

Work Life Balance: The impact of individual  
perception. A study within the Department of Health.

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## **Abstract**

Work life balance is a crucial topic in terms of employee work performance and ability to manage other life roles. Previous research has highlighted the importance of in depth work life balance practices for organisations. Further research is however required in order to understand how employees fully engage with work life balance on an individual level. The focus of this research is within the area of work life balance among Department of Health employees at an individual level. Such a study is important in order to analyse whether the work life balance measures in place within the organisation are suitable to the staff's individual values and needs. The research in this dissertation took a qualitative approach in which the researcher conducted semi structured interviews among 15 Department of Health employees. The data extracted from these interviews was then coded and organised into themes. The findings from this research provides evidence that employees' individual perceptions of work life balance can vary greatly. The main conclusion drawn from this study indicate that greater awareness needs to be taken in terms of these differences when drawing up both formal and informal work life balance measures within the organisation. This dissertation recommends that more flexible working practises be undertaken by the Department of Health, as well as giving consideration to the benefits of working from home, while also improving its access to mobile technology as an enabler of work life balance.

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## **List of abbreviations**

<b>WLB</b>	<b>Work Life Balance</b>
<b>DoH</b>	<b>Department of Health</b>
<b>CO</b>	<b>Clerical Officer</b>
<b>EO</b>	<b>Executive Officer</b>
<b>HEO</b>	<b>Higher Executive Officer</b>
<b>AP</b>	<b>Assistant Principal</b>
<b>PO</b>	<b>Principal Officer</b>

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Work Life Balance (WLB) is an integral part of employee's wellbeing in terms of both work and outside commitments. WLB is defined "as a ratio of time sharing between work and family" (Soomro, Breitenecker & Syed, 2018, p.131). There has been extensive research into the overall concept of WLB but little on how individuals actually perceive it (Leslie, King & Clair, 2019). Following research done by Bourdeau, Ollier-Malaterre & Houlfort, (2019) on employee hesitancy to take advantage of existing WLB schemes, they imply that little research has been done in regards to why employees are hesitant to take up these expansive policies. Therefore, it could be suggested that employee's perceptions of WLB are not necessarily always compatible with the policies that their organisations offer.

Employees' engagement with WLB affects everything from their mental wellbeing, to their performance at work, as well as their engagement with outside commitments. Employees however, can often compromise one aspect of their life over another due to a lack of harmony in their WLB (Kristensen & Pedersen, 2017). Guest (2002), offers some major concerns regarding an uneven WLB. These include the changing nature of the modern workplace as well as the conflict between the demands of work and the decline of work as the most important element in employees' lives. It is therefore imperative before hard-line policies are formed, that an organisation understands their employees' values in order to build an effective WLB structure. Guest (2002) further explains that more information is required on what upsets the imbalance in WLB for employees in order to successfully achieve this.

In terms of the development of WLB policies, research has greatly expanded upon this area in the last fifteen years. WLB infers that an employee can perform different roles in their life, such as employee and family member while gaining satisfaction from each of these roles but not detracting from the others (Mazerolle, Bowman, & Kilbourne, 2018). Further to this balance of life and work, Soomro et al (2018) indicate that job satisfaction moderates the effectiveness of an employee's WLB and their job performance. Thus employees who are satisfied in their roles are more likely to have a strong WLB.

The growing desire for companies to have a strong WLB culture reflects the changing model of the average worker as being a single male breadwinner to the more diverse dual earning family (Powell, Greenhaus, Allen & Johnson, 2019). It is therefore imperative that organisations be cognisant of meeting the changing needs of employees, who are now more diverse in their requirements.

The literature generally agrees that employees face competing demands for their time from both work and outside commitments (Bourdeau, et al, 2019, Leslie et al, 2019). In order to address these needs, organisations have begun to introduce measures to combat this such as flexi time and working from home. Despite this however, it has become evident that in fact many employees are hesitant to take up these work life policies as they fear their career will suffer (Bourdeau et al, 2019). This furthers the possibility that those on flexible schedules have to make up their work hours elsewhere, for fear they may not be promoted due to lack of availability (Marcum, Cameron, & Versweyveld, 2018). However gaps in the research indicate further consideration must be given to whether this is the only reason for hesitancy on taking up flexible working opportunities.

After the success of Sweden introducing six hour working days, many countries and organisations are adopting similar approaches (Riđić, Avdibegović, & Bušatlić, 2016). Despite this, and unlike many other EU countries, Ireland has no mandate for additional WLB opportunities or flexible working arrangements (Daverth, Hyde & Cassell, 2016). Thus Irish organisations face a greater challenge to develop effective WLB policies which their employees will find agreeable.

## **1.2 Focus**

Effective WLB is a key issue in terms of EU priorities on how to best implement policy in terms of employee performance and wellbeing (Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley, 2017). While Irish organisations have made progress surrounding the issue, they still remain well behind their European counterparts in terms of WLB. According to the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey 2017 (Government of Ireland, 2017), which had a 56% response rate of 21,365 respondents, 75% of employees are said to highly rate their sense of wellbeing. Employees commented that they generally feel an increased level of support from their organisations. Staff at lower levels however generally responded less positively than their senior colleagues. Thus, while job satisfaction is generally high, factors such as grade can influence this level of satisfaction. It is therefore imperative that organisations have a complete understanding of individual perceptions of WLB in order to see what might influence uptake of these policies.

This research examines WLB specifically in relation to individual perceptions and their effect on an organisation's existing WLB structure within a large government

organisation, specifically the Department of Health (DoH). In doing so, the research will draw upon the work of Leslie et al (2019) and Kristensen and Pederson (2017) in terms of their work in the area of WLB and specifically the importance of employees on an individual level. The latter suggests that WLB systems are designed to complement the process of individuation, the process in which an individual is recognised as distinct from everybody else, and promotes the idea that work and life are interrelated. This research examines the different factors which can alter employees' perceptions of WLB. It also examines whether the diverse group of employees within the DoH, which differ in gender, age, grade, unit and those with or without families. can maintain a healthy relationship with WLB within the organisation across all these variations.

The researcher investigates whether these perceptions and contributing factors influence whether an organisation's WLB policies are in line with employees' needs. This study hopes to contribute to how employers can improve existing WLB practises in order to suit both the individual and the organisation, as well as adding to the growing body of research on the subject.

### **1.3 Structure of paper**

This paper is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one starts with a brief background to the literature in order to provide an overview of the entire study. It indicates the main research issues and seeks to identify gaps in the existing literature.

The literature review in chapter two identifies the existing research on the topic of WLB, as well as theories in relation to WLB which feed into individuals' perceptions

on the subject, as well as existing WLB structures. Chapter three then examines the research question and sub objectives that this study will be based around.

Chapter four outlines the chosen methodology of the researcher, which is that of a qualitative study that has been based around semi structured interviews. The researcher decided to take this approach as these interviews are most suitable in terms of delving deeper into participants' personal views on the subject of WLB.

Chapter five examines the findings by breaking the data collected from interviews into themes and subthemes. Furthermore in chapter six these findings are examined and applied in relation to the literature examined previously.

The seventh chapter concludes the findings of the research in relation to the research questions and objectives outlined and proposes several recommendations with estimated potential costs and a timeframe. A reflective journal on the researcher's experience conducting this project is included in chapter eight.

#### **1.4 Value of research**

This research adds to the lesser amount of existing research on qualitative analysis in the area of WLB, particularly at an individual level. By examining employees' personal views on the subject, this research can contribute towards a framework in which the DoH can examine its existing WLB policies and assess how its employees engage and partake in them. Furthermore, it will give more information on WLB practises which have formed not necessarily from hard-line policy but through informal approaches that have been adopted within the organisation.

This research also provides insight in relation to employees' perceptions of WLB in the public sector, due to similar policies being in place across the civil service. This will also provide general insight into research on the culture and tendencies of Irish work organisations with similar WLB policies.



## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Changing perceptions of WLB**

WLB is a major issues which affects employees from all walks of life, rather than being limited to female employees with children as previously thought (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Gyanchandani (2017) highlights that one of the biggest challenges HR professionals face today is retaining skilled individuals within their organisations because of the challenges presented by striking a balance between professional and non-professional life. With the move away from the single breadwinner household, organisations need to consider updating their WLB policies in order to reflect the modern changing workforce (Leslie et al, 2019). However, organisations can contribute to their employees' sense of individuation due to their WLB policies often setting cultural norms (Kristensen & Pedersen, 2017). Thus there is evidence that WLB policies are in an evolving state that requires further consideration on the part of employers.

The research on previous work life policies has some limitations due to a tendency to consider all WLB policies across organisations as one size fits all. These policies often do not take into account individual employee's work life ideologies (Leslie et al, 2019). These strategies omit many of the basic factors which can influence employees' views towards work life policies in terms of maintaining wellbeing, such as availability of onsite healthcare or gyms (Bourdeau et al, 2019). It is therefore vital to acknowledge employees' individual differences in order to create a successful WLB model (Deery & Jago, 2009).

## **2.2 WLB and technology**

Daily time pressures can upset the harmony between work and life if not spaced out carefully (Brosch & Binnewies, 2018). Face to face communication has diminished due to the impact of technology allowing the majority of office workers to work remotely, to some extent (Ko & Kim, 2018). However a considerable number of negative effects have also arisen. The use of mobile technology has resulted in the barrier between work and personal time being broken down (Gyanchandani, 2017). In addition to the problems faced by families and women in particular, Carlson, Thompson, Crawford, Boswell, and Whitten (2018), found that the spill over of work into personal time due to mobile technology giving greater access to work around the clock has resulted in increased relationship tension, especially for dual working couples. There thus is the argument that technology intrudes on domestic life with work related duties. Support technologies encourage instant responses after business hours. This can spiral out of control if an employee does not have some degree of self-regulation (Gądecki, Jewdokimow & Żadkowska, 2018).

Technology is evolving faster than laws and society can keep up with. Easy access compels people to respond to an email and text instantly due to the fear that if they do not respond immediately it may be harmful career wise (Marcum et al, 2018). Work life ideologies impact this and are tied to the organisations culture as well as the employee's preconceptions (Leslie et al, 2019). Thus the organisation holds considerable sway in controlling how much work can spill over into non-working hours for employees.

The introduction of mobile technology has allowed work to become more flexible but has also endangered the boundaries between work and non-work time, putting a strain

on family and other commitments (Adisa, et al, 2017). Although employees may feel this is a more flexible working initiative, there is always the danger that availability of mobile devices may intrude on what is supposed to be non-work time (Chen & Casterella, 2019). There is also the issue that these mobile technology advancements may promote work family conflict for workers with families due to their greater time commitments (Carlson et al, 2018). More often women in this scenario, who largely act as the primary caregiver of the household, may not have time due to their family commitments to respond to emails outside of hours, which may harm their career advancement (Marcum et al, 2018). Adisa et al (2017), explains that WLB should recognise employees desire to find a healthy harmony, irrespective of their status. It is thus vital that employees have a choice in terms of how workplace technology is used in order to increase and avoid potential discrimination.

### **2.3 The importance of effective WLB strategies**

Kristensen and Pedersen (2017), argue that managing employees on an individual level is not so much about simply integrating or excluding employees work and life duties but rather taking into account how employees individually handle this relationship between work and life. Employees potentially now have access to their work around the clock due to technological advancements (Adisa, Gbadamosi, & Osabutey, 2017). For example, employees can in theory now work remotely in the majority of office jobs at any time. This brings up the issue of not setting limits on workloads, which contribute to burnout due to external pressures (Valcour, 2016). Inaccessible WLB policies can result in employees being hesitant to take them up. Lederer et al (2018), make the point that the presence of large amounts of red tape and

bureaucracy can cause burnout by employees having to perform to rigid standards. This leads to workers over performing beyond their regular duties. Therefore WLB policies need to be accessible in order to be fully effective.

The negative impact of lacking proper WLB structures in a job which causes overworking can result in stress to physical and psychological health, as well as damaging personal relationships (Lederer et al, 2018). WLB is found to have a direct correlation to employee health, absenteeism, headache/eyestrain and fatigue to name but a few (Choi & Kim, 2017). Valcour (2017) comments that it is important to curb work related stressors in order to avoid burnout for not just the employee, but their colleagues and family members. Avgoustaki and Frankort (2019) comment that a fatigued employee may have long term effects as they have less time to recover between working days and thus their overall performance suffers as a result. Furthermore, in Fontinha, Eason and Van Laar (2019), they noticed a trend that there was a correlation between number of additional hours worked per week and the negative elements this has on career satisfaction. Employees with limited career potential may be goaded into working harder for longer, while those with greater potential may be given more flexible opportunities (Avgoustaki & Frankort, 2019).

A healthy work family balance can act as a deterrent against this organisational over commitment (Peng Fan, 2018). Bushardt, Young and Beal (2018) provide insight into those who experience passion for their work usually have stronger sense of WLB, in which individuals are able to engage in their outside work activities successfully while having high levels of on the job satisfaction. This is at odds with a more obsessive overworked pattern, which can often lead to destructive tendencies overriding life outside of work (Bushardt et al, 2018). Thus, it is fair to say, that job satisfaction links

into an employee's perception of there being a healthy WLB structure in an organisation.

Organisations have a duty to build their WLB culture in line with what their employees' values. The Sloan National Workplace Flexibility Initiative examined the competing demands of work and personal life for employees. They highlighted the importance of setting new standards in relation to WLB as modern work practises evolve (Christensen, 2013). In order to do this, employers must consider the different factors and backgrounds which affect different groups of employees in terms of their work and outside commitments.

#### **2.4 Different perceptions of WLB within the organisation**

The differences in individuals, inferred from the existing literature, indicate that future research should focus on whether managers and supervisors view WLB policies in different lights to their employees and the impact this can have on the organisation as a whole (McCarthy, Cleveland, Hunter, Darcy & Grady, 2013). For example, if supervisors go against organisational policy at an individual level, managing their employees in a discriminatory manner, this results in employees losing motivation as well as generally lowering performance levels (Gabler & Hill, 2015). This may result in available WLB opportunities within the organisation being deemed inaccessible by employees due to having inapproachable managers. Organisations must therefore modify their work structures to meet the needs of a diverse workforce (Robbins & Judge, 2017)

The strongest reasons for workplace dissatisfaction, as seen in Matilla-Santander et al's (2019) research, shows excessive working hours, shift work and the inability to influence working hours as major issues of contention. Furthermore, Proost and Verheast (2018) suggest that it remains unclear whether organisations are truly ready to hire applicants who express a strong WLB desire on their CV as it may be interpreted that the job applicant will be less available to the organisation and in turn have a perceived lower work ethic. Recruiters and managers must therefore approach flexible WLB practises with an open mind in order to lead an effective organisation, capable of working with a range of different workers with varying schedules and backgrounds (Bushardt, Young & Bari, 2018). Surprisingly in academic institutes, Fontinha et al (2019) commented that workers who work up to ten hours overtime felt more satisfied and in control over decisions made in work. It is, however, hypothesised that these workers are also in more senior and challenging roles than those who did not work overtime. There is thus a relationship between differing perceptions of correct WLB procedure depending on position within the organisation.

It is imperative that organisations design work life policies that suit the needs of the individual while allowing the organisation to flourish (Daverth et al, 2016). As time progresses, these work life policies need to change and adapt. According to a CIPD report on Flexible Working (CIPD, 2019), flexible working is expected to increase greatly by 2020, decreasing demand for some more traditional flexible working arrangements. Flexitime and working from home are shown as preferable to both men and women over these more traditional flexible working opportunities such as part time work and teleworking (Dizaho, Salleh & Abdullah, 2017).

This results in a competitive element among organisations in order to retain and recruit the best staff. The Family Work Institute promoted this approach by developing an award in which companies could compete in the community to promote best flexible work place practices (Galinsky, Mathos & Sakai-O'Neill, 2013). In doing this they showed that there is value in organisations being both proactive and creative in terms of WLB and increased their opportunities to attract and retain top candidates. Furthermore, organisations which are aware and proactive in providing competing work family demands can help reduce turnover (Braun, de Lara Machado, de Andrade & de Oliveira, 2019, Nyberg, Pertistera, Berharard-Oettel & Leinewebber, 2018).

## **2.5 WLB and family commitments**

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) comment on how experiences from one part of life such as work, have a direct impact on the quality of life in non-work related roles. Workers with families face additional challenges such as work family conflict due to lack of time for family life (Amiruddin, 2019) and workaholic tendencies due to time pressures (Braun et al, 2019). There is concern that workplace expectations may result in unconscious bias against professionals with family commitments by their superiors when considering them for promotion and other benefits (Drago et al, 2006). They therefore can be driven into working harder to combat this (Braun et al, 2019). Furthermore, when employees' significant others also struggles to meet work and family life demands, it may solidify this as an inevitable standard, given that their partner is experiencing similar challenges (Wilson, Baumann, Matta, Ilies, & Kossek 2018). Casper, Bordeaux, Lambert, Eby and Lockwood (2007) comment that very little research on work and family relations has been done due to the lack of diversity

in design choices for research, which has resulted in major generalisations such as the above. In this regard, there is further research to be done which could contribute to a deeper individual understanding on how preconceptions impact WLB structures and workers with families.

It has been shown that employees who display an overly strong commitment to their work activities can be negatively impacted in other areas outside of the workplace. This can create higher levels of work family conflict by work life taking up too much of their time and energy (Braun et al, 2019). Equally so, employees who need to spend more time in work to support their family can create a work family conflict due to the competing interests of work and family in terms of time (Amiruddin, 2019). Hirschi, Shockley and Zacher (2019) comment that work family balance is in a constant competition between employees' duties at work and their home life. Wilson et al's (2018) findings suggest that balance satisfaction is a mechanism with which the positive effects of inter role conflicts can bring about higher satisfaction in work and family life. Thus, even if one partner experiences low levels of work family conflict, if the other has higher levels, it can be equally as destructive.

In order to avoid these work life imbalances it is imperative for organisations to convey the right attitudes towards work for employees. It has been shown that high level executives, for example, who are more psychologically flexible, can better balance their WLB duties and conduct more meaningful relationships with their families while having time for outside commitments (McCormack, Abou-Hamden & Joseph, 2017). Workers with families who have a more rigid approach than this would benefit from suitable organisational policies. Brosch and Binnewies (2018), confirm in their study that daily time pressure can have a negative impact on work life



enrichment by increasing the chances of conflict between work and family life. Employees who have positive work experiences have more energy to engage with their family (Brosch & Binnewies 2018, Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Thus it is essential to consider whether employees with families are benefiting from the organisation's current WLB policies.

Further consequences of work family conflict include the fact that, should employees have an imbalanced WLB pattern, it tends to impact working life in negative ways, such as tardiness, poor job performance and absenteeism (Casper et al, 2007). This shows that work family relationships have a direct correlation with how an employee handles their spare time and will be influenced by their workload and career level responsibilities.

## **2.6 WLB and gender differences**

Female professionals have an excellent set of skills and qualifications but can often opt for a nonlinear career path in favour of more harmonious WLB opportunities due to further obstacles they face in the workplace (Lederer et al, 2018). They face many underlying cases of discrimination with the most notable example being that of pregnant women seeking new roles (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2010). This is despite the evidence that employing a greater number of senior female employees appears to increase overall organisational performance (Osland, 2018).

Employment of women is largely influenced by their stage in life and the nature of their job (Kar, Panda & Pathak, 2019). Numerous studies imply that women are the

group most impacted by the overlap between work and family life (Braun et al, 2019, Marcum et al, 2018). However this is an area that requires further research.

Largely due to family commitments, women with children can often feel pressure to give extra attention to their motherhood role, often affecting their WLB and in turn diminishing their career ambitions (Meeussen & Van Laar, 2018). Societal guilt is examined as pushing some WLB mechanisms such as maternity leave. Women who do not choose their family life over their job commitments can often be judged by society (Smidt, Pétursdóttir, & Einarsdóttir, 2017). This can result in many women choosing careers that emphasise WLB and better compliments their family responsibilities. There are difficulties in achieving this balance nonetheless. Career coaching has been proven to help midlife women in developing a more positive WLB which can empower them in order to combat this (Brown & Yeats, 2018). It is therefore important to find out what influences female employees in using these WLB opportunities which the literature to date is lacking in (Ko & Kim, 2018).

The fact that that there is a growing interest in men pursuing a career which balances both their work and family commitments suggests that companies should offer robust WLB policies to all employees in order to attract and retain staff. Kar et al (2019) indicate through their study that the majority of working women do so to assert meaning and self-worth rather than due to familial obligations. Despite this, and in contrast to male obsessive work patterns, a lack of research has done on female obsessive work patterns in the workplace (Bushhardt et al, 2018). Thus traditional gender roles in the workplace require further examination. This research benefits workers across the spectrum, from younger employees to established older employees,

the former of whom are often delaying settling down with a family until they are established career wise (Powell et al, 2019).

Nonetheless, it appears that there are driving factors which prevent women from working to their full capabilities. Preconceptions appear to play a large role in the opportunities offered to women. For example, the view that only mothers leave the workforce to care for their children may be incorrect, as many female non-mothers are shown to be pushed out of the workforce due to the fear they will have children and be unavailable as Wilhoit (2014) infers. She goes on to suggest that most organisations are built to work around the commitment free man, while providing little variation from this. Thus it remains a concern that female employees WLB may be greater affected in terms of career progression, even should they choose to remain childless.

## **2.7 Workplace flexibility**

Traditional work patterns can often result in competing demands for personal time as previously outlined. Time has been pointed out as being an integral factor when considering WLB, as it defines the individual's availability to complete tasks (Dizaho, et al, 2017). According to an IBEC report on "Key Pay and Workplace Trends" (IBEC, 2017), their research shows that flexible start and finish times are favoured by 62% of companies, while investment in technology which improves communication between staff is in place in 36% of companies.

Shepherd-Banigan, Bell, Basu, Booth-LaForce, and Harris (2016) comment how workplace stress usually comes about from lack of autonomy and negative

psychological demands. Both employers and policy makers must work together to limit work intensity along with work duration (Avgoustaki & Frankort, 2019). Roy (2016), emphasises the importance of segmentation between work and non-work life. The debate is whether these should be kept separate or compartmentalised in order to achieve a more symbiotic relationship.

According to a 2019 CIPD Survey on report Practices in Ireland (CIPD, 2019), over 80% of respondent organisations offered some form of remote or flexible working. However, in reality, 50% of the organisations offered this only on a limited basis. This includes the growing trend of working from home. Benefits of this include lessening the strain on health and financial burdens for employees as well as the obvious flexibility benefits (Dizaho et al, 2017). Shepherd-Bannigan et al (2016) concur that particularly for working women with young children, working from home may help to alleviate depressive symptoms in relation to job stress.

The impact of work demands into family life has still been largely unexamined (Carlson, Thompson & Kacmar, 2019). Hirschi et al, (2019) comment that there is a lack of research also in relation to work-family balance and progressive strategies due to organisations focusing heavily on resources and work demands. Pandolfini (2014) argues that one of the most significant changes in the last decade is the growing number of flexible workers. This could help combat the growing issue of work spill over which can create work family conflict (Carlson et al, 2019). An unbalanced workload results in employees becoming stressed and less effective in terms of both their work and family roles. Gabler and Hill (2015) use the example of sales managers under considerable amounts of pressure, which permeates into negative behaviour when managing their staff due to a lack of control and firefighting in work constantly.

Gunnigle et al (2017) comment that these stresses may impact at a societal level also, resulting in not just family disruption but reduced social and community engagement.

Effective WLB strategies are linked with the ability to offer employees the resources for being able to achieve their work goals as well as offer the advantage of flexibility, which can be used to mould work and family time commitments to their individual needs (Hirschi et al, 2019). Roy (2016) comments on the idea of integration theory which seeks to merge work and outside life in order to achieve a more holistic approach in which each segment can benefit by being in harmony with the other.

## **2.8 The changing nature of employees and their roles**

While many studies on the evolution of WLB balance have been put forward over the last two decades, little consideration has been given to gender differences and systematic inequalities which inhibit some groups from fully accessing WLB structures (Smidt et al, 2017). This can have a major impact on employee expectations within organisations. Smidt et al (2017) defined a key element of WLB as “When organisational structures facilitate substantial time for involvement both at work and at home in a way that seeks to challenge gendered hierarchies in the organisation and society more broadly” (2017, p127).

There can often be a misguided approach that employees should offer total commitment to their organisation, while any commitment to personal lives is seen as a negative in the view of management (Leslie et al, 2019). For example, there is a fear that onsite childcare facilities would distract workers, drop productivity levels and enable greater work life conflict during work hours (Hari, 2017). Furthermore it has

been suggested that women may want to express on their CV that they do not mind working overtime, in order to compete for high level, demanding positions such as director boards (Proost & Verheest, 2018).

This appears to be contrary to the main arms of WLB incentives across European countries recently, which focus heavily on improving parental leave, childcare services and child and family support (Pandolfini, 2014). The lowest prevalence of weak WLB is reported in Scandinavian countries, (Choi & Kim, 2017) which have some of the strongest systems in place in this regard. Among major suggestions are encouraging more fathers to take paternal leave in order to encourage more balance of paid and unpaid work between couples (Adema et al, 2017).

Matilla-Santander et al (2019) describes how the flexible working market has resulted in the breaking down of work boundaries, which can potentially result in longer hours. The changing roles of modern employees has shifted with societal and living standards in the last ten years and requires greater flexibility on the part of employers.

Hari (2017) comments that WLB structures can often be conservatively rigid by promoting a heteronormative, male worker, female caregiver model. Thus men are disincentivised from taking family time while women may be passed over for more full time career expanding roles. Pandolfini (2014) comments that if a gender equal society is truly to be achieved then the latent potential for countries expanding parental leave to both parents must be examined. This could be beneficial for women wishing to break through stereotypes and progress further up the ladder as well as men who wish to take a more family centric role.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

As indicated, a number of factors can change employees' perceptions of WLB. These primarily include, family, gender, technology, job and the changing nature of the modern workplace. Over the past two decades organisations have attempted to integrate and improve work and life for their employees (Crawford, Thompson & Ashforth, 2019). While organisations are slowly adapting to these changes, the information on how employees engage with WLB in all these aspects is still limited and could potentially lead to the existing work life policies not being taken up due to their insufficiency (Bordeau et al 2019). Boundary control is shown to be a major imperative for employees being able to psychologically detach from work and make the most of their personal time and any disruption from work interrupts this (Cole, 2016). The benefits for organisations adhering to a cognisant WLB strategy are plentiful, from increased work attendance to positive health and wellbeing and performance (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2010). Therefore organisations would be at a considerable advantage by gaining a better understanding of their employees WLB desires at an individual level to further understand individuals work life ideologies (Leslie et al, 2019).

### **Chapter 3. Research Question**

Based on the literature reviewed, a key issue surrounding effective WLB strategy appears to be that research is lacking into individual perceptions of WLB. This research aims to explore these concepts through interviewing of employees who are of crucial importance, in order to gauge these perceptions.

While there has been plenty of research into organisations' work life policies, there is little to be found on how WLB operates on an individual level. As stated above, this directly connects to how employees perceive and choose to utilise these structures, thus questioning the effectiveness of existing policies considerably (Kristensen & Pederson, 2017). It is the aim of this research to add to the body of literature by providing qualitative insight into how employees view a specific organisation's WLB practices and the impacts this may have on them. It is the hope of the researcher that this study will contribute to the literature by showing a range of personal perspectives which have a direct impact on the effectiveness of an organisation's WLB policies.

It will therefore be asked: "What are the individual perceptions of Work Life Balance of employees within the Department of Health and what are the implications these perceptions have?"

This question will examine a range of differing views across the organisation by conducting interviews with a diverse group of staff within the DoH in order to give a wide range of perspectives and identify key areas of concern which could lead to implementing more effective WLB policies in future.



In order to gain a more detailed understanding of the differences in employees across the Department, the following objectives will be considered in relation to the research question:

Objective 1: To consider whether employees are satisfied with the WLB opportunities within the Department.

Objective 2: To explore the differences in perception of WLB among a diverse group of staff.

Objective 3: To examine how gender impacts on WLB.

Objective 4: To understand how successfully employees balance their career and outside commitments.

## **Chapter 4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This study used a qualitative approach in order to explore experiences and perspectives related to WLB within a large government department. Semi structured interviews were used in order to explore this topic and establish key themes in relation to the research objectives. The researcher prompted the interviewee with a number of questions in order to ideally establish reoccurring themes and trends across different backgrounds. It was the hope of the researcher that this approach would lend itself well to recording individual responses in order to examine values across the department as a whole. A number of themes were drawn up from this data and the various similarities and differences were cross examined in relation to grades, age and gender in the hopes of finding patterns in people's responses. The Methodology section below outlines how the research will be conducted and how the data gathered will be analysed.

### **4.2 Philosophical approach**

This research takes an interpretivist, epistemological approach with a relativist view. Saunders et al (2016), comment that an interpretivist approach focuses on reality being a social construct, rather than objectively determined. Thus it lends itself well to gaining further insight into individual interpretations of WLB. Kristensen and Pedersen (2017), comment that the contribution of individuation to existing WLB theory remains an important epistemological issue. It therefore lends itself well to qualitative data analysis. Due to the fact that this research is solely focused on employees' perceptions of WLB, it compliments this approach as seeing what the

impact is from a policy perspective for the DoH. Inductive reasoning was used for this research due to the fact that it is strongly suited to understanding the nature of the problem through individual employees' perceptions.

Sullivan (2010) describes epistemology as a branch of philosophy which determines to differentiate knowledge from beliefs. In this respect, this philosophy lends itself well to this research since it is focused on examining employees' beliefs in relation to existing WLB practices. Due to the subjective nature of employees' views, an epistemological approach could better analyse assumptions about knowledge over a more abstract ontological approach (Saunders et al, 2016). It is these beliefs which shape how effective the strategies actually are in terms of how to interpret the knowledge gained from these opinions (Sullivan, 2010).

This research took a relativist approach to how data is interpreted due to it being strongly compatible with qualitative research. Sullivan (2010) refers to relativist social constructions as being tied greatly into the perceptions and understandings of reality. Thus reality is only really understood by the representations we as people give to them and further justifies the subjective nature of this research. As this study concerns individual perceptions of WLB, this approach lends itself well to interpreting peoples' views on the subject. It is the crux of this research that WLB is not constructed by hard-line policy of the Department, but rather how people and the cultures they create have shaped it through their views.

An epistemological approach was chosen over an ontological approach due to ontology focusing largely on the nature of reality and how the structures impact the individual (Saunders et al, 2016). Thus if this study was commencing from a

management perspective it might be useful in terms of why employees may not be utilising WLB policies to their full extent. Epistemology and its concern of assumptions about knowledge lends itself better to delving into individuals personal perceptions, as well as being multidisciplinary (Saunders et al, 2016) thus being able to better analyse a versatile set of individuals.

### **4.3 Research strategy**

For this qualitative study, semi structured interviews were conducted in order to gain extensive individual, personalised responses which would establish clear themes. Clarity around these themes is crucial in order to provide detailed responses and remove potential assumptions (Braun & Clark, 2016). Each question allowed the participant to tease out the various aspects of WLB which they feel particularly strongly about. Often, they would touch on topics which future questions in the interview would bring up. If there was more data to be gleaned from this, the researcher would prompt the participant to expand upon their point in greater detail.

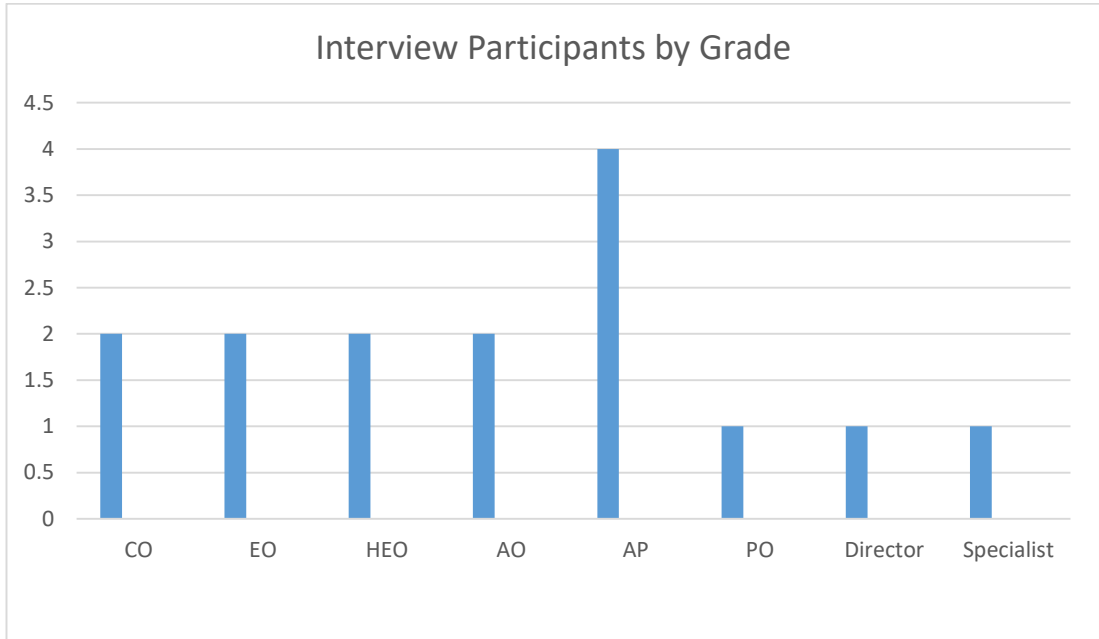
### **4.4 Sample**

Participants in this study were employees of all grades within the Department of Health. A sample of 15 participants was chosen in order to conceptualise the themes within each interview thorough in depth analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2016). This number was chosen from a total of 40 volunteers, representative of 470 full time equivalent employees across the department. The participants ranged in age from 24 to 62 with a mean age of 40. Eight male and seven female participants were chosen to keep an

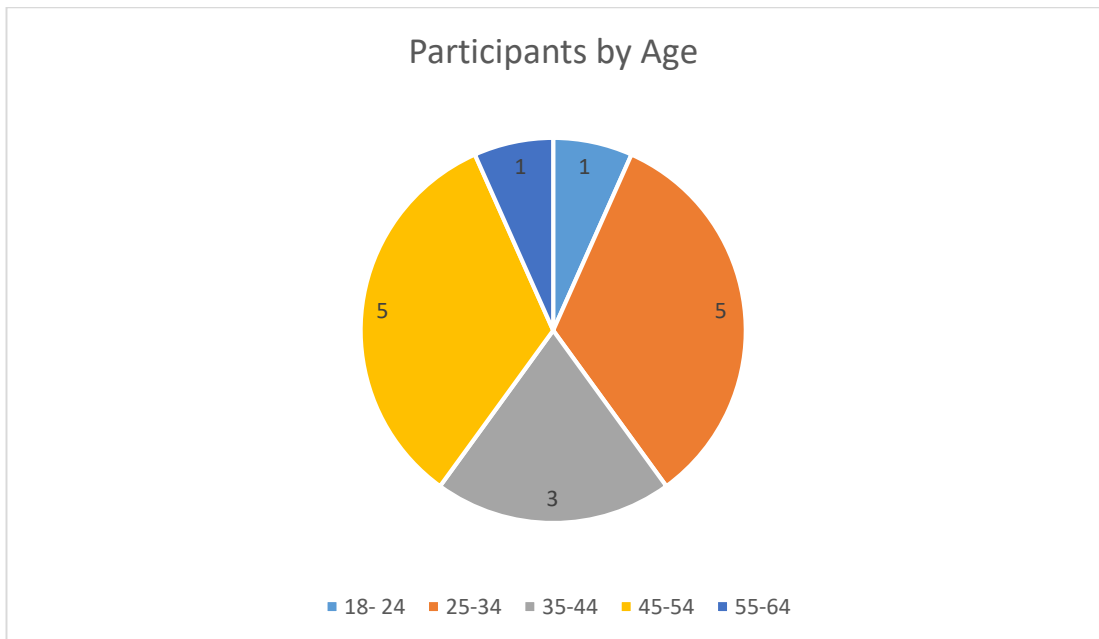
equal balance in terms of gender. Due to the time-consuming nature of these interviews, this study selected to use a convenience sampling technique with the hopes of selecting individuals who best meet the relevant criteria (mix of gender, grades, workers with full families etc.) This is due to the fact that these interviews were time consuming and needed to be adjusted around the work needs of the individual. The researcher received a very high response rate of 40 volunteers, further allowing him to pick and choose a diverse range of candidates from different grades and backgrounds.

All interviews for this topic were conducted between 24 May, 2019 and 14 June, 2019. The interviews took place within the Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, in several different private meeting room that the researcher booked. The time range for these interviews ranged between 25 to 55 minutes with a mean time of 29 minutes. Due to the high response rate for this study from Assistant Principals (APs) within the DoH, along with it being one of the largest grades in the organisation, more members were taken from this grade in order to reflect this. Table one holds a breakdown of all interview participants, by grade within the civil service. Table two indicates a breakdown of employees interviewed by age range.

**Table 1: Interview participants by grade**



**Table 2: Interview participants by age**



#### **4.5 Research Instrument**

A qualitative interview process was chosen as there is evidence that this puts more focus on the individual (Bansal & Agarwal, 2017). This research chose to focus on perspectives rather than quantitative data, in the hope of gauging personal experiences with how effective WLB were in terms of the practices within the DoH.

Semi structured, face to face interviews were conducted in the hopes of allowing for a diverse number of perspectives from participants as seen in other qualitative studies (Bansal & Agarwal, 2017). This is also the most appropriate interview structure as it takes account of individuals' personal experiences in terms of the topics covered in this research (Saunders et al, 2016). The same list of questions was used in each interview to ensure a level of consistency with all respondents, similar to the interview structure utilised by Mazerolle et al (2018), which catered specifically for individualisation of responses. An interview guide was developed in order to ensure consistency in relation to topics as well as across interviews, in order to assist the researcher in conducting the interviews. The order of these questions was however varying and could be guided by the dialogue in order to explore additional relevant topics which arose.

#### **4.6 Data Analysis**

The researcher implemented thematic analysis according to the procedures outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006). They refer to thematic analysis as searching for themes across interviews, focus groups and texts in the hopes of finding repeated patterns.

The research followed Braun and Clarks six step guide to thematic analysis. First the researcher familiarised himself with the data by transcribing the interviews and making note of initial ideas. The data was then coded into a systematic order in which it was organised. These codes were then moulded into themes and subthemes and reviewed to make sure they were in line with the relevant coded data. After detailed analysis, themes were named and further shaped. Finally these themes, along with relevant notable extracts from the interviews, were used to provide detailed analysis of the data which linked back to both the research question, sub objectives and relevant literature. Due to the large and diverse amount of data received from semi structured interviews, thematic analysis lent itself well as a choice in terms of being a systematic and orderly way of organising heavily theory based data rich on descriptions (Saunders et al, 2016).

#### **4.7 Procedures**

Interviews were recorded using audio recorder on two of the researchers' phones. Upon completion of the interviews, audio files were transferred to a secured and encrypted folder on the researcher's personal computer and stored securely in this folder. Recordings were then deleted from the recording devices once these files had been transferred and backed up. The HR division of DoH was made aware of these security procedures and approval was granted to the researcher via email.

Before conducting interviews, the researcher met the participant, briefed them on the procedures, making sure they had read the information sheet and consent forms. When all was in order they then asked the participant to sign the consent form. They then set



up both recording devices and began the interview. These interviews ranged anywhere from 25 to 55 minutes with a mean time of 29 minutes.

#### **4.8 Pilot interview**

Prior to the interviews taking place, the researcher undertook one pilot interview with a colleague within the DoH. This was done in order to make sure the questions listed were sufficient for allowing participants to draw enough information from them as well as any possible ethical offences the questions might pose. It also gave the researcher an idea of how long the average interview would take and to test the recorders used. After the pilot study was undertaken the researcher further refined the interview questions.

#### **4.9 Ethical considerations**

Kind (2010) comments that modern contemporary research ethics have been built around the Helsinki declaration which aspires to protection from harm, individual dignity, privacy, self-determination and confidentiality, upheld together with honesty and integrity. There were several important ethical considerations to touch on in this research. The first is the fact that this study was voluntary, and participants could withdraw their consent. Participants were informed and reminded of these issues verbally, by email and via accompanying information and consent sheets which required their signature. This study used participant numbers in order to protect their identity. Should a participant wish to withdraw from the study, they were free to do so up to two weeks after their interview took place. The Department was also free to

withdraw consent for this study. Every attempt was made to not ask leading questions which would show the researchers personal bias.

In addition to ethical considerations, the researcher also gave due consideration to issues related to data protection. Personal data was stored on the researcher's two phones and immediately transferred to their personal computer in which the file was encrypted. Once the information was transcribed, the audio file was deleted, and the transcripts kept out of the reach of any third party. On completion of the research, the information will be destroyed in line with National College of Ireland's data retention policy.

There was also the issue of collecting data from employees surrounding their employment within the DoH. Participants were informed that this research would be shared with the DoH HR unit for research purposes along with the research board of NCI. Participants were informed that participation would have no impact on their employment and that they would not be identified through the research. A number of direct quotes from interviews have been used in this paper. None of the participants were selected from any at risk groups.

There was also the minimal risk that participants would hit on a distressing topic or experience in the course of these interviews. Participants were thus informed that should they feel any discomfort, they were free to terminate the interview at any stage. The recording would be deleted immediately in that scenario and their consent sheet destroyed.

#### **4.10 Limitations of research**

The limitations of this research included the fact that this study was limited to the DoH and their respective WLB practises. The use of interviews in one department could also result in the possibility of groupthink being a factor, as well as the clear disadvantage of gathering data from a limited number of employees. The use of convenience sampling could also be argued to be a disadvantage in choosing participants in this respect. Thematic analysis may also have its negative aspects as it is often criticised for its overly flexible approach, which can result in an unclear framework in where the research wants to go (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The use of quantitative research could have assisted in gaining the researcher a greater understanding of the general feelings of a greater number of employees on the issue of WLB within the DoH. Furthermore, while similar indicators might be found from other large government departments, it is in no way representative of these organisations as a whole. This applies further to those organisations in the private sector.

## **Chapter 5. Findings**

### **5.1 Thematic Analysis**

This chapter sets out the variety of views from staff interviewed across all grades on how they view WLB within the DoH. This section will look at the results of the interviews conducted with the main question and sub-objectives in mind. This study used a semi structured interview approach, in which participants were asked questions in an order that best followed the individual discussions. The findings from these interviews were then broken down into the following themes and subthemes which will be discussed in relation to staffs perceptions of WLB. The list of questions asked in these interviews can be found in appendix three. It should be noted that this study is just a small number of employees and is not an attempt to explain WLB views as a whole within the DoH. The table below gives a breakdown of the five themes covered and the relevant subthemes that fall within each of them. There is however a certain amount of overlap with these subthemes overall.

**Table 3: Themes and Subthemes**

<b>Themes</b>				
<b>Trust</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Wellbeing</b>	<b>Organisational Status</b>	<b>Time/Flexibility</b>
<b>Sub-Themes</b>				
<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>Internal pressures</b>	<b>Burnout</b>	<b>Career progression</b>	<b>Commuting</b>
<b>Interdependence</b>	<b>Technology</b>	<b>Equality</b>	<b>Drive/Ambition</b>	<b>Response to workload</b>
<b>Informal arrangements</b>	<b>Response to workload</b>	<b>Happiness</b>	<b>Equality</b>	<b>Work patterns</b>
<b>Role of managers</b>	<b>Indispensability</b>	<b>Family commitment</b>	<b>Gender roles</b>	<b>Family time</b>

## **5.2 Theme 1: Wellbeing**

Participants generally spoke favourably about their wellbeing in terms of WLB. They largely noted facing only minor challenges that a lack of WLB is contributing to such as issues around family commitment for example, “not being able to get the kids to soccer practise” or “promising the family I would be home by a certain time”. These views were more commonly expressed in the AP grade and up and were largely male.

Participants were asked to give a definition of WLB and generally emphasised the division between their work life and professional life in order to their happiness. Their answers included “To have clear and defined boundaries” and having enough time to accomplish both of these “Where you’re not overstretched on either side” are but a few of the responses given. Four participants also mentioned they love what they do making it easier to engage in long periods of work.

Ten participants felt that burnout is generally not an issue in terms of employees’ wellbeing. More so they feel that it comes down to the individual, their personality and how much work they take on. “I’ve seen people at their wits end because of some of the workloads around the place..but they would be the vast minority” said participant two. Participant 12 felt it important to note the difference between clinical burnout and over exhaustion “There are times where I feel ‘burnt out’ but I’m really just tired. I go home and get eight hours sleep and realised the next day it wasn’t that serious”.

Participant three commented that having a strong WLB “doesn’t necessarily mean that life will be more important to your employer. You have to come in and do your work and at certain times, you need to be flexible”. This may link in with what participant 11 commented on that employees may commit themselves to more work hours than explicitly stated on paper due their status and drive within the organisation. Participants one and 13 both commented however that “once it hits five and you’re out the door, you can stop. Similarly, participant 13 commented “once you’re out the door, day done”. He also noted the difference in the increased sense of wellbeing from his experience working with a multinational company. Two participants, who previously held non civil service positions, commented that their wellbeing had also

improved greatly due to not having “12 hour shifts” and “not having to work until close to one am”.

### **5.3 Theme 2: Time/Flexibility**

Participant six highlighted, in discussing his own WLB that “One of the factors is literally time”. Flexible working conditions and their advantages were seen as a huge motivator by all participants. Many participants (11) could work on a flexible schedule due being non senior grades. A total of 12 participants expressed a desire to work from home in order to combat heavy commute times and family commitments. However, participant five, a CO, who is a mother of two children, expressed concerns about her time management “I find my work time overtakes my family time. I’m limited to how much time I have with my partner and child and I sometimes feel I’m losing out on aspects of the development of my family”.

A number of participants expressed that there were informal arrangements in place with their manager. This however, was viewed as lacking, as participant 15 stated “You don’t want to keep drawing from the well and using up that favour”. Participants however did not feel there should be an overly formal arrangement in place despite this. They did feel that some “training and guidance” should be given to managers in terms of creating a more homogenous flexible work patterns.

Six participants expressed that the recent change in office location had been a factor that added on to their commuting time. This resulted in their day being extended for “no extra benefit” but “extra stress and time.” Participant 10 noted that working in an open plan office resulted in more work hours for her ”Sometimes I find I’m quite

distracted by the noise going on around me so often I come in a few hours early. I feel I'm putting extra time in because of those inefficient hours" Participant four concurred on these negative implications "the move to this building has added an hour to my day and given me serious pause to whether my future is here when it eats into my family time".

None of the 15 participants expressly said they were dissatisfied with their WLB. Seven participants expressed concern that their WLB could definitely be improved. Senior manager respondents generally were wary of their work pattern growing more intense with increased workload. Participant 10 noted "I am happy with my WLB but I think maybe on my own side I need to make times for things like lunch and making sure I leave on time so time management is a bit of an issue". Likewise participant nine set concerns about "for example if the minister sets a meeting and he's delayed you need to be prepared to stay late...as a rule of thumb that's a concern". She felt that there were flexible work arrangements that were not available at her grade and position within her unit and impacted on her personal time.

Opportunities for families were generally viewed as very good, with participants listing the department as very strong compared to other Irish organisations, but it was "down to the individual" to take up these policies. Participants 10, six, five and eight had childcare commitments which meant they had to be out of the office by a certain time. However, participants five, 10 and 14 all noted that there should be "careful consideration" given to the needs of employees without families in terms of "the perception that if you don't have children, you don't have family commitments".



Interestingly, participants have often said that the lack of WLB is down to themselves. Participant 14 noted that importance of “developing a routine” in terms of his time management in order to be more satisfied with his WLB “It’s not that the higher managers are forcing me..I want to get the results and the idea has come to me outside core hours” said participant five in terms of being compelled to answer work related issues outside office hours.

#### **5.4 Theme 3: Organisational status**

Grade level generally plays a big part in employees’ compulsion to answer queries out of office hours. Out of the nine participants below senior management level, eight felt they could switch off after working hours and had no pressure to answer work queries remotely. As participant four put it, “it’s very self-contained. When I clock out I’m done”. Interestingly, those in senior management generally answered that they did not so much feel compelled to answer queries remotely but more so to keep on top of their work and “not come into any surprises Monday morning”.

Participant nine noted “that APs’ and POs’ do an awful lot of unacknowledged work” and suggested that policies needed to be put in place to protect those on the senior end of the organisation and prevent inequality. However, Participant five noted that the lower grades “didn’t enjoy the same level of discretion” that APs and above enjoy in terms of balancing their work day due to “not having to use the clock in system”.

Six participants agreed equal WLB opportunities extended across all grades while seven disagreed and the remaining two were undecided. A range of answers were given from the “uneven workload between grades” to the “extended opportunities that

senior management are given informally”. Similarly participants were divided on whether sacrifices to WLB needed to be made in order to progress career wise within the DoH. Participant 15, a mother of several children and on a part time work pattern, noted it should be seen as a “strength” in terms of managerial ability to successfully balance work and life when applying for senior promotion. Participant four however cited the gender breakdown in grades highlights the inequality towards women who take up these WLB opportunities more actively “citing 11.7 percent of Secretary Generals are women while 65 percent are CO’s”. Participant 12 commented that he would consider switching to a part time position if he wasn’t the “main breadwinner of the household” and was willing to put his career progression on hold.

Of the seven female participants interviewed, four were women with families. Participant nine, a senior manager, highlighted that while it was generally possible to progress career wise while maintaining her WLB, she felt sacrifices were needed and described maintaining work and family life as “potentially overwhelming”. Participants five, eight and 15 expressed hesitancy about their career progression opportunities due to their work pattern and family commitments. However they highlighted the benefits of flexi at lower grades as a major plus in balancing their commitments. Participant seven, the youngest female participant highlighted one possible difficulty for female employees: “I know I’d feel the pressure to reach the grade I want to maintain it in terms of career stability before starting a family”.

### **5.5 Theme 4: Autonomy**

The use of mobile technology was generally seen as one of the major factors in terms of autonomy and a major concern in terms of individuation, due to what extent the participants managed it. Participants generally felt divided on its use in terms of impeding or improving employee's WLB. Participant 13, the oldest interviewed member, had strong feelings on the use of mobile technology stating "We've lost that bit of privacy in our own time..its crossed a threshold of interference in our personal lives". However several participants highlighted the flexibility that technology had brought. Participant 10 made note of the advantages that teleconferences had made for her in terms of saving on travel time and not eating into their other work commitments but noted that gadgets are "starting to intrude on your personal time". Participant two noted that they "like coming in in the morning knowing there wouldn't be a crisis. So you flick on the email at eight pm and know there isn't going to be anything awful hitting you".

Participant seven highlighted the pros and cons of always on availability that mobile technology has brought "you get no peace because its tied to you at all times, but on the other hand you're not tied to the office so you can go out the day with a phone that may never ring". Participants generally agreed that the higher the grade in the organisation the participant was, the more this was expected in terms of work and time commitments.

Interestingly, seven participants used the term "lucky" with their manager in terms of how much freedom they enjoy in organising their work commitments. They noted that due to the high reliance on informal arrangements, this creates an uncertainty on the

employee where the requests to one manager may be different to another they may be transferred to.

Several participants touched on the idea of indispensability in this Department and the effect it has on individuals WLB and their response to workloads. “Another thing you don’t see in government departments is the single point of failure..What do you bring to the table that’s is so unique? Everything can be done without you. It’s a control issue” said participant 13, while participant five called it a “pride issue”. Likewise the culture that is set in the organisation about people working long hours can have an adverse effect, “Sometimes it could be a bit of peer pressure..you see your colleagues working late on something so I’ll work on something and our positive energy may help each other in doing so” said participant 12, who described this pressure as “internal pressure”. Participant four noted that this pressure was particularly an issue for senior managers “It’s certainly a problem where people work beyond their hours expected on paper”. He noted again that “It came down to the individual”.

## **5.6 Theme 5: Trust**

In explaining the flexibility that many of the informal arrangements that were in place had brought, several participants noted the importance of trust. Participant 14 noted the positive association with employees being trusted in terms of their WLB schedule “Shows the organisation trusts you that you’ll switch on fast when you come back into work”. No one commented that they were generally restricted by their managers in terms of their schedule with participants contrasting with examples of managers who would rigidly control their employee’s day previously. All participants agreed that

they found it important that line managers have a good WLB themselves as well as looking after their employees “As good practise comes from the top down”, furthering independence.

Participants highlighted that a lot of the procedures in place within DoH are sculpted around managers and employees trusting each other to work harmoniously on a local level and emphasised that this is where the crucial elements of WLB come from. The use of informal arrangements was however described as “once in a blue moon” and “quid pro quo”. Managers generally empower their staff largely by catering to situations not covered by hard-line procedure such as “a sick child” or “household emergencies” such as a burst pipe. However several participants noted this was open to abuse. While this current arrangement is generally known among staff, several participants noted problems in terms of accessibility both for “new staff” which participant seven, a new member of staff, commented on, as well as those who change units and managers.

The role of managers thus was highlighted as crucial in developing this informal culture of trust. Participant nine emphasised this by noting that the DoH was a difficult organisation to find any down time for a period during the year “Part of it is local management. Managers have a role to play and need to be mindful of what’s happening. If someone is working up more hours..because of the pressures of work” However six participants noted that there is a disharmony in the workload of managers across the departments in terms of their commitments and drive. Participant seven noted that “some managers are too lax in their workload..while others are taking on more than they should” Participant two highlighted that “There’s a lot of diversity around everyone’s role” in their grade which can result in imbalanced workloads.

Likewise, participant nine highlighted the fact that “other manager’s take on more than they should and are working very hard so their staff can have a little more leeway”. She went on to indicate hardworking managers “would work every hour if they were allowed”. Participant eight highlighted the dangers of employees who do not reciprocate within this relationship of trust “If you have somebody sloping off at four o’clock every day that’s not a good message”. Thus participants generally felt the extreme existed on both ends in terms of overworked and underworked employees. Participant six noted the knock on effect that stressed managers can bring if this interdependence is out of balance “If the PO’s feel that way then the AP’s feel overwhelmed, so it should be very clear than you’re expected to stand up and be counted when you’re needed but that won’t be all the time” in relation to give and take in their workload.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

From analysing the information from these interviews, it appears participants are generally satisfied with their WLB. They did however express a number of areas which could improve this already strong structure. In relation to the researcher sub objectives, participants expressed differing opinions depending on grade, family commitments and age. It appears that senior workers with families are under the most pressure in terms of WLB, however lower level employees generally have a greater reliance on management in order to make their WLB as effective as possible.

## **Chapter 6. Discussion**

### **6.1 Discussion of Themes**

This section will relate the findings of the previous chapter to the literature examined in Chapter two and show how the findings both relate and contrast to this previous research.

### **6.2 Theme 1: Wellbeing**

Participants generally noted that their wellbeing suffered in cases where their work and outside duties were out of balance. Carlson et al (2019) found that the excessive demands of work can spill over into negative outside consequences such as work family conflict. This seems to be reflected among staff as participant five noted that she could use more “headspace” in terms of her family commitments and work. This can result in a behavioural role conflict as expressed by Roy (2016), in which employees have difficulty switching from the professional attitude of the workplace, to the nurturing one of the family environment. Similarly, participant six highlighted that his work duties restricted his family commitments and potentially lowering his happiness. Leslie et al (2019) gives the example of a priority ideology in which employees choose whether work or life is more important. However participants appear to not view this as a choice, as seen with participant four who also wished to have more family time but is limited by financial constraints. Thus it would appear that employees’ wellbeing is suffering because of the high demands of their work and could potentially effect happiness and increase the likelihood of burnout.

The fact that over half of participants mentioned the move to the new office space and how it negatively has affected their WLB is a cause for concern in terms of wellbeing as participants commented that it has added extra “time” and “stress” in terms of commuting. Participants also noted the quick rate that colleagues are leaving through retirement, transfers or new job opportunities as a result. This would appear to echo Leslie et als’ (2019) comments on how individuals process demands between work and outside commitments. This becomes under greater strain with changes to employee work pattern. Participant four commented on overtime becoming the normal “If you treat work outside of your core hours as normal, they (management) will normalise it”. Thus, although participants do not feel burnout is an issue, there may be factors indicating overworking.

The study also found that changing gender roles is a factor which requires more consideration in terms employee’s wellbeing (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). However, it is safe to say that this idea has not been given full consideration. This is evident from the participants of this study, the men, all of whom are employees, apart from one who worked an 80% week. It is evident that the majority of men in the DoH work full time patterns. However as previously stated, one male participant said he was open to possibly going to part time if it was possible financially. As express by participant five, she claimed that due to stresses of work sometimes this would result in family conflict where she had trouble leaving her work stresses at the door. Thus the amount of work employees’ bear appears to be a factor in creating a greater sense of wellbeing in terms of work and outside commitments.



Thus it is imperative for an organisation to establish prerequisites which assist good personal WLB in order to combat employee turnover (Nyberg, et al, 2018) and create equality of opportunity between male and female employees.

### **6.3 Theme 2: Time/Flexibility**

The interviews established a clear demand for greater flexibility in terms how work time can be allocated. Soomro et al (2018) comments that it is up to WLB practices to determine how much time is available between work and family demands. Participant 11 and their comments about not having enough time to do the work they are given appears to reflect Choi and Kim's (2017) comments on working long hours, creating a disharmony in terms of WLB. This results in the negative impact of work spill over echoed in Carlson et al (2019).

Participant 14 highlighted the importance of seeing others working patterns as being indicative of the culture within the organisation and workload responses. Peer behaviour and promotion opportunities influence use of flexible working arrangements (Ko & Kim 2018). Therefore if workers have a tendency to work beyond their standard hours, their colleagues are likely to do the same as confirmed by three participants. Brosch and Binnewies (2018) added that time pressure and psychological climates can result in a norm being created. Furthermore they state that having more tasks than available work time may result in a spill over into personal time. This is reasserted in the interviews in which several participants noted going above and beyond the normal hours as the workload was greater than the hours permitted,

resulting in uncertain work patterns. Participant 11 noted that employee turnover has increased work for her and added to her daily time pressure.

Participant three commented that WLB is only effective when you have enough time in terms of both work and outside commitments. Participant four noted that a particular struggle in this regard was time wasted commuting to external meetings and that this impinged on her time for family centred activities. This seems to echo Hari's (2017) study in which ICT companies tried to perceive themselves as flexible but in reality remained resistant to effective WLB incentives such as working from home, teleconferencing and working outside of core business hours.

#### **6.4 Theme 3: Organisational status**

While management of WLB generally appears to be a lesser issue for participants under AP, due the advantages of flexi time available to them, the research would suggest that senior managers suffer a more imbalanced WLB in order to keep up with the pressures of work and also prove that they are capable and driven enough to be considered for promotion. Participant 12 noted "the higher up you are, the more visible you should be". Thus there is clearly differences in how certain managers and employees experience WLB (McCarthy et al, 2013). Feedback from participants appears to echo this with senior managers noting conflicts with their work schedule, with participant eight expressly highlighting this inequality. These gaps may further need to be considered with the needs of now younger managers starting off in their roles who have a different set of attitudes towards work and life (Bushardt, et al, 2018) as well as greater of women reaching senior positions within the organisation as

emphasised by participant seven. In terms of female participants, it appears they require a greater degree of support in terms of their commitments. Female supervisors and other co-workers have been generally recognised as one of the top support structures due to their shared experiences and goals (Brue, 2018). This appears to solidify the informal relationships that can enable women to progress.

Kar et al's (2019) findings that the key motivations for working women is to establish self-worth and independence rather than familial and financial obligations with three female participants highlighting the passion they have for their job and how this influences their career choices. However, they also appear to face a greater number of obstacles due to the conflicting demands they face as seen in Marcum et al (2018). Participant 15's concern with losing her shared work pattern if promoted due to her family obligations further indicates this. Bushardt et al (2018) comment on obsessive female work patterns which may result in women working harder proves interesting due to the fact that predominantly female participants were noted as taking anything less than full time work patterns.

Bordeau et al (2019) comment that those who avail of a greater amount of WLB policies may often be penalised in the forms of lower wages, less on floor work and less promotion opportunities. However the majority of participants feel that greater use of WLB in DoH does not impact promotion, with even a number of top level staff starting to work part time patterns. However participant three indicated that time needed to be sacrificed somewhere which could result in negative work patterns such as working late or at weekends. Participant six noted that he felt he needed to work beyond the allocated hours in order to be viewed as fully committed to his position.

However the majority of participants commented on how they largely do not feel burnout and overworking is an issue within the Department. In contrast, several senior managers expressed that they regularly work past designated finish time of 5.45pm. Many expressed that this affected their overall productivity (Avgoustaki & Frankort, 2019) but that it was a necessity at the grade.

Participant 12, an AP, highlighted how he made a conscious decision to not take a work mobile phone home with him in order to avoid aggravate this scenario further. Choi and Kim (2017) confirm that these inefficient work practises are often adopted as a result of these heavy workloads. The lack of WLB and over exhaustion thus can leave workers exposed to a drop in productivity as stated by participant. Employees generally noted that burnout was unlikely to happen but participant 14 noted that he imagined “it happens in the higher grades if they don’t have appropriate levels of support”.

#### **6.5 Theme 4: Autonomy**

Adema et al (2017) highlights how flexible working arrangements are a huge factor in employee autonomy due to allowing greater management of work and family life. However, as noted by participants, internal pressures can create a culture in which employees overwork themselves. Valcour (2016) noted both the importance of employees setting limits on their workloads as well as limiting their exposure to workplace stressors. Participants were particularly keen to note that this comes down to staff setting work limits at “an individual level” and highlights the discretion the organisation has given them. The fact that a large proportion of senior staff have

mobile technology which enables them to answer work queries outside of office hours could indicate a negative result of the autonomy given as this is not expressly expected from the organisation. Several participants felt this empowered them to manage their workload. However Valcour (2016) indicates that this choice erodes the boundary between work and life and enables workplace stressors to intrude on personal time. Brough and O’Driscoll (2010) comment on the importance of interrogating organisation WLB strategies. However, it appears to be equally if not more important to examine these more informal workplace practises.

The growing concern of work boundaries being blurred in Kristensen and Pedersen (2017) appears to be a reality for employees who work excessive hours within the DoH. The most common suggestion from participants for how WLB could be improved was to allow for working from home. Participants commented on how this gives great “flexibility” and helps workers “feel empowered”. This appears particularly relevant with the move to the DoH’s new office space in which participants felt they have no control over. It could be argued therefore that workers have a degree of autonomy and are eager for this loss to be replaced. This reflects Brosch and Binnewies (2018) emphasis on the competing demands of work and family life, in which a greater degree of control and flexibility would work towards a more harmonious WLB. Participants noted that they want to prioritise family in terms of autonomy with several participants highlighting that their family duties came before work. This comments appear to show that a masculinist structure could still said to be in place even in a somewhat flexible working environment (Hari, 2017).

Participants expressed largely different views on their autonomy depending on whether they were a lower grade or senior management, each group having unique

opportunities. APs and up have a greater degree of control over their workload and how they manage it, while lower staff have the benefit of flexitime and less stress of responsibilities. This ties in with the growing pressure of indispensability as one progresses. Bushardt et al (2018) confirms this in terms of the challenges that employees face in transitioning to management due to greater work demands and responsibilities. One participant, who recently was promoted to AP, said he was uncertain in this regard due to “a big piece of work coming down the line” which may upset his work pattern. Thus, individuals’ perceptions of autonomy need to be reconfigured in order to successfully maintain WLB for different groups of individuals.

## **6.6 Theme 5: Trust**

The fact that all participants spoke positively about their current managers and their understanding towards their respective WLB needs indicate a strong level of trust. Nyberg et al (2018) indicates that a key issue for managers and turnover is the neglecting of employees personal life needs due to the pressures of work. Hirschi et al, (2019) note the importance of clarifying expectations from stakeholders at all levels in order to improve WLB. Participants appear to be aware of what is expected of them as indicated by the fact that lower level employees can generally leave work on time as previously stated. This is also demonstrated by participants’ managers frequently allowing informal changes to the work pattern. McCarthy et al (2013) note that an organisation must be perceived as supportive of employees in terms of their uptake of WLB both at a policy and managerial level, the latter also echoing Galinsky et als’ (2013) views. Participant eight, a middle manager highlighted the interdependent

nature between herself and her staff in that she trusts her staffs' competence and can thus allow for greater flexibility as required.

Thus while the organisational policies set a foundation for WLB, immediate supervisors appear to have the final say over how much flexibility staff have. Participants used terms such as "give and take" and "drawing from the well" in terms of requesting flexibility in this sense, however several also expressed a reciprocal relationship in wanting to make their managers lives better in terms of their WLB. The fact that all participants generally spoke favourably of their managers would indicate DoH has strong culture of trust among staff at all levels and can act as a deterrent from the danger presented by obsessive work patterns highlighted by Bushardt et al (2018).

Peng Fan (2018) stresses the importance of managers knowing their employees, their values and their work family needs. This largely echoes participant 14s sentiment on managers having "regular check ins "with staff in order to monitor performance and wellbeing. If managers therefore know their individual staff's needs, they are more likely to be successful in keeping them content and creating strong relationships of mutual trust. This is particularly true for staff at lower grades who do not enjoy such a degree of accessibility in terms of certain flexible opportunities as managers may. As participant 12 noted, "why shouldn't these opportunities be open to everyone?"

In contrast to this, several participants mentioned the issue of last minute demands. Commenting on middle managers in her unit, one participant highlight that staff in certain units may be required to travel at a moment's notice. Matilla-Sandander et al (2019) expresses the loss of boundaries with jobs of the modern age which appear to reflect this example. This is in contrast to the greater control over personal time that

flexible working arrangements are known to bring for employees (Dizaho et al, 2017). There can thus be a degree of inequality in employees' flexibility which upsets their WLB and breaks down the relationship of trust both at a managerial and organisational level.



## **Chapter 7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to examine the individual perceptions of employees WLB within the DoH and to identify the potential differences and similarities in order to shed further light on effective WLB practises within this department. It was imperative to get a cross selection of employees from different age ranges, grades and units as well as an equal mix of genders. Data gathered from these interviews showed a wide range of viewpoints. The research question sub objectives sought to identify these differences among the diverse range of participants while also interrogating current WLB practises within the department and as well as how successfully participants managed their WLB as well as their satisfaction levels. These are identified below.

**Objective 1: To consider whether employees are satisfied with the WLB opportunities within the Department.**

Participants generally said they enjoyed high levels of satisfaction in terms of their WLB. This was indicated by the range of flexible work opportunities staff enjoy as well as the high quality of relationships a large amount of staff have with their managers. This creates the opportunity for informal WLB measures which staff can avail of in a limited capacity. Participants noted however, that this sometimes resulted in inequality among certain sections and grades due to its discretionary nature. Among the most desired addition to WLB was the availability of working from home which

would appear to provide a counter measure to the relocation of the new office space which many participants noted as taking away from their WLB.

**Objective 2: To explore the differences in perception of WLB among a diverse group of staff.**

In terms of perceptions, the most obvious differences were noted among senior and non senior grades as well as working women with families and to a lesser extent, fathers with young families. Due to senior and non senior work patterns differing, participants at both levels commented that there are advantages and disadvantages to being at their respective level. This is notably identified with the opportunity for flexi time and the more wide availability of non-full time patterns at HEO, middle management level and below. In contrast, APs and above enjoy a greater degree of autonomy in their workload and have possibly more opportunities for the informal arrangements previously noted but are confined to more restricted hours.

**Objective 3: To examine how gender impacts on WLB.**

The take up of part time work patterns within the DoH is predominantly among female employees as evident from the participants work structures. While these flexible opportunities are available to both men and women, men remain hesitant to take up these patterns and can often assume the role of main breadwinner. Thus it could be argued that these policies need to be incentivised further in order to break this pattern. In contrast, female participants working a part time pattern found it difficult to complete their work in the time available and expressed that promotion opportunities were rarer due to the uncertainty of whether their part time pattern would be allowed

at senior level. Increasing the number of women in senior positions will therefore faces further obstacles at present.

**Objective 4: To understand how successfully employees balance their career and outside commitments.**

Participants generally found the DoH to be an effective organisation in balancing their work and outside commitments, most notably for younger employees without families and older employees approaching retirement. In contrast, mainly middle aged women and men with family commitments expressed the greatest frustration in balancing the two. Male participants with family commitments commented on the stress of work intruding into their family time, specifically time with their young children in the evening due their over consuming work patterns. All these male participants worked full time, while only one expressed a desire to change to part time work. Male employees with families therefore are sacrificing family time in order to progress and because of financial pressures. From this study, it therefore appears that female employees sacrifice work time for family commitments, while male employees sacrifice family commitments for work duties.

From the findings in the literature highlighted, on the importance of individual perception and surrounding WLB theory, as well as the researchers own findings, the importance of acknowledging individual employees perceptions of WLB needs to be taken into account when designing WLB policies and practises. The changing balance of male and female work and family roles highlight this most strongly and organisations would do well to adapt to these societal changes.

## **7.2 Future research**

Future research could conduct similar studies using a quantitative analysis in order to get a wider but less in depth range of employees perceptions. This would allow for a greater diversity in the number of employees examined within an organisation.

Following this research conducted in the DoH, it might be of further use to conduct similar studies within other civil service or public bodies. Furthermore for an even more contrasting study, research could further be conducted in the private sector to examine whether the findings differ greatly from this study.

## **7.3 Recommendations**

Based on the researcher's personal findings, the following recommendations have been made

1. Provide training on flexible work strategies for managers
2. Establish a working from home subgroup within DoH.
3. Conduct further eworking research done through the existing Joint ICT User Liaison Group.

### **1. Provide training on flexible work strategies for managers**

By establishing some training for managers of staff in the department, this can contribute to a more formalised set of procedures on how managers should handle requests for their staff to take flexible work arrangements in order to provide more equal WLB opportunities across the DOH.

**Costs** – The costs of this group would be related to whether the department chooses to have this training done internally or through outside providers. If the latter, Learning and Development Unit can calculate costs through getting in touch with the relevant training organisations it deems appropriate.

**Time Scale** - This implementation can be reviewed on a quarterly basis with a decision to be reached by end of 2021.

## **2. Establish a working from home subgroup within DoH.**

This group would be made up of a versatile range of DoH employees who can give balanced consideration to this greatly desired opportunity. The group could further consider whether it is effective to have a strategy around allowing staff to work from home, how often this could be implemented as well as examining the benefits of e-working. The Subgroup would examine which staff are allowed to work from home, and how effective this would be in implementing, across the Department in terms of its work priorities and staffing.

**Costs** – No external costs would be evident apart from the loss of man hours from staff involved in the process during business hours.

**Time Scale** - The group could meet on a bi monthly basis to discuss its findings and strategies for achieving its goals.

## **3. Conduct further eworking research done through the existing Joint ICT User Liaison Group.**

This recently established group in the DoH could link in with the working from home subgroup in terms of whether employees have the necessary IT equipment at home in

order to carry out their duties. It could also look at the possibility of establishing further telecommunication and video conferencing opportunities in order to cut down on man hours and travel time in terms of meetings and other work demands.

**Costs** - The possible costs for this would include any further IT equipment the DoH would require as well as potentially any equipment employees require remotely or at home.

**Time Scale** - This initiative will be rolled out until the end of 2020 and then further reviewed in terms of its effectiveness.

## **Chapter 8. Personal Learning Statement**

I found the overall process of this study to be challenging but rewarding. One of the main challenges I faced was interpreting such a large amount of data from interviews. In hindsight, either the number of interview participants or the number of interview topics could have been reduced. Of particular note, was the opportunity to speak and get to know fellow colleagues in the Department and gain an insight into their WLB values. I received genuine positive feedback to how the interviews were conducted and employees generally felt engaged in participating in the topic. This made the research all the more rewarding in the fact that this was obviously a subject close to a lot of employee's hearts. Listening to such a diverse range of subjects and establishing recurring themes was very rewarding and highlights the similarities the department employee's value as a whole. The writing up of this dissertation was a huge undertaking and ironically I found my own work life balance being severely diminished, which gave further personal insight into the subject. It is my hope that this undertaking can improve my own WLB in future while helping colleagues to do the same.

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# **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1: Interview information sheet**

### **Work Life Balance: The Impact of Individual Perception. A study within the Department of Health**

#### **Information Sheet**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study, that aims to investigate perceptions and experiences related to work-life balance. Before you decide whether to take part, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information sheet carefully. If anything is not made clear in the document, please do not hesitate to ask further questions. Please take time to decide whether you would like to take part.

#### **Who I am and what this study is about.**

My name is Fiachra Mac Namara and I am a Civil Servant in the Department of Health as well as a final year Masters student in Human Resource Management in National College of Ireland. This research is being carried out as part of my final assessment for my Masters qualification. The aim of this study is to investigate individual experiences and perceptions related to work-life balance measures among staff in the Department of Health.

#### **What will taking part involve?**

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to engage in a one-to-one interview. During this interview, you will be asked a number of questions related to your experiences and opinions about work-life balance and the measures designed to support this within your workplace. This interview will take place in a private meeting room in Miesian Plaza and last approximately an hour. The interview will be audio recorded, to allow me to transcribe and analyse the data. All of the information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

**Why have you been invited to take part?**

I am looking to interview Department of Health employees from across different grades in order to explore the differences and similarities which exist within the organisation.

**Do you have to take part?**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and/or withdraw at any time without any consequence whatsoever. You can also choose to withdraw your data from the study for up to two weeks after the interview has taken place.

**What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?**

Risks to this study are minimal outside of any day to day discomfort a participant may possibly feel by being interviewed. Your decision to take part or otherwise, and the information that you provide during the study will have no impact on your continued employment. Personal data will not be shared with your employer. There are no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. However, your participation can contribute towards a greater understanding of individual WLB perception. The Department of Health has expressed a keen interest in this study and it is my hope that the overall findings of this research may help to inform measures related to work-life balance in the organisation in future.

**Will taking part be confidential?**

Taking part in this research is entirely confidential. All names or identifying information (that could reveal your identity or the identity of others) will be redacted from the interview transcript and the written report of results in my dissertation. When writing up my findings, some quotes from interviews may be included but these will not contain any identifying information. Non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings will be collected and stored as part of this study. All data will be stored securely with access limited to the research team.

**How will information you provide be recorded, stored and protected.**

Signed consent forms will be stored in a secure location. Audio recordings will be collected on an electronic device and will then be transferred to the researcher's private computer where they will be stored in an encrypted folder until after my degree has been conferred. Once audio recordings have been transferred to the researcher's computer and backed up, they will be deleted from the recording device. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. This procedure is in line with National College of Ireland's data retention policy. Under the freedom of information legislation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

This research will be used for submission in the context of my masters and a report of the overall findings may also be shared with the Departments HR unit. Individual participant data will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team.

**Who should you contact for further information?**

You can contact myself on my personal email at [fiachra.r@gmail.com](mailto:fiachra.r@gmail.com) or my work email [fiachra\\_macnamara@health.gov.ie](mailto:fiachra_macnamara@health.gov.ie).

Alternatively, you can contact my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Caoimhe Hannigan, at [Caoimhe.Hannigan@ncirl.ie](mailto:Caoimhe.Hannigan@ncirl.ie)

**Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study!**

## Appendix 2: Interview consent form

### **Work Life Balance: The Impact of Individual Perception. A study within the Department of Health**

#### Consent to take part in research

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequence of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves answering a number of interview questions which will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. The findings will be written up for the researcher's dissertation.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the researcher's final dissertation.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they must report this to the relevant authorities – they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that audio recordings and signed consent forms will be stored securely they will be until the college exam board confirms results of the researcher’s dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a period of two years from the date that the exam board confirm results.
- I understand that under the freedom of information legislation, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Researcher - Fiachra Mac Namara

Supervisor – Dr Caoimhe Hannigan

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Signature of participant

-----  
Date

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

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Signature of researcher

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Date

### **Appendix 3: Interview questions**

#### **Work life Balance: The impact of Individual perception. A study within the Department of Health.**

##### **Work Life Balance Interview Questions**

1. Could you please define what work life balance means in your opinion?
2. How satisfied are you with WLB in your role?
3. Do you think WLB is a major influence your overall job satisfaction?
4. What do you think could be done to reduce employees working excessive hours?
5. Do you think this organisation caters better than most in terms of WLB?  
Why/Why not?
6. Do you feel employees with families are given enough WLB opportunities in this department? How so?
7. Do you feel equal WLB opportunities extend across all grades of this organisation?
8. Do you believe it is possible to have an extensive WLB while climbing the career ladder in this Dept?
9. Do you feel the organisation works around your needs as an employee in terms of your commitments?
10. Are there any challenges you face that lack of WLB is contributing to?
11. Do you feel there is a balance struck between your work and your outside commitments? Why/Why not?
12. Do you feel work load has ever negatively affected your outside commitments?
13. Do you think managers in this Department impede or improve employees WLB needs?
14. Do you think it is important that managers set good examples themselves in terms of WLB?
15. Do you feel burnout is a likely possibility for employees here?



16. Do you think the use of technology in the office has impeded or improved peoples WLB in the office?
17. Do you ever feel compelled to answer work queries remotely/out of office hours if they pop up?
18. Do you think the organisation could offer any further (or improve) WLB measures?