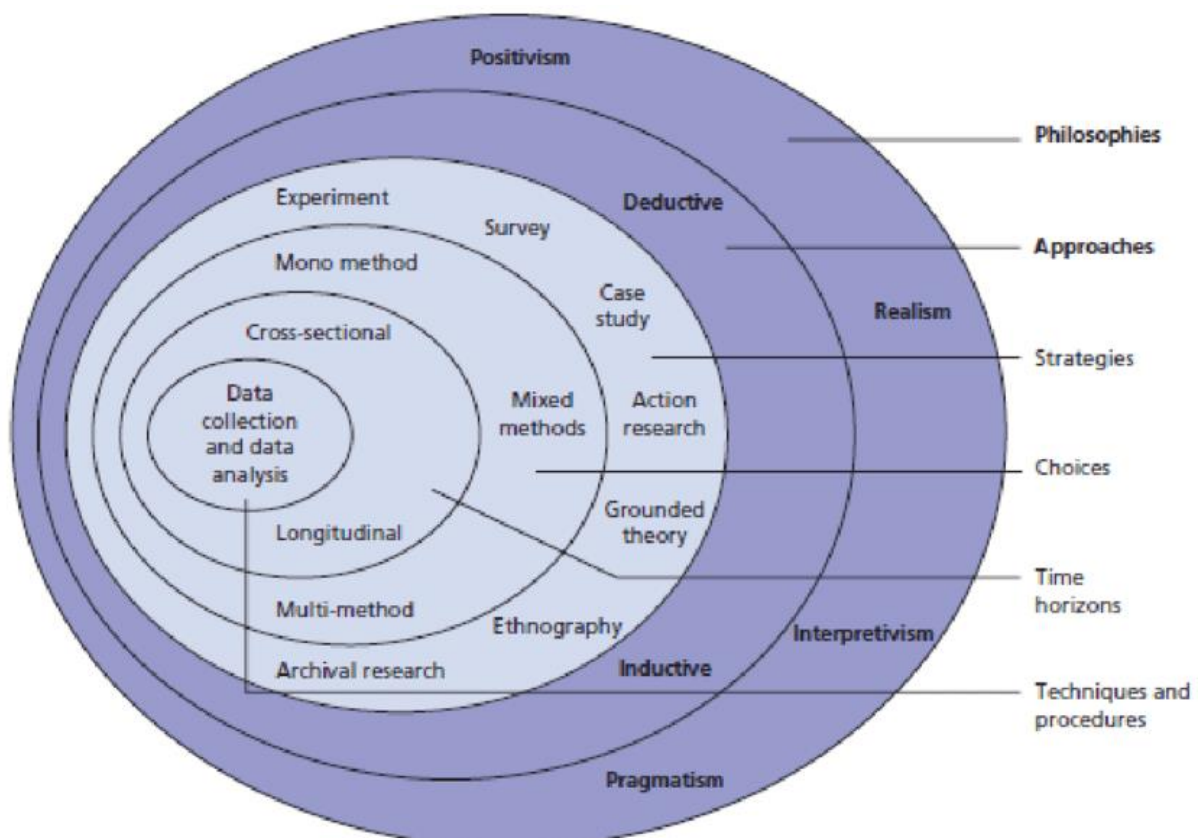


Figure 1.1: The “Research Onion” (Saunders *et al.*, 2009, p. 108)

3.6: Ethics

Ethics should be considered in every research project. The researchers aim in this project was to ensure that the highest level of ethical standards was being upheld throughout the research. Within this study a quantitative approach was utilised, this included the use of surveys, therefore, the researcher was aware that all information gathered had to be stored in a way that would protect the identities of those who completed the survey. The researcher gained consent from each participant prior to them beginning the survey, every participant was made aware that completing the survey was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any stage. Furthermore, the participants were informed that any information gathered from the survey was for the purpose of the study and would not be used for anything else. Finally, the researcher made it clear that at no stage would any information from the survey be show to management or any unrelated person such as a third-party individual.

3.7: Limitations of Research Methods

There are a number of limitations within this research. This is a common occurrence when conducting a study. Firstly, as the survey was uploaded onto a popular social media platform, those who responded to the survey were mainly of one particular age group. Therefore, the data collected was not as diverse as the researcher had wanted. This meant that the results only focused on a particular age group, 18-29 years of age. This influenced the results of the study as only one age bracket was accurate as it had a large sample size. The other age groups only received a small amount of participant and therefore the resulting data for these groups were less reliable. In order to obtain accurate results, the researcher could have distributed the survey in a different way in order to achieve a more diverse sample group, testing each demographic equally. As a result of choosing a different method of distributing the survey the results would reflect how various different age groups feel about work-life balance in their organization and how this affects their engagement levels.

Furthermore, within the survey itself the researcher did not include a question examining how long an individual had been working in the retail sector, this was a limitation in itself as the survey did not examine whether those who experienced a good work-life balance were more inclined to stay working in the company for longer. Future research could be conducted here

to examine this organisational commitment and whether having a good work-life balance affects this choice.

As the researcher chose a mono method of gathering data, this was achieved through the use of a quantitative method, some limitations were experienced by the researcher. If a mixed method, using quantitative and qualitative methods, had been used the researcher could have benefited from gaining a more in-depth understanding of how retail workers feel about work-life balance and how it effects employee engagement levels. Through the combined use of the surveys with interviews the resulting data would have been more accurate and detailed. However, as only a quantitative approach was applied, the results gathered were less detailed than if a mixed method had been applied. Using a mixed method approach can be very time consuming and as a result of this a mono method had to be used by the researcher when collecting the data. In an ideal situation for the type of research that was being conducted in this study, a mixed method would have been more suitable.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

4.1: Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will discuss and evaluate the findings from the completed surveys.

The data obtained through the quantitative method of using a survey will be discussed and explored. In total the survey contained 18 questions and was completed by 93 participants. The survey was placed onto a social media platform and therefore the total response rate is unknown. All of the data that is discussed in this chapter was all taken from the findings of the survey.

4.2: Demographics

In the survey that was used for this research, questions numbered 1-4 were used to gain an insight into the background of those who decided to participate in the study. These questions looked at gender, age, marital status and whether the individual had children or not. This gave the researcher a small background on the participants. It also allowed the researcher to deduce if there was any trend in gender and work-life balance or is a particular age groups tended to be more engaged on average.

4.3: Reliability Tests

A number of tests were ran on the data that was gathered in order to test the hypothesis. In this research the author chose Cronbach's Alpha to test for the reliability level. The will test the internal consistency of a scale. There were three scales within this study which were tested for their reliability: Work-life balance, Leadership styles and Employee engagement. Cronbach's Alpha tested each of these for their reliability, the results of which are shown in **Tables 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4**. A high reliability level for Cronbach's Alpha is 0.70 and above.

The work-life balance scale shows a high reliability as it comes in at 0.898 on Cronbach's Alpha. It is the only scale out of all three that shows a high reliability. The alpha coefficient

for work-life balance's 5 items is 0.898 (**Table 1.2**). This type of a score is a good example of high reliability. The scale for leadership style and employee engagement (**Tables 1.3 and 1.4**), showed a low level of reliability.

In the work-life balance scale (**Table 1.2**), participants were asked to rate how they felt they were able to balance their work life and personal life. The range here began at 1= Very dissatisfied, 2= Dissatisfied, 3= Unsure, 4= Satisfied and 5= Very satisfied. Within this scale respondents were asked 5 questions. These questions measured how time is divided between work and personal life, how well the two fit together, is there a balance, the divide of attention and the opportunity to do well at work while still carrying out personal responsibilities.

Table 1.2: Reliability Statistics: Work-Life balance

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.898	.898	5

Table 1.3: Reliability Statistics: Leadership Style

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.544	.542	4

Table 1.4: Reliability Statistics: Employee Engagement

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.572	.585	5

Table 1.5: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean Work-Life Balance	93	1.2	5	3.1699	0.93341
Mean Leadership Style	93	3.75	10	7.3629	1.45984
Mean Employee Engagement	93	4.2	9.8	7.6602	1.288
Valid N (listwise)	93				

Table 1.5 shows the descriptive statistics achieved from the authors variables, work-life balance, leadership style and employee engagement. From completing this statistical test, it is shown that the mean work-life balance level from the sample was 3.2 with the standard deviation coming in at 0.93. Through examining these results, it is clear that the majority of employees feel that they have a good work-life balance.

Looking at the leadership style we can see that the mean value is 7.4 with the standard deviation coming in at 1.46. Here we can see that on average the participants felt leadership style influenced their work-life balance and engagement levels. The last variable, employee engagement, shows the mean as 7.7 with the standard deviation being 1.29. On average the participants felt that they were engaged in the workplace.

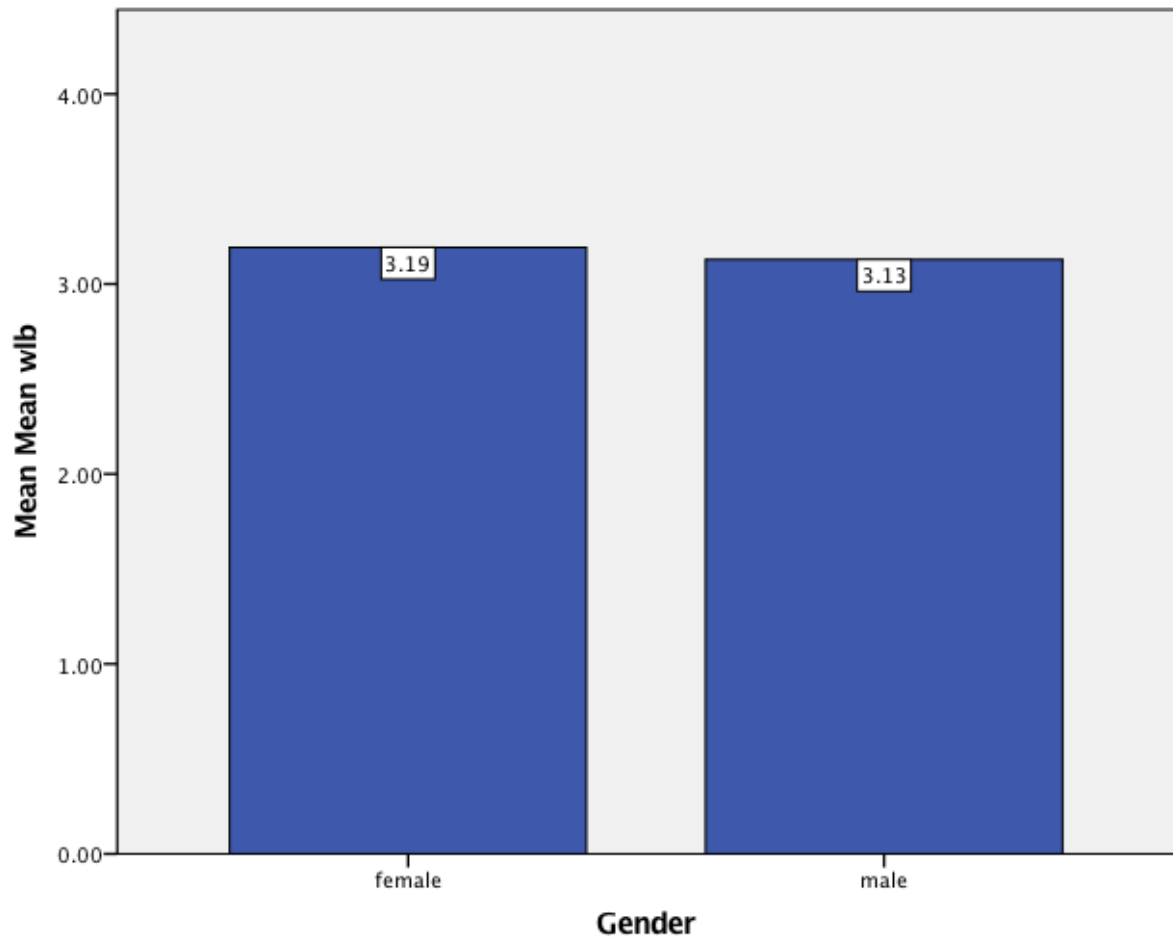


Figure 2

In **figure 2** the bar chart represents work-life balance across the genders, female and male. It is clear that there is only a slight difference in the average work-life balance between the two genders. The female average is 3.19 and the male average is 3.13. This bar chart shows gender on the x-axis and average work-life balance on the y-axis.

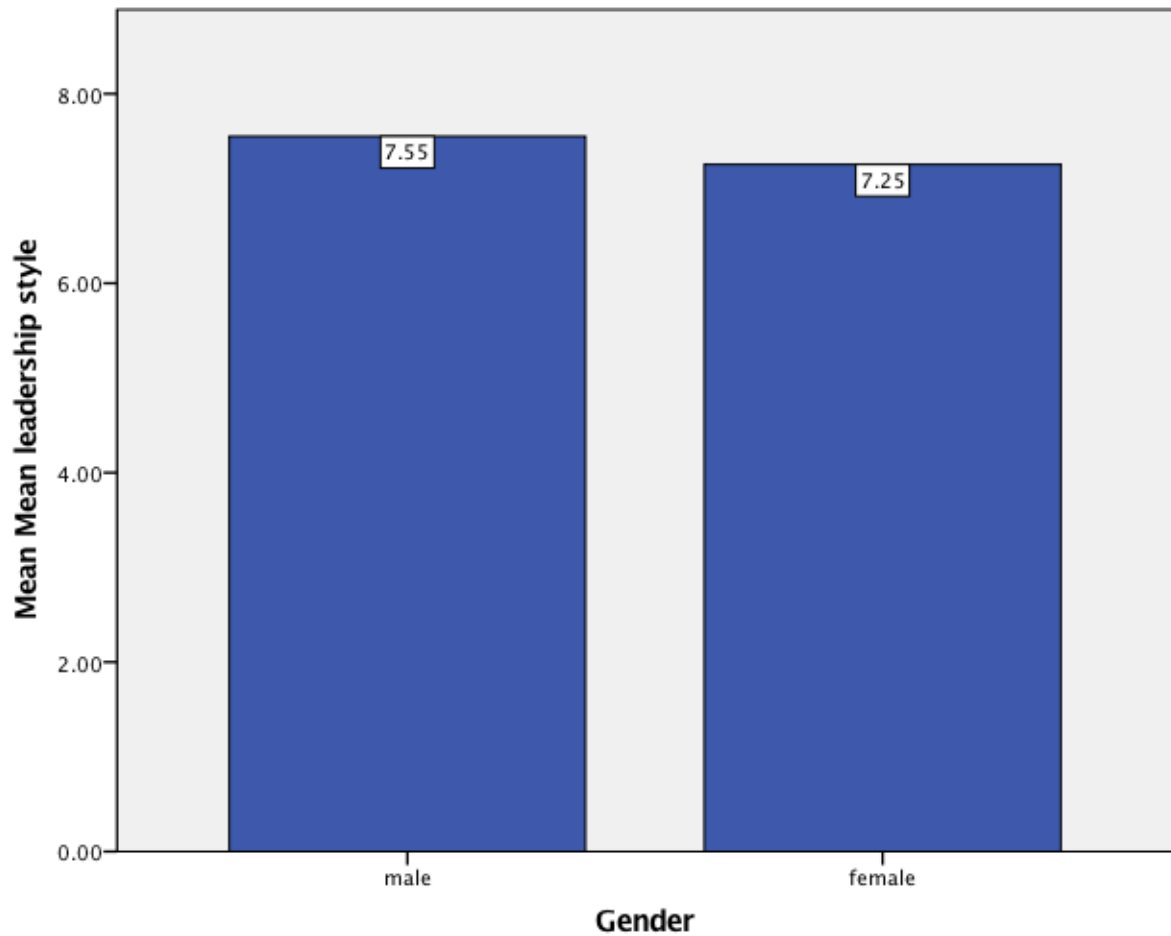


Figure 3

Figure 3 shows how the participants of the survey felt about whether leadership style can affect their work-life balance and employee engagement levels across the two genders. Just like in the previous bar chart, figure 2, the total score of males against female is very similar. The average leadership style for males is 7.55 and females is 7.25. The gender is shown on the x-axis and the average leadership style score is on the y-axis.

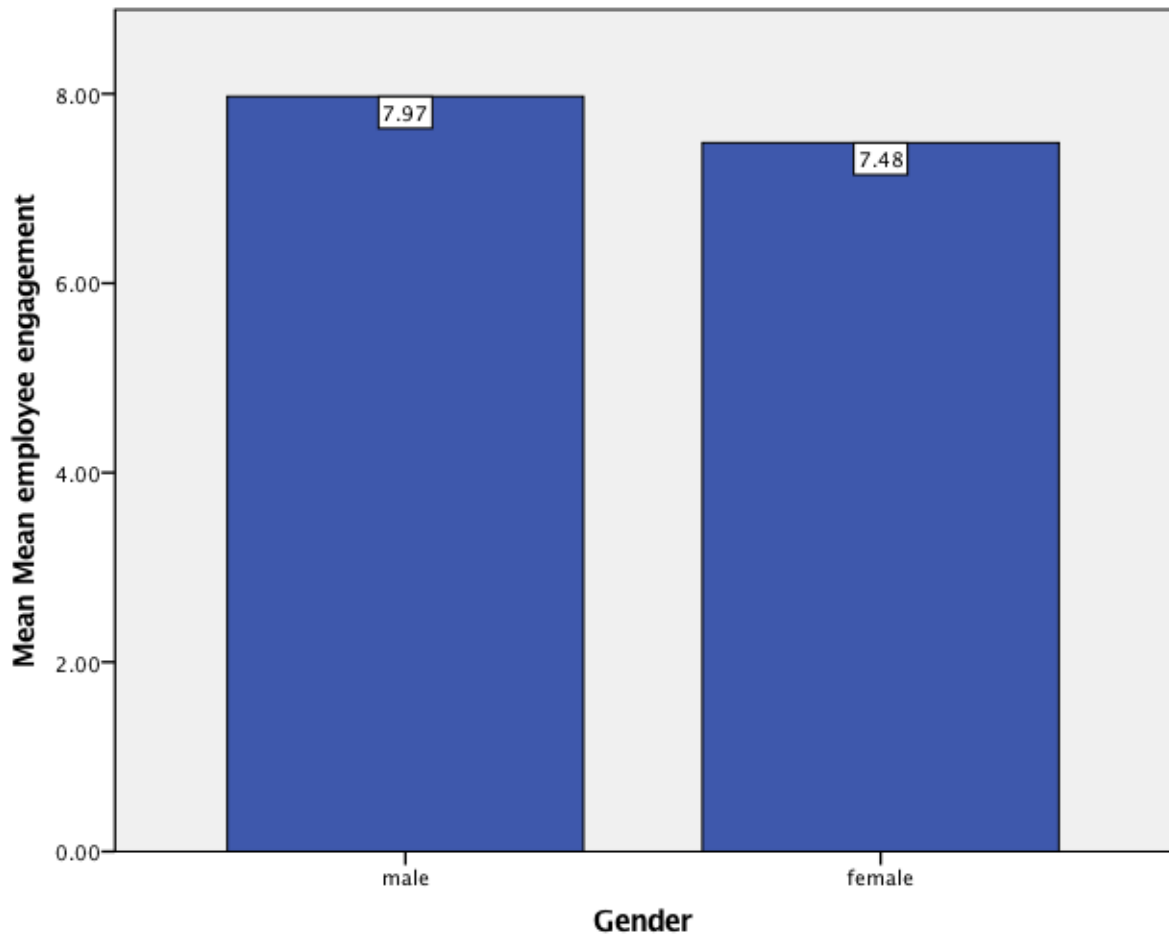


Figure 4

In **Figure 4**, it shows the total average of employee engagement levels across both male and female survey participants. We can see that in total the male average score for engagement is 7.97 and female average is 7.48. There is only a slight difference see in the above bar chart for the two genders again. The x-axis shows the gender and the y-axis is showing the average employee engagement score.

Table 1.6: Correlations

		WLB	LS	EE
Work-Life Balance Total	Pearson Correlation	----	----	----
	Sig. (2-tailed)	----	----	----
Leadership Style Total	Pearson Correlation	0.18	----	----
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.09	----	----
Employee Engagement Total	Pearson Correlation	.51**	.35**	----
	Sig. (2-tailed)	----	----	----

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

In **Table 1.5** it illustrates the correlations between work-life balance, leadership style and employee engagement. In this table it displays a strong correlation ($r=.51$) between work-life balance, employee engagement and leadership style. The correlation shown in this table shows that the data is significant at the level $p<0.01$. The author would reject the null hypothesis if the p-value had been less than 0.05. If this was to occur the author would then have to accept the alternative hypothesis, that work-life balance does not affect levels of employee engagement. In this study we accept the null hypothesis as the data taken from the survey shows that work-life balance does affect employee engagement levels in the retail sector in Ireland.

Table 1.7:

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.511 ^a	.261	.253	.807

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mean employee engagement

The author chose to run a linear regression analysis (**Table 1.7**) on the data to see if work-life balance affected employee engagement levels in the retail sector in Ireland. The R^2 value on

the table shows 0.261 which equals to 26.1% which illustrates the percentage of the variance between the dependent variable (work-life balance) and the independent variable (employee engagement).

Table 1.8:

		ANOVA^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.937	1	20.937	32.174	.000 ^b
	Residual	59.219	91	.651		
	Total	80.156	92			

a. Dependent Variable: Mean wlb

b. Predictors: (Constant), Mean employee engagement

In **Table 1.8**, the ANOVA table shows the researcher whether the model results are statistically significant or not. From interpreting the table, we can see that $F(1,91) = 32.18$, $p < .0005$. Therefore, the average work-life balance significantly predicted employee engagement levels.

Table 1.9: Correlations among Work-Life Balance and Leadership Styles variables

	Mean Work-life Balance	Mean Leadership Style
Mean Work-Life balance Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.092 93	
Mean Leadership Style Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.176 93	

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

Table 2.0: Correlations among Leadership Style variables

	Mean Work-Life Balance	Mean Employee Engagement
Mean Work-Life Balance Sig. (2-tailed) N	0 93	
Mean Employee Engagement Sig. (2-tailed) N	.511** 93	

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

Table 2.1: Correlations among Employee Engagement variable

	Mean Employee Engagement	Mean Leadership Style
Mean Employee Engagement Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.001 93	
Mean Leadership Style Sig. (2-tailed) N	.346** 93	

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

As shown in the **tables 1.9** and **2.0**, both of the variables showed positive relations to work-life balance. **Table 2.1** shows a positive correlation between employee engagement and leadership style. These tables show that aspects such as work-life balance can affect employee engagement levels.

Table 2.3: Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Total Work-Life Balance Score	.157	93	.000	.921	93	.000
Total Leadership Style Score	.115	93	.004	.964	93	.012
Total Employee Engagement Score	.097	93	.030	.956	93	.004

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The survey aimed at testing employees in the retail sector to see if their work-life balance affected their engagement levels and whether leadership styles influenced this. In order for the author to examine this a normality test had to be run. This normality test showed whether the assumptions of the t-test were acquired. The Shapiro-Wilk test which can be seen in **Table 2.3** shows that the data rejects the null hypothesis as normality is breached ($p < .05$). The author went on to carry out the Mann-Whitney U test using the mean total of work-life balance, leadership style and employee engagement against gender and a separate test against if they had any children.

Table 2.4: Test Statistics: Gender

	Work-Life balance	Leadership Style	Employee Engagement
Mann-Whitey U Test	961.5	1,129.00	1,207.00
Wilcoxon W	1,556.50	1,724.00	1,802.00
Z	-0.333	1.009	1.631
Asymp.Sig.(2-tailed)	0.739	0.313	0.103

Table 2.5: Test Statistics: Children

	Work-Life Balance	Leadership Style	Employee Engagement
Mann-Whitney U Test	751	807.5	916.5
Wilcoxon W	2,962.00	3,018.50	3,127.50
Z	-1.193	-0.709	0.216
Asymp.Sig.(2-tailed)	0.233	0.478	0.829

In **Table 2.4** it shows whether there were any variations between work-life balance, leadership styles or employee engagement scores in relation to gender. The engagement scores for males and females were fairly similar as seen previously in **Figure 4**. The Mann-Whitney U results in **Table 2.4** showed that $U=961$ and $p=0.74$. Leadership style shows $u=1129$ and $p=0.31$ and employee engagement shows $u=1207$ and $p=0.10$. In each case here our p value is greater than .05 so we therefore cannot reject our null hypothesis. Consequently, as our data lacks significant data we have to accept our null hypothesis that there is no difference between genders and the following: work-life balance, leadership styles and employee engagement.

Table 2.5 examines whether an individual has children or not can influence their thoughts on work-life balance, leadership style and employee engagement. For work-life balance $u=751$ and $p=0.23$, leadership style showed $u=807$ and $p=0.48$ and employee engagement showed $u=916$ and $p=0.83$. Again, the results here lack statistically different diversity and as a result we accept our null hypothesis that there are no differences between the three variables and whether the participant has children or not.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

5.1: Introduction

Within this chapter the author will explore all of the data that was gathered from the survey, Furthermore, the author will discuss the results chapter in detail. This chapter will be divided into the following sections: Employee background, work-life balance and employee engagement, work-life balance and leadership styles and finally employee engagement and leadership styles. This chapter will explore the survey results of all those who participated in the research. The survey examined the various different age groups, both male and female, different relationship statuses and whether the participant had any children or not. After these demographic questions the survey was divided into 3 sections. Section 1 focused on work-life balance and included 5 questions. Section 2 examined leadership styles and was made up of 4 questions. The last section was for employee engagement and was composed of 5 questions. The questions were chosen by the author as they examined the research topic in detail.

For the duration of this chapter the author aimed to display all of the findings of the survey. The aim here was to determine how work-life balance affects employee engagement levels in the retail sector in Ireland. The researcher also wanted to look at whether different styles of leadership influenced work-life balance and employee engagement within this sector. The survey itself was aimed at individuals who work within the retail sector in Ireland only.

5.2: Employee Background

At the beginning of the survey the researcher included 4 demographic questions to gain an understanding of the background of the participants. These questions included their gender, age, relationship status and if the participant has any children. The researcher asked these questions in order to gain an understanding of the participants. The researcher felt that it was important to include these questions as it gave the research an awareness of the various different circumstances of each individual. Gender was examined as it would show if a specific sex felt more engaged than the other. Likewise, if one particular gender felt they had a good work-life balance over another. This could also be said for including the question which asked the individuals age group. The age groups included were: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49

and 50+. Relationship status was included here as it could prove whether different statuses felt they were more engaged or have a better work-life balance than an individual with a different relationship status. The relationship status options included: Single, Married/Cohabiting, Separated/Divorced and Widowed. Lastly, each participant was asked whether they have any children or not. This provided the researcher with the ability to examine if those individuals who have children struggle with work-life balance and their engagement levels in work over those who do not have any children.

5.3: Work-Life Balance and Employee Engagement

The main aim of this research was to determine if work-life balance affected employee engagement levels within the retail sector in Ireland. Therefore, the researcher felt that this area was to be examined in depth and to have more of a focus than on leadership styles. In the literature review chapter of this research it was highlighted that organisation's who use methods of work-life balance such as flexible work arrangements tend to see higher levels of engagement across their employees as they have a good balance between their work and personal lives (Ruldolph & Baltes, 2017).

At the beginning of our research there are two bar charts in particular which examine work-life balance and employee engagement against gender (**Figure 2 & Figure 4**). In **Figure 2** is shows that on average females tend to feel more satisfied with their work-life balance than their male counterparts. The total average for females was 3.19 while males came in at 3.13. Interestingly enough in **figure 4** it showed that on average males felt that they were more engaged than women in the workplace. Here the male total average was 7.97 while the female total average was 7.48. One limitation that the researcher felt which relates to this as there was a higher number of female participants than male participants and this may have effect the results of the survey itself. These results are telling us to reject our hypothesis that work-life balance affects engagement levels as women who felt that they have a better work-life balance felt less engaged in the workplace as a whole. However, the variance between the two figures of male and female is so small that there is no significant difference. This tells us to accept our null hypothesis that work-life balance does in fact affect employee engagement levels. This point is backed up in **table 1.8** as $F = 32.18$ which equates to the average work-life balance predicting the employee engagement levels. The researcher went on to conduct a Mann-Whitney U test as this is used to determine if there are any differences in the scores

between two variables. This test was utilized to test the work-life balance score against gender and the engagement score against gender. The results of this can be seen in **table 2.4**. In each case the resulting p value was greater than .05 which tells us that we cannot reject out null hypothesis as the results lack significantly different data.

5.4: Work-Life Balance and Leadership Style

The researcher felt that by examining how leadership styles can influence levels of work-life balance it would be beneficial to the study as it is an area that an organization could modify if they were concerned with increase engagement levels across their employees. In this section we are going to look at work-life balance and leadership style and what we found from our results. To link this area back to the literature review it was stated that when an organization management team promote a healthy balance between work and an individual's personal life they are considered to be an employer of choice and tend to experience higher engagement levels across their employees as a whole (Parkes & Langford, 2008). This is important for an organisation to understand if they wish to increase the engagement levels of their employees.

We can see from **Table 1.9** the correlations between work-life balance and leadership styles. The correlation between these is positive. In this table the correlation between work-life balance and leadership styles is $r = .18$. Therefore, the score shows significance as $p < 0.01$. As a result of this the researcher accepts the null hypothesis that leadership styles can influence work-life practices within an organisation. This point was further backed up by the Mann-Whitney U test which was ran on leadership styles and work-life balance for gender and a second on whether the individual had any offspring. This can be seen in tables 2.4 and 2.5, the p vale in both tables is above .05, therefore we accept the null hypothesis.

5.5: Employee Engagement and Leadership Styles

The last area that was examined within this research was the relationship between employee engagement and leadership styles. The researcher carried out a number of tests to see whether this hypothesis was true or not, does leadership styles effect the level of employee engagement in an industry. In the literature review chapter, it was shown that there has been a number of researches in the past that examines the link between employee engagement and leadership styles but there has been little research conducted with the focus on the retail sector in Ireland. According to Lather and Jain (2015) an organisation cannot achieve a highly engaged workforce without firstly examining their leaders as this is the ultimate influencing force on the employees. Therefore, the researcher felt that it was important to include this into the research as it gave a further understanding into employee engagement and work-life balance.

By examining **figure 3** and **figure 4** we can see a link between leadership style and employee engagement. These two figures showed similarities between the results of leadership styles and employee engagement. In **figure 3** males scored an average of 7.55 whilst females scored 7.25. **Figure 4** showed a similar trend as males once again scored higher than the females, 7.97 compared to 7.48. We could summarise here that on average males feel more engaged in the work place than females. Similarly, males are of the opinion on average that leadership styles influences their engagement levels more so than females (**Figure 3**). **Table 2.1** goes on to show a positive correlation between leadership styles and employee engagement ($r = .34$ significant at the $p < .01$ level).

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1: Introduction

This study aimed at examining the link between work-life balance and employee engagement levels in Ireland. The study also explored how various different leadership styles could influence these work-life balance practices and engagement levels within the organisation. Within this chapter it aims at discussing and analysing the findings of this research while linking it to previous studies and determining if there are any similarities. The results were gathered from 93 participants in total. Through the completion of the survey it produced a number of different areas that could be analysed by the researcher, these included: work-life balance, employee engagement and leadership style. This researched mainly aimed at identifying the link between work-life balance and employee engagement whilst also determining the benefits of having such a such an engaged workforce. Having these flexible working systems allows employees to balance their time sufficiently and work around various life situations that they may find themselves in.

6.2: Work-Life Balance

The researcher found that, on average, those individuals who participated in the research felt that they currently have a good work-life balance. In general, the participants felt that this work-life balance affected their engagement as was show in the results section. Those who felt they had a good work-life balance showed high engagement levels as seen in the survey results. According to Garczynski *et al* (2013) work-life balance is the second most sought after attribute when an individual is looking for employment. The researcher of this study felt that because of this the area of work-life balance would be an interesting topic to examine. Various other studies have also suggested that when an individual experiences high levels of engagement it is commonly found to be linked to having a good work-life balance (Virga *et al.*, 2015). It is clear from the previous literature involving work-life balance that it is an important aspect of an individual's life and without this balance an individual would feel stressed and unmotivated (Pandita & Singhal, 2017). Throughout this research we were able to see a link between those who felt they have a good work-life balance and their engagement levels which tended to be high. Likewise, it was apparent that those who felt they had a poor work-life balance also experienced low levels of engagement.

6.3: Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is another key area that the author wished to explore. The topic of employee engagement has become very popular in recent years, but the author felt that there was little research on this topic in relation to the retail sector in Ireland. To link this back to the literature review section of this research, in a study by Pandita and Singhal (2017) they found employee engagement to be the main factor in an organisation having a productive workforce. As this research is examining the retail sector, having an engaged workforce is critical to the organisation's success as they have to compete against similar retailers who provide the same goods or services (Vinodhini & Lakshmi, 2015). Engagement levels seen amongst the participants of this research tended to be high. Males on average appeared to have higher engagement rates than females. The high engagement levels were linked to those who felt that they have a good work-life balance. Therefore, the retail sector appears to have good work-life balance procedures in place and this is resulting to the increased engagement levels amongst their staff.

6.4: Leadership Style

The last area that the researcher wanted to examine was leadership style and how this can influence work-life balance and employee engagement. Firstly, an organisation cannot achieve a highly engaged workforce without examining the leadership style that is present as it is one of the key influencing factors (Lather & Jain, 2015). Furthermore, a study by Au and Ahmed (2017) showed that it is important for management to support work-life balance as this could help boost productivity and engagement levels amongst the employees. The researcher of this study found that on average individuals felt that when leaders promote work-life balance it resulted in a more engaged workforce. These higher levels of engagement benefitted the organisation as the employees feel more involved and productive within the workplace. These higher levels of motivation are a result of this engagement. Therefore, it is important that management recognize this if they hope to boost the engagement levels amongst the employees in the organisation.

6.5: Conclusion

This research was carried out in order to allow the researcher to achieve the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher carried out background research on the research topic to gain a clear understanding of what it is the research topic is looking to show. The researcher gained an insight on the research topic through carrying out this background research and also gained a further understanding of work-life balance and employee engagement.

From the survey results it is clear that employees in the retail sector in Ireland feel like they have a good work-life balance and that this influences their levels of engagement. From the quantitative data that was collected it showed that on average the majority of participants felt that they have a good work-life balance which correlated to those individuals who appeared to be highly engaged. Those individuals who felt that their organisation does not promote a healthy work-life balance scored low on the engagement section of the survey. This shows that again there is a direct link between low levels of work-life balance and employee engagement. This links back to the journal articles that were examined by the researcher in the literature review of this study. Similar studies were discussed in the literature review where organisation's that experience poor work-life balance tend to have unmotivated and uninterested employees (Pandita & Singhal, 2017).

Overall the survey proved to be an efficient method of collecting the data and it allowed the researcher to recognize any trends in the results. It gave the researcher an insight into how work-life balance affects employee engagement whilst also how leadership styles can influence this within the retail sector in Ireland. The results gathered from this survey confirmed to the researcher that work-life balance does influence employee engagement.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1: Introduction

Within this final chapter of the research the researcher will conclude the overall findings of the research and consider the overall aims of the study. It is within this chapter that the researcher will also discuss any limitations that were experienced throughout the study. Any future research that could be conducted on this topic will also be discussed. This will include any recommendations and cost estimates involved in conducting this future research. Finally, the author will conclude this research with a final piece which will be a reflection on the researchers experience and own personal learning. This will include a discussion on what the researcher has learned through completing this study. The aim of this research was to determine if work-life balance affects levels of employee engagement in the retail sector in Ireland. This was shown to be true through the survey results that were gathered.

7.1: Research Question

The title of this research was “The Effect Work-Life Balance has on Employee Engagement in the Retail Sector in Ireland”. The main focus here was investigating the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement within the retail sector in Ireland. The research showed that there was in fact a link between work-life balance and employee engagement levels and that when an organisation promotes flexible work arrangements they benefit from increased engagement.

The study also showed that when engagement levels are high it benefits both the employee as well as the employer. These flexible work arrangements are welcomed by the staff and it allows them to have a healthy balanced lifestyle. It is through conducting this research that we can see the benefits of having a good work-life balance as well as having high engagement levels.

7.2: Limitations of the Research

Having completed this study, the researcher gained a deep understanding into the research topic. However, the researcher felt that there a few limitations that were experienced throughout this study. One of the main limitations being the time constraint. The researcher found it difficult to complete the dissertation to the highest standard whilst also working a full-time job.

Another limitation experienced by the researcher was that there was no question included in the survey which asked the participant if they work in the retail sector in Ireland. As this survey was released onto a social media platform the researcher felt that some individuals may have participated in the study incorrectly as they may not have worked in the retail sector in Ireland. If the researcher was to conduct this study again, a question would be included in the survey which asked whether the participant works in the retail sector in Ireland or not. Those who select 'no' would be automatically excluded from the findings.

Overall the findings of this study have been positive which shows that work-life balance does in fact effect levels of employee engagement in the retail sector in Ireland. One of the main recommendations that the researcher would give to anyone looking to study this topic further would be to choose various different retailers and have their employees answer the survey directly. The researcher felt that by uploading the survey onto a social media platform the results were not as diverse as initially hoped for. Future studies could focus on only allowing a select group of employees from various retailers answer the survey as this could provide a more diverse sample group.

Another recommendation that the researcher would like to give is to focus on time management when completing a study such as this one. As the researcher struggled with time due to working a full-time job, the use of a time management system or timetable would have been helpful. The author would recommend creating a timetable to help track progress and to keep the dissertation progress on schedule.

7.3: Recommendations and Cost of Recommendations

The main recommendations that the researcher has for the retail industry in Ireland would be to introduce a new shift pattern which would allow an employee one weekend a month off if desired. This would allow the individual to spend quality time with friends and family. It would also help, in the researcher's opinion, boost engagement levels in those employees who lack motivation and who do not feel valued in the workplace. This could mean only making small changes to employees shift patterns in order to rotate which employee has the weekend off. The researcher feels that if this was introduced employees would feel more valued and engaged in the workplace. There would be no necessary costs here.

The next recommendation that the researcher would like to give is for retailers to examine their current leadership style. The study conducted here showed that the style of leadership that is implemented in an organisation can have a direct effect on work-life balance and employee engagement. Therefore, if this leadership style was examined and modified the organisation could change their whole strategy towards their outlook on work-life balance and as a result boost levels of engagement. This recommendation would be relatively low in cost. It would involve creating a training session for all those in management and explaining to them about the new leadership style. This could then be implemented within the organisation once all management members have completed the training. The researcher feels that both of these recommendations would help boost engagement levels throughout the organisation.

7.4: Timelines for Implementation of Recommendations

The first recommendation would not require a huge amount of time. Management would need to enquire who out of their employees would be interested in a weekend off each month. Once that has been established it would be a simple matter of reviewing the current roster and making the necessary changes. The second recommendation should also be relatively quick to achieve. It depends on when the organisation can get their management team booked in for a training course to update them on the new leadership style.

7.5: Personal Learning and Reflection

Through completing this research, the researcher has gained an insight into the mechanisms of both work-life balance and employee engagement. The literature review provided a detailed background into both work-life balance and employee engagement. This study has demonstrated various different ways that organisation's could adopt to help boost engagement levels amongst their employees. One such method being through work-life balance. The area of work-life balance and employee engagement was analysed to find if there was a link between them with a particular focus on the retail sector in Ireland. By taking this angle the researcher was able to explore work-life balance and how it affects employee engagement within the retail sector which previously had very few studies focusing on this. Looking back there are a few things that the researcher would have changed within this study. One in particular would be the survey chosen to conduct the research. The researcher would have included some extra questions in the demographics which would have asked if the individual was a resident in Ireland as well as if they are currently working within the retail sector in Ireland. The researcher felt that having not included such questions some participants may have completed the survey incorrectly as they may not have fit the criteria of the survey.

Another useful skill that was developed throughout this research is the use of SPSS. The researcher found SPSS to be very helpful in the analysis and findings part of the research. The researcher used SPSS to create all of the graphs and tables which were then referred to when discussing the findings. The researcher found that SPSS was a quick way of gathering all of my data and presenting my findings from my research.

7.6: Final Conclusion

This research was carried out in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the research topic. Within this study the researcher explored various different journals and articles that were linked to the research topic in order to achieve these aims and objectives. The researcher chose to take a quantitative approach and used a survey to research and gain an understanding of the research topic. The research focused on work-life balance, employee engagement and also considered leadership styles. The researcher wanted to gain an understanding of what work-life balance is currently like in the retail sector in Ireland and whether this influences the employee engagement levels. A look into how leadership styles

can influence these was also examined. Having completed this study the researcher feels that further research could be conducted on this area to expand on the findings.

Having ran the study on a relatively large sample size (93 participants) the researcher felt that the findings show that work-life balance does in fact affect employee engagement rates within the retail sector in Ireland. Employees as a whole feel that having a good work-life balance is important to them and that it plays a role in how engaged they are. Therefore, this should be an area of interest to the retail sector in Ireland as it could help them to boost levels of engagement by examining their work-life balance strategies.

It is from the completion of this study that I feel I have achieved a further understanding on work-life balance and employee engagement in the retail sector in Ireland. This research has also shown that organisation's who give their employees a good work-life balance tends to have a more engaged workforce. This engagement is extremely important to the success of the organisation. It influences both organisational performance and employee performance. From conducting this research, it is clear that the majority of participants happy with their current level of work-life balance. This then proved that due to this happy balance the participants, in general, felt more engaged and motivated in the workplace. Further research could go on to examine a particular retailer.

I have now gained a further understanding on quantitative research which will be beneficial to any future research I may conduct. I have also gained the necessary skills in SPSS which I feel will be useful in my future career. Through the use of this quantitative method I have gained the necessary knowledge into how employees in the retail sector in Ireland feel about their work-life balance and how this affects their engagement levels. I would recommend that retailers should review their leadership styles to help encourage work-life balance and consequently boost levels of employee engagement.

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Appendix 1

How Work-Life Balance Affects Employee Engagement in the Retail Sector in Ireland

Hi there,

I am currently a Human Resource Management Master's student at the National College of Ireland. Presently I am in the middle of completing a study examining how work-life balance affects employee engagement levels in the retail sector in Ireland. The study also seeks to examine how leadership styles can influence this.

The entire questionnaire should take approximately five minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary and confidential. You can cease participation at any time. There will be no personal data collected in this study. The overall findings of this questionnaire will be included in my final dissertation.

Thank you for your participation.

Emily

Section 1: Demographic Questions

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Age:

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

Marital status:

- Single
- Married/ Cohabiting
- Separated/ Divorced
- Widowed

Do you have children?

- Yes
- No

Section 2: Work-life Balance Satisfaction

Please rate your level of satisfaction with each item below.

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

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

- 5- Very unsatisfied

How well does you work life and your personal or family life fit together

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

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

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

The way you divide your attention between work and home

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

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

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

Section 3: Managerial Support

Please rate your level of satisfaction with each item below.

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

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree
-

Senior management in this organisation encourages supervisors/line managers to be sensitive to employee's personal/nonwork concerns

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree
-

In the event of conflict, managers are understanding when employees have to put their personal lives first

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree
-

In this organisation, employees are encouraged to strike a balance between their work and nonwork lives

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

Section 3: Environment

Please rate your level of satisfaction with each item below.

The environment in this organisation supports a balance between work and personal life

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

I am able to satisfy both my job and family/personal responsibilities

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

The pace of work in the organisation enables me to do a good job

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

My team work effectively together to meet our objectives

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

The amount of work I do is reasonable

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

Section 4: Organisational Support

Please rate your level of satisfaction with each item below.

I feel valued for the work that I do

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

I feel my organisation is concerned for my well being

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

My team members are a great source of support through periods of change

- 1- Strongly agree

- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree

I feel adequately rewarded for the work that I do

- 1- Strongly agree
- 2- Agree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree
- 4- Disagree
- 5- Strongly disagree