

**Ashley Dooley**

**Master of Arts in Human Resource Management**



**National College of Ireland**

***An Investigation into the Impact of Remote Working on Employee Well-Being within a Telecommunications Organisation in Ireland***

**Submitted to the National College of Ireland**

**August 2021**

## Abstract

Globalisation, Economic factors, , changing demographics and the evolution and advancement of technology has all contributed to the changing nature of work in today's era. As a direct result there we have seen the creation of new forms of flexible working arrangements including "remote working". Remote working has become a relevant topic today due to the onset of the current Covid 19 pandemic. With government advice the current pandemic has seen a large number of white-collar workers remote workers into new territory of remote workers as employers aim to safeguard their employees from contracting the virus and adhere to government guidance.

Current research on the area of remote working impact on well-being is scarce. Questionable also is if prior literature is current as prior to the current Covid-19 pandemic. With an increasing number of those now remote working it provides the ideal opportunity to conduct new and relevant research on the area. A study conducted by Crawford et al, (2011) highlights the gap in the research on remote working and well-being. Within this research the researcher will aim to investigate this gap by collecting and analysing data on remote workers and its implications on well-being from three key perspectives - psychological, social and physical aspect.

A qualitative approach was applied through semi structured interviews to gather data. Twelve participants were interviewed from the HR department of a Telecommunications organisation who all had prior experience working remotely prior to Covid 19 on a part time basis however has become a permanent structure for them since March 2020. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic the research applied semi-structure interviews and allowed for a more in-depth understanding of remote workers experiences in relation to their well-being. Interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams recorded and transcribed. The research for the purpose of this study applied thematic analysis to identify common five common themes.

Conclusion where highlighted drawn on both negative and positive and negative experiences of remote working and impact on well-being. The limitations of this study that interviews were unable to be conducted face to face and within the same organisation due to the current Covid 19 pandemic. Due to the unprecedented times questionable if this study will be reflective of the situation in a couple of years

## Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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

**Name:** Ashley Dooley  
**Student Number:** X15008649  
**Degree for which thesis is submitted:** MA in Human Resource  
Management

**Title of Thesis :** An investigation into the impact of Remote Working on employee Well-Being within a Telecommunications organisation in Ireland

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2021

#### Material submitted for award

- A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself.
- B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.
- C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access repository NORMA.
- D. ***Either*** \*I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.  
***Or*** \*I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

---

*(State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)*

Signature of research Student: Ashley Dooley

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021

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

**Student name:** Ashley Dooley

**Student number:** X15008649

**School:** National College of Ireland

**Course:** MA in HRM

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

**Title of Thesis:** An investigation into the impact of Remote Working on employee Well-Being within a Telecommunications organisation in Ireland

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

**Signature of Candidate:** *Ashley Dooley*

***For completion by the School***

The aforementioned thesis was received by:

Date:

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

## **Acknowledgements**

While this research study has been challenging, it has been a great learning opportunity and would not have been possible without the support, encouragement and guidance of a number of people.

Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor Julius Nyiawung for his support, time and guidance throughout the research process. The completion of this study would not of been possible without your feedback and guidance.

I would like to thank my family especially my parents Patrick and Sandra and brother Philip for their continuous support and encouragement over the past five years of my third level education and at all times.

I would also like to say thank you and a massive appreciation to all the participants in my research study. Without your contribution this research study would not of been possible.

I would also like to thanks my work colleagues for their support especially my manager Stephen Kirwan who has been supportive, understanding and accommodating offering guidance through the whole process and I am really appreciative.

Lastly I would like to thank my thank my classmates for all their support and friendship over the past number of years of my study and during the research process.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Submission of Thesis and Dissertation .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>List of Appendices.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	12
1.2 Research Context .....	12
1.3 Aim of Research .....	13
1.4 Research Question .....	14
1.5 Research Objectives .....	14
1.6 Research Design.....	14
1.7 Research Ethics .....	15
1.8 Outline of the Study .....	15
1.9 Conclusion .....	16
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	17
2.2 Changing nature of work.....	17
2.3 Flexible Working .....	18
2.4 Remote Working.....	20
2.5 Remote working and Well-being .....	21
2.6 Aspects of Well-being.....	22
2.6.1 Benefits of Remote working and well-being .....	23
2.6.2 Challenges of Remote working .....	24
2.7 Previous studies on Remote working and well-being and identified literature gaps.....	27

2.8 Conclusion of the Literature .....	28
<b>Chapter 3 Research Question and Aims of Study.....</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1 Research Question .....	29
3.2 Research Objectives .....	29
<b>Chapter 4 - Methodology.....</b>	<b>31</b>
4.1 Introduction:.....	31
4.2 Research Philosophy .....	31
4.3 Qualitative Vs Quantitative Methods .....	32
4.4 Research Design .....	33
4.5 Sampling Method.....	34
4.5.1 Breakdown of Sample Participants .....	36
4.6 Pilot Study .....	37
4.7 Data Collection.....	37
4.7.1 Interviews.....	38
4.7.2 Interview Schedule.....	39
4.7.3 Interview Procedure:.....	40
4.8 Data Analysis .....	41
4.9 Limitations of Research Design.....	42
4.10 Ethical Consideration .....	42
<b>Chapter 5 Findings.....</b>	<b>44</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	44
5.2 Demographics Description .....	44
5.3 Themes .....	45
5.4 Thematic Analysis .....	46
5.4.1 Theme 1 Communication .....	46
5.4.2 Theme 2: Flexibility /Personal Factors .....	50
5.4.3 Theme 3: Managing Boundaries .....	53
5.4.4 Theme 4: Health and Well -Being.....	56
5.4.5 Theme 5 Work Environment .....	60
5.5 Conclusion .....	62

<b>Chapter 6 Discussion.....</b>	<b>64</b>
6.1 introduction.....	64
6.2 Discussion Theme 1 - Communication .....	65
6.3 Discussion Theme 2 - Flexibility and Personal Factors.....	67
6.4 Discussion Theme 3 Managing Boundaries .....	68
6.5 Discussion Theme 4 Health and Well-Being .....	68
6.6 Discussion Theme 5 – The Work environment .....	69
6.7 Discussion - Objectives of study.....	70
6.7.1 Objective 1: .....	71
6.7.2 Objective 2: .....	71
6.7.3 Objective 3: .....	72
6.7.4 Objective 4: .....	72
6.8 Limitations of Study .....	73
<b>Chapter 7. Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>74</b>
7.1 Conclusion.....	74
7.2 Future Research Recommendations .....	75
7.3 Recommendations .....	76
7.3.1 Recommendation 1 - Communication Improvement & Well-being programmes.....	76
7.3.2 Recommendation : Work Environment Support and Review .....	78
<b>Personal Learning Statement.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Reference List .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>90</b>



## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1.</b>	Description of Sample Gender.....	45
<b>Figure 2.</b>	Diagram illustrating the relationship between research area . The identified f five themes and research objectives .....	46
<b>Figure 3.</b>	Mechanisms and techniques implemented to improve  Communication and social interaction.....	49
<b>Figure 4.</b>	Has Remote Working impacted the ability to switch off.....	55
<b>Figure 5.</b>	The Impact of Remote Working on overall well-being.....	58
<b>Figure 6.</b>	Stress Levels and Remote Work.....	60
<b>Figure 7.</b>	Remote Working Locations.....	62

## **List of Tables**

<b>Table 1.</b>	Breakdown of Participants.....	<b>45</b>
<b>Table 2.</b>	Challenges and Benefits of Remote Working.....	<b>51</b>

## **List of Appendices**

<b>Appendix 1.</b>	Original Email to Participants.....	<b>90</b>
<b>Appendix 2.</b>	Participant Information Form.....	<b>91</b>
<b>Appendix 3.</b>	Consent Form.....	<b>93</b>
<b>Appendix 4.</b>	Interview Questions.....	<b>96</b>

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

The key objective of this research study is to investigate how remote working impacts remote workers' well-being within the telecommunication sector. In this chapter the aim will be to outline the background and provide an understanding of the rationale for the research study. In ensuring ethical considerations, this chapter will outline the primary objective and aims of the research along with identifying a research approach to be applied to conduct this study. The structure of this research study will be identified with an introduction and conclusion to each chapter.

## 1.2 Research Context

Globalisation, changing demographics and economic conditions have been the changing nature of work. Work and its environment have evolved over the past century predominantly since the digital revolution (Popovici and Popovici, 2020). The internet has become the foundation of a new economy characterised by the importance of information technology and globalisation (Klopotek, 2018). Technology has allowed for alternative methods to organise work while also changing the nature of work and bringing in new forms of working (Popovici and Popovici, 2020). These forms of working known as flexible working are being utilised within many organisations (White and Maniam, 2020). This includes a flexible working arrangement termed "Remote working" involving an individual spending the majority of their time performing their contractual duties away from the employer's premises (Crawford, MacCalman and Jackson, 2011).

The Corona virus has triggered a mass retreat of white-collar workers from an office to remote working from home (Jacobs, 2020). According to the Central Statistics Office, Ireland had the fourth highest rate of homeworkers within the EU prior to the pandemic. During the Pandemic the incidence of homeworking has soared (Burke-Kennedy, 2020). While remote working has become more predominant due to the corona virus pandemic with employers

encouraging homeworking as long as required to protect its employees, there is evidence this could be an influencing factor for both future life and work (Dwivedi,2020). Government support for remote working is a clear indicator that remote working is set to continue. Employees will now have the legal right to request their employer allow them to work remotely with clear justification to be provided by the employer if not permitted under the new legislation (Wall.2021).

This Study will investigate remote working and in particular, how this form of working impacts on the well-being of remote workers within the telecommunication sector. Research in the area of remote working and its impact on well-being is scarce especially within the telecommunication sector. Crawford et al, (2011) highlights a gap in the research in which I aim to address. Little is known about remote working in respect of the impact on physical, psychological, or social wellbeing - either positively or negatively. The CIPD outlines that while many organisations have a broad understanding of the potential benefits of remote working on their employee well-being due to the broad understanding, many organisations are not embracing the potential benefits of remote working. It is further highlighted that research is required to close the implementation gap and allow organisations maximise the benefits of remote working (CIPD,2021). The opportunity to conduct additional research and turn it into actionable actions to support organisations and its employees has been provided with the influx of remote working (Carneval and Hatak,2020).

### **1.3 Aim of Research**

The aim of this research study is to establish the impact remote working has on employee well-being in regards to well-being from a, social and physical, phycological aspect.

The primary aim will be to assess the impact remote working has on all on these areas of well-being. As highlighted, there is a scarcity of research in the area of remote working and its impact on well-being. Furthermore with the influx of remote working due to the Corona virus pandemic and the clear indications that it may be here as a permanent working structure this will provide a key opportunity to explore the area. In a lot of the research conducted prior to Covid 19 there is existing gap within the literature for exploration .

## 1.4 Research Question

*“What impact does remote working impact the well-being of remote workers”*

## 1.5 Research Objectives

- To understand the impact of remote working from a Physical perspective on remote workers.
- To understand the impact of remote working from a Psychological perspective on remote workers.
- To understand the impact of remote working from a Social perspective on remote workers.
- To understand the experience of remote workers within the Telecommunications sector.

## 1.6 Research Design

This study will involve a quantitative paradigm to address the research area and further explore the area of wellbeing and what impact remote working has on remote workers wellbeing. Through the application of this approach the researcher will be able to get a clear insight of and explain, explore and gain a clear insight into remote workers' experiences and the direct impact on their well-being. This study will be to investigate remote working within the Telecommunication sector in Ireland. Purposive sampling was chosen by the researcher as participants were carefully chosen from different grades and teams to get an accurate representation. Due to the influx of remote working due to Covid 19 the researcher had easy access to obtain information within their organisation. The primary data was obtained through conducting semi structured interviews on a total of twelve participants all of whom are currently employed within the Telecommunications sector and all of whom are currently remote working on a full time basis since March 2021. Prior to March 2021 all participants were able to work remotely one day a week. To analyse the data provided, the researcher applied thematic analysis which involved coding and categorising into established

themes. The researcher identified five themes to address the aim and objectives of the research.

## **1.7 Research Ethics**

Throughout all stages of this of this study ethical considerations were taken into account in regard to the obtained data, confidentiality and privacy. The data method implemented by the researcher was in the form of interviews. The interviewer ensured that all participants were clearly informed with regard to the participation being voluntary and they were given the choice to terminate the interview at any stage. Moreover all participants were asked to provide consent and were also provided with an information document regarding what the research study entailed. Finally the email inviting the participants to participate was sent 2 weeks in advance of the proposed interview date to provide adequate notice and allow for time for questions to be asked and answered due to sensitive nature of the study. This was deemed by the researcher to be very important.

## **1.8 Outline of the Study**

This study's focus and primary aim is to investigate the impact and experience of remote working on the wellbeing of remote workers in the Telecommunication sector.

**Chapter 1:** This chapter will outline the framework and the rationale and background of study. The aim and the research objectives will be outlined with the chosen research method and ethical considerations

**Chapter 2:** This chapter forms the foundation of the study by examining previous research studies in the area. Highlighted are existing gaps in the literature

**Chapter 3:** The aims and objectives of the research area will be explained and an outline of each objective will be included.

- Chapter 4:** This chapter will clearly outline the research method chosen and the justification for application. This incorporated the implemented design, sample, sample method, data collection, data analysis and limitation of the research of the applied research method and ethical considerations.
- Chapter 5:** This chapter will be focus on the findings obtained. The findings of the study will identify five themes. Each identified theme will be discussed individually. Quotations from the semi -structured interview will be provided.
- Chapter 6:** This chapter cross-examines and compares the findings with the pre-existing literature within the literature review .
- Chapter 7:** This chapter will summarise the key findings and recommendations not only to benefit the employer but also future researchers within the area. Finally this chapter will in draw on researcher’s learning through a statement of personal learning implications and statement of strategic implications.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed and highlighted the rationale for the research study, along with the objectives and aims of the research.

The research design was established within this chapter identifying the researcher’s chosen approach, the sample data and collection and how results will be analysed.

As highlighted the researcher, through each part of the research, will ensure eithical considerations are adhered to with regard to privacy and confidentiality .



# Chapter 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review and provide a comprehensive overview of existing literature by academics in the area of well-being and remote working. Moreover this chapter will discuss how the nature of work has evolved. This chapter will aim to outline what implications remote working has had and how it has implications for employees well-being. The examination, evaluation and critique of previous literature and studies in the area are vital . This chapter will provide an insight into the changing nature of work, remote working and impact on well-being

## 2.2 Changing nature of work

Since the beginning of the industrial revolution in Western Europe the nature of industries have evolved and so have its workers and workplaces. Prior to the Industrial Revolution industry work was predominantly physical in nature . In today's era and with globalisation, there has been a rapid shift, due to the increasing evolvement of information technology (Parthjeet,2018). Similarly Stella and Chinedu ,(2020) highlights that technology advancements have brought radical change and facilitated the evolvement of twenty four hour organisations - closing the boundaries between work and personal life. Moreover, as a direct result MNC are now composed of multi-cultural and ethnic workers. While there has been a radical change in the nature of work so also has the concept of going to work and a modern HR policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century now requiring a holistic approach (Parthjeet,2018).

Organisations rarely remain static and must evolve in response to these technology advancements. The millennial generation have been at the forefront of this evolving technology change and have adapted to the new technology both within their personal and work environment (Stella and Chinedu ,2020).The millennial generation is filling the ranks of this constant changing workforce and it is estimated by the year 2025 they will account for 75% of the workforce. As the baby boomer numbers diminish it is vital for an organisation's financial success to harness these skill sets as HR face the complexity of the pressure to

retain them(Johnson,2020). In comparison Hernandez,(2019) highlights this generation of workforce strive and are focussed around the area of flexibility and work life balance emerging as a key aspect of a healthy work environment.

Melluso et al,(2020) identifies the economic conditions and the onset of the current Covid 19 pandemic having brought unprecedented challenges for organisations globally. The Pandemic has forced organisations to respond and deploy innovative solutions to remain competitive and safeguard itself and their employees in a hyper unstable market . As a direct consequence, organisations have been required to develop capabilities of agility and flexibility (CIPD,2021). The current Covid 19 pandemic has been problematic for HR with management having to promptly venture into the unknown as they aim to assist their workforce to adapt and cope with radical change both in their social and work environment (Carnevale and Hatak,2020).

### **2.3 Flexible Working**

Many organisations have turned their focus to flexible working arrangements as a tool to improve both work life balance and organisational integrity (Avgoustaski and Bessa,2019). The concept of flexible working is regarded as complex to define due to numerous definitions existing across the literature (White and Maniam ,2020). While no universally accepted definitions exist Wiatr,(2019) defines flexible working “as such working conditions which allow employees vary the amount of time or location of their work”. Companies offering flexible working arrangements assist with the attraction and the retention of talent. By offering flexible working arrangements it highlights the organisation’s willingness to adapt to the employee’s needs. Moreover Kotey and Sharma,(2019) identify a gap in the literature with flexible working focussed on mainly larger firms rather than SME . While the provision of flexible working arrangements contribute positively to wellbeing and performance it is questionable if these associations apply to SMEs.

Highlighted across the literature are three main categories of flexible working. These include variations in relation to location time and work tasks. While each arrangement can be utilized individually they are often combined to complement one another (CIPD,2019). Across the literature the various authors highlight that flexible working arrangements are increasing due

to evolution within the environment ,technology and content pressures of globalisation and competition (CIPD,2021 ; Stella and Chinedu ,2020:White and Maniam ; Smith, Patmos and Pitts,2015). As highlighted the environment has experienced dramatic change and the advancements in technology and communication systems have enable employees to work from remote locations (White and Maniam,2020).

According to the CIPD, (2021) there has been a heightened demand for more flexible working arrangements among employees that can be tailored to the their personal needs and requirements. Moreover flexible working has been identified as a hot topic for academics within the modern era as a key elements to improving work life. In contrast White and Maniam,(2020) states that women entering the workforce has been the rationale for the caption of flexible working arrangements since the 1940s . Since the 1940s the number of women entering the workforce in Ireland has increased significantly and the gap of women in the workplace of seeking work has grown considerably. The gap between both women and men at work is now at its lowest Duncan,2013). It is evident from the CSO figures the gap is closing and the number of females entering the workforce is increasing. In 2019 59.3% of the workforce were female. In comparison, the latest CSO statistics 2019 showing 63.7% in 2019 (CS0,2019).

Moreover according to the CIPD,(2021) organisations can benefit through flexible working arrangements with regard to work life balance and increase performance and reduced overhead costs. In addition flexible working arrangements can assist address some of the key people strategies, including talent, gender pay gaps and sustainability. However in contrast De Mendez and Kelliher, (2017) highlights that while studies have examined the correlation between flexible working and performance at a higher level, a specific gap exists within the literature to examine individual performance to a specific type of flexible working.

Across the literature there are numerous flexible working arrangements highlighted - both informal and formal. Informal flexible working arrangements evolve through the negotiation between and employee and their employer. In contrast formal mechanisms of remote working can be through the organisations flexible working policy. While formal flexible working arrangements incorporate -Job sharing, flexible working time, and compressed hours, informal flexible working arrangements include remote working or the flexibility of working hours (CIPD,2021; ,Menzes and Kelliher,2017).

## 2.4 Remote Working

According to Klopotek, (2017) the first reference in a source of literature to the phenomenon of remote working can be found in 1983 by M.H Olson. Remote working is a part of the broader umbrella term of flexible working (Klopotek,2017). Existing across the literature is that remote working can be described using numerous terms including – Teleworking, Remote Working , Agile Working and Working from Home (CIPD,2021 ; Remote working in Ireland,2019). The saturation of within the literature and the clear conscious of what remote working constitutes is problematic. As a result this highlights the fact that it restricts employees to understand what it would mean to request remote working and for an employer understanding what remote working actually entails (Remote working in Ireland ,2019).

Furthermore while the term remote working is somewhat misunderstood and owing itself to a wide range of different working, it has resulted in no one universally accepted definition across the literature Klopotek,(2017).However while no one universally accepted definition exists the European Framework aims to define remote working as “A form of organising and/or performing work using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/relationship where work which could be performed at the employers premises is carried out away from that premises on a regular basis” (European Framework cited in remote working in Ireland ,2019).While conflicting definitions exist across the literature to define remote working, various authors are agreed on what remote working is. Where an employee spends the majority of working time carrying out work for their employer through information technology and telecommunications in a place other than the traditional workplace (Wang, Albert and Sun,2019; Klopotek,2018 ; Crawford et al,2011 ; Sullivan,2003).

According to the remote working in Ireland in Ireland report in Ireland ,(2019 ) remote working is more prevalent within the private sector in comparison to the public sector (Remote working in Ireland,2019). However the onset of Covid 19 has forced organisations to rethink their business models and also rethink how work is carried out (Jacobs,2021). As a direct consequence, overnight white collar workers who spend the majority of their working time inside the physical boundaries of their organisations have had to adjust to remote working environments (Jacobs,2021 ; Carevale, Hatak and Jacobs,2021). The central statistics figures also supports this concept outlining that within Ireland the emergence of the

Covid 19 virus has brought radical change to employment and daily life. Based on the data survey conducted in April 2020 from a total sample size of 2288 respondents 47% of those who had their employment impacted as a result of Covid 19 34% indicated they have commenced working from home . However prior to Covid 19 Ireland had the fourth highest rates of remote working in Europe (CSO,2020). As white collar workers slowly return to their workplaces it is positive that Covid 19 will have long term implications on office life as remote working is due to become a permanent feature of future white collar working (Thomas,2020). Government supports can be seen for remote working and a clear indicator that remote working is here to stay through their effort to legislate to provide employees the right to request remote working as part of the national remote working strategy framework set to continue after the pandemic (RTE,2021).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, also highlighted is the influx of remote working has highlighted divisions among employers who have effective well-being and management policies in place (Jacobs,2020).;

## **2.5 Remote working and Well-being**

Over numerous years employee well-being has been a term widely discussed and recognised across the literature. It remains a highlighted debate due to a clear and concrete definition (Tripathi and Singh,2020 ;Zhang et al,2015 ; Simone,2014). Well-being within the working place is defined as “The quality of employees, Experiences and performance in the workplace” (Simone,2014). In comparison highlighted by Kolakowski et al (2020), employee wellbeing is not the absence of negative emotion, health issues or loneliness while it will be inevitable that employees will suffer from these if they can return to a state of positive social connection, happiness and physical wellness well-being may be preserved. Further emphasised by Shier and Graham,(2010) wellbeing can include the way one assess them self and incorporate areas such as anxiety, satisfaction, emotions and all can be impacted by the work environment (Sheir and Grajam,2010) In comparison the remote working in Ireland report argues well-being at work is the exclusion of negative systems and stress (Remote working in Ireland,2020) . In comparison E well-being incorporates the state and how remote workers manage their well-being and health while working remotely (Grant et al,2013).

## 2.6 Aspects of Well-being

Employee well-being is a broad concept describing the overall quality of how employees experiences and functions while working (Khoreva and Wechlet,2018). Well-being has been described as a multidimensional construct incorporating social, Phycological and physical well-being. The request for the retention of talent has required organisations to focus further than performance outcomes and additionally look at factors of well-being including physical, psychological and social well-being of employees (Tripathi and Singh,2020 ;Khoreva and Wechler,2018 ; Crawford et al ,2011). Well-being has become a heightened topic among academics and numerous literature exist. However a vast majority of the literature is disjointed and unfocussed across numerous fields relating to workplace well-being . While earlier definitions of well-being focussed on physical factors of individuals, most recent explanations combine Physical, mental, Social and emotional factors (Simone,2014).

Psychological well-being (PWB) Looks at the ability to function in the workplace and personal experiences. According to Dagenais-Desmaris and Savoie,(2011) there are two main aspects to PWB the eudaimonic and hedonic approach. The eudaimonic approach considers PWB in terms of self-actualisation meaning optimal functioning. While in contrast the hedonic approach studies PWB in terms of life satisfaction and happiness, the main operationalization of this approach is concerned with indicators negative and positive affect and life satisfaction (Dagenais-Desmaris and Savoie,2011). According to Robertson and Cooper the first model of well-being was created to access phycological well-being within a six dimensional model by Ryffs formed of personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, Positive relations with others , autonomy and mastery (Hoffmann-Burdzinska and Rutkowska,2015). In contrast Dagenais-Desmarai and Savoie,2011 examines PWB through five dimensions – Recognition, Involvement, personal fitness at work. Competence and succeeding at work.

Identified by Grant ,(2013 is a gap existing within the research as to the relation and influence of remote working on remotely based employees' well-being. In comparison according to Nwinyokpug,(2017) previous studies have primarily focussed on office based employees.

As highlighted employee well-being is a broad concept with principal dimensions composed of physical, social and psychological well-being. Physical well-being is in regards to bodily health and functioning, in comparison psychological well-being focuses on functioning at work and subjective experiences (Khoreva and Wechtlet,(2018). According to Grant ,(2017) elements including stress and increased workloads may be incorporated to assess physical well-being going forward . According to the CIPD promoting well-being can prevent stress and create positive working cultures where both organisations and its individuals thrive (CIPD,2021). In comparison Simone, (2015) highlights social well-being involves having positive workplace networks including interactions and long term relationships (Simone,2014). According to Khoreva and Wechlet, (2018) future studies in the area of well-being will investigate the similarities existing between colleagues, employee and organisational support.

Within Maslow's hierarchy of needs developed in the 1940s which still remains valid understanding for human motivation, personal development and management training. These are the components of well-being and all must be achieved to reach self-actualisation and the best an individual can be at the top of the hierarchy. According to Maslow physical needs are highlighted including sleep, food and safety. Also highlighted are psychological needs to reach self-actualisation at the top of the hierarchy such as self-esteem and self-fulfilment. Reference is made to social needs by Maslow -including relationships and feeling of belonging (Kehoe,2013). Accordingly, these basic human needs are pursued daily (McCarty,2011). Research suggests factors affecting well-being include stress work life balance, job satisfaction and workload (Haymann,2010).

### **2.6.1 Benefits of Remote working and well-being**

According to the CSO statistics Ireland ranks the second highest with regard to commuting times in comparison to other EU members (CSO,2020). Remote Working is highlighted by Boland et al,(2020) to provide a better work life balance due to the elimination or reduction in commuting time. Studies across the literature have highlighted that individuals found more productive ways to spend time and enjoy the increased flexibility of remote working and its improvement of work life balance with the majority indicating the preference for remote working in comparison to the office environment due to the elimination of commuting times (Boland,2020 ;CIPD,2020).

Organisations can also benefit from remote working through gaining access to a wider talent pool with the elimination of physical barriers (Dwivedi et al,2002). In Addition remote working can create a more accessible workforce opening up roles to those with caring responsibilities, disabilities and older workers through eliminating barriers for these cohorts (Remote working in Ireland ,2019). A study of 4000 executive and non-executive employees also highlighted the remote working on worklife balance as a key influencer in improving well-being and engagement (Tripathi and Singh,2020).

Moreover, highlighted are the benefits of remote working and increased levels of autonomy with higher levels of productivity with less distractions (Remote working in Ireland,2019). Prior to the pandemic the ideology was that offices played a critical role in productivity, culture and the war on talent. Companies competed for prime urban offices spaces both internationally and in Ireland. Emphasised is that many have been surprised how quickly and effectively videoconferencing, technology and other forms of digital collaboration were adopted and for the most part performance results have been better than they initially thought (Boland et al,2020)l. Furthermore with cities becoming over crowded in Ireland and globally, remote working can eliminate these accommodation pressures and support greener economies (Rao,2020).

## **2.6.2 Challenges of Remote working**

The department of health estimates that one in four individuals in Ireland will experience some form of mental health issue in their lifetime (Dept of Health,2019). According to the remote working in Ireland report,(2019) remote working can have negative implications on mental health including increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression due heightened levels of isolation remote working brings. Similarly Wang et al (2019) states remote working can be associated with increased levels of both physical and Psychological isolation. According to Wang physically isolated employees believe they possess fewer career advantages and are less respected. A study by Debouk,(2020) from the onset off remote working especially those new to remote working have been feeling more anxious with declining mental health. Gigi and Pavithra,(2020) state mental health disorders have major implications on individuals' health and can impose an economic challenge for organisations



in terms of a diminished workforce. Remote working conditions have been attributed to negative consequences on mental health in unprecedented times during Covid due to the lack of communication, social isolation and anxiety and this tends to reflect in their job performance. According to (Haider, Tiwana and Tahir, (2020) mental health conditions are often overlooked in comparison to more physical conditions. Those suffering mental health can experience social disparity and chronic medical issues. Bruce and English,(2020) outline mental health issues have shifted to the domain of the employer over the past decade. Organisations have recognised that supporting employees goes beyond physical medical issues. Additionally in comparison Gigi and Pavithra, (2020) states that organisations should have the belief that their employees are their key asset and their well-being should be looked after if the organisation is to achieve its goals (Gigi and Pavithra,2020).

Although remote working employees tasks and responsibilities remain the same, working virtually fundamentally changes the work environment and the ways employees communicate with the environment and its members. This has triggered the ideology that virtual work with the separation of the office environment leads to employees' sense of belonging and organisational belonging seeming to be jeopardised (Bartel, Wrzesniewski and Wiesenfeld,2012). Haider, Tiwana and Tahie, (2020). According to Smith et al,(2015) remote working has negative implications on well-being including diminished relationships with managers and co-workers. Thomas et al,2020 highlights that remote working can be effective with communities that know each other but it is complex to form bonds with new employee without that social interaction. Without the consistent social interaction to form bonds and trust, the company culture will diminish (Thomas,2020). Social connection is vital for employees' well-being and while internet platforms and applications including Zoom, Teams and Skype allow for social interaction to continue, they are no replacement for face to face in person human communication. Moreover according to Ankit et al, (2020) those suffering from mental health disorders are advised to socialise as part of treatment. However with the current Covid 19 pandemic and almost all countries endorsing the concept of home working, social distancing, isolations and lockdowns to contain the virus, it has many mentally vulnerable to social isolation, anxiety and depression.

From a physical well-being perspective highlighted is the fact that poor work stations and environments have negative implications on shoulder, neck and back pain (Remote working in Ireland,2020). Furthermore remote working has been associated with longer working hours, interference in personal life and work intensification and interference.

Moreover highlighted is the inability to switch off and that remote working individuals are less likely to call in sick (Klopotek,2017). Mudditt,(2020). Highlights the suitability of working environment and the complexity for organisations to adhere to health and safety legislation while employees are working remotely. The Organisation of Working time Act 1997 is a directive concerning the organisation of working conditions, time of employment and safety of workers . This sets out the statutory rights in respect to minimum time, hours and rest periods (Faulkner,2018). According to Klopotek (2017) it is complex for employers to monitor working hours and rest periods while those are working remotely due to the easier accessibility to laptop's and work systems available 24/7 it further closes the gap between work and personal life .

From an organisational perspective highlighted is the area of performance management (Crawford et al, 2011). The influx of remote working during the pandemic according to Hill and Jacobs has highlighted management are ill-equipped for the management of performance and instead are using visibility and presenteeism as a substitute. Employees are therefore judged by face time rather than the work performed (Hill and Jacobs,2020). In contrast Thomas highlights the area of engagement and the complexity in keeping a remote workforce engaged. Engagement does not only influence performance of a business but also employee well-being. When employees are engaged they are productive with lower levels of attrition and absenteeism.

Another challenge imposed by remote working is that since May 2018 under GDPR data protection it has required organisations within the EU to make significant changes to data processes while prior to Covid 19 it predominantly focussed on offices boundaries. However with the current pandemic it has forced organisations to revisit their efforts to ensure that compliance with data protection is achieved (Lueck,2020). Furthermore also highlighted is the increased cyber risk due to remote working and with employees becoming complacent with systems and devices utilised by employees potentially available for others to gain access to confidential organisational client and personal data (Mudditt,2020).

A challenge highlighted by Jacob's (2021) is with regard to a recent survey conducted on 145,000 remote workers globally which found 28% of remote workers struggle to collaborate on creative and innovative ideas while remote working. With home working set to be the

main working place and the office an occasional hub, future management face an increasing issue in regard to innovation and creativity.

## **2.7 Previous studies on Remote working and well-being and identified literature gaps**

According to Carevale and Hatak,2020 prior research on the area of remote working is dated due to the onset of the current Covid 19 pandemic. However with the onset of the current pandemic and the complex challenge that Covid 19 has created with the influx of remote working an ideal opportunity has been provided for management and academics to coordinate current research in the area to produce actionable insights to assist organisations .Furthermore, highlighted across the literature is that well-being is a vital employees experience and can lead to both positive and negative implications for both organisations and employees (Remote working in Ireland,2019) This provides a clear rationale as to why clear and current research on the area must be conducted.

Kotey and Sharma, (2015) additionally identify a gap within the literature on the area of flexible working which is predominantly focussed on larger firms rather than SMEs. The provision of flexible working arrangements is highlighted to assist positive well-being and performance with little research conduction is questionable if these associations apply to SMEs - an area requiring future investigation. Similarly a study by Grant et al highlighted remote workers in five different organisations in three different sector. In addition further studies of remote working and well-being have been conducted among those with administrative roles and self-employed (Hislop et al,2015). This forms the gap in which there is scarce research within the Telecommunications sector on remote working on well-being.

Moreover according to Mednez and Kelleher,(2017) while studies have examined the correlation between flexible working arrangements and performance at a higher level a specific gap exists within the literature to examine performance to a specific flexible working arrangement (De Mendez and Kelliher,2017).

Finally highlighted by Crawford et al,(2011) is the lack of research with regard to remote working and its implication on employees' well-being from a positive or negative standpoint in relation to a Physical , psychological and social perspective. While the threat of Covid 19 will dissipate over time it is evident that organisations will continue to utilize remote working

and lead to the configuration of workplaces over time (Kolakowski et al,2020). Also highlighted by the CIPD,(2021) is the importance for organisations to recognise the impact of remote working on employee well-being.

## **2.8 Conclusion of the Literature**

Within this chapter examined is the concept of both remote working and employee well-being in which no accepted definition exists within the literature and therefore has been broadly defined by numerous academics. It is also apparent that remote working is a hot topic due to the onset of the current Covid 19 pandemic. Also evident across the literature is that remote working and its impact on well-being has both negatives and positives but research in the area remains limited. Moreover due to the current pandemic it is questionable whether prior research is relevant to today's working environment .

Furthermore due to the influx of remote working and the onset of the pandemic and the lack of current research within the area of remote working and employees' well-being there is a requirement to explore this area. Findings conclude that further detail is needed to obtain data in greater detail by obtaining the feelings and experience of remote working in relation to well-being . Therefore the research study will investigate the influence of remote working on three key areas of well-being – Physical, social and Psychological well-being of remote workers

## Chapter 3 Research Question and Aims of Study

It is evident that based on the reviewed literature, there are gaps and uncertainty within the existing research on the impact of remote working and how it impacts on well-being. Furthermore highlighted is the necessity to investigate the area of remote working and impact on well-being due to the influx of remote working in the current Covid 19 pandemic. The purpose of this study will be to investigate and gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of remote workers and how remote working has impacted their wellbeing since engaging in the practice.

The following question from the literature has been identified to be answered within this research study. Through the research it will hopefully provide a clear indication as to how remote workers have had their wellbeing impacted since remote working.

### 3.1 Research Question

*“What impact does remote working impact the well-being of remote workers”*

### 3.2 Research Objectives

- **To understand the impact of remote working from a Physical perspective on remote workers.**

This objective was developed to assess and examine how remote working has impacted the physical wellbeing of remote workers with regard to stress and other aspects of physical health

- **To understand the impact of remote working from a Phycological perspective on remote workers.**

This objective of the research is to investigate how remote working has implicated phycological factors, including work life balance and mental health of remote workers

- **To understand the impact of remote working from a Social perspective on remote workers.**

This objective highlights the gaps within the literature. It also highlights that there is a clear requirement for further research to explore the area and the significant impact remote working has had on influencing social issues, relationships and how organisations can support workers.

- **To understand the experience of remote workers within the Telecommunications sector.**

This objective was to investigate and form an in-depth understanding of remote the experiences of remote workers while engaging in the practice of remote working and the challenges and benefits they have faced as a direct result of remote working.

## **Chapter 4 - Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction:**

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the area of remote working and the impact and influence it has on remote workers and their well-being within the telecommunications sector in Ireland. Within the chapter it will firstly discuss research philosophy and types of research methods available to gather data for this research project. Also discussed will be the research design indicated by the rationale for the type of research approach chosen for the purpose of this study. This chapter will outline the sample and the type of research method selected will be discussed along with the data analysis, procedure and limitation of the research.

### **4.2 Research Philosophy**

The term research philosophy is described by (Saunders, Lewis and Thorntill,2016) as a system of assumptions and beliefs about the development of knowledge directing how the research should be conducted. The research onion outlined by Saunders identifies that there are numerous considerations and factors that must be given and considered prior to participating in research.

Identified across the literature are two main viewpoints of research philosophy. These are Epistemology and Ontology. Epistemology relates to the knowledge and to what constitutes knowledge and the process through which knowledge is created. In contrast, Ontology relates to the study of being, the nature of being and our way of being within the world (Quinlan, et al,2016). Within epistemology there are two key perspectives - Interpretivist and positivism. Positivism is the ideology that social science should mirror as closely as possible those of the natural sciences and may incorporate quantitative research (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight,2010). While in comparison interpretivism is the philosophical stance which allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the differences between humans and objects (Saunders et al,2016)

The theory of Ontology is the nature of social entities (Bryman and Bell,2011). Moreover, ontology is concerned with the nature of existence and unpins that social reality is external and independent of social actors concerned with their existence (Saunders et al,2016).

Due to the overall nature of this research study and the researcher, the researcher must gain an understanding of the individuals experiences within the Telecommunications sector while engaged in remote working. Therefore, the epistemology was the research philosophy selected. Considering the aims and objectives of this study an epistemology approach was chosen. Literature and interpretivism allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the differences among humans and this formed the rationale for selecting an interpretivist perspective as the aim was to obtain and understand the opinions of those engaged in remote working.

### **4.3 Qualitative Vs Quantitative Methods**

When it comes to primary research there are two primary research methods that can be applied i.e. qualitative or quantitative.

According to (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight),2010 qualitative research is empirical research and is where the data is in the form of words and non-numerical and seems to focus on exploring as much detail as possible. The collection of qualitative data as a research strategy is subjective and inductive and situated within a frame of constructivist or interpretivist. Qualitative research accordingly is concerned with the exploration of a topic and with inductively generating hypothesis and theories. The focus on qualitative research is required where a deep understanding is required primarily focussed on understanding interpretations of human experiences (Quinlan,2015). In comparison (Ames, Glenton and Lewis ),2019 also establish that qualitative research is employed when an in-depth understanding of a complex phenomenon is required while also allowing the focus on experiences and perceptions, beliefs and opinions of the research participants taking into consideration other contextual factors (Ames,Glenton and Lewis,2019). Bustetto, Wick and Gumbinger,2020 outline qualitative research as useful particularly where the research question cannot be answered through quantitative methods. The main sources of qualitative data collection include interviews, observations and focus groups.



In contrast quantitative research focusses on the gathering of numerical data that can be coded in numerical form. It is deductive in nature and objective and situated within a framework of positivism (Quinlan et al,2015). Quantitative research measures the relationships between variables utilising statistics or a questionnaire producing numerical data. Outlined in quantitative research is employed where the researcher requires factual hard data compared to qualitative research where the researcher requires a deeper insight when examining the research phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill,2016). Moreover, quantitative research often is applied where to test a particular theory as it employs a deductive approach with the use of statistical analysis to measure variables (Collis and Hussey,2014). Furthermore, while quantitative methods are highly structured employing a large sample size, qualitative research Is unstructured or semi-structured incorporating a small sample size (Rugg and Petre,2007).

Finally, Saunders outlines that research can be employed to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This is known as a mixed approach to research and the integration of the two research methods is termed triangulation (Saunders et al,2014).

#### **4.4 Research Design**

Collis and Hussey,2014 state that while research is central to both academic and business activities, there exists no universally accepted definition within the literature on how it should be defined. However Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill,2016 pg5 aim to define research as “A process the people undertake in a systematic way in order to find out new things, thereby increasing their knowledge” According to Bryman and Bell, 2011 research design is the establishment of a suitable framework for the collection and data analysis. The field of organisational development requires research-based interventions in order to drive organisational effective and required organisational change (Shufutinsky,2020). Moreover, Bussetto and Gumbinger,2020 highlight when selecting a research method, it should aim to align with the highlighted research question to be addressed. The aim of this study is to access the impact of remote working on employee well-being from social, physical, phycological context.

According to Babin et al, 2015 Qualitative research is primarily focussed on understandings, human experiences and interpretations. In contrast and in agreement Collis and Hussey,2014 note that qualitative research allows one to gain a more detailed understanding into a certain issue and is ideally suited when studying views and aspects of individuals .Therefore, to gather data for the purpose of this research study a qualitative approach was chosen to gain the required data in relation to the individual's experiences of remote working and impact on their well-being. While in contrast quantitative research is more where a research question can be addressed applying measurement validity. (Bryman and Bell,2011).

The selection of qualitative research will assist in this and will help the researcher gain an insight into the impact of remote working on employee's well-being. All employees within the sample size, while provided the option to work one day a week remotely, this has become a permanent feature since March 2020. Garcia and Gluesing,2013 provide a key benefit of qualitative research in its ability to provide an insight into new forms of working and how practices are evolving daily.

#### **4.5 Sampling Method**

When it comes to this research study the primary aim is to explain the influence and impact remote working has on employee wellbeing. There are a wide variety of sampling strategies available under two main groups - nonprobability or probability. The approach will be determined on the resources at your disposal and population in question. Non-probability is most preferable when a number of in-depth interviews are carried out in relation to their working experience. The researcher can be content to restrict the research to suitable colleagues or friends (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2010).

Research is mainly conducted on purposive samples and one whose characteristics are defined for the purpose of the research study (Andrade,2021). Purposive sampling is outlined as hand selection of interesting or typical cases (Blaxter et al,2010) Purposive sampling was chosen by the researcher as the researcher is currently employed with the Telecommunications sector of O2 employing over 7000 employees and the subject was of strong interest to the researcher due to a large and wide range of individual available across the HR function who had all had experience of working remotely on a part time basis prior to March 2020 and on a full time basis after that date. Individuals from different teams and

grades, as well and varying in ages in gender were selected to give an accurate representation of the impact of remote working on well-being.

The key benefit of purposive sampling is the sampling is conducted with reference to the goals of the research involved. The units of analysis are picked in terms of criteria that allow the research question to be answered (Bryman and Bell,2011). Similarly, Collis and Hussey,2014 also state that participants are selected by the researcher due to their experience and strength of the phenomenon prior to the commencing the study or by limited availability. Andrade,2021 outlines an additional benefit is that purposive sampling only studies the population of a specific interest and excludes population samples of adverse advents (Andrande,2021) However, one key disadvantage of purposive sampling is its inability to pursue other contacts arising throughout the course of the research (Collis and Hussey,2014).

HR Remote workers within the Telecommunication sector were asked to participate for the purpose of this research as the prominent key subjects for this investigation and due to the aim and investigation of this study. The individuals are all based within the HR department in Dublin across various teams. The rationale for choosing the HR individuals within the Dublin region was that I wanted it to be representative of the HR environment within Dublin. All other departments of the organisation are operating in the UK. If the researcher selected different sectors of the business within the UK it would dilute the integrity of this study who's aim is to access the impact of remote working on employee well-being within the telecommunication sector in Ireland.

According to Jamaludin et al, (2020) since the onset of the corona virus pandemic remote working, especially working from home, has become the most favourable option for employers to operate during the pandemic and even encouraging employees to work from home as long as comfortable and required. Due to propensity of remote working within the researcher's organisation of employment and working within the Telecommunication sector becoming a permanent feature, the researcher did not have any difficulty in finding participants. The sample was comprised of twelve individuals all employed within the Telecommunication sector In Ireland. The sample included 9 females and 3 males between the age of 23 to 38 years. The sample participants were from the various HR functions and different roles to get a full an accurate sample. When the participants were identified, an email to their work email and a copy can be found in the appendix 1. The email was provided to 14 subjects however only twelve expressed an interest and responded to email to

participate in this study. Also contained in the email was an attachment on the purpose of this research referenced in appendix 2. All those who wished to participate responded from work email providing consent in appendix 3. Once they agreed I added a meeting slot for the participants.

#### 4.5.1 Breakdown of Sample Participants

	LL	SK	SD	SOS	MK	JM	NC	NH	SOF	AM	SA	AS
Gender	F	M	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	M
Age	25	30	24	28	23	27	30	29	38	30	28	31
Team	Lifecycle	Lifecycle	Contracts	Lifecycle	Resourcing	Contracts	Resourcing	Contracts	HHS	Contracts	L&D	Resourcing
Position	Advisor	Team Lead	Advisor	Function Specialist	Advisor	Function Specialist	Advisor	Advisor	Head of HR	Advisor	Advisor	Tea Lead
Dependents	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Length of Time Remote working Full Time	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths	1yr 4 mths
Length of time Remote working Part Time	2 Years	5 Years	1 Year	3 Years	2 Years	1.5 Years	1.3 Years	1.2 Years	12 Years	1.5 Years	1 Year	3 Years
Reason for Remote Working	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid	Company Benefit & Covid

*Table 1 Break down of Participants*

## **4.6 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted to determine if the interview questions were suitable and relevant to the research study. The researcher had never used Microsoft teams for the purpose of interviewing and was required to practice and become familiar with the tool. By conducting a pilot study, the researcher was able to define the research questions to ensure the questions allowed scope for discussion and limit repetition.

This was also beneficial as it allowed the researcher to add probing questions and ensure all questions were suitable. This would not have been possible through a quantitative method of research. Moreover, by conducting the pilot study, this allowed the interviewer to build confidence with interviewing it was not something they would do daily. By conducting the pilot study, the interviewer became more confident and learnt new skills on Microsoft Teams for example setting up meetings as well as recording, and transcribing. The pilot study further ensured that the audio, internet and environment was suitable for conducting the interviews.

## **4.7 Data Collection**

The participants were informed they would be allocated an interview time through Microsoft teams outside work hours. The interviews were set up for a time period of 40 minutes on Microsoft teams to allow flexibility or additional time if the interview went over time. When the participants received their invite, they accepted once and agreed the time and date the interview slot would go into their calendar and they would also receive a reminder half an hour prior to the interview. However, as the participants were work colleagues to the researcher there was an additional benefit insofar as the researcher could send a reminder. The data was obtained by conducting 30-minute interviews. The data obtained was primary information and gathered from an original source conducted on remote workers. The interview schedule was established which included a list of open-ended questions with probing questions as can be seen in Appendix 4

### **4.7.1 Interviews**

The research method chosen for the purpose of this study consisted of semi structured interviews. According to Buseto, Wick and Gumbinger,2020 interviews will allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding into the participant's personal circumstances while allowing one to gain an insight into the participant's subjective experience and opinions. Interviews are regarded as the best approach where the research topic involved is formed on a sensitive nature. As the research involves discussing personal experiences and elements of employee well-being an interview was deemed best appropriate for the purpose of this research. Moreover through the use of semi-structured interviews, the open ended questions will encourage the interviewee to discuss what impact remote working has had on their well-being while also allowing additional questions to emerge through the interview due to the open ended and flexibility of questions (Collis and Hussey,2014).

The interviews were conducted within the HR department of O2. In addition, due to the current Corona virus pandemic it was not possible for the researcher to conduct the interviews face -to -face therefore all interviews were conducted after office hours to avoid disruptions during the course of the interview. The interview questions as evident from appendix 5 are all focused on the area of remote working and obtaining data on well-being from a physical, social and psychological perspective from remote working.

## 4.7.2 Interview Schedule

To answer the research question “*What impact does remote working impact the well-being of remote workers*” and to achieve the main objectives in this research study the following questions were formed. The concrete schedule of the interview is evident from appendix 4. The schedule of the interview was divided into the following six sections.

- Demographics of Participants
- Psychological well-being
- Physical well-being
- Social well-being
- Boundary management
- Thoughts and perspective of remote working on their well-being

To achieve the objectives as per above the following questions were developed:

### **Objective 1: To understand the impact of remote working from a Physical perspective on remote workers**

- 1) What would typical remote working day look like for you?
- 2) How have your levels of stress been impacted since remote working?
- 3) What is your remote working environment like?

### **Objective 2: To understand the impact of remote working from a Psychological view on remote workers?**

- 1) How do you feel remote working has impacted your work-life balance?
- 2) What do you feel have been the main challenges of remote working?
- 3) What do you feel have been the main benefits of remote working?
- 4) What is your opinion on the continuation of remote working?
- 5) How do you feel remote working has impacted your ability to switch off ?

### **Objective 3: To understand the impact of remote working from a Physical point of view on remote workers**

- 1) How do you feel your relationship with your work colleagues has been impacted as a result of remote working?
- 2) What platforms and techniques has the organisation implemented as a mechanism to improve relationships and social interaction among teams?
- 3) How do you feel your organisation supports you while remote working?

### **Objective 4: To understand the experience of remote workers within the Telecommunications sector?**

- 1) Where do you predominantly work from while remote working?
- 2) What do you see to be the key difference between the office and your remote working environment?
- 3) Provided the option how many days would you choose to return to office?
- 4) How do you feel remote working has impacted your ability to switch off from work?
- 5) How do you manage the boundaries between your home and work life?
- 6) What advice would you give to someone new or adapting to remote working?

#### **4.7.3 Interview Procedure:**

Once the participants agreed to be interviewed for the purpose of the study, they were provided an allocated slot on Microsoft Teams after work hours. Once a suitable date and time was agreed the details were noted into the Microsoft Teams calendar for both the researcher and participant. The email and information were sent over two weeks in advance as to provide adequate notice and to allow time for the participants to ask any queries they may have. Prior to the interview the interviewer provided a pack to each of the participants containing the information about the research project, consent form and contact details should they have any queries in regards the study prior to the interview.



The interviews were all conducted outside of work hours through Microsoft teams to avoid any distractions in a quiet place away from others to allow confidentiality. All interviews were recorded and last approx. 30 minutes each.

All interviews commenced with a set of opening questions allowing the interviewee to start talking and make them feel at ease. Once the main interview schedule questions were asked the process of moving onto deeper questions and probe by the interviewer in order to get a clearer picture of some questions.

## **4.8 Data Analysis**

According to Quinlan, 2011 the process of qualitative data analysis is the analysing of the gathered data to provide a rich description of the phenomenon in question. Once the semi-structured interviews were conducted the interviews were recorded through Microsoft teams for the purpose of transcribing after. By recording the interviews this allowed each interview to be replayed in order to transcribe the entire interview from start to finish. After each interview was transcribed the researcher commenced analysing each interview and the data within each to familiarise the researcher with data within the study. A grounded theory approach was selected for the purpose of the research study. In a grounded theory approach the research question is likely to be subject to refinement with the process of coding implemented involving three main stages: Open Coding, Axial coding and selective coding. Through the grounded approach your theoretical framework should be established from the data collected and analysed (Saunders et al, 2016).

Thematic Analysis was employed within this research study - a foundational method of qualitative analysis. The essential purpose of the thematic analysis is the identification of common themes across the data set and involved the researcher identifying common themes (Saunders et al, 2016). Moreover, the process of thematic analysis involved the examination of the data through the implementation of these themes (Quinlan et al, 2015). The researcher analysed the data by examining and carefully reading through each of the interview transcripts and taking notes throughout the course of the interview for the purpose of the identification of common themes (Rugg and Petre, 2010). Using a pen and highlighter the interview transcripts were examined at a higher level to code and identify common themes. When an identified common theme was established it was allocated a code. Each common

code was analysed for common themes and patterns to ensure that no primary categories were missed and included within the data. To ensure the validity the results obtained from the thematic analysis and coding was compared.

#### **4.9 Limitations of Research Design**

There are many limitations to qualitative research. The transcribing of the interviews was time consuming. The rationale for not transcribing during the interview is that recording and transcribing after the fact - while more time consuming - ensured nothing was missed.

Another limitation of this study was that interviews were time-consuming to conduct and all participants plus the researcher work full time as well as participants having personal and family commitments (Bryman and Bell,2011). Shufutinsky,2020 criticises qualitative research as the author is the main instrument of the research. The process is regarded to be less systematic and increases the likelihood of bias based on the researchers, knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and values. The researcher was conscious of this and took this into account during interview process and was mindful not to influence the interviewee in any way while answering the questions.

Another limitation of this study was due to Covid all interviews were not able to be conducted face to face and would have allowed for a more personal approach especially due to the nature of the research topic and the discussion of well-being. However, although this research design has limitations, the researcher contends the suitability and strengths of the research was not jeopardised or degraded.

#### **4.10 Ethical Consideration**

Ensuring your research is ethically appropriate is a key aspect of the conduct of well-founded and sound research. The conduct of ethically informed research should be a main priority of all researchers. Outlined by Blaxter et al, 2010 ethical issues most commonly arise in research designs while implementing qualitative methods of data collection. The rationale is due to the close relationships between the researched and researcher.

Firstly, due the research nature and looking into the area of well-being, it was important that all participants were accurately informed as to the nature of the research in advance and fully

informed in regard to its privacy, confidentiality, data protection and sensitivity. In order to ensure this aspect was achieved, all participants were issued in advance, a consent form and information document setting out the privacy and confidentiality of this research. Prior to commencing the interview through Microsoft Teams, the point was emphasised again that the interview process would be confidential and private and only recorded for transcribing the interview afterwards. The participants were advised they could end the process at any point during the interview or if they did not feel comfortable answering a question, indicate and we could move on with the next question.

Another ethical consideration was through the careful design and phrasing of questions throughout the interview. The researcher was careful to eliminate any form of discrimination. The researcher ensured that while conducting the interview, because it was not conducted face to face, the interviewer ensured the interview was carried out away from others, in a quiet place away, from distractions. The option for participants to have their camera turned on was totally voluntary. However, the interviewer kept their camera on to allow a more personal approach.

Finally, the ethical consideration of the storage of the data was taken into account. Because the information is of a sensitive nature, once the information was collected for the purpose of the research study, each participant was advised, both orally and in writing, that the researcher would adhere to the National College of Ireland's Code of Ethics as well as all Data Protection Acts.

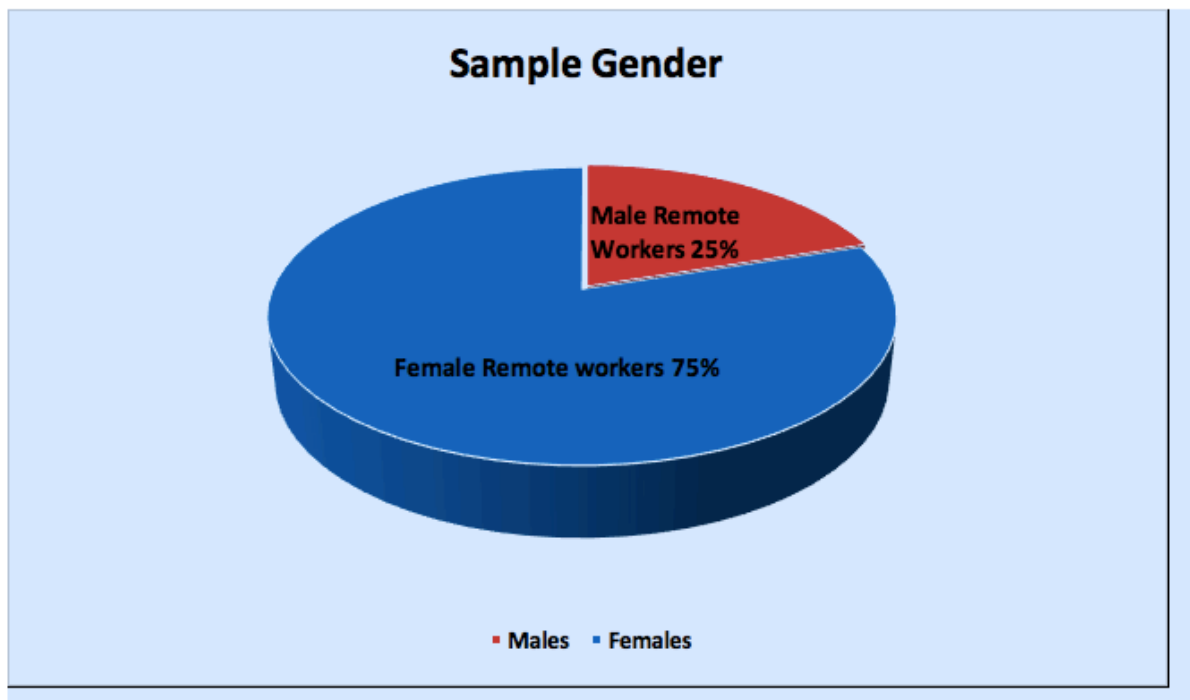
# Chapter 5 Findings

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will involve the analysis of data gathered using primary research. Exploration of themes were established through the process of conducting thematic analysis. To gather the data, as previously highlighted in chapter 4, the process of conducting semi-structured interviews with twelve HR individuals who are employed within the telecommunication sector in Ireland employed by the Telefonica group within the UK which employs over seven thousand employees across the UK. All remote participants for the purpose of this research study have experience in working remotely on a full-time basis since March 2020 which has become a permanent structure. Prior to this, the individuals were provided the opportunity to work remotely one day a week.

## 5.2 Demographics Description

As outlined in chapter 4, to get an accurate representation, I have conducted the interviews within the Telecommunication sector in Ireland. The interviews were conducted within the HR department among various teams all holding different positions and grades from Advisors to the head of HR people services. Moreover, all participants varied in age from 23 to 38. As seen in the table below the sample incorporates a total of 9 females and 3 males. The researcher experienced difficulty in obtaining male workers to participate due to the workforce predominantly being female in the centre.



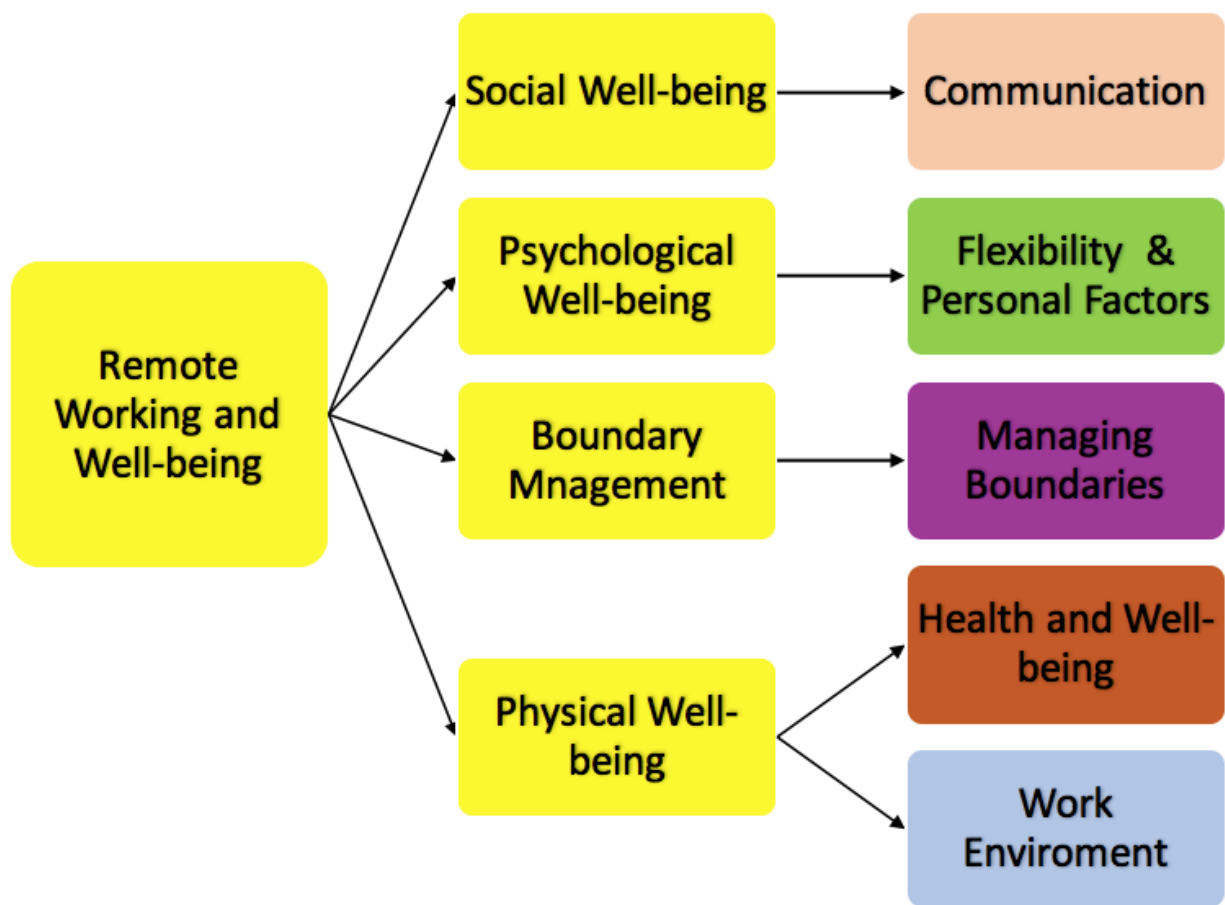
*Figure 1. Description of Sample Gender*

### 5.3 Themes

To analyse the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, the processes of thematic analysis was applied. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for this purpose. Thematic analysis was applied through the highlighting, sorting and coding common themes within the data. Each transcript was individually cautiously reviewed. After it had been reviewed it was then cross referenced against the other transcripts to identify the existing common themes within the obtained data. A level of caution was exerted while coding and initially 14 themes were identified with the research further breaking these down to identify an overlap. Established by the researcher is some themes overlaps that fundamentally could be categorised into one theme.

Each of the themes were reviewed and identified by the researcher who identified 5 key themes

1. **Communication**
2. **Flexibility/ Personal factors**
3. **Boundary Management /Work Environment**
4. **Work Environment**
5. **Health and well-being**



*Figure 2: Diagram illustrating the relationship between research area. The identified five themes and research objectives*

## 5.4 Thematic Analysis

### 5.4.1 Theme 1 Communication

All participants were asked if they felt their relationship with their work colleagues had been impacted as a result of remote working. While all confirm that the implementation of remote working had impacted work relationships, some affirm that while it has not had an impact on relationships within their team, it has impacted their relationships with members from other teams. Participants SK, SOF, and AS who have all direct reports refer to the impact remote working has had in this area. SK makes reference to 121s and the reluctance of those to switch on camera. AS highlights the struggle regarding engagement and the complexity of keeping a remote team engaged. Furthermore, participant SOF states when she reaches out directly, virtually all the individual think they have done something wrong.

Referenced by participant LL *“it was difficult at first as we were so used to seeing each other physically - however it has improved over time”*.

Participant S.K states *“I don’t feel remote working has negatively impacted my relationship with my colleagues as we are still very close and continue to have great relationships. The team I work with and other teams have grown together and worked with each other for a number of years. From a manager perspective 121s can be difficult. They can be reluctant to turn on camera and you cannot have that informal chat “*.

Similarly, participant SD *“I feel we talk more. I didn’t think it would be possible, but we are constantly resorting to WhatsApp and team chats. I think my own team bond is strong. However, with teams I don’t interact with throughout day, I do think remote working has impacted my relationship with them”*.

Emphasised by participant SOS *“I think we still have a strong bond as a team, and I do think the manager relationships are still strong as well and that we all slab the teamwork with a mentally all-together attitude. However, I do find it more difficult with what’s going on in someone’s life if they are having difficulties you don’t want to be asking someone all the time if they are ok “*.

The participant MK states *“I would say there are fewer social aspects as you are not seeing them face to face “*.

Similarly, participant JM *“I would say it is damaged in a way because I never really talk to some colleagues for long periods of time who are not on my initial team “*.

Outlined by participant NC *“I think with my initial team it has become better. I talk to them a lot more. I think with the wider team and other colleagues in the centre it has been negatively impacted “*.

In comparison and also in participants views the participant NC *“I think with my direct team it hasn’t been impacted we have the opportunity to remain very connected. But with other teams I think it has been negatively impacted”*.

Contrasting with the previous participants the participant SOF states ***“With my initial team it hasn’t really been impacted. We have a very good relationship, but I do think with wider teams it has been impacted “.***

In line with previous participants the Participants AM ***“with my direct team it has improved as we are making a conscious effort to link in with each other on a regular basis. With the wider department due to nobody’s fault it has been more difficult”.***

The participant SA states, ***“As a result of remote working I suppose we don’t really communicate unless it is about work”.***

Lastly participant AS ***“Within the team we don’t have the advantage sitting in the same pod in a face to face environment you have to stay on top of keeping the team engaged through emails or a quick call on teams “.***

All participants were asked what platforms the organisation implemented as a mechanism to improve social interaction and relationships while remote working.

As per below the following mechanisms have been implemented to improve social interaction and communication within the organisation. From mystery chats with people across the centre from different teams not work related to keeping the communication line open. Also, Workplace which is a business social media platform, has been fully utilised and contains the FYI about centre updates and health and well -being tips.

Participant SD outlines ***“The monthly random mystery chats are nice it’s nice to get to speak with others from other teams. It’s nice to see others from other teams and see their faces “.***

In comparison Participant JM also highlights the monthly mystery chats ***“I find these sometimes quite forced as they are arranged”.***

The participant SA in contrast also states ***“We do have the have the monthly random mystery chats - they help, but feel a bit forced”***



Furthermore, the participant SK comments on the HR and CEO calls ***“Monthly call updates giving us a flavour into the wider area of HR. Without the pandemic and influx of remote working we would not get that level of access”***.

Similarly, participant SOS states ***“The quarterly calls with the CEO are great and not something we would have been included in before and have been very beneficial for my office “***.



***Figure 3 Mechanisms and Techniques implemented to improve communication and social interaction***

## 5.4.2 Theme 2: Flexibility /Personal Factors

A common existing theme throughout the interviews was the theme flexibility. Especially when it came to work life balance. Out of the twelve participants all have indicated that remote working has had a positive impact on their work-life balance in some form.

Participant L.L outlined *“Since remote working, it has improved my work life balance. With reduced commuting times I have additional time to do activities in the evening and to spend more time with my family”*

Participant S.K Highlights *“It has definitely impacted it for the better. As I mentioned I have a young family. While I was not a million miles away from the office I am saving 2 hours a day commuting. It has been positive. I can finish work and head off training. So yes it’s definitely been positive for me”.*

Participant S.D states in a similar manner *“It has overall improved because when I was working in the office it would take me a half an hour to walk home. Now when I finish at 5, I am straight away able to make dinner or do other activities. Therefore, it has allowed additional time for myself and I am enjoying the work life balance”.*

Emphasised by participant SOS *“it has no doubt improved. I think everyone would agree whether you are getting the bus, train or driving you have gained back time by not commuting everyday which is fantastic. However, I do miss the spontaneous work side of things that might happen outside of work.*

Participant MK States *“You get a later rise in the morning so I would say yes it has definitely improved “*

Participant JM also in agreement *“I think really improved as I do not have that commute to work. You are not sitting in traffic in the morning you are finished at 5pm and you are home “*

In contrast Participant NH highlighted *“I get more time to exercise while I am not a workout person, I get more time to go for a walk after work as I have parks quite close to me. If I*

*was going to the office, I would not arrive home until 6pm. Working remotely you get more time to enjoy things you wouldn't normally”.*

Participant SOF similarly *“Since remote working there is definitely extra hours I have back. I was also just discussing with a friend how it is great you log off at 5pm and two minutes past your home so yes, I would definitely say it provided a better work life balance*

Participant AM *Outlines “it has definitely contributed positively to my work life balance. Like even going home to Galway I can midweek and have a change of scenery”.*

Participant AS identifies **“improved work life balance as I do not have the commute in and out of town to the office everyday “**

In regards personal factors all participants from the twelve interviews were asked about the challenges and benefits of home working. The results can be seen from the table below.

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
IT issues easier resolved in office	Saving Money
Depending on good WIFI and Technology.	Saving Time
Face to face interaction informal chats	Eating Healthy Access to full Kitchen
Lack of space for a Home office	No commute to work
Equipment such as Desk not provided	More Sleep less tired
Networking more difficult	Improved Work life balance
Training new team members or cross Training	More time for family and improved bonds
Isolation and loneliness	More productive less distractions
Engagement more problematic	Increased Flexibility
Extrovert personality type need to be around others.	Less Stressed
Harder to Disconnect	

***Table 2 Challenges and Benefits of remote working by participants***

All participants were asked their opinion on the continuation of remote working. While the consensus is that the majority are enjoying working from home most are in favour of a blended approach with 5 out of the 12 participants indicating their preference for a blended approach. In contrast 3 of the 12 participants wished to return to the office. Their rationale for this their remote working environment is not currently suitable. In addition, participant MK highlights the practicality of the location of the office in the city. 4 of the twelve participants indicated they don't wish to return to the office as they are as productive at home or remote working suits their lifestyle and the flexibility remote working brings.

Participant LL outlines **"I am enjoying remote working and the flexibility it brings"**

Participant SK similarly ***"I would be happy enough to continue to work remotely full time and continue to work from home"***.

SOS states ***"While I think it's a great option to have the flexibility is fantastic, I don't think working remotely permanently is ideal for people looking to network and get established in industry. Ideally I wouldn't mind working from home 2-3 days a week"***.

In contrast Participant MK ***"The office is a bit missed. Working in an office environment, especially in the city centre, allows you to when you leave work go and do an activity in town"***.

Highlighted by participant JM ***"I would ideally like a blended approach of a couple of days in office"***.

Participant NC ***"for me personally I am happy with it definitely suits my lifestyle and provides a better work life balance"***.

Similarly, participant NH **"I was already use to it and would like to continue remote working"**.

Participant SOF also explains **" I really like it and people whom I have spoken with like it also for a whole range of reasons"**.

Moreover, participant AM *“I like it at the minute, but I would like to get back 2-3 days a week from the office “.*

Emphasised by participant AS *“ I think it’s one of those things where I would be happy with the balance between the two “*

In contrast participant SA *“I don’t think it should happen I don’t think it is normal for someone to sit the whole day by themselves “.*

### **5.4.3 Theme 3: Managing Boundaries**

Participants were asked how remote working impacted their ability to be able to switch off. There was divide when it came to the ability to be able to switch off from work with half of the participants indicating remote working had a negative impact on their ability to switch off, while the other half expressed a view that remote working had not negatively impacted their ability to switch off. From those indicating that remote working had negatively impacted their ability to switch off the lack of physical boundaries between the home and the office environment and easy accessibility to the laptop played key factor. In contrast, for those who stated that remote working had not impacted their ability to switch off - this appears to be due to the establishment of an effective routine and management guidance.

Participant LL highlighted the point *“When you leave the office it is easier to separate work and home. Particularly if you had a tough day it is harder to switch off from work in the evenings. I think because you are working from home, then trying to relax at home there is a fine line. Also, with working from home, it is easier to lose track of time”.*

Participant SK outlines *“Yes it has definitely made it harder to switch off. When you’re working from your bedroom like me and the laptop is the last thing you see before bed and first thing when you wake up, it definitely makes it harder “*

Similarly, like Participant LL participant MK referenced the lack of physical boundaries *“Your office is in the same house 24/7 it is hard to close the office door and not go back into the office because there is no physical break in the building”*

In a similar manner Participant NC *“It has definitely impacted my ability to switch off. As I now have the laptop at hand I have definitely logged into the computer at the weekend”*.

Furthermore, Participant NH states *“Yes this has been a challenge as my team works on the phone all the time and has a specific ringtone. Just hearing the ringtone in your home can be a little overwhelming and challenging in a way”*.

In line with the above participants participant AS *“it can be difficult at times while I may step away for five minutes, I often find myself coming back to check an email response or if another recruitment escalation has come through”*.

In contrast participant SOS rationale for being able to switch off *“I think I do not have a problem switching off. I make it my business to switch off. You wouldn’t normally be bringing the laptop home and logging in after-hours, so it is important not to get into that habit”*.

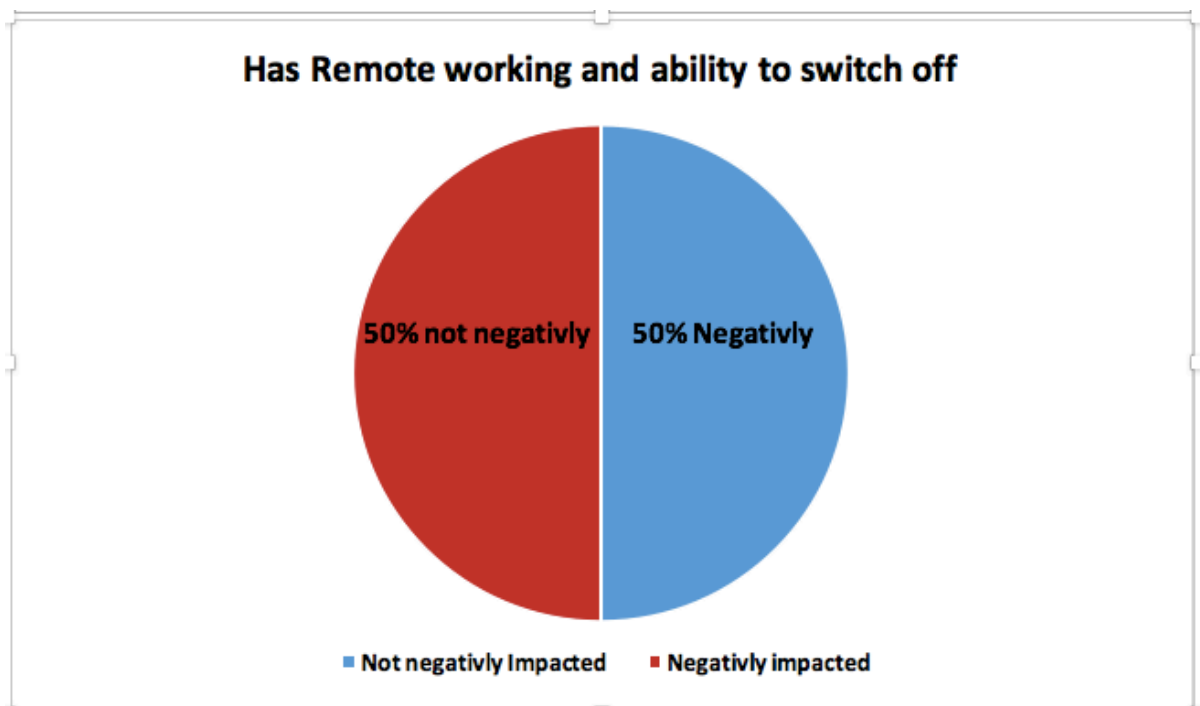
Furthermore, Participant SOF *“it took a lot of practice and mindfulness. I have a storage basket in the corner. When I am finished I switch off, I clean down my laptop and everything so it’s back to being out dining table”*

Similarly, participant AM *“No I I don’t think it has to be fair. I ensure to switch down the computer. I don’t go near my little space until the next morning”*

Moreover. Participant SD *“I am quite adamant once it is 5pm it is time to close the laptop I think it is down to that I also live with others and they need to be able to get on with their evenings”*

Emphasised by participant SA *“I don’t know about others but I definitely do not think about work once finished. I have trained myself. It would also not allow me or make me work past 5pm”*.

Finally, participant JK *“Personally for me it is grand. I just finish at 5pm close the laptop. I would not be expected to stay late and try and get emails answered”*.



***Figure 4 - Has remote working impacted the ability to switch off?***

When it comes to managing boundaries between work and the home environment all participants had different methods of managing the boundaries between their home and their work environment. Three participants outlined they had a home office in a spare room and have the ability to close the door, while others outlined, they have family responsibilities that ensure they have to manage these boundaries. Moreover, another participant outlines the effectiveness of deleting teams from phone while on annual leave as a mechanism of managing boundaries. Finally, a participant highlights the struggle of a balancing act of where work life ends, and personal life begins.

Participant SK outlines *“I feel having a four-year-old makes it a little easier for me. When I am with him no laptop or phone and we take it from there “*

Participant SD Explains *“I always ensure to switch off my laptop and shut down my laptop screen. While I used to have my own laptop for my purposes at my work desk before remote working on a permanent basis at that desk, now I find myself not sitting there and once I don’t sit at that desk, I don’t associate it with work”.*

Participant SOS states *“I will turn off teams on my phone on the weekend or whilst on annual leave and not turn on the laptop past 5pm”*.

Participant JM highlights *“as mentioned I have my own office area, so I just close the office door and ensure to finish at 5pm “*.

Similarly, participant NC outlines *“I can distance myself as the laptop is in the spare room/office and I can close the door and not have it staring at me “*.

Highlighted by Participant NH *“I think the way we work we have very set starting and finishing times, so we don’t or are not expected to work overtime”*.

Similarly, Participant AM *“I ensure I switch down the computer and I don’t go near my office space until the next day”*

Finally, Participant AS outlines *“I try not bring my laptop outside my office, so I do feel it’s difficult and do find myself trying to limit myself in what I do work wise. However, when in the office, I would have gone to the gym around the corner, now I am doing it from home and its now trying to implement the balancing act of where workday ends and personal life begins”*.

#### **5.4.4 Theme 4: Health and Well -Being**

All participants were asked regarding their overall health and wellbeing since remote working. While some highlighted that they have seen an overall improvement due to the additional time and work life balance, in comparison others have stated they miss the social aspect the office brings. Also highlighted was mental health from a positive and negative perspective.

Highlighted by Participant LL *“it took a while and it took a lot to adjust but now I have been doing it for over a year full time. Establishing a routine while remote working has been key to my well-being”*.



In comparison MK *“it has taking a lot to get used to. I think it was a novelty at the start but now time has moved on and I miss seeing my colleagues”*.

Participant MK outlines *“I think it has been positively impacted. In terms of Covid I am lucky in the sense I have been able to remain working. So, working from home has allowed me to keep occupied and keep me interested so it’s been good in that sense “*

Participant JM emphasis *“I suppose I am used to it now and it’s the new normal. But I would love to get back to the office. I just miss talking to people and going for work drinks “*.

Participant NC explains *“I think it has impacted it in a positive way due to the fact I have a better work life balance and not travelling in. I have more time to rest. Not getting up as early in the morning. I have more time and personally I think it has had a positive impact on my mental health”*.

In comparison participant NH highlights *“I don’t think remote working has had a negative impact on my well-being or mental health. I think what affected it was Covid and combined with the two it has been challenging “*.

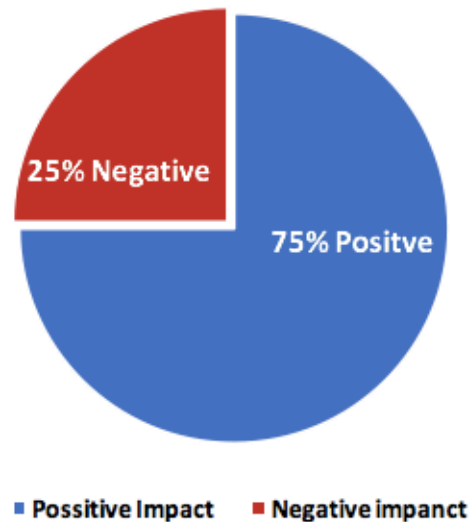
Participant SOS emphasis *“I definitely think it has improved my entire kind of work and life routine and been positive in regards my overall well-being “*.

Furthermore, participant AS states *“overall I think it’s been positive. It has lent itself to a better work life balance particularly from a day to day basis “*

However, in contrast participant AM outlines *“it is hard to say, it has had its ups and downs. I miss my walk to work. Then there is the socialising on a mental health aspect and personally I need that. However, as time has gone on I would say its 50/50 I wouldn’t say it’s terrible or fantastic”*.

Participant SA outlines *“At the start I was a wreck I hated it. I would be waiting for someone to come home in the evening like a lost puppy. So my well-being wasn’t great and it made me find it harder in social situations. It wasn’t good. I was overthinking to myself to much”*.

## Impact of Remote Working On overall Wellbeing



*Figure 5 – The impact of remote working on overall wellbeing*

All participants were also asked in regard to their stress levels since remote working. 3 out of the 12 participants highlighted an increase in stress levels since remote working while 9 of the participants indicated that their stress levels have remained the same or decreased.

Participant LL outlines *“At first it was a big change and stress levels were higher than normal”*.

In contrast participant SK *“As you know, I don’t get to stressed. If anything, remote working has brought it down. However, the only stressor for me is to ensure my team are not stressed”*.

Moreover, participant SD outlines *“I am quite lucky that I have not felt overwhelmed and that is down to our support system and management”*.

In contrast participant SOS *“I think it has increased. I think being in an office environment can be stressful at times, but your colleagues, even if they don’t have the solution for your problem can calm you down”*.

Furthermore, participant MK *“There is obviously other types of stress as well as the workload being heavier now. While there is a good bit of stress it has kind of taught us the value of having a bit of work”*.

Participant JM highlights *“I don’t feel they have changed since remote working”*.

Similarly, participant NH attributes stress levels not remote working but due to the role itself *“I think my stress levels is not connected to remote working. It is more connected the activities I have in work. When taking calls from employees who are very stressed would add to my levels of stress. However, I would get this in the office or at home”*.

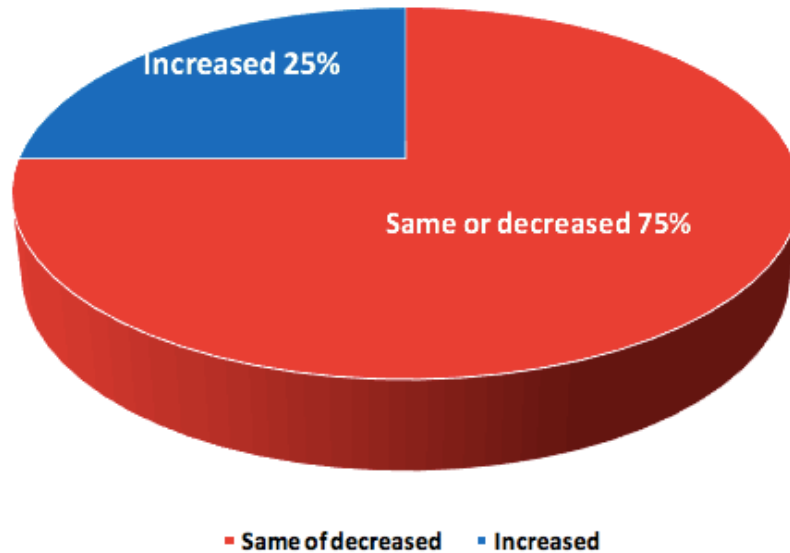
Furthermore, participant SOF *“I would never be a stressed person. Obviously, I can’t compare like with like as I wasn’t a mum last time in the office and now, I am a mum it’s a bit different”*.

Participant AM *“To be honest at the start it was high but I think the fact that it can be a little bit stressful you are not able to bounce ideas to somebody physically and if your role is time sensitive like mine where I could have someone on the phone looking for support it increases stress levels a bit “*.

Furthermore, participant SA *“With stress, well I am the only person on the team not including my manager, so obviously I am going to be stressed. But in terms of working from home it’s not much more stressful at all “*.

Finally, participant AS *“I think I am good at managing stress. It hasn’t really changed to be fair. I would be in the same mindset while in the office “*.

### Stess levels Since remote working



*Figure 6 – Stress levels and remote working*

#### 5.4.5 Theme 5 Work Environment

Participants were asked in regard to the difference between their remote working environment and the office environment. The area of communication, collaboration and the lack of social interaction were all identified. Furthermore, also highlighted was the bigger space in the office and noise from a positive and negative aspect while remote working.

Participant LL comments *“The office space was bigger, and I feel communication was better”*.

Highlighted by participant SK *“for me very little however being in the office is a little more collaborative “*.

Similarly, participant SD explains *“I suppose communication with my colleagues and line manager is a little different if not in person. Another difference is I interviewed recently for a role on a different team and this was very different than doing it in person - it was less nerve wrecking “*.

Furthermore, participant SOS states ***“The noise would be one. There are four other adults in my house. I mean there is noise in the office but it’s a different type of noise and it’s kind of quietens down when busy”***.

In comparison MK outlines ***“it has to be the social element and not being around people and the face to face interaction”***.

Participant JM also like other states ***“definitely the socialising and just having lunch with anyone who is in the office “***.

Participant NC states ***“I suppose the only difference is not having people around to have a general chat at the coffee machine “***.

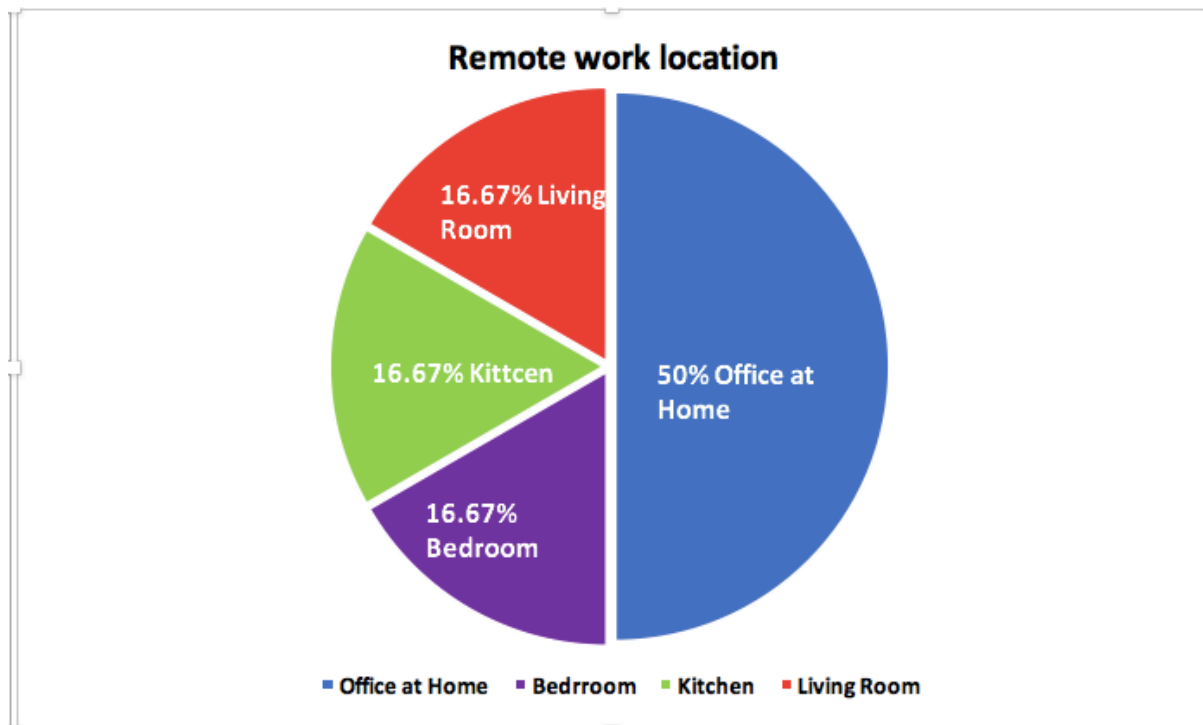
Also, Participant NH argues ***“I miss the social interaction of the office which is very important for us human beings “***.

Emphasised by participant AM is the social aspect” ***So the main aspect for me would be the social aspect I am very much a people person”***.

Moreover, participant SA includes ***“The biggest difference for me is communication. It is much more difficult than it would be - much easier to ask a question in the office “***.

Finally, Participant states ***“it’s a lot quieter at home you don’t have the hustle and bustle of the office. When it’s busy in the office it not distracting but something you are aware of“***.

All participants were asked in regard to their work environment while working remotely. Half the participants had indicated they work from a specially made home office. While other locations included working from their bedroom, Kitchen and living room.



*Figure 7 Remote working locations*

## 5.5 Conclusion

Concluded from the findings is communication and social interaction remains an issue among teams as a result of remote working. While the organisation has implemented measures, they have not been totally affective with many missing the face to face interaction the office environment brings.\

When it comes to the area of flexibility and personal factors concluded is that many are enjoying the flexibility and improved work life balance remote working offers. However, many indicated when possible they would like to return to the office on a part time basis.

When it came to the area of managing boundaries there was a divide in the ability to with the gap narrowing between the home and work environment due to factors including easy access to laptops and work systems and no physical boundaries separating the home and work environment and when it came to over remote working and overall well-being over half had indicated an improvement.

When it came to health and well-being highlighted was impact on mental health both from a positive and negative factor. Stress levels among participants had remained the same for the majority of the participants. Those highlighted an increase in stress levels was predominantly due to the current unprecedented times due to the pandemic. While at first some struggled to adapt to the new way of working, they had become use to the new norm.

When it came to the working environment the interviewed participants the majority work from a spare roomed utilized as an office. However, some participant's highlighted that their environment was not suitable for remote working due to working from location such as bedrooms, living rooms. Moreover, also highlighted was that they were not adequately equipped for remote working in terms of desks and other office supplies,

## Chapter 6 Discussion

### 6.1 introduction

The purpose of this chapter will examine the data in my findings and identify the relevant detail in the research. The findings will be linked with the previous literature review.

The primary aim of this study was to conduct an investigation into the impact of remote working from a psychological, social and physical perspective on the well-being of remote workers. Furthermore investigated will be remote workers' personal experiences and boundary management.

Each of the following themes will be discussed and all 6 are related to the research objectives:-

- Theme 1 is focused on Social Wellbeing
- Theme 2 is focussed on boundary management
- Theme 3 is focussed on Psychological well-being
- Themes 4 & 5 are focussed on Physical well-being

In detail each theme will be discussed. Highlighted will be the emergence of additional themes in regard to the previous research from the literature review.



## 6.2 Discussion Theme 1 - Communication

Apparent from both the findings and the literature review is the fact that communication is a complex challenge in the area of remote working. All participants were asked how they felt remote working impacted their relationships with their work colleagues and what mechanism the organisation had implemented to improve communication while remote working.

When it came to the challenges with regard to communication some highlighted issues for the participants were:-

Participant LL highlighted *"it was difficult as we were so use to seen each other every day"*

Participant SOS *"Communication is difficult as you don't want to be asking some all of the time if they are ok"*

According to participant NC *"I think with my initial team it has become better . However with the wider team and other colleagues in the centre it has been negatively impacted"*.

Furthermore Participant SA states *" as a result of remote working I suppose we don't really communicate unless it is about work "*.

Finally participant AS *"within the team we don't have the same advantage of sitting in the same pod in a face to face environment. You have to remain on top of engagement through emails, calls or Teams"*.

In comparison, within the literature the various authors, specifically highlighted by Bartel, Wrzesniewski and Wiesenfeld ,(2012). Tiwana and Tahie, (2020) state that remote working has negative implications on wellbeing including diminished relationships.

When it comes to participant AS and what he highlights in comparison to Bartel et al,(2012) it corresponds with the ideology that virtual working and the separation of the office environment can jeopardise organisational belonging.

In contrast some points highlighted by participants include:-

Participant SK highlighted states “ ***I don’t feel remote working has negatively impacted my relationship with my colleagues as we are still very close and continue to have a great working relationship. The team I work with and other teams have grown together and worked with each other for numerous of years*** “.

(Thomas ,2020) in comparison highlights that remote working can be effective with communities that know each other. However highlighted is that it is complex to form bond with new employees without the occurrence of social interaction and physical communication. .

Participants were also asked what mechanisms the organisation had implemented. All highlighted, from the primary data obtained, the virtual mechanisms of communication.

Highlighted across the literature is that social connection is vital for employees wellbeing and while internet platforms allow for social interaction, they are no replacement for face to face communication (Thomas,2020).

This is apparent from the participants interviews

The participant JM highlights the mystery chats “***I find these sometimes quite a bit forced as arranged***”.

Participant SA in comparison also states “ ***we do have the monthly random mystery chats – they do help feel a bit forced.***

### 6.3 Discussion Theme 2 - Flexibility and Personal Factors

It is evident that there is an improvement in work life balance, for the majority of the participant due to remote working.

A number of the participants highlight that the elimination of a commute has improved their work life balance

Participant LL Highlights *“Since remote working it has improved my work life balance . With reduced commute times I have additional time to do activities in the evening”*.

Similarly participant SK **“It has definitely impacted it for the better. While I don’t live a million miles away from the office I am saving 2 hours a day commuting”**

In comparison Participant SOS **“ Whether you are getting the bus, train, or driving you have gained back time by not commuting everyday – it’s fantastic “.**

Finally Participant JM **“I think it’s really improved as I do not have to commute to work. You are not sitting in traffic in the morning. You are finished at 5pm and you are home “.**

In agreement with the literature Boland et al, (2020) remote working provides a better work life balance due to the elimination or reduction in commuting times. The primary research corresponds with studies across the literature and have found more productive ways to spend and enjoy the increased flexibility of remote working and its improvement in work life balance. The majority of individuals in the study express a preference for remote working rather than office environment (CIPD,2021; Boland et al,2020)

## 6.4 Discussion Theme 3 Managing Boundaries

Participants were asked how remote impacted their ability to be able to switch off. There was a divide per the findings. However, from the participants who stated that remote working impacted their ability to switch off the following was highlighted:-

Participant L, L outlines *“When you leave the office it is harder to separate work and home. I think because you are working, then trying to relax at home, there is a fine line”*.

Furthermore according to participant NC *“it has definitely impacted my ability to switch off, as I now have now the laptop at hand I have definitely logged onto the computer at the weekend “*.

Finally participant MK *“Your office is in the same house 24/7 it is hard to close the office door and not go back into the office because there in no physical break in in the building”*.

In comparison with the literature according to Klopoptek,(2017) with remote working there is an inability for employees to be able to switch off .Mddditt, (2020) Highlighted is the suitability of working environments and the complexity which organisations face to adhere to health and safety legislation.

When in comparison with the literature review it is the case that for some of the participants there is a lack of physical boundaries between the office and remote working environment.

## 6.5 Discussion Theme 4 Health and Well-Being

From the primary data obtained it was concluded that overall health and wellbeing of employees since remote working had improved. Some participants highlighted improvement of work life balance while others, in comparison, highlighted the implications on mental health from both a positive and negative perspective .

Participant SA states *“so my well-being wasn’t great and it made me find it more complex in social situations. It wasn’t good . I was overthinking to myself too much “*

Similarly participant AM *“Then there is the socialising from a mental health aspect and personally I think I need that”.*

Across the literature it is highlighted that the area of mental health and Wang et al,(2020) highlighted the fact that remote working can be associated with increased levels of physical and psychological isolation which have negative implications for mental health. This corresponds to the finding from the primary data collected. Moreover Gigi and Pavithra,(2020) highlight the fundamental belief that employees are their key asset and therefore their well well-being should be looked after if the organisation is to achieve its goals (Gigi and Pavithra,2020).

Other findings indicated that presenteeism is associated with the inability to switch off. In regard to performance being measured using presenteeism and visibility as a substitute (Hill and Jacobs,2020)..

NH highlights *“I am more proactive then when I am in the office . So yeah my concentration and productivity has improved as in the office you get people coming up to you and interpreting you why you are in a train of thought “.*

## **6.6 Discussion Theme 5 – The Work environment**

The findings suggested that the work environment while remote working is highly important.

According to Muddit, (2020) highlighted is the security risk of remote working with employees becoming complacent with systems and devices being utilized with house mates or family potentially gaining access to organisational and client personal data. Moreover Lueck,(2020) has highlighted GDPR data protection and its requirement within organisations in the EU to make significant changes to data processes. Whereas prior to Covid it

predominantly focussed on office boundaries, organisations have now been required to revisit their efforts to ensure compliance with GDPR directives is achieved.

This corresponds to the primary data obtained where employees are working from remote locations within their home environment and employees co-inhabitants possibly having access to confidential organisational and client data.

The primary data obtained corresponds with the literature and the heightened security risk that remote working brings as participants are working from locations including – Home offices, Kitchens, Living rooms and dining rooms. .

## **6.7 Discussion - Objectives of study**

It is apparent from the findings and discussions that each of four objectives set out from the start have been achieved .

The question set out in the research for this study was ***“How does remote working impact the well-being of remote workers ?”***

Examined through research objectives is the inclusive answer posed that remote working has both negative influences on remote workers wellbeing. This was investigated through the following research objectives:-

### **6.7.1 Objective 1:**

#### **To understand the impact of remote working from a Physical perspective on remote workers**

In relation to the physical health of participants, those indicated they have had improved health and higher energy levels due to reduced commute times and increased sleep. The majority of participants indicated that their overall health improved with more time to spend with family and do exercise such as sports.

The ability to be able to switch off was mixed within the study and participants had different methods to manage work boundaries. Furthermore, when it came to work locations, employees worked from numerous locations around their home environment and noticed some challenges such as noise, lack of space and unsuitable environments due to other people living also in the home.

While the majority indicated that their stress levels had neither decreased or remained the same in comparison, to those who stated their stress levels has increased they attributed it to sudden change or sudden lack of support which could be procured easier if face to face with colleagues.

### **6.7.2 Objective 2:**

#### **To understand the impact of remote working from a Psychological view on remote workers.**

The findings from the study suggest that remote working has had both positive and negative implications on psychological wellbeing in terms flexibility, work life balance and satisfaction.

In comparison prior studies on psychological well-being note that there is positive and negative implications on well-being. However, concluded from this research is the fact that remote working has had positive implications on flexibility and work life balance.

### **6.7.3 Objective 3:**

**To understand the impact of remote working from a Social point of view on remote workers.**

The exploration of social wellbeing on remote workers through the investigation of their social relationships with their colleagues organisation support their perspective in regards social aspects.

While all participants were asked in regard to the impact of remote working relationships, some indicated that working relationships remained strong with members of their direct teams and also highlighted how remote working had negatively impacted relationships with members from other teams as well as personal relationships having diminished. Also established was that virtual communication mechanisms were no replacement for face to face interaction.

### **6.7.4 Objective 4:**

**To understand the experience of remote workers within the Telecommunications sector.**

Evident is the gap within the literature with regard to the management of remote and home boundaries. As outlined previously there was a divide when it came to the inability of employees to be able to switch off. Over half the participants indicated their inability to be able to switch off during remote working. The difficulty in managing boundaries were due to technological advancements, presenteeism and the inability to be able to switch off.



## 6.8 Limitations of Study

Throughout this research it is inevitable that limitations will exist.

In conducting the research the first limitation of the study was the gender imbalance, of the sample of participants comprising of three males and nine females. While the research did not seek this imbalance, the researcher experienced difficulty in obtaining male participants to engage in this study due to the gender imbalance within the organisation. However three males did eventually engage.

Secondly, time was another limitation during this study. The researcher works full time and all twelve interviews were conducted outside working hours where it was difficult to organise times that were suitable for everyone due to personal commitments. The researcher also found time a challenge and did not fully consider the amount of time involved to transcribe the interviews.

Lastly, remote working on permanent basis within the organisation has happened due to Covid. There was a limitation to this research which was conducted during a global pandemic and the area of remote working becoming the new norm. This indicates that remote working and its influences on well-being will constantly be required to be evaluated to ensure accurate data .

## Chapter 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusion

The primary aim of this research study was to investigate remote working and how it impacts the wellbeing of remote workers while remote working. This identified the following research question “ *“What impact does remote working impact the well-being of remote workers”*”

To address the research question, specific objectives were identified to gain an in-depth insight into the phenomenon and to further explore the impact remote working has on aspects of wellbeing including Psychological, Social and Physical wellbeing. Furthermore, the final objective focussed on understanding the experience of remote workers within the Telecommunications sector. As the literature was predominantly prior Covid the research identified a gap for more current research to be conducted.

Firstly, the researcher examined the existing literature in the area of remote working and wellbeing. From assessing the literature, the researcher identified numerous gaps which appeared within the literature on remote working and its impact on wellbeing highlighted as an area requiring further investigation.

To obtain primary data for the purpose of this study the research method implemented was a qualitative approach in the form of semi-structured interviews. Twelve interviews were conducted who had all been remote working on a permanent basis since March 2020 and had now become a permanent structure for the employees. Moreover all participants had prior experience of remote prior to Covid 19 on a part time basis and all are currently employed within the HR department of a large telecommunication sector of a multinational organisation.

The first finding from this study concluded that social interaction and communication was an issue for the participants with many indicating they there has been negative impact on communication with wider teams and social relationships diminished as a result of remote working . Highlighted was the issue while remote working can be effective with those who already know each other and have met face to face there is the struggle with new joiners and it is complex to form a bond unless that face to face interaction occurs.

The second finding was that many participants and the physical environment was not suitable for remote working for a number of factors , noise, equipment , space. and is a need for support or further investigation and monitoring

Another finding in that certain aspects such as training whether it cross training on another team or training a new joiner you are relying on the virtual platforms including teams which can be slow or have issues. Another issue that highlighted is engagement and the struggle to keep a remote work force engaged and could be another area worth investigating engagement and remote working .

## **7.2 Future Research Recommendations**

It was that there is potential to further research this area and will require revisiting and monitoring due to the impact of Covid 19. We have experienced unprecedented times and while the research is reflective of the what is current, further research needs to be conducted to get a more accurate representation in the future.

Another area of potential research is highlighted in the gap in the literature in the area of flexible working predominantly being focussed on larger MNC rather than SMEs and it is questionable if these associations concluded what applies to flexible working also applies to SMEs in the area.

Finally another area requiring investigation identified from the gap in the research is the correlation between flexible working arrangements and performance to a specific flexible working arrangement as previous research assess these key elements at a higher level.

## **7.3 Recommendations**

Within this section the aim will be to highlight recommendations that can be provided to employers of telecommunication workers who maybe looking or have recently introduced remote working in their organisations on either a part time or full time basis.

It is apparent from the findings that while remote working has many benefits, highlighted is its negative impact on communication and social wellbeing.

### **7.3.1 Recommendation 1 - Communication Improvement & Well-being programmes**

Evident from the findings and within the literature is that communication can be negatively impacted as a result of remote working. With those outlining that while some team bonds have remained, outlined is that relationships and communication has been impacted negatively as a result of remote working. Highlighted is that a well-established permanent and robust communication strategy is key to success . The below recommendation can be applied within the telecommunications sector to large or small organisations.

#### **Organisation Telecommunication companies**

A dedicated HR executive to communicate and assist with the management of communication and social interaction while working remotely. A dedicated person from each of the HR teams can be provided with the title “Buddy for Remote working”. This person can document communication issues and employees concerns and try and collaborate with remote working buddies to organise events and mechanisms to encourage communication and social interaction. Another duty of the “Buddy for Remote working” could be to provide clear information on how employees can access support programmes for mental health, organise virtual wellness programmes and conduct well-being and remote working surveys every six months in the area of remote working and wellbeing and see what areas need addressing.

The remote working buddy can organise online small events like “Coffee Mornings” and conversation are not work related but formed on topics that would be often discussed at the water fountain or coffee breaks. These soft topics can be spoken about and discussed through virtual mechanisms using MS Teams, WhatsApp, or similar chat mechanisms.

When it comes to hard topics these would consist of occasions, company events, staff appointments, sick days, business updates, staff promotions and other issues . The communication of these hard topics should be done through email and occasionally Microsoft Teams.

Team leaders/Managers can play an influential role and should always remain the point of contact for encouraging communication among their teams through team meetings and communication on issues such as win-losses, wider business issues, holiday planning, team news and updates. This should be done daily. Also the manager is responsible for the area of one to one meetings. These are important, not only to keep the employee updated on performance, but also keep the manager and employee relationship strong where there is an open line of communication for the employee to discuss any personal or business issue they may have.

### **Financial Cost and Time frame**

The team leader would be required to dedicate a proportion of each day to communication with his remote team which can be time consuming for the manager. As the team within the HR department are all working remotely the manager needs to ensure emails are clear transparent and read by the employees. As some of the teams within the HR department are quite big it is important that the manager, while communicating in the wider team group in team meetings, talks with those in smaller groups to encourage those less willing to speak to open up about their concerns.

- Training would need to be provided to the “Buddy for working buddy “ from each team

- Coffee mornings inside work hours would be away from contractual duties and decreases in performance.
- Time consuming and more difficult for team leaders/Managers of bigger teams of remote workers is to try to keep the line of communication open and allow time for those natural conversations that would occur within the office to happen virtually.
- There would be significant additional work for the team leader as communication that would often but done face to face will have to be done through virtual mechanism or email is more time consuming .
- Training will have to be provided to the remote working buddy and time allocated out of working day for training also.
- Time out of working hours for coffee mornings.
- Timescale for implementation is estimated at 1 month

After 6 months of implementation the organisation can review to see if there has been an improvement in communication and social interaction among remote workers.

The review can be assessed through implementing a survey virtually and anonymously and confidentially to assess the overall effectiveness of the programme and how it can be improved and/or changed.

The results from such surveys should be assessed and benchmarked. The results should be also shared with employees and discussed as their feedback can be influential in establishing some suggestions directly from employees .

### **7.3.2 Recommendation : Work Environment Support and Review**

As highlighted in the findings all twelve of the participants were now working remotely on a full times basis. As this was a sudden move by the organisation to safeguard its employees during the Covid 19, it has now become a permanent structure due to its success. However,

some employees highlighted they were not in suitable environments or equipment. Due to health and safety considerations the onus is on the employer to ensure employees are adequately supplied while working remotely. In the pandemic the advice is to limit contact with others and social distance. The organisation can send out a check list form for employees to complete indicating what they require in the area of equipment, office furniture, printers etc so that it can be ordered for them. As highlighted some participants indicated that they had laptop issues, poor workstation and second hand uncomfortable chairs. In the future the HR generalist may take on the role to visit remote workers' premises to ensure their environment is adequately supplied and suitable for remote working. Also through the HR portal the HR generalist should set up and monitor a portal or similar where employees can easily order or request new equipment or items they may require while remote working.

### **Financial Cost and Timeframe**

While providing desks, new laptops and chairs and other office equipment can be costly for organisations, this would be a long term investment and a once off cost. While providing a survey and creating a section on the internet portal may be timely to set up it can be worth it to increase retention, engagement and boost morale within organisational brand if the employee feels their needs are being adequately met. The time frame for implementing this would be a period of 1-2 months. The work environment should be assessed every six to also ensure IT equipment , and additional equipment and amenities are operating effectively.

## **Personal Learning Statement**

In order to meet the the requirements of my Masters in Human Resource Management the requirement was to conduct research study of a particular area of Human Resource Management. The chosen research area I have taken for my research project is the area of flexible working. This research area is highly topical at present and a current issue within organisations at present and moving forward.

From conducting this research project I have examined and expanded my knowledge of the area of remote working and wellbeing of individuals within the Telecommunications sector. Conducting the research was one that was a new and enjoyable experience and one of the most challenging that I have undertaken to date.

Throughout the research project I was exposed to new learning experiences including the insight into analytical skills. Throughout the research I analysed and critically evaluated prior research conducted by academics into remote working and wellbeing and which will be beneficial when conducting future research.

As the chosen research was qualitative in nature I gained future and valuable knowledge into this form of data collection. The of qualitative analysis applied was semi-structured interviews and exposure to the area strengthened my confidence when conducting interviews and built my skills and something beneficial for going forward with my HR career. By using the Microsoft Teams platform to conduct the interviews as these were done virtually I had gained an insight into the platform and how to transcribe and record.

There were challenges while conducting the research project due to the pandemic. I was unable to conduct the interviews face to face and it may be questionable if the results would have been different if conducted in face to face. The interviews where limited to one organisation. The topic could be expanded on and if the results from an alternative Telecommunications organisation were available for comparison. It was difficult to allocate and establish suitable times to conduct the interviews as all the participants and the researcher work full time and interviews were conducted after working time. The transcribing of the interviews also was time consuming for the researcher and if the study was to be repeated time management would be a better focus.



Overall the research project has been highly beneficial. I have improved my interview and research skills. Furthermore I have enjoyed the experience as this was a topic of interest to me as I am currently a remote worker. I hope the research can benefit my current organisation and Managers within the Telecommunication sector.

## Reference List

- Ames, H., Glenton, C. and Lewin, S. (2019). Purpose sampling in a qualitative evidence synthesis :a worked example from a synthesis on parental perceptions of vaccination communication. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 10(1).
- Andrade, C. (2021). The inconvenient Truth about Convenience and Purpose Samples. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 43(1).
- Avgoustaki, A. and Bessa, I. (2019). Examining the link between flexible working arrangement bundles and employee work effort. *Human Resource Management*, 58(4), pp.431–449.
- Bartel, C.A., Wrzesniewski, A. and Wiesenfeld, B.M. (2012). Knowing Where You Stand: Physical Isolation, Perceived Respect, and Organizational Identification Among Virtual Employees. *Organization Science*, 23(3), pp.743–757.
- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. (2010). *How to Research*. 4th ed. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Boland, B., De Smet, A., Palter, R. and Sanghvi, A. (2020). *Reimagining the office and work life after COVID-19 | McKinsey*. [online] [www.mckinsey.com](http://www.mckinsey.com). Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/reimagining-the-office-and-work-life-after-covid-19>.
- Bruce, J. and English, L. (2020). The challenge of change fatigue on workplace mental health. *Strategic HR Review*, 19(5), pp.199–203.
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015). *Business Research Methods*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burke-Kennedy, E. (2020a). *Ireland had one of highest rates of home-working during Covid-19 crisis*. [online] The Irish Times. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/ireland-had-one-of-highest-rates-of-home-working-during-covid-19-crisis-1.4369346>.
- Burke-Kennedy, E. (2020b). *State had fourth-highest home-working rate in EU last year*. [online] The Irish Times. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/state-had-fourth-highest-home-working-rate-in-eu-last-year-1.4381867> [Accessed 16 Aug. 2021].
- Busetto, L., Wick, W. and Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, [online] 2(1). Available at:

<https://neurorespract.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z> [Accessed 1BC].

Carnevale, J.B. and Hatak, I. (2020). Employee adjustment and well-being in the era of COVID-19: Implications for human resource management. *Journal of Business Research*, [online] 116(116), pp.183–187. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7241356/>.

CIPD (2018). *Flexible working: the business case*. [online] . Available at: [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/flexible-working-business-case\\_tcm18-52768.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/flexible-working-business-case_tcm18-52768.pdf).

CIPD (2021a). *Employee remote working | Guides*. [online] CIPD. Available at: <https://www.cipd.ie/news-resources/practical-guidance/guides/employee-remote-working>.

CIPD (2021b). *Flexible Working Practices | Factsheets*. [online] CIPD. Available at: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/factsheet#gref>.

CIPD (2021c). *Wellbeing at work | Guides*. [online] CIPD. Available at: <https://www.cipd.ie/news-resources/practical-guidance/guides/well-being-work#75754> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2021].

Clarke, M.A. and Hill, S.R. (2012a). Promoting employee well-being and quality service outcomes: The role of HRM practices. *Journal of Management & Organisation*, 18(5).

Clarke, M.A. and Hill, S.R. (2012b). Promoting employee wellbeing and quality service outcomes: The role of HRM practices. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 18(5), pp.702–713.

Collis, J. and Hussey, R. (2014). *Business Research : a Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students*. 4th ed. Basingstoke: Hampshire.

Crawford, J.O., MacCalman, L. and Jackson, C.A. (2011). The health and well-being of remote and mobile workers. *Occupational Medicine*, 61(6), pp.385–394.

CSO (2019). *Women and Men in Ireland 2019 - CSO - Central Statistics Office*. [online] [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie). Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wamii/womenandmeninireland2019/>.

CSO (2020). *Employment and Life Effects of COVID-19 - CSO - Central Statistics Office*. [online] [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie). Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/elec19/employmentandlifeeffectsofcovid-19/>.

- Cullen, P. (2018). *Ireland has one of the highest rates of mental health illness in Europe, report finds*. [online] The Irish Times. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/ireland-has-one-of-the-highest-rates-of-mental-health-illness-in-europe-report-finds-1.3707073>.
- Dagenais-Desmarais, V. (2011). What is Psychological Well-Being, Really? A Grassroots Approach from the Organisational Sciences. *Journal of Happiness studies*, 13(4).
- De Menezes, L.M. and Kelliher, C. (2016). Flexible Working, Individual Performance, and Employee Attitudes: Comparing Formal and Informal Arrangements. *Human Resource Management*, 56(6), pp.1051–1070.
- De Simone, S. (2014). Conceptualizing Wellbeing in the Workplace. *Journal of Business and Social Science*, 5(12).
- Debouk, M. (2017). *Happy staff translates to more profitable organizations by Mohamed Debouk | New Metrics*. [online] Available at: <https://www.newmetrics.net/insights/happy-staff-profitable-organizations-mohamed-debouk/> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2021].
- Debouk, M. (2020). *Employee Experience Strategies to Jumpstart Success - by Mohamed Debouk*. [online] International Association for Human Resources Information Management. Available at: <https://ihrim.org/2020/11/employee-experience-strategies-to-jumpstart-success-by-mohamed-debouk/> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2021].
- Deloitte (2020). *Millennial Survey 2020 | Deloitte | Social impact, Innovation*. [online] Deloitte. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html>.
- Duncan, P. (2013). *Women at Work: 40 years of change*. [online] The Irish Times. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/women-at-work-40-years-of-change-1.1420721>.
- Dwivedi, Y., Hughes, D., Coombs, C., Constantiou, I., Duan, Y., Edwards, J., Gupta, B., Lal, B., Misra, S., Prashant, P., Raman, R., Rana, N., Sharma, S. and Upadhyay, N. (2020). Impact of Covid 19 pandemic on information management and research and practice :Transforming education, work and life. *International Journal of Information Management*, 55(1).
- Faulkner, M. (2018). *Essentials of Irish Labour Law*. 3rd ed. Dublin: Clarus Pr.
- Garcia, D. and Gluesing, J. (2013). Qualitative Research methods in international organizational change research. *Journal of Organisational Change*, 26(2).

Gigi, G. and Pavithra, R. (2020). Employees' mental wellbeing, organizational outcome and innovative practices during covid-19. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 26(02).

GIGI, G.S. and Sangeetha, J. (2020). Impact of remote working on employees in IT industry. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 26(02).

Gov.ie (2019). *Mental Health*. [online] [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie). Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/3aa528-mental-health/> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2021].

Grant, C.A., Wallace, L.M. and Spurgeon, P.C. (2013). An exploration of the psychological factors affecting remote e-worker's job effectiveness, well-being and work-life balance. *Employee Relations*, [online] 35(5), pp.527–546. Available at: .

Grant, C.A., Wallace, L.M., Spurgeon, P.C., Tramontano, C. and Charalampous, M. (2019). Construction and initial validation of the E-Work Life Scale to measure remote e-working. *Employee Relations*, 41(1), pp.16–33.

Haider, I.I., Tiwana, F. and Tahir, S.M. (2020). Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Adult Mental Health. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 36(COVID19-S4).

Haider, I.L. (2020). impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on adult mental health. *Journal of Medical Science*, 36(1).

Hayman, J. (2010). Flexible Work Schedules and Employee Well-being. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 35(2).

Hill, A. and Jacobs, E. (2020). *How is the worlds mass homeworking experiment going ?* [online] [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com). Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/75639ffa-6f95-11ea-89df-41bea055720b>.

Hislop, D., Axtell, C., Collins, A., Daniels, K., Glover, J. and Niven, K. (2015). Variability in the use of mobile ICTs by homeworkers and its consequences for boundary management and social isolation. *Information and Organization*, 25(4), pp.222–232.

Hoffmann-Burdzińska, K. and Rutkowska, M. (2015). WORK LIFE BALANCE AS A FACTOR INFLUENCING WELL-BEING. *Journal of Positive Management*, 6(4), p.

Jacobs, E. (2020). *Homeworking: isolation, anxiety and burnout*. [online] [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com). Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/315095c0-7da0-11ea-8fdb-7ec06edeef84>.

Jacobs, E. (2021). Where's the spark? How lockdown caused a creativity crisis. *The Financial Times*. [online] 19 Jan. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/27364b27-6c0c-4dec-b109-17c054b49465>.

Jamaludin, S., Azmir, N.A., Mohamad Ayob, A.F. and Zainal, N. (2020). COVID-19 exit strategy: Transitioning towards a new normal. *Annals of Medicine and Surgery*, 59(1), pp.165–170.

Johnson, M. (2015). *Stop Talking about working life balance*. [online] WWW.Ihrim.org. Available at: WWW.Ihrim.org [Accessed 2015].

Khoreva, V. and Wechtler, H. (2018). HR practices and employee performance: the mediating role of well-being. *Employee Relations*, [online] 40(2), pp.227–243. Available at: [https://helda.helsinki.fi/dhanken/bitstream/handle/123456789/183120/well\\_being\\_manuscript\\_Employee\\_Relations.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://helda.helsinki.fi/dhanken/bitstream/handle/123456789/183120/well_being_manuscript_Employee_Relations.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) [Accessed 26 Feb. 2019].

Klopotek, M. (2017). The Advantages And Disadvantages of Remote Working from the Perspective of Young Employees. *Scientific Quarterly "Organisation and Management,"* 4(40).

Kolakowski, M., Royle, T., Walker, E. and Pittman, J. (2020). Reframing Employee Well-Being and Organizational Commitment. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 20(5).

Kotey, B. and Sharma, B. (2019). Predictors of flexible working arrangement provision in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 27(22), pp.2753–2770.

Kotey, B.A. and Sharma, B. (2019). Pathways from flexible work arrangements to financial performance. *Personnel Review*, 48(3), pp.731–747.

Lueck, M. (2020). GDPR in the new remote-working normal. *Computer Fraud & Security*, 2020(8), pp.14–16.

McCarty, G. (2011). Understanding Employee Well-being Practices in Australian Organisations. *The International Journal of Health and wellness and Society*, 1(1).

Melluso, N., Bonaccorsi, A., Chiarello, F. and Fantoni, G. (2020). Rapid detection of fast innovation under the pressure of COVID-19. *PLOS ONE*, 15(12), p.e0244175.

Michèle Kehoe (2013). *Make that grade organisational behaviour*. 2nd ed. Dublin Gill & Macmillan.

Miley, I. (2021). Employees to have right to request remote working. *www.rte.ie*, [online] 43(3). Available at: <https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2021/0115/1189819-remote-work-strategy/>.

Muddit, J. (2020). *Are your customers satisfied with their comprehensive car insurance*. [online] . Available at: <https://anziif.com/members-centre/the-journal-articles/volume-43/issue-2/whats-driving-car-insurance-complaints>.

Nwinyokpugi, P. (2017). Work-Life Balance Management And Employee Productivity In The Nigeria Hospitality Industry. *Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research*, 1(5).

Parthjeet, S. (2018). Sarma, Parthjeet (2018) The Radically Changing Nature Of Work, Workers & Workplaces: Using Space As A Starting Point Of Innovation. Mumbai: Become Shakespeare. *Space and Culture, India*, 6(3).

Popovici, V. and Popovici, A.-L. (2020). Remote Work Revolution Current Opportunities and Challenges for Organisations. *Economics Science Series*, 1(1).

Quinlan, C., Babin, B., Carr, J., Griffin, M. and Zikmund, W.G. (2015). *Business research methods*. 1st ed. Hampshire: Cengage Learning Emea.

Rao, P.H. (2019). Organisational Initiatives to Enhance Employee Well-Being Preventing / Reducing The Onset of Non- Communicable Diseases in the Workplace. *Orgaisazational Initiatives to Enchance Employee Well-being Preventing /Reducing the Onset of Non-Communicable Diseses in the Workplace*, International Journal Of Business Ethics in Developing Economies(8).

Remote Working Ireland (2019). *Remote Work in Ireland*. [online] enterprise.gov.ie. Available at: <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Remote-Work-in-Ireland.html>.

Rugg, G. and Petre, M. (2007). *A gentle guide to research methods*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Sánchez-Hernández, M.I., González-López, Ó.R., Buenadicha-Mateos, M. and Tato-Jiménez, J.L. (2019). Work-Life Balance in Great Companies and Pending Issues for Engaging New Generations at Work. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(24), p.5122.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016a). *Research Methods for Business Students*. 7th ed. Pearson, p.5.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016b). *Research Methods For Business Students*. 7th ed. Essex: Pearson.

Shier, M.L. and Graham, J.R. (2010). Work-related factors that impact social work practitioners' subjective well-being: Well-being in the workplace. *Journal of Social Work*, 11(4), pp.402–421.

Smith, S.A., Patmos, A. and Pitts, M.J. (2015). Communication and Teleworking: A Study of Communication Channel Satisfaction, Personality, and Job Satisfaction for Teleworking Employees. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 55(1), pp.44–68.

Stella, A.-E.I.S., Iheriohanma, E.BJ. and Chinedu, N. (2020). Flexible Working Arrangements and Organizational Performance An Overveiw. *Flexible Working Arrangements and Organizational Performance: An Overview*, 25(5).

Sullivan, C. (2003). What's in a name? Definitions and conceptualisations of teleworking and homeworking. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 18(3), pp.158–165.

Thomas, D. (2020). *Bosses predict Permanent Shift in working and an evolution*. [online] www.ft.com. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/ace512f5-46b1-464f-b71b-170564ee271e>.

Tripathi, P. and Singh, S. (2020). Work-life Benefits & Employee Well-Being :Role of Perceived Organisational Support. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 56(2).

Wall, M. (2021). *New laws will give employees in the State the option to permanently work from home*. [online] The Irish Times. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/new-laws-will-give-employees-in-the-state-the-option-to-permanently-work-from-home-1.4458770?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Fireland%2Firish-news%2Fnew-laws-will-give-employees-in-the-state-the-option-to-permanently-work-from-home-1.4458770>.

Wang, W., Albert, L. and Sun, Q. (2020). Employee isolation and telecommuter organizational commitment. *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, 42(3), pp.609–625.

White, C. and Maniam, B. (2020a). Flexible Working Arrangements Work-life Balance And Working Women. *Journal of Business And Accounting*, 13(1).

White, C. and Maniam, B. (2020b). Flexible Working Arrangements, Work-life Balance , And Working women. *Jornal of Business and Accounting*, 13(1).



Wiatr, A. (2019). Flexible Working Arrangements - Current Conditions and Research Directions. *International Branch in Poland*, 1(1).

Zhang, S., Moeckel, R., Moreno, A.T., Shuai, B. and Gao, J. (2020). A work-life conflict perspective on telework. *Transportation Research. Part A, Policy and Practice*, [online] 141(1), pp.51–68. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7509537/>.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Original Email to Participants

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope you are well.

I am currently in the process of completing my dissertation for my Masters in HR in NCI which is an investigation into remote working the influence it has on the well-being on employees.

As part of my study and to gather information I am hoping to carry out interviews with remote workers and how they feel their well-being has been influenced and impacted since remote working.

Remote working is an extremely interesting and relevant topic today even more so with the Corona Virus pandemic and there are many arguments for and against it.

I hope to gain further information into the area and aim to identify how it influences well-being in relation to three key areas including , Social physical , Phycological well-being.

I have attached an information sheet setting out all specifications of the study. I hope you can assist me with my study within this area in this and I look forward to hearing from you.

While I have attached a consent form please reply from your work email acknowledging request and consent to participate .

I will add a Teams meeting for a selected time and please let me know if this does not suit and an alternative time can be allocated .

Thank you for your time and willingness to help.

Kindest Regards,

Ashley Dooley

## **Appendix 2 – Participant information form**

### **Research Title:**

#### **An investigation into the impact of Remote Working on employee Well-Being within a Telecommunications organisation in Ireland**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

### **Purpose of this Study:**

- The purpose of this study is to investigate experience of remote working within the Telecommunications sector and its influence on well-being.

### **Objectives of this Study**

- To investigate how remote working influences social well-being of employees.
- To Investigate how remote working influences the psychological well-being of employees.
- To Investigate how remote working influence physical well-being of employees.
- To understand what effect remote working has on work-life boundaries of telecommunication workers.

### **Confidentiality:**

Throughout this study there will be confidentiality at all stages and any data obtained while conducting this interview will remain confidential. Any information provided will solely and strictly be confidential and specifically use for the purpose intended.

Participation is completely voluntary and you the person can refuse participation, refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence. Prior to the study all participants provided a consent form to be completed prior to participating in the study which can be found in Figure

### **Risks of the study:**

There should be no risks by taking part in this study, however if any issues arise or the participant does not feel comfortable answering any questions they may withdraw from the interview at any stage and are not obliged to give an explanation.

### **HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?**

The interview will be conducted using Microsoft Teams and will be recorded with no video camera required however will be recorded. The interview process will last approximately thirty minutes. The recorded data will be store on as a hardcopy on the researchers laptop and password protected with restricted access for a specified period and no longer then required until the dissertation results are released by the examinations board. Access to the data will be restricted to the researcher and supervisor.

Signed consent forms and audio recording will be retained in a hard drive until after the degree has been conferred. A transcript of the interview in which identifying all information removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under the freedom of information legislation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

### **WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?**

If you seek further information, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Ashley Dooley – [X15008649@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:X15008649@student.ncirl.ie)

Supervisor – Julius Nyiawung

**Thank you for your time in assisting in this study.**

## Appendix 3 - Consent Form

An investigation into the impact of Remote Working on employee Well-Being within a Telecommunications organisation in Ireland

### 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 consequences 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...*[outline briefly in simple terms what participation in your research will involve]*.
- 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...*[list all forum in which you plan to use the data from the interview: dissertation, conference presentation, published papers etc.]*.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to 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 signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in *[specify location, security arrangements and who has access to data]* until *[specific relevant period – for students this will be until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation]*.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for *[specific relevant period – for students this will be two years from the date of the exam board]*.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Names, degrees, affiliations and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant).

*Signature of research participant*

-----

Signature of participant

-----

Date

*Signature of researcher*

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

-----

Signature of researcher

-----

Date

## **Appendix 4 – Interview Questions**

### **Introduction – Questions**

- 1. How long have you worked remotely on a full time /Part time basis?**
- 2. Prior to Covid did you have an opportunity to work remotely and if yes how often?**
- 4. Where in your home do you predominately work from?**
- 5. What do you consider to be the key differences for you between an office and a work environment?**
- 6. If you had the option to continue to work remotely or return to the office full or part time and if part time how many times per week?**

### **Physical Well -Being**

- 7. Can you provide an overview of a typical remote working date is like?**
- 8. How do you feel you levels of stress have been impacted by remote working?**

### **Phycological Well-Being**

- 10. How do you feel remote working has impacted your work life balance?**
- 11. What do you feel have been the main challenges of remote working?**
- 12. What do you feel have been the main benefits of remote working?**



### **Social Well-Being**

- 13. How do you feel your relationship with your work colleagues has been impacted as result of home working?**
- 14. What platforms and techniques have the organisation has implemented as a mechanism to improve and relationships and social interaction among teams?**
- 15. How do you feel your organisation supports you while working remotely?**

### **Managing boundaries**

- 16. How do you feel remote working has impacted your ability to switch off from work?**
- 17. How do you manage the boundaries between you home and work life?**

### **Perception over all well-being**

- 18. How do you feel remote working effect overall well-being?**

### **Semi Structured interview probing questions**

- Can you elaborate?**
- Can you provide example of that?**
- Why do you say that?**
- You mentioned \_ can you provide more information or tell me more in regards to this?**