



**Remote Work in an Irish post Covid-19 society: A
Qualitative study of how organisations can use Remote Work
as Retention Strategies.**

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Abstract

Remote working is a relatively new subject within the organisational scene and academic community. Until recently, the practice was adopted only by a limited number of organisations as a flexible working arrangement. There was a preconception linked to it since it was thought that most tasks could only be performed onsite, which was proved wrong when the world had to answer to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

Unquestionably, society will not revert to what it was before the pandemic. In this scenario, organisations will need to adapt to new requirements in order to retain and attract talents. This study proposes to analyse people's experiences and perspectives about Remote Work (RW) during the lockdown in Ireland. Data was collected through a qualitative online questionnaire and analysed with Thematic Analysis. Experiences shared by participants from 6 different groups were compared to reach a better understanding.

The findings of this research aimed to assess if the practice could improve employees' flexibility and work-life balance, analyse barriers and their possible resolutions and also investigate the respondents' opinions regarding "The Right to Disconnect" and regarding the adoption of a Mixed Approach. By answering these questions, this study hoped to understand the employees' perspectives and how organisations could adopt RW and use it as a retention practice.

The conclusion of the findings showed that people do want to continue working remotely in the future. Although they also find it essential for organisations to address disconnection barriers and the lack of interaction with colleagues. Some respondents mentioned preferring a Mixed Approach, alternating both remote and onsite, since it enables an increased contact with colleagues. It was also noted that, in this scenario, offering the employee the flexibility to choose whether to work remotely, onsite, or mix them, can have more efficiency in retaining employees.

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1. Introduction

1.1. A New Reality Overview

Evolution has always been part of humankind's history. Through them, society was able to reach farther places, shaping our lifestyle as we know it today. Although 2020 arrived forcing changes that we were not ready for, bringing a worldwide pandemic caused by Covid-19, an unprecedented event that disrupted our lives almost overnight.

The virus was first detected in Wuhan, China and propagated with basically no barriers, affecting people on a global scale. To prevent its escalation, governments adopted lockdowns throughout the world, changing our routines entirely (Richter, 2020). To comply with this new reality and with health and safety guidelines, organisations, institutions, and governments had to promptly adapt (Carroll and Conboy, 2020), mostly by adopting Remote Work (RW).

The practice, also known as working from home (WFH) or teleworking (McFarland *et al.*, 2020), allows people to work from wherever they are, while using information and communication technologies (Martin and MacDonnell, 2012). During the pandemic, it enabled us to continue with daily tasks such as buying groceries, exercising, e-learning and even using telemedicine (Savić, 2020). Although, due to the overuse of technologies during RW, people were more stress for not being able to "log out" from work (Richter, 2020) and developed "Zoom fatigue" (Fosslien and Duffy, 2020).

Nevertheless, scholars have been studying RW as a practice that can improve people's work-life balance (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Anderson and Kelliher, 2020).

1.2. Covid-19 and Remote Working

Covid-19 removed the planning and the time factor of the implementation process, forcing people to adapt to RW overnight (Williamson, Colley and Hanna-Osborne, 2020). Still, many authors (e.g. Kniffin *et al.*, 2021; Savić, 2020 and Houghton, 2020) and politicians have welcomed this new reality. As an example of how the government supports the new measure, the Irish Tánaiste Leo Varadkar, declared that the government is drawing a plan to permanently implement and regulate remote working through Ireland (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021).

The lockdown experience has also contributed to opening people's minds to RW since they were able to spend more time with their relatives. By doing that, they also noticed that RW enabled

them to live closer to their families or to move to lower-cost residences, achieving a better quality of life, and still work for the same company (Choudhury, 2020).

Greenshields (2020) notes that once the employees realised the advantages that RW offers, there is a risk for organisations to lose their talents to organisations that adopt the practice before. This paper aims to examine a piece of this thematic, analysing if organisations will be able to use RW as a Retention Practice in society post-Covid-19, focusing on the Irish scenario.

Being able to understand and meet people's necessities promptly is what aids organisations to control turnover intentions (Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner, 2000) and develop successful retention strategies (Ahmad and Daud, 2015). Using these techniques, they can improve their employee's quality of life and also improve their branding as an employer (Ahmad and Daud, 2015).

1.3. Research Overview

This study aims to answer the following research question: "How can organisations use the employee perspective of the Remote Work experience in Ireland during the pandemic to draw effective Retention Strategies?" The focus of the study is to analyse the employees' perspective about their experience working remotely during the lockdown, and compare these perspectives with other organisations employees' perspectives. To achieve this, the set of objectives below was defined:

- Understand if RW has influenced flexibility, work-life balance and job-satisfaction, consequently improving turnover intention levels.
- Review obstacles imposed by RW and investigate suggestions of possible countermeasures that would aid organisations to implement the practice effectively.
- Investigate respondent's perspective and positioning regarding the "Mixed Approach".
- Analyse the importance of the "Need for Disconnection" according to respondents' perspective.
- Analyse each respondent's perception regarding Remote Working in Ireland during the pandemic and their views for the future and compare with other organisations employees' opinion.

By answering the research question and objectives, we hope to understand the importance of RW according to the current context and understand how they can be linked to retention strategies. The research design chosen to perform this study is qualitative research, using an online

questionnaire as research strategy. The data derived from this type of research would allow the researcher to analyse and understand better the participants' views of the theme.

1.4. Similar Studies

Similar studies in the field show that the relevance of RW is rapidly increasing. Gajendran and Harrison's (2007) paper relates RW with employee behaviour and performance. Martin and MacDonnell's (2012) searched to correlate the practice with employee productivity, retention, commitment and performance. In a more general way, Moore (2006) looks into the impact of remote working on work-life balance.

A highly significant study on the field was performed by Bloom *et al.* (2015), who researched the end-to-end process and results of the implementation of RW in a Chinese organisation. A second study was performed by Barrero, Bloom and Davis (2021) researching the impacts of the RW during the pandemic in the US.

In Ireland, a set of surveys were carried out by Whitaker Institute, NUI Galway and the Western Development Commission (McCarthy *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b, 2021). These surveys intended to understand the general population's opinion about RW. From these surveys, four reports were published, three of these will be mentioned during this study.

The research proposed in this paper differentiates itself from these as it focuses on the existing gap that correlates remote working practices with retention theories, considering a society where people have their mind changed by a new reality imposed.

1.5. Structure of the Study

The paper is divided into sections to better outline each step of the study development. The chapters will be divided as follows:

Chapter 1 – *Introduction*: An overview of the study by presenting RW during Covid-19 and outlining the research question, the issues correlated to it, research objectives, and the paper's structure.

Chapter 2 – *Literature Review*: An analysis of the literature available regarding the thematic, highlighting the main positive and negative sides of the practice and new trends.

Chapter 3 – *Research Objectives and Methodology*: An explanation of the main Research Question and objectives of the paper, along with an explanation of the research methods used to perform the study.

Chapter 5 – *Findings*: An analysis of the results and findings of the research elaborated.

Chapter 6 – *Discussion*: An analysis and comparison of the participants' answers with the literature outlined previously.

Chapter 6 – *Conclusion and Recommendations*: An overview of the study elaborated, noting relevant findings perceived by the research and reaching a recommendation for organisations that want to adopt RW as a Retention Practice.

2. Literature Review

RW is not exactly a new subject for academics and organisations. The term “telecommuting” was first used by Jack Nilles in 1975 (cited in Martin and MacDonnell, 2012), but it has not been extensively applied until recently. Before the sudden need urged by the pandemic, few organisations would offer flexible work arrangements that would cover the possibility to work from home.

So why exactly is it significant to study the influence RW can perform on retention strategies? Urban centres have been growing intensively through the last decades, imposing employees to face long hours of commuting and rush hours, consequently increasing levels of vehicle emissions (Choudhury, 2020).

Being in a society surrounded by informational technologies at all times, it is only natural that people would eventually advance into working mainly virtually. Considering the world sustainability and people’s needs, we see the importance for organisations to prepare themselves for this option. This section will analyse the literature regarding the theme and variables that can influence it.

2.1. Defining and analysing Remote Work

Di Martino and Wirth (1990) define and explain terms as telework, telecommuting, remote work and others, as referring to an arrangement that allows working from someplace else rather than the organisational office by making use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Sullivan, 2003). Terms such as “work from home” (WFH), “remote work”, and “work from anywhere” (WFA) are more current and broadly used since they do not impose geographical limitations on its definition (Kniffin *et al.*, 2021).

Until recently, the practice has been used, mainly for tech organisations or high-skilled employees, who are able to perform their work digitally (European Commission Science Centre, 2020). Some organisations have also been adopting it as a way to offer flexible work arrangements and a better work-life balance to their employees (Hill *et al.*, 2008).

Even though most people had never had experience with RW before (European commission science centre, 2020; Savić, 2020), organisations had to adhere to RW within days to cope with the

pandemic's restrictions (Aurelia and Momin, 2020), ignoring previous obstacles and scepticism (Bloom *et al.*, 2015).

Nevertheless, this helped to draw and form a new culture for the society (Varadkar cited in Wall, 2021), which has led to one of the main questions that helped formulate this study: “will RW be our new normal?”. Many authors such as Choudhury (2020), Savić (2020) and Guyot and Sawhill (2020) do agree that this indeed will become a normality for society. Companies like Twitter, Facebook, Fujitsu and Siemens have already announced the permanent adoption of the practice (Block, 2020; Choudhury, 2020).

The Irish Government has also demonstrated support for the practice since 2019, when they issued the report “Remote Working in Ireland” (Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, 2019). More recently, the Irish Tánaiste Varadkar and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, released the “Making Remote Work – National Remote Work Strategy” (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021), aiming to provide a Code of Practice with policies and regulations for the implementation of RW, and encouraging local companies into adhering it after the pandemic. The plan also covers taxation policies, investments on new working hubs across the country, the right to request RW, the ‘Right to Disconnect’ and sets a minimum mandatory percentage of the public sector to be working remotely.

Curiously, different from the government positioning, the practice was not a priority in Ireland (Caulfield, 2015), but has changed a lot through the last couple of years. According to a CSO survey, at least 34% of the population affected by the pandemic started to work remotely (CSO, 2020).

Therefore, after understanding what RW is and the scenario, it is necessary to know how it can influence employees and employers, to finally comprehend the influence it can have on retention strategies. It is also crucial to keep in mind that as each individual is unique and each experience can be influenced by different factors, leading people into forming different opinions regarding the practice (Moore, 2006).

2.2. Remote Working: Advantages and Disadvantages

2.2.1. Work-life Balance, Flexibility and Environmental Benefits

Undeniably, one of the factors that mostly influence people to choose remote working is the greater autonomy and flexibility it can provide (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Dittes *et al.*, 2019;

Moore, 2006). Hill, Ferris and Martinson (2003) study comparing three different styles of workplaces note that sometimes people may be more productive during non-conventional hours. Being able to perform both work tasks and personal/house chores altogether, can also allow people to reach a better work-life balance (Hill *et al.*, 2003). RW can also enable a healthier lifestyle (Moore, 2006) and reduce work-family conflicts (Guyot and Sawhill, 2020).

Studies link RW to productivity and performance increase, as is shown by many authors (e.g.: Hill *et al.*, 2003; Di Martino and Wirth, 1990; Martin and MacDonnell, 2012; Bloom *et al.*, 2015; Savić, 2020). This increase has been considered a result from the better flexibility that employees have to manage their schedule, along with the less time commuting (Milder, 2020) and a decrease of breaks and days off (Bloom *et al.*, 2015).

RW is also known to allow people to live anywhere, enabling them to avoid massive and chaotic cities since they do not need to live closer to their job, which consequently increases their life quality (Milder, 2020). The new trend “Digital Nomads” also uses this ideology, where people work solely with jobs that do not bind them to one place, continuously allowing them to travel as it pleases them (Hanes, 2020).

Similarly, the “boomerangers”, people who move back to the countryside looking for a sense of community or looking to stay closer to family, are also benefited by RW (Milder, 2020; Hanes, 2020; Choudhury, 2020). This migration from main urban centres can also result in potential new investments in small towns and rural areas (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021). For organisations, this opens the alternative to recruiting talents without geographical limitation, opening a new window of possibilities (Milder 2020).

Moreover, equally significant not only for organisations and employees, but for the world in its totality, is the reduction in vehicle carbon emissions promoted by the less commuting time RW can provide (Bloom *et al.*, 2015 and Choudhury, 2020). Leading to a reduction in climate impacts and commuting costs, being both financial and time-related (McCarthy *et al.*, 2020b).

Finally, RW is also linked to other benefits including: better commitment (Martin and MacDonnell, 2012), new leadership forms (Dittes *et al.*, 2019), job satisfaction and an increase in retention levels (Savić, 2020). However, Gajendran and Harrison (2007) note that most of these benefits occur in normal situations, which is different from what organisations find themselves currently.

2.2.2. Remote Working Limitations

Before Covid-19, organisations were especially hesitant in adhering to RW due to the belief that they would not exert the same control over employees as they can in the office (Hill *et al.*, 2003; Kniffin *et al.*, 2021). Until recently, the practice was viewed with scepticism and sarcastically described as “shirking from home” (Bloom *et al.*, 2015) and “working remotely, remotely working.” (Bloom, 2020).

Bloom *et al.* (2015) studied the application of RW in a Chinese call centre. Its results showed that, even though most employees initially approved the practice, 49% preferred to return to the office at the end of the research. The explanation for this was that remote working increased the employees’ isolation and loneliness, as the practice lacked the socialisation provided by the office and the socialisation after-work.

Another consequence noticed was that the practice could also negatively impact promotions and career development. A BCO (2020) survey highlighted that a majority of 71% of employees found that working in the office provided an environment favourable to developing networks and ensuring learning and development.

The lack of physical interaction that people have in the office may also affect communication between employees. Decreasing the efficacy of team interactions, brainstorming, problem-solving, and even mentoring and employee evaluation (Choudhury, 2020). To prevent this, organisations are already working to improve communications technologies and help remote workers connect better among themselves (Semuels, 2020). Qualio, an American company that embraced RW in 2016, aiming to reduce the lack of social interaction, promoted the adoption of apps that allow one-on-one meetings and other kinds of unrelated work chats between employees (Semuels, 2020).

People working remotely can also display the tendency for working overtime, affecting hours where they usually were off and causing “Digital Burnout” (McCarthy *et al.*, 2020b). The “Right to Disconnect” was a response to this overtime, and is now being applied globally. In Ireland, it is being implemented as a part of the Working Time Act 1997 (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021).

The pandemic can be seen as a massive experiment of working remotely (Banjo *et al.*, 2020), to which most organisations had to reevaluate and adapt quickly (Towers-Clark, 2020). After considering the positive and negative sides of the practice, organisations and governments are

examining a new hybrid approach, mixing the best of both environments, which will be discussed later (Partridge, 2020).

2.3. Using Remote Work in the Retention Strategies

2.3.1. Retention Definition

According to many authors, employee retention focuses on practices that will lower levels of employees' turnover intentions (e.g. Taylor, 2002 and Darcy, O'Donoghue and Liu, 2019). Taylor, a leading author on the subject, infers that high levels of turnover "represents a loss of valuable human capital in various forms, including knowledge, skills and also social capital (i.e., contacts and high trust personal relationships built up over time)" (Taylor, 2019, p.298).

Taylor (2002) also suggests that retention practices involve employer branding, providing favourable working conditions, rewarding programs and pay equity. Ivana (2020) adds that, so far, most retention practices used by organisations were related to recruitment and selection, training and development, and performance and reward management.

There is a new tendency to adopt more intangible rewards, providing meaningful work and assisting employee's career development, especially regarding new generations (Smith and Aaker, 2013; Thibault-Landry, Schweyer and Whillans, 2017). Organisations listed nowadays as the best places to work offer a wide range of rewards, varying from tangible to intangible, depending on their employee's profile (Thibault-Landry *et al.*, 2017).

Even so, if the organisation's turnover levels are high, employees and potential recruiters can see that as a bad sign, impacting attraction and retention efficacy. Moreover, considering that the ongoing "War for Talent" happening between organisations (Chambers *et al.*, 1998) has now lost the geographical barriers due to RW (Milder, 2020), having good branding can make a difference.

Considering that job satisfaction levels can impact our life quality and turnover intentions, organisations with successful retention programs can avoid the high employee replacement costs (Darcy, O'Donoghue and Liu, 2019). Therefore, understanding the employees' needs can assist employers in searching for more ways to attract and retain their talents.

2.3.2. Remote Working and Retention Strategies

Until now, organisations used to offer RW in their rewards program to increase their employees' autonomy and flexibility, allowing them to manage better work and family responsibilities (Moen, Kelly and Hill, 2011; Shockley and Allen, 2010). Hence, employees would reach a better work-life balance without losing effectiveness and turnover intentions would drop.

Gajendran and Harrison's (2007) paper studies the connection that RW has with the overall individual performance and behaviour, seeking to understand if the practice can influence job satisfaction, performance, turnover intention, role stress and perceived career prospect. Their results show a positive correlation between the practice and the factors researched, including better autonomy and work-life balance, which led to a reduction of turnover levels in some organisations (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

In another perspective, RW can also be considered an option for employees who require maternity leave, some kinds of sick leave, and even when they are close to retirement (Di Martino and Wirth, 1990). Additionally, as mentioned previously, it removes geographical barriers, allowing employees to live anywhere and organisations to increase their talent pools.

However, according to Bloom *et al.* (2015), the employees' performance in RW is linked to their choice to be working from home and not an imposed decision. In other words, people need to choose to work remotely, which was not possible since employees were forced to adhere to it during the pandemic. Nevertheless, RW allowed organisations to continue functioning and prevented the termination of many businesses and jobs (Towers-Clark, 2020; Bloom, 2020).

2.4. How COVID-19 influenced RW

Covid-19 is an unprecedented event with no barriers that impacted people globally (McFarland *et al.*, 2020). Some authors see it as an unprecedented RW experiment (Kramer and Kramer, 2020; Banjo *et al.*, 2020) that allowed the implementation of the practice rapidly and avoided old cultures and mindsets that before would reject it (Richter, 2020).

The pandemic itself caused an alarming increase of around 30% in stress, anxiety, fear and depression levels, leading people to psychological crises (Salari *et al.*, 2020). Along with the fear generated by the virus, the stress aggravated by factors as limited access to child-care support

(OECD, 2020), high volume of video-conferences employees were put through, and loss of social contact (Richter, 2020), influenced on levels of productivity (Morikawa, 2020).

Nevertheless, it is vital to outline that, in typical situations, RW is not linked to an increase of these negative perceptions (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007). The lockdown experience and stress levels made the practice to be perceived as tiresome (Richter, 2020) and removed the feeling of autonomy RW usually provides (Anderson and Kelliher 2020).

The pandemic forced people to combine both working and living environments. In other situations, people could use hubs or even coffee shops to work remotely, which would enable a distinction of environments (Kniffin *et al.*, 2021) and better differentiation of working times, avoiding working overtime (Hill *et al.*, 2003). To avoid this, the Irish government decided to implement “The Right for Disconnection”, as stated previously in this chapter.

Finally, RW was adopted to ensure people’s continuous wellbeing and safety concerning Covid-19 (Aurelia and Momin, 2020). Nevertheless, the loneliness generated by the lack of social interaction impacted people in a way that, even though some people still long to continue working remotely, some also want to go back to the offices. In this scenario, we see how the Mixed Approach can meet people’s requests.

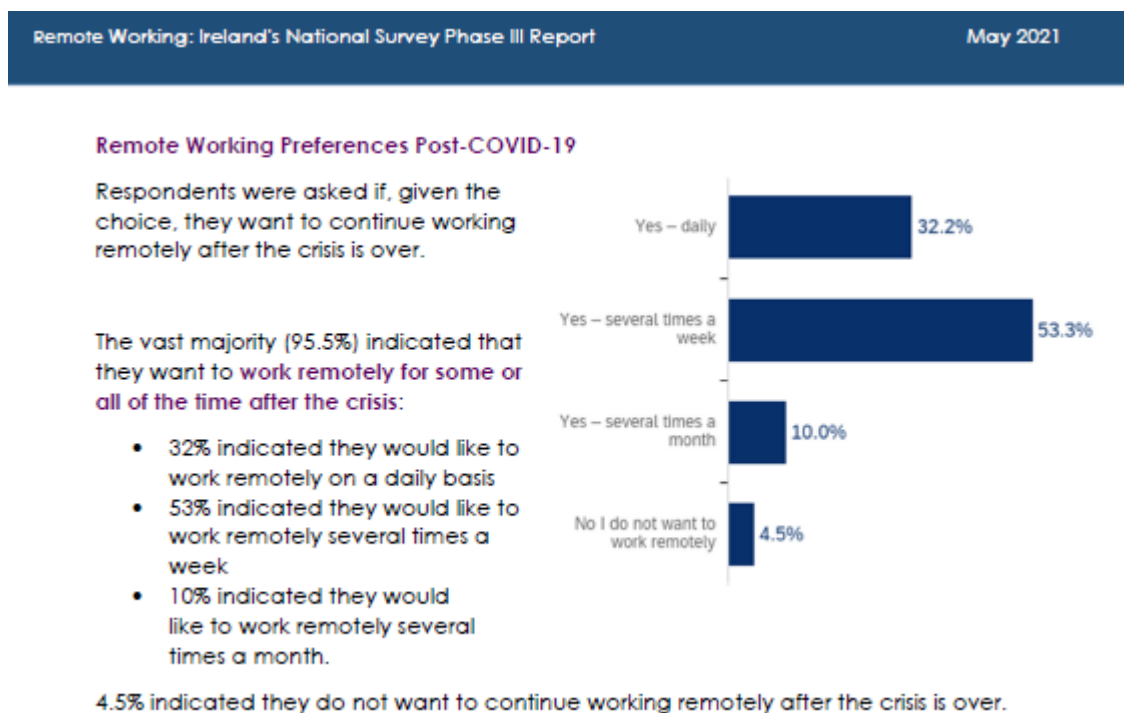
2.5. A New Trend: Mixed Approaches

Who would say that the five-minute coffee break employees take would matter that much nowadays? The pandemic showed us that these small interactions people have during work time are rather significant. Some organisations, worried that the lack of them could impact employees’ relations, started to suggest practices like “virtual morning teas” and “after work (social) zooming” (Richter, 2020) whilst the pandemic continues. However, it is expected for organisations to tackle this problem with more options.

A BCO (2020) survey showed that, in Britain, 46% of the participants stated that they would prefer to split their work between the two environments. They also highlighted the importance of the office environment for socialisation and career development, learning, and networking. As for Ireland, according to McCarthy *et al.* (2021 – see Figure 1) survey, 95.5% of the participants would prefer to continue RW after the lockdown. From this percentage, 53.3% of them prefer to continue working remotely several days per week.

Considering these numbers, it is noticeable that people will not be returning to regular working hours as before (Partridge, 2020; Miller, 2020). However, they are also tired of being confined at home and longing for interaction and socialisation. Observing this, some organisations started to consider a mixed approach, in which employees mix both remote and office environments (Bloom, 2020; Partridge, 2020). The idea is to make use of the positive sides of both approaches, maintaining the autonomy and flexibility of RW and ensuring socialisation, integration and the structure provided by the office (Guyot and Sawhill, 2020).

Figure 1. People’s preferences after Covid-19



Source: McCarthy *et al.* (2021, p.9)

Organisations that have already started to adopt RW may have a competitive advantage over the companies that do not offer this option yet. In this thought, we outline the importance of studying RW and the Mixed Approach.

2.6. The importance of “Disconnection”

Studies showed that people tend to work more when working remotely. Since organisations have a duty of care with their employees’ wellbeing including stress-related situations, as specified by the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (Ireland, 2005), it is necessary to address this problem.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, “The Right to Disconnect” is a set of practices that aims to prevent people from extrapolating working times when working remotely and guaranteeing that their working times will not impact their family and maintain the work-life balance (McCarthy *et al.*, 2020b). The policy is already being implemented in France, the Netherlands, Finland and New Zealand (Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, 2019).

McCarthy *et al.* 's Phase III (2021) survey showed that 51% of the respondents worked more hours during the RW in lockdown. They also mention that 64% of the participants mentioned to be responding to emails out of work time (McCarthy *et al.*, 2020a). This issue led to 70% of them feeling that it was important for the organisations to ensure they would not be penalised for not responding to emails out of their working hours.

Consequently, if organisations want to adopt RW as a way to offer more autonomy, flexibility and work-life balance for their employees, they need to ensure that their employees would not fear being penalised for not replying to emails when they are not on official working time or not working unusual hours. Otherwise, the whole proposition of the practice would be contradicted.

2.7. Conclusion

Indeed, people changed during the lockdown, and organisations will need to continue restructuring to retain their talents effectively. The quarantine forced people to stay apart, but this can also bring people closer once this is over. Working remotely was forced on us, but it also supported hundreds of employees and employers to continually maintain financial income during these challenging times (Milder, 2020).

Since organisations were forced to re-evaluate their structures and establish new strategies and practices (Towers-Clark, 2020), there is a need to analyse how they can use RW. After pondering the available literature regarding the subjects and noticing a gap in linking RW as a Retention Strategies, this paper investigates the possibilities of these new approaches for both organisations and employees. Following the definitions and organisational positioning mentioned in this section, the next chapter will position this study on the subject.

3. Research Objectives and Methodology

This section will now approach the research objectives and methodology employed in this study, describing the methods and samples used and how and why they were chosen.

3.1. Research Question and Objectives

After analysing the literature available, it was noted that, even though this subject is relevant for organisations, there is still a gap linking RW with Retention Strategies. To help in filling this gap, this paper proposes to research how organisations can use RW as a retention practice in the society after COVID-19, aiming and restricting the research to Dublin/Ireland.

The Research Objective is to analyse and compare views from individuals who had experience with RW during the lockdown. The groups chosen to participate in the research belonged to five different targeted companies and a different group from untargeted companies. Using these opinions and experiences and current literature, this research aimed to draw, discuss, and suggest possible strategies organisations may adopt to support their retention practices.

From this perspective, the main Research Question was defined as: *‘How can organisations use the employee perspective of the Remote Work experience in Ireland during the pandemic to draw effective Retention Strategies?’*. This study has an interpretivist nature, seeking to understand the influence RW can impose on employees and if it can be effectively used as a retention strategy.

The following set of objectives were outlined from the main question. They aimed to guide the research and target main points that needed to be addressed and compared to the available literature, in order to reach the main goal of the study:

- Understand if RW has influenced flexibility, work-life balance and job-satisfaction, consequently improving turnover intention levels.
- Review obstacles imposed by RW and investigate suggestions of possible countermeasures that would aid organisations to implement the practice effectively.
- Investigate respondent’s perspective and positioning regarding the “Mixed Approach”.
- Analyse the importance of the “Need for Disconnection” according to respondents’ perspective.

- Analyse each respondent's perception regarding Remote Working in Ireland during the pandemic and their views for the future and compare with other organisations employees' opinion.

These objectives were drawn accordingly with literature research, prioritising elements that were outlined as meaningful by other authors as: work-life balance, flexibility, mixed approach and the "Right for Disconnection".

The following section will discuss the methodology used to reach these objectives.

3.2. Research Philosophy

The research philosophy can be understood as to how the researcher believes that the knowledge can be developed in the chosen field and how he/she addresses the research question (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Saunders *et al.* (2019) propose the "Research Onion", a representation of types of philosophies, approaches, methodologies, strategies and procedures that can be adopted whilst designing the research.

The literature displays that research is divided into two different philosophical perspectives: ontological and epistemological. The first one questions the nature of reality and of our ways of being (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019) and branches into objectivism and constructivism/subjectivism. Objectivism focuses on realism (Saunders *et al.*, 2019), positioning social phenomena independent of social factors (Bryman and Bell, 2011). While subjectivism embraces nominalism, suggesting that "social reality is made from perceptions and consequent actions of social actors" (Saunders *et al.*, 2019, p.137).

Contrary to that, the epistemological perspective questions how we perceive knowledge and how this knowledge is developed. It divides into positivism and interpretivism (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Positivism suggests that the knowledge's legitimacy relies on the possibility of the phenomena to be observed and measured (Bryman and Bell, 2011), focusing on studying social reality by using natural sciences (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

The interpretivism philosophy considers the individuals different from phenomena, as they create meaning. Its main objective is to investigate these meanings (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Bryman and Bell (2011) infer that for interpretivism, it is necessary to differentiate individuals from objects of the natural sciences and that the researchers' task is to understand the meaning of these relations.

After analysing all these possible research options and considering the theme proposed in this study and the questions it seeks to answer, the approach chosen is an epistemological philosophy with an interpretivist perspective. This choice derives from the need to collect detailed, subjective and descriptive data regarding the participants' experiences and opinions about RW, which can be provided by this type of research (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998 and Bryman, 2004; both cited in Heath and Tynan, 2010), allowing to draw, or not, a connection between the two variables studied.

3.3. Research Approach

The choice of the approach that will be used in the research can influence the strategies and methodologies used in the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). There are mainly two types of approaches that can be considered during an investigation: deductive and inductive.

According to O'Reilly (2012), a deductive approach begins with a pre-developed or an existing theory that will be tested accordingly with the hypothesis suggested by the researcher and proved right or wrong during the project. Contrarily, the induction approach does the inverse trajectory, starting by collecting data and then forming a theory from the analysis of the research findings.

Considering that there is an exploratory nature to the question proposed by this research, seeking to investigate how an event has influenced people and how organisations can use this experience to improve their retention practices, the inductive approach was chosen as a development approach. The Grounded Theory methodology was also chosen to develop a theory derived from the questions and the research findings, attaining a deeper understanding of the meanings people allocate to events (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

3.4. Research Design

Saunders *et al.* (2019) explain that, according to their "Research Onion", the design refers to the research's overall plan, which relates to quantitative and qualitative methodologies, or a mix of both. The research strategies refer to the data collection method and data analysis method chosen.

When choosing the design, it is necessary to consider that the selected approaches can also influence the design selection. O'Reilly (2012) suggests that, mostly, deductive approaches are more

suitable with quantitative research, and consequently, inductive approaches match better with qualitative research.

In a simplified description, we can say that quantitative research concentrates on studying and analysing the ‘facts’ by mainly inquiring ‘what?’ and collecting numerical data (Barnham, 2015; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Whereas qualitative research worries about reaching a deeper level of knowledge when using interrogative questions as ‘why?’ (Barnham, 2015).

In order to choose the type of study properly, it is necessary to draw the research design’s purpose. Saunders *et al.* (2019) explain that these purposes can be exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, or even a mix of these. Since this study investigates the relationship between the two variables, RW and Retention Strategies, we can define it as explanatory in nature (McGregor, 2018).

However, the research can also be described as an exploratory study, which seeks to understand the phenomena studied, gaining insights about it by using open questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Since the research proposes to understand better how the remote working experience impacted society during the Covid-19 lockdown and how organisations can cope with these changes, it can fit as both exploratory and explanatory.

Therefore, considering the need for in-depth data that would adequately answer the questions and objectives proposed in the Research Question chapter and the explanatory/exploratory purposes of the research, a qualitative design was chosen for this study.

3.5. Research Strategy

Following Saunders *et al.* (2019) methodology, each kind of research requires a different strategy. To adapt to participant’s requirements, the method chosen for this study is a self-completion online questionnaire focusing on open-ended questions. Although it is an unusual choice for qualitative research, authors as Braun and Clarke (2020), well-known for their “Six Phases of Thematic Analysis” (2006), advocates its use to acquire qualitative data.

According to them, even though this technique faces its disadvantages (explained in the “Limitations” section), it is still an effective tool. It allows the researcher to collect and understand in-depth data, like experiences and perspectives, especially regarding sensitive topics (also in Terry and Braun, 2017; and Albudaiwi, 2018). It offers the participants a high level of flexibility, allowing

them to choose the best time to answer the survey (Braun and Clarke, 2020). Additionally, it allows the participants to answer the questions however they see fit and take the time to understand and think about their answer without constraints (Terry and Braun, 2017).

As examples of this method's use in other areas, they cite Davey, Clarke and Jenkinson (2019) "Living with alopecia areata: an online qualitative survey study", and Jowett and Peel (2009) "Chronic Illness in Non-heterosexual Contexts: an online survey of experiences". Both articles seek to collect people's experiences and opinions regarding their particular themes.

As an example of the qualitative questionnaire approach related to a similar theme suggested by this study, we can cite the University of Aberdeen's 'Remote Work in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic' survey, elaborated by Irwin *et al.* (2020); which included both qualitative and quantitative types of research and was conducted among the university's staff with the purpose of aiding on the university's planning and development for guidelines post-pandemic. A second example is the DTU Management, Technical University of Denmark's 'Experiences of working from home in times of Covid-19' survey by Ipsen, Kirchner and Hansen (2020), which also involved both qualitative and quantitative data, seeking to assess the first impressions the population had after working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Finally, though a mono-method data collection design was chosen for this research, a few objective questions were added to the questionnaire, allowing the collection of extra data required for some of the research objectives. The second purpose of these questions was to build a user-friendly questionnaire, hoping to retain the participant's attention.

3.6. Sampling Strategy

Once defined the strategies to be used whilst researching, the next step is determining the target population, the group of individuals that fit any requirements that the research may hold (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). A sampling frame can be set from the target population, and from them, sampling units can be selected (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019).

Different from the other types of qualitative research (i.e. interviews, qualitative surveys), the qualitative online survey requires a larger sample size but still smaller than quantitative research (Braun *et al.*, 2020).

The main inclusion/exclusion criteria used to select the population sample was the requirement of having RW experience during the lockdown in organisations based in Dublin/Ireland. To reach this population, the sampling method used was a non-probability sampling, where the sampling is designated by using selection methods that target the population that meet the criteria necessary, instead of random sampling (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). The second criteria that needed to be met to fit the comparative purpose of the research were to select people from different organisations, which would provide experiences relevant to the study.

The technique used to reach the sample required was a mix of self-selection purpose technique and snowball technique. The purpose sampling is when the researcher selects the sample units that, according to his/her judgement, would fit better the research requirements (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The snowball technique is when the participant selected by the researcher recommends new possible candidates for the research (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019).

Using these two techniques, the researcher contacted one employee from five different well-known organisations through “LinkedIn”. From these five participants, by using the snowball technique, the researcher had access to other potential participants in each organisation.

To compare the experience the participants from these companies had with others, the author also approached a different group of people from diverse companies. Most of these participants belonged to medium-sized organisations and were reached by using the purpose sampling method.

The researcher explained to all participants in this first contact the research purpose (see Appendix 1). After they responded, the author elaborated on how the research was being applied, ensuring that all information was confidential.

3.7. Pilot Study

According to Quinlan *et al.* (2019), the pilot study tests the efficiency of the research’s data collecting instrument. In this case, due to the importance of the pilot study and considering that the questionnaire would collect mainly qualitative data, the researcher opted to implement a pilot testing before moving forward and sending the questionnaire for the sample selected.

The pilot study was performed with a participant whose profile was similar to those selected for the research. The main objective of this procedure was to find any errors during the online

questionnaire, and to define the time duration that the respondents would need to complete the questionnaire properly. The respondent of the pilot study was able to answer it within 30 minutes, but stated that “he could have completed in less time than that”.

3.8. Data Collection Process and Storage

As stated previously, the research’s data collection process chosen was a self-completed online questionnaire. The questionnaire was built by the author, using the platform “Qualtrics” as research instrument. The questions were based on the research objectives, defined in Section 3.1 from this chapter. A set of images exhibiting the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 3.

As the participants were approached through the social media “LinkedIn”, the author tried to connect and build rapport with them by explaining the research, the questionnaire and its purpose and analysing if they would fit the requirements. After that, a link to access the questionnaire was sent to them. All answers were stored in the survey platform, to which only the author had access.

Depending on the depth of the participants’ responses, a necessity to require further information from the respondents would possibly arise (Braun *et al.*, 2020). With that in consideration, a last question was added, enquiring if a follow-up contact could be done in that case and requiring the participant’s email for that, but leaving for the participant to agree to it or not.

3.9. Data Analysis Methods

As per the previous sections, the qualitative nature of the data required an in-depth analysis. The author chose Braun and Clarke’s (2006) Thematic Analysis as the main method for this study, according to Braun *et al.* (2020) suggestion.

By using thematic analysis, the researcher reviews the data looking for patterns that arise throughout the whole data set, connecting them and forming themes that will aid in reaching the research’s results (Saunders *et al.*, 2019; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The method comprises six phases: familiarisation with the data, creating first codes, identifying potential themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes and writing the results (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Following these steps, after a long immersion in the data, codes were generated and linked in potential themes, enabling the composition of the findings and results.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

Between the researcher's responsibilities lies the need to ensure that all of the study's processes are aligned with ethical considerations, especially when the research investigates external participants (interviews, focus groups, observation, surveys, among other types). Saunders *et al.* (2019) explain that the ethical considerations focus on avoiding putting the participants through situations that can impose them to pain, any disadvantage (material or not), any harm or embarrassment.

In order to maintain the ethical standards, Quinlan *et al.* (2019) suggest ensuring the participant's confidentiality and anonymity, keeping in mind not to be too intrusive and to provide all the information they need before they consent to participate in it. Buchanan and Hvizdk (2009) mention that online surveys add challenges as privacy risks and data storage and security.

Considering all these aspects and the Research Design defined previously, most of the ethical aspects to be considered in the research were focused on the type of data collected and how they would be collected and stored.

The author ensured not to demand too much personal information from the participants, guaranteeing to avoid any form of discrimination or embarrassment and maintain ethical requirements. The first two questions of the questionnaire were elaborated as an "Informational Consent Form" (see Appendix 2), explaining the study's purpose and objectives and ensuring that the participant could renounce his/her participation in the research at any moment.

It is imperative to note that, as some questions may relate to employee's turnover intentions, all the processes applied and the data secured followed GDPR, maintaining the participant's information secure and confidential (Ireland. Data Protection Act, 2018). The responses were collected and stored on the online platform "Qualtrics", to which only the researcher has access.

3.11. Limitation of the research

As in any other research, this study also faced many limitations to its research methods and implementation. Due to the small selection of participants, the validity of the findings and recommendations will depend on the organisation's circumstances to be similar to those studied.

The main limitation found during the study process, however, was in the research method. The research proposes to gather qualitative data, although when first approaching participants for the

research, most of the participants stated that they were willing to contribute to it, but only by answering questionnaires, not to engage in an interview. As stated in this chapter previously, even though using questionnaires may generate sufficient data, some authors still point out that building rapport with respondents is essential whilst collecting qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2019).

A second issue that could arise from using an online survey is that, as most of the questions required explanatory answers, the participant may lose interest in writing down everything required and only provide short answers. According to Braun et al. (2020), this is a liability of the method and can prejudice the findings and results of the research. It was also not possible to enquire about new themes that could arise during the participants' responses, as possible during an interview.

Davis *et al.* (2004) also note that using online resources in research can negatively impact its results since it can introduce factors as ambiguities and misunderstandings that may not happen within personal contact.

Lastly, as the theme approached in this study focuses on a considerably new phenomenon for society, the researcher faced a limitation on the literature available regarding the theme.

3.12. Conclusion

After taking into account methodologies definitions and outlining the methodology used to design and perform this study's research in this section, the next chapter will summarize the findings produced by the data analysis.

4. Findings

As the first step of the research results, this chapter will summarize findings from the analysis of the data collected. According to the previous sections, the qualitative data requires a more detailed examination of the meanings and opinions, therefore the decision to use the Thematic Analysis as the data analysis method. Through this method, recurrent subjects and elements were outlined and assembled to form themes relevant to the research during the evaluation of the answers.

4.1. Participants' Profile

The sample targeted in this research, as explained previously, focused on employees that had experience with RW during the Covid-19 lockdown in Ireland. The research respondents belonged to areas that would fit that requirement, as IT, human resources, operations, and others alike. The roles varied from analysts, managers, engineers and coordinators, among others.

In total, there were 27 participants from 7 different groups as per Figure 2. Each participant was given a code, from P1 to P27, which will be used to describe each of them during the analysis.

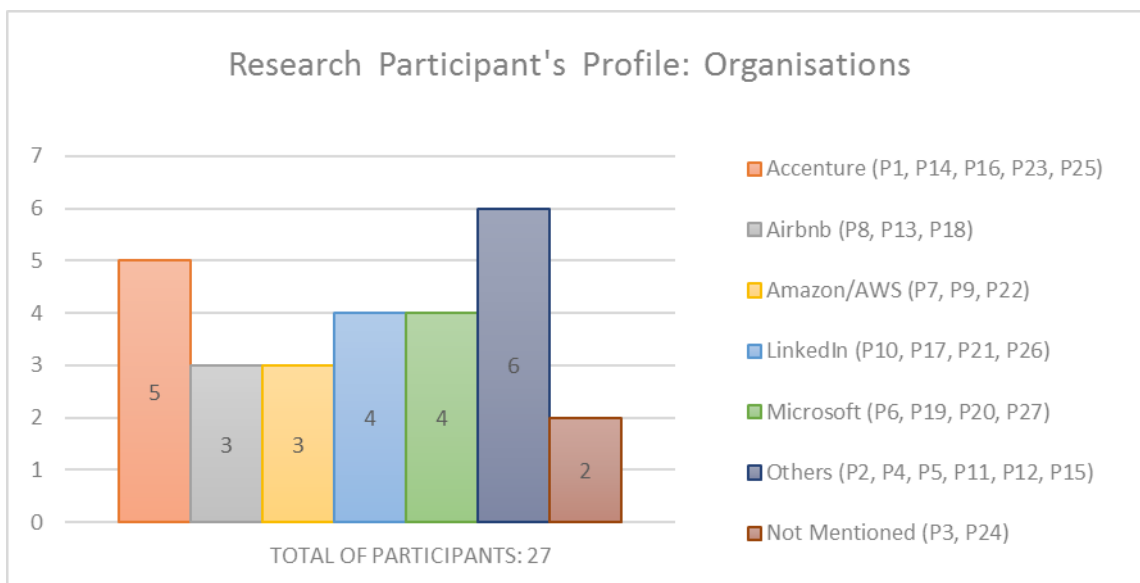


Figure 2. Outline of organisational groups in the research

From these participants, 46% of them had experience with RW before the lockdown, while a slight majority (54%) were experiencing it for the first time (see Figure 3).

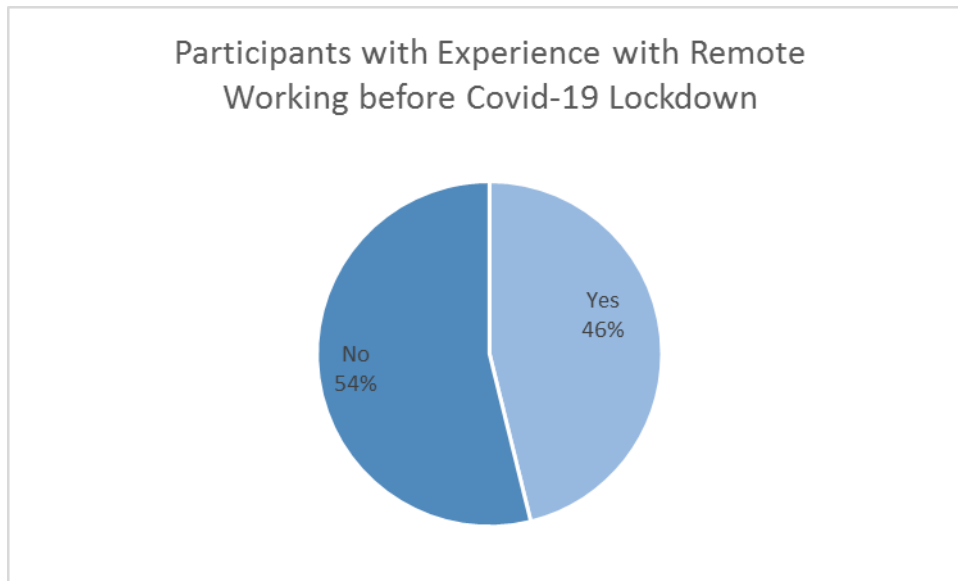


Figure 3. Participants with RW experience before the lockdown

4.2. Thematic Analysis

By using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) Thematic Analysis, the participant’s answers were revised several times, which enabled the author to find and highlight frequent topics mentioned by several respondents.

The first analysis resulted in a group of nearly 20 codes, which were analysed, refined and grouped into four themes, as detailed below:

- Theme 1: Flexibility and Work-life Balance
- Theme 2: Increased Productivity
- Theme 3: Barriers and Limitations to Remote Working
 - Sub-theme 3.1: The lack of Social Interactions and Networking
 - Sub-theme 3.2: Work/home Barriers and the Right to Disconnect
 - Sub-theme 3.3: Potential Challenges
- Theme 4: The Flexibility to Choose

As indicated, Theme 3 was divided into three sub-groups since all three topics were correlated in nature but had different aspects mentioned by different participants, which will be accessed below.

4.2.1. Theme 1: Flexibility and Work-life Balance

During the analysis of the participant's answers, the first element noticed was that the vast majority of respondents linked RW with flexibility. Some participants described that having more flexibility was one of the main positive points of RW: "*Flexibility on managing your day*" (Participant P18) and "*flexibility in schedule and work location*" (Participant P6). Participant P14 concludes that "*Having flexibility in my schedule is something that is my priority now*".

Another element linked to RW that was clearly noticed throughout the answers, was saving the commuting time. Participant P3 mentioned that "*Life without commuting is great (...) I can now enjoy extra time at home in the mornings and after work, I also enjoy being able to eat lunch at home, typically a freshly cooked meal*". While participant P8 added, "*I feel that you can do more things (like studying) when you don't need to commute*".

It was evident for the participants that having more flexibility and saving commuting time allowed them to have more time to focus on other personal activities and their own health, consequently increasing work-life balance. This can be illustrated by the chart below (Figure 4), and it was also noted by participant P8, who stated that "*You have more free time to focus on your wellbeing and health*", who also added: "*I feel more in control of my life with remote working*".

For participant P22, RW could provide "*better work-life balance, as you spend no time on transport*". Likewise, participant P2 stated that "*being able to do house chores during my lunch break improved my relaxation time on the weekends*".

Participant P17 complemented that, along with flexibility and time and energy saved from commuting, RW also offered the "*Ability to balance work and personal life. Being able to spend more time with family and friends*".

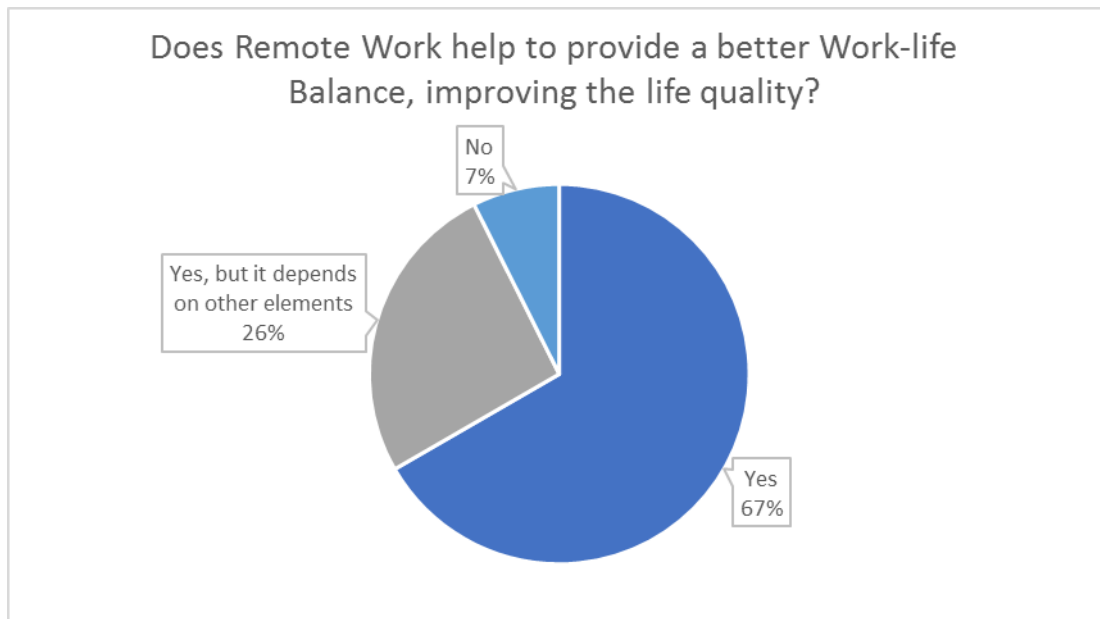


Figure 4. RW influence in Work-life Balance

Another element mentioned connected with the flexibility was the possibility of living anywhere and travelling at any time. Participant P13 mentioned that RW offers “*the possibility to work from anywhere (larger sense of freedom in that way)*” and added that “*I would love to have the flexibility to work for 6 months in a country, and 6 months somewhere else, having the flexibility to keep performing in my job, while finding true happiness and freedom a personal level, without the frustration of my life being fully defined by a work place*”.

In the same line, participant P6 mentioned that remote working can attract employees “*as many people nowadays are willing to move to quieter places or keep in the move (digital nomads)*”. Also, participant P21 noted, “*a lot of people from outside Dublin could have the opportunity to move back to their home town while still working for the same company or a company that allows them to work remotely*”.

Along with that, participant P2 adds that “*Tech workers can work for any company in the world and being able to not be stuck on a place is the beauty of being a tech worker*”.

Considering the groups comparatively, as mentioned at the beginning of this theme, most of the participants had a similar view of RW related to flexibility and aiding in employee well-being and work-life balance.

4.2.2. Theme 2: Increased Productivity

Another theme observed in the analysis involved an increase in productivity noted by some participants. It was also noted that this increase was not only related to having more flexibility and saving commuting time, but also with being in a more comfortable environment.

Participant P3 exemplifies that by stating: *“if you have a quiet environment at home, is great for concentration”*.

While for participant P23, RW can be considered a *“very comfortable”* way to work since you are in your own space and can wear what you prefer, which, along with the time saved with no commuting, can influence productivity.

Similarly, participant P13 notes that, while working remotely, *“I felt way more productive on a daily basis” (no distractions, less breaks to help colleagues, which now text with enquiries and can be accessed when there is time, no commute = more energy and sleep longer)*. Moreover, participant P9 corroborates this by mentioning *“Less distractions, increase in productivity”*, and participant P19 concludes: *“I find I am more productive working remotely”*.

For some participants, being able to manage their own time was one of the main benefits of the practice. And, although they were not explicitly mentioned by the participants, they are factors that can influence employee performance.

Likewise, participant P13 added an important note relating RW with employer/employee relations, stating that it was *“easier to focus and more productivity, having the sense of being trusted in performing my job”*. Which is also mentioned by participant P10.

When questioned about their opinion regarding the increase or not of productivity and job satisfaction levels when working remotely (see Figure 5 below), of the 27 participants, 18 pointed that they strongly agree with that statement. Whilst none of the participants disagreed with it, one of them selected *“Neither agree nor disagree”*, and the remaining eight opted for *“Somewhat agree”*.

Although most of the participants agreed that remote working positively influenced productivity some of them still mentioned factors that it could negatively impact that matter: *“I like the office space without family distractions”* (Participant P21).

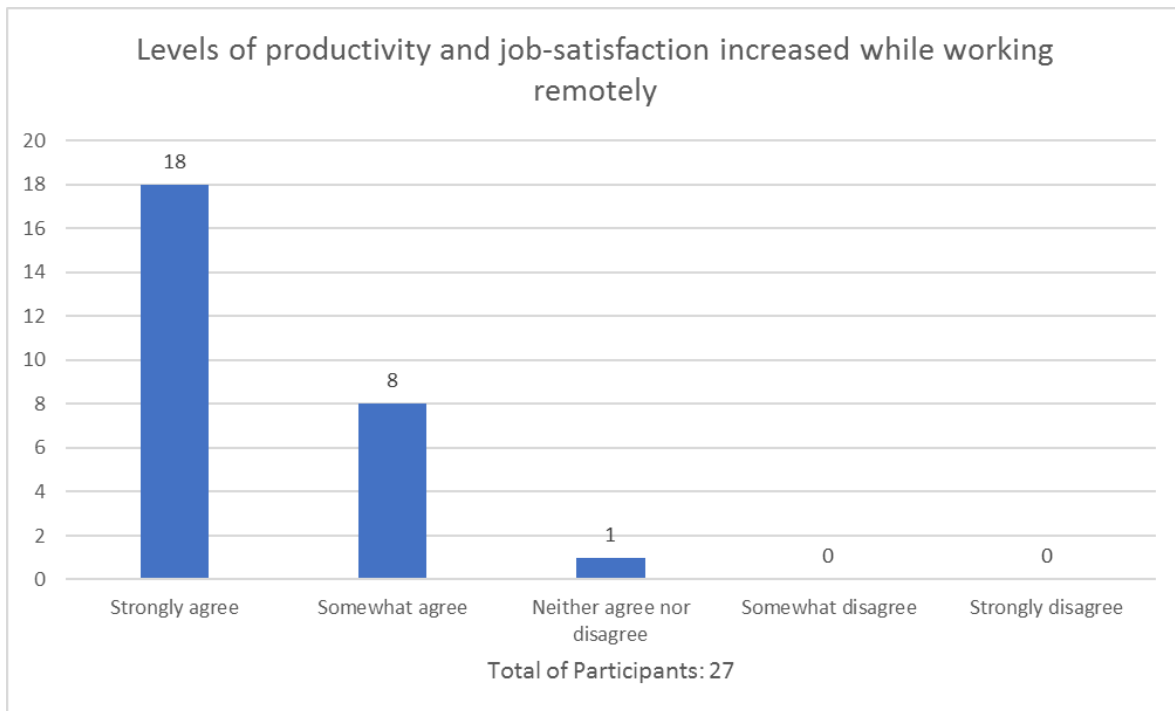


Figure 5. RW influence in productivity and job-satisfaction levels

Alongside that, the next section will also demonstrate other distractions and negative influences for employees whilst working remotely.

4.2.3. Theme 3: Barriers and Limitations to Remote Working

As per one of the research objectives, there was a need to investigate the limitations and problems employees can/have faced during remote working. The approach chosen for this investigation was to list a set of possible challenges they might have faced (to which they could choose more than one answer). Through that, the author was able to build the chart in Figure 6, which shows the number of respondents that selected each option.

After considering the information provided by the chart alongside other information provided throughout the answers, it was clear that the participants emphasized the lack of social interaction and the work/home barrier. However, some other factors were also pointed out throughout the answers, enabling the composition of the three sub-themes below.

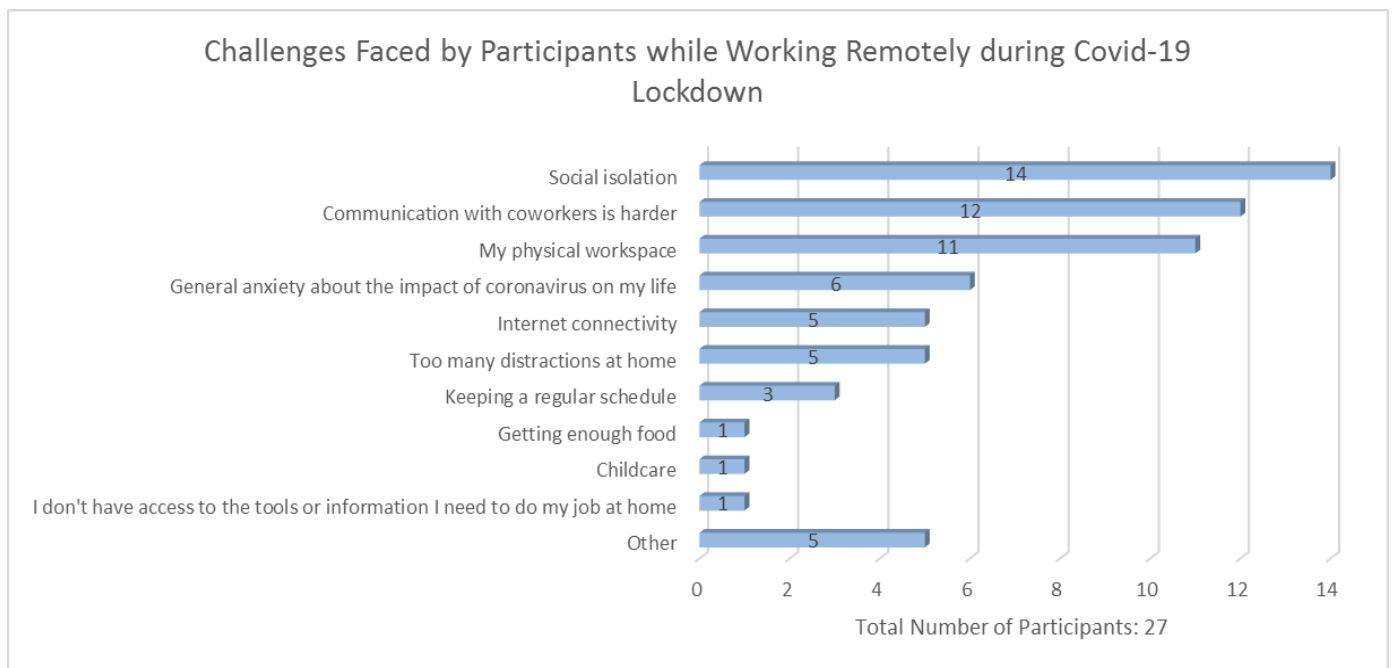


Figure 6. Challenges faced by participants

4.2.3.1. Sub-Theme 3.1: The lack of Social Interactions and Networking

As demonstrated by Figure 6, Social interaction was indeed what most affected the participants during their time working remotely. Most of the participants also mentioned this factor as an issue for the future of the practice and an element that might influence their decision to adhere to RW, opting for returning to the office or adopting a mixed approach.

Participants P9 mentions to “*miss the social interaction with colleagues*” and participant P1 that notes that “*we miss a lot not having a social interaction and changing ideas at work. The human quality of interaction isn’t the same virtually*”.

Along with them, participant P18 adds: “*I do miss going on lunch with my workmates and have chats etc.*”. These findings enable us to see the importance of the small daily interactions that the office can provide.

Participant P7 points out that “*Some meetings work better face to face*”, and in the same line, participant P22 notes: “*I believe I could be more productive if could meet my team from time to time*”. These findings show a concern that the team’s productivity may be affected if maintaining RW.

Following this note, a problem that was also mentioned by some participants was the communication difficulty within their team and with others too. This issue is also demonstrated by

Figure 6, in which “Communication with co-workers is harder” ranked the second option most chosen. Additionally, participant P3 stated: *“Keep the communication flowing is very difficult, as well as to onboard people who joined the company fully remote. Companies should have transparent and efficient communication channels that allow people to engage, meet the people who they're working with”*.

Being able to know the colleagues and teammates can also influence the team’s productivity since they develop trust in each other, as according to participant P6: *“The face to face interactions help to develop better rapport with co-workers”*.

For participant P14, another important factor is *“being able to meet my colleagues and get to know them would be a very good experience”*. This factor was also mentioned by other participants, and it is essential, especially for new employees, to meet their colleagues and build a relationship.

It is also crucial for the organisation’s management to interact with their employees and for the organisation itself to work as a community. Participant 23 notes that by stating *“I miss mostly the office culture and interaction with the Senior or team lead”*.

On that note, it was also mentioned the possibility to create a network when interacting with other employees in the office. Participant P21 states: *“The work space gives people a chance to interact with other colleagues that are not from their team”*. While participant P16 adds, *“I would prefer to go in to office for better networking as well as for a sense of community”*.

Although most participants supported RW, the lack of social interaction and the difficulty in strengthening networks and professional relationships while working remotely was considered problematic for the participants.

4.2.3.2. Sub-Theme 3.2: Work/home Barriers and the Right to Disconnect

As established in Chapter 2, one of the most worrying issues imposed by the RW practice that needed to be accessed is the inability to disconnect.

The participants were asked about their opinion on the importance of “the Right to Disconnect”, and for the majority of them, the policy is a necessity when adopting RW. Participant P26 said that *“this ensures mental health is balanced”* and participant P19 defined it as *“important for mental and physical health and wellbeing”*.

For participant P7, RW posed positive and negative aspects as it was explained: *“In one hand this gives more time with family, contributing to a better family connection, but in the other hand, it reduces the home/work barrier which can make some people working more hours than supposed to”*.

Nevertheless, the worry or inability to disconnect from work was also mentioned by participant P9, *“feeling as though you’re not fully switched off after work”*; and by participant P20, which stated, *“For me it’s difficult to separate life and work if I’m constantly sharing the same space with my work”*.

Participant P21 comments on the need to continue connected when working remotely: *“employees may feel like they need to check their email or messages, this creates anxiety. It is important to always reinforce that employees are not expected to check or reply to emails after work hours. The same for employees that are working extra hours to get the job done. Managers need to make sure their team has a reasonable workload and that they are able to deliver it”*.

This necessity to continue connected can be demonstrated by what participant P9 mentions: *“I feel pressured to stay logged on until the work is done”*; and by participant P17: *“I find that I am checking my work phone more often”*.

Some respondents mentioned that working in the office and commuting back home actually helped them disconnect and leave work at work. As stated by participant P20: *“I definitely work longer hours when working from home. Being unable to turn myself on/off from work during commute hours creates an anxiety and necessity of constantly having to check my work device for new notifications. When working from the office I usually found it easier to leave the work at work”*.

Similarly, participant P9 states that it is better to have two different environments: *“Better to have a dedicated place for work and when you leave you can mentally disconnect. Your home should be a safe heaven”*. As well as participant P7 that mentions: *“Context switch is also a potential problem as you won’t have time to disconnect your brain from work related pressure before ‘returning’ home”*.

For participant P17, ensuring the Right to disconnect relies on managers, as stated: *“It might be difficult to implement, but I believe that the support of line managers is imperative to roll this out properly”*.

Complementing this point of view, participant P27 mentions the duty of care that the organisation has with their employees: *“now more than ever it is highly important, employees are*

becoming more susceptible to burn out, stress, anxiety and employers have a responsibility and duty of care to have to model and to reinforce this policy as we move towards hybrid working.”

Likewise, participant P13 adds: *“Being working from home, does not mean working all the time, and it is the social and legal responsibility of organisation's leaders to make sure their people are protected, and can be able to detach work time from their personal life, even though the physical spaces where all of it happens can create confusion”*.

On the other hand, some participants also highlighted that it could also be challenging if the organisation has multiple time-zones: *“It is necessary. Often times though it is very difficult for both parties, especially if people on the team are working different hours (either due their personal schedules or different time-zones)”*, mentioned by participant P20.

Participants P9 and P13 also mentioned that they removed work-related apps from their personal devices, and that allows them to disconnect. Although, these findings allow us to see the importance of the organisational culture in relating to this matter.

For participant P18, *“With our company we’re giving wellbeing time off and all sorts of mental health support to support employees to get some time off or away from work. This impacts at least my team in a very positive way as people knows that our company is in fully support on letting us know that if we need to disconnect, we can disconnect”*.

Participant P13 concludes that *“We need to take the time to listen to our people and have these conversations to let them know it's absolutely essential to disconnect, not promoting extra working hours, providing them with all necessary resources to make sure they can log out without working longer. I personally do not have any of my emails or professional apps related on my personal phone, and when off, I'm off”*.

4.2.3.3. Sub-theme 3.3: Other Potential Challenges

This sub-theme focuses on factors and issues mentioned by the respondents that did not fit the two sub-sections above.

One of these elements mentioned throughout the answers was a barrier to knowledge sharing and the difficulty within new employees to be trained remotely. For participant P12, it was one of the main issues faced: *“I started to work at (...) during the pandemic, the most challenging situation was learning from home”*.

Along with that, participant P2 also mentions the lack of support from the organisation: *“More training and knowledge sharing would be the best thing, it's hard to work without support”*. This issue was also cited by other participants, especially regarding connectivity. Participant P11 mentioned a necessity to *“engage with internet providers to improve connection availability in different areas”*. Participant P5 cited the necessity of *“Investing in more technology for connectivity”*. And participant P18 suggested for the organisation to *“have 24/7 IT support for any IT issues”*.

Participant P14 notes that, usually, the adoption phase of RW is the step that faces more difficulties: *“This part of the process (onboarding) was very time-consuming”*.

Although, once the organisation already has good support in place, the employees who adhere to RW tend not to face many challenges regarding that matter. Participant P7 highlights that by stating: *“The company already has a good remote work culture. Tools, home office budget, and especially inclusion are required to overcome every obstacle while working remote”*.

Similarly, participant P10 highlights that, during the lockdown, even though their organisation provided a good support, people can still face difficulties: *“I believe the company took all the measures to support the employees, providing the tools for working from home, sometimes the obstacles come from the individual's personal circumstances”*.

On the same note, participant P24 emphasised the assistance and support provided by the company during the lockdown: *“They have been incredible, always understanding of our potential anxieties and work overload, and gave us some credit to buy office furniture and equipment”*.

Along with these, Figure 6 shows that the physical workspace was elected the third more recurrent challenge faced by the respondents and, along with it, the internet connectivity also affected some participants. Considering these points, we notice how the organisational culture and support can affect the overall RW experience.

Still regarding support, participant P16 mentions that the home environment can be quite distracting and provides the following suggestion: *“Addressing needs for a distraction free space, could be a budget for a closer co-working space or a team meet up, especially on days with deadlines”*. Together with that, 5 of the 27 participants also mentioned that there are too many distractions at home (see Figure 6).

“Anxiety about the impact of Covid-19” was another issue also mentioned as a challenge faced by 6 of the 27 participants (as per Figure 6), even though it was not mentioned by any participants in their text answers.

Some participants also mentioned that they had been experiencing a lack of routine and even “*working longer hours, not taking breaks*” (Participant P9), which could negatively impact their work/mental health.

Participant P13 mentions having faced Zoom exhaustion, a growing problem noticed when the lockdown started: “*is literally tiring for the eyes and can be causing headaches when having zoom meeting all day*”.

Considering the issues pointed in this section, it was noted that, to maintain performance levels, employees expect that organisations ensure any support they need to execute their tasks.

4.2.4. Theme 4: The Flexibility to Choose

During the analysis, a set of different positions regarding the practice were noted. It was possible to perceive that some respondents were entirely on board with RW, whereas some others prefer to continue working in the office.

In a straightforward note, participant P7 defines that RW “*isn’t for everyone*”. For some participants, the lack of social interaction with colleagues was one of the main factors to consider coming back to the office. As participant P21 states: “*I miss the office space and work relationships, it’s also good to switch off personal life while in the office and vice versa*”.

However, other participants were more comfortable with the practice, as participant P8: “*In general I did not have any issues, I kept in touch with my co-workers, maintained my productivity, did not burn out or got over stressed. So, I’m my opinion, I only saw positive things about remote working*”.

One suggestion that stood out through the answers was giving the employees the flexibility to choose whether they work in the office, remotely or a mix of both. This recommendation was strongly advocated by participant P13: “*I believe that organisations need to understand that what works for someone may not work for someone else. Hence, taking a decision such as being only fully remote, or only fully in the office has an impact to attract or retain employees, and will have even a bigger impact now that more people have actually experienced it. For this reason, I believe the smartest choice would be to combine both systems, and to allow people to be fully flexible depending on their needs. This is essential, and again, strategically, allowing people to feel secured and free to*

decide how they want to work, actually allows people to work at their best. they know what works best for them, they know in which circumstances they are the most efficient: so let's give them that".

The participant goes on and adds that even though a mixed approach can solve some of the RW barriers, providing full flexibility for employees can still work better: *"I acknowledge that this would require extra organisation, however on a leadership perspective, I believe this could be possible in my company. I wouldn't like a hybrid system that would force everyone to join 2 days in the office on the same days, because then, my freedom and flexibility would be taken away again, and I would still have to stay most of the year in the same expensive city, same country"*

Sharing the same opinion, participant P21 states, *"I would advise the company to also take the employees conditions into consideration. People have different lifestyle, some live with their parents, some with flatmates and so on. It is impossible to please everyone, but I would like to see a flexible approach to remote work instead of a compulsory decision"*.

Participant P3 also mentions the importance of providing this kind of flexibility for employees: *"some people enjoy working from an office and companies have always offered offices for everyone, why not give the option for those who enjoy remote work? It shouldn't be compulsory and companies should aim to work remote-first so that regardless of where you're working from you can collaborate fully"*.

In a different but yet similar perspective, participant P5 mentions that organisations can adopt a hybrid approach system and still have the same flexibility of the fully remote approach by planning ahead.

For some participants, even though they preferred an office approach, they would still like to have the option to switch for RW: *"It is not top of my priorities and I would be open to work for a company / role that does not offer this. Although it would be nice to be offered the option"* (Participant P9).

These findings provide a better understanding of what employees would prefer, suggesting a different option that can be offered to employees, apart from the ones reviewed in the literature.

4.3. Comparative Analysis

In order to achieve one of the research objectives, a comparative analysis between the organisational groups (as presented in Figure 2) was performed alongside the Thematic Analysis.

The objective was to identify any potential patterns or trends that could have influenced the employees' experience with RW and then compare each group's perspective with the others.

According to the sub-section Other Potential Challenges, the organisation having a RW culture and adequate support for employees can impact their performance and overall experience. Participants from Microsoft, Amazon, Airbnb, and a couple of different organisations on the groups 'Others' and 'Not mentioned' mentioned having excellent support from their organisations, which included providing tools and equipment to encouraging to disconnect after the end-of-shift and providing mental and well-being support:

"They have been incredible, always understanding of our potential anxieties and work overload, and gave us some credit to buy office furniture and equipment." (Participant P24 – Not mentioned).

"My company doesn't have a problem with disconnecting, we are oriented to keep slack and all communications tools on our work computer and not mixture personal items with work items." (Participant P2 – Others).

"The company already has a good remote work culture. Tools, home office budget, and specially inclusion are required to overcome every obstacle while working remote." (Participant P7 - Amazon).

"Currently my issue is space in my accommodation. The company already provided all that I need for working from home." (Participant P4 – Others).

Nevertheless, most groups had participants who also mentioned experiencing problems with communication or some support from their organisations.

Additionally, during the comparison, it was noticed that the participants' perspectives regarding the practice did not seem to follow the same parameters. Even though some participants were from the same organisations, they experienced different challenges according to their situation, as noted by participant P10: *"sometimes the obstacles come from the individual's personal circumstances"*.

These findings allow us to consider that what influences the RW practice is not only what is from the organisation's responsibilities, but it may arise from the employee situation, making his/her circumstance suitable or not to continue working remotely.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter focused on analysing and categorising the participant's views regarding RW into themes. Most of these themes can be linked to topics approached in the literature review, although unexpected elements were brought by the participants.

This data was analysed with Thematic Analysis, forming four main themes: Flexibility and Work-life Balance, Increased Productivity, Barriers and Limitations to RW and Flexibility to Choose. The data collected was also compared in order to find patterns between the groups. Although, this comparison showed that the employee perspective regarding RW mostly depends on their circumstance, not only on what the organisation offers.

These findings and the themes presented in this section will be widely discussed in the next chapter, analysing them accordingly with the objectives proposed by the research.

5. Discussion

Having discussed the data findings in the previous section, this chapter aims to use these findings to address and discuss the objectives proposed in Chapter 3. The discussion will link the findings with the literature, which provide theoretical base to answer the research question and objectives.

5.1. Discussion of Research Objective 1: RW influence in Flexibility and Work-life Balance

The first objective of this study consisted in:

‘Understand if RW has influenced flexibility, work-life balance and job-satisfaction, consequently improving turnover intention levels.’

According to the Findings Chapter, participants sensed that RW provided a wider flexibility, as demonstrated by the first theme.

This relation can also be demonstrated and supported by authors as Bloom *et al.* (2015), Moore (2006) and Hill *et al.* (2003), who suggests that flexibility is not only a positive outcome of the practice, but it also is one of the main reasons why people choose to work remotely. It is possible to connect this through what Participant P14 stated: *“Having flexibility in my schedule is something that is my priority now”*.

According to Figure 4 (which demonstrates the participants’ answers to whether they felt a better work-life balance while working remotely), most participants signalled that they perceived a better work-life balance. Nevertheless, others have also mentioned facing issues such as lack of social interaction or inability to disconnect (as Theme 3 from Findings Chapter describes).

Other researchers have also reached similar conclusions, as it is stated by Moore (2006), Zhang, Yu and Marin (2021) and Hill *et al.* (2003). The latter suggests that RW can provide a better work-life balance and also improve employee performance, although a fully remote practice may negatively influence the employee work-life balance since they might lose the home/work barrier distinction. We see an example of this in the participants’ P7 answer: *“In one hand this gives more time with family, contributing to a better family connection, but in the other hand, it reduces the home/work barrier which can make some people working more hours than supposed to”*.

Theme 2 and Figure 5 in the Findings chapter also provide us with data to conclude that the participants found that their productivity levels have increased during the RW period. Both these findings can be supported by authors as Martin and MacDonnell (2012), Bloom *et al.* (2015) and Wheatley (2012), all suggesting a positive relation between RW and productivity. McCarthy *et al.* (2021), shows the participant's stating an increase of 91% in flexibility and 68% in productivity during lockdown.

A consequence of these elements altogether with the RW practice is the increase of job-satisfaction, as stated by Wheatley (2012) and Gajendran and Harrison (2007), which leads to a decrease in turnover levels. Moen *et al.* (2011) add that having more flexibility decreases employee turnover intentions. Bloom *et al.* (2015) show a connection of RW with a higher productivity and a reduction in absenteeism and turnover intentions.

When questioned if they would change organisations to continue working remotely, the majority of the participants of this study answered affirmatively, as per the chart below (Figure 7).

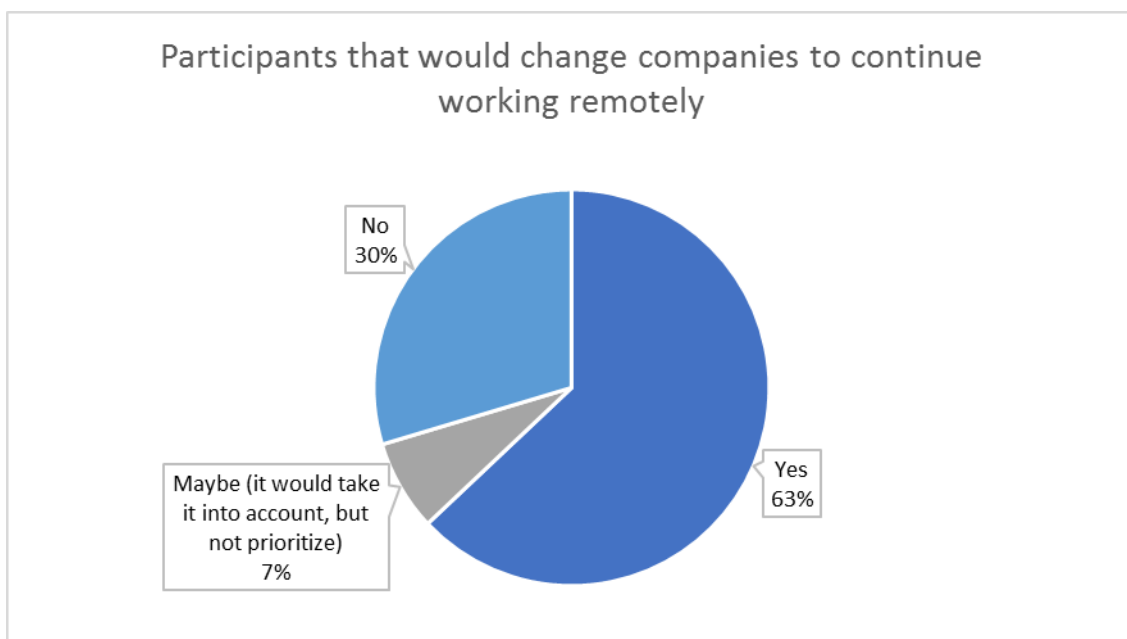


Figure 7. Turnover intention rate due to RW

When questioned their opinion regarding if RW could be used as a retention strategy by organisations, most participants agreed. Participant P17 stated: “*Work life balance is extremely important to the modern-day employee and wellbeing is front and centre, therefore it should be used as a strategy to attract and retain employees*”.

As pointed out in Theme 4 from the Findings Chapter, other participants mentioned that what would attract and retain better employees is giving them the flexibility to choose whether to work remotely or in the office, according to their circumstances.

It is possible to conclude that regarding the first objective, both literature and research findings indicate a positive relation mainly between RW and flexibility, job-satisfaction and decreased turnover levels. Although it was also noted some downsides on work-life balance, which can be assessed by the organisation as it will be demonstrated in the following sections.

5.2. Discussion of Research Objective 2: Obstacles to the practice and possible Countermeasures

The second objective of this research involves:

‘Review obstacles imposed by RW and investigate suggestions of possible countermeasures that would aid organisations to implement the practice effectively.’

This objective can be mainly focused on Theme 3 and its sub-themes from the findings, which examines the challenges faced by the respondents and how they suggest to assess them.

As noted previously, the major issue verified from the data collected was the lack of social interaction imposed by RW (and by the lockdown), followed by communication issues within co-workers.

Bloom *et al.* (2015) reached a similar conclusion, as their study noted that some employees were more prone to feel isolated when working remotely. They also mentioned feeling career progression limitations since they were not seen by their superiors. For these reasons, after the experiment, a large group decided to return to the office, even though they reported more flexibility and their productivity was not affected.

McCarthy *et al.*'s (2021) report also presented similar results, stating that participants mentioned the lack of interaction with others as the most challenging about RW. They mention that the management team suggested adopting a ‘one all-team day onsite per week’ (McCarthy *et al.*, 2021, p22).

Furthermore, when enquired on how to address these obstacles, most of the participants from this study mentioned that a Mixed Approach would settle both lack of interaction and

communications issues, as they would be able to meet colleagues for meetings and use the opportunity to improve their connections and networks. Since the Mixed Approach is part of one of this study objectives, it will be widely discussed in later sections.

Another suggestion to address the social interaction barrier is to, according to participant P13, “*create dedicated time for the team to reconnect (...), create a lot of team events (virtual ones for now, but can be adjusted to a non covid world), more ludic / playfull team meetings, making sure as Managers that we take time to acknowledge our people's wellbeing and don't go straight to 'work talks'*”. This suggestion was similarly mentioned in McCarthy *et al.* (2020b), as they recommend organisations ensure that their employees have opportunities to interact between them and that new employees can increase their network and open doors in their careers.

Other issue pointed out by participants was regarding new employee integration, exemplified by Participant’s P12 statement: “*I started to work at Citi during the pandemic, the most challenging situation was learning from home*”. This view is supported by McCarthy *et al.* (2020b), who mentions that new employees require more intensive mentoring, which can be more challenging to be implemented in a remote position.

Along with that, the lack of support by the organisation and colleagues was also cited by participants, bringing back the communication barrier, as stated by participant P2: “*More training and knowledge sharing would be the best thing, it's hard to work without support*”.

Choudhury (2020) also suggests that RW negatively impacts co-worker’s communication, knowledge sharing, and even mentoring and team activities, such as brainstorming. To prevent that, Carroll and Conboy (2020) mention that organisations can use tools such as Zoom to restore communication.

Although, it was noticed during the lockdown an increase in “Zoom Fatigue” (Fosslien and Duffy, 2020), which affected employee health and mental wellbeing. An example of this issue was mentioned by Participant P13, who mentions that stating “*Zoom meetings exhaustion: it is literally tiring for the eyes and can be causing headaches when having zoom meetings all day*”. According to the participant, the issue was resolved once the team realised it and adjusted meetings according to their real necessity.

Even though some respondents mentioned a lack of support by the organisation, the majority of the participants stated that their organisation provided good support. Participant P24 states: “*They*

have been incredible, always understanding of our potential anxieties and work overload, and gave us some credit to buy office furniture and equipment”.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the Findings Chapter and demonstrated by Hill *et al.* (2008), having a solid RW culture and good support for employees can minimise technical and some other problems, such as work-related stress and communication issues and even increase the social interaction.

A small proportion of respondents also mentioned internet connectivity issues, which was also mentioned in McCarthy *et al.*'s (2020a) report. According to the Irish Government, there is a “National Broadband Plan” (NBP) being implemented across the country, aiming to increase the connectivity in order to enable RW more extensively (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021). As a second short-term solution for this problem, the Government is also working on implementing a number of co-working hubs throughout the country. These hubs will provide all the infrastructure and internet necessary for employees, so they can continue working remotely in an environment similar to the office, but locally, with still no need to commute.

Considering the findings discussed and the literature mentioned, the objective to review obstacles and means to assess them was reached. However, it is imperative to add that different issues may arise depending on the organisational circumstance, requiring different solutions from the ones proposed.

5.3. Discussion of Research Objective 3: The ‘Mixed Approach’

The third objective of the research aimed to:

‘Investigate respondent’s perspective and positioning regarding the “Mixed Approach”’

The findings of the research show that, from the total of 27, 21 of the participants declared favoured adopting a hybrid approach. Most of the participants explained to see the choice as a possible answer to the social interaction barrier.

According to current literature, the Mixed Approach is a new trend that emerged to compensate for the lack of social interaction that employees felt whilst working remotely during the lockdown. For them, a hybrid approach would maintain the benefits of RW and compensate for the lack of social interaction: *“A mix would be perfect because you can manage your time the way it is*

better for you, have more connection with the teammates and still have all the flexibility of working from home” (Participant P15).

Corroborating this, McCarthy *et al.*'s (2020a) report mentions that the majority of participants also demonstrated a high interest in the mixed approach. In a more recent report, they state that, so far, 78% of organisations participants of the survey mentioned adopting a hybrid model (McCarthy *et al.*, 2021). For Guyot and Sawhill (2020), considering that not everyone adjusts the same to RW, a hybrid system can provide a better balance for employees.

Despite the fame around the Mixed approach, it was noticed a fault in it: *“I wouldn't like a hybrid system that would force everyone to join 2 days in the office on the same days, because then, my freedom and flexibility would be taken away again, and I would still have to stay most of the year in the same expensive city, same country, would still need to commute on some days just for the purpose of performing a job I can do at home in an office” (Participant P13).*

McCarthy *et al.*'s (2021) report corroborate this finding, mentioning that one of the recurring themes in the survey was the desire from employees to choose which and how many days they would work remotely, according to their situation.

After considering the data collected and compared with the literature presented, it is noticeable that the participants' views regarding the hybrid model are extremely positive since almost 80% of them demonstrated interest in adopting the practice. Although it was also noticed that this approach is not suitable for people who wish to move to the countryside (Milder, 2020) or travel to other cities/countries, like digital nomads (Hanes, 2020).

Therefore, it is important for the organisation to balance these factors, along with the organisational culture and necessities, in order to adopt the best model depending on their own circumstances.

5.4. Discussion of Research Objective 4: The ‘Right to Disconnect’

As mentioned in section 5.2, the fourth objective aims to:

‘Analyse the importance of the “Need for Disconnection” according to respondents’ perspective.’

As per the findings on sub-theme 3.2 from the previous chapter, a recurring issue identified by the participants was the inability to disconnect from work-related issues even after working hours.

Some participants mentioned to be checking emails in non-working hours; others mentioned working longer hours since they were in the same environment and the lines between home and work were blurred.

One of the participants mentioned that it is easier to disconnect when working in the office: *“helps to switch off when you leave the office building”* (Participant P9). Participant P7 adds that *“Context switch is also a potential problem, as you won't have time to disconnect your brain from work related pressure before ‘returning’ home”*.

Moore (2006) research mentions that, for some participants, the boundaries between home and work environment become blurred, and Hill *et al.* (2003) study confirms that RW may lead people to carry work into evenings.

Some participants mentioned the necessity to have two different environments dedicated to each activity, and because of that, they were more inclined to continue working onsite. Although for the majority of them, having organisational support and policies in place, as the “Right to Disconnect”, can be enough to fulfil this need.

As mentioned in the Literature Review Chapter, the “Right to Disconnect” is being implemented by the Irish Government and aims to prevent people from losing their safe place and staying attentive to work issues all the time (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021).

McCarthy *et al.* (2021) mentions that 59% of the survey participants believe that the “Right to Disconnect” will positively impact their productivity. Participant P4 confirms this by stating that *“it is more productive when you do your working hours properly and turn off the computer when agreed with the company initially”*.

Participants have also mentioned that this policy’s effectiveness may rely on managers and employers ensuring that employees are able to disconnect and draw boundaries:

“It is important to always reinforce that employees are not expected to check or reply to emails after work hours” (Participant P21).

“I believe that the support of line managers is imperative to roll this out properly” (Participant P17).

This theme also falls into the Duty of Care from the employer with the employee, which is noted by Participant P27: *“now more than ever it is highly important, employees are becoming more*

susceptible to burn out, stress, anxiety and employers have a responsibility and duty of care to have to model and to reinforce this policy”.

“Being working from home, does not mean working all the time, and it is the social and legal responsibility of organisation's leaders to make sure their people are protected, and can be able to detach work time from their personal life, even though the physical spaces where all of it happens can create confusion” (Participant P13).

VonBerger and Bressler (2019, p.62) confirm this by stating that “the ability to work anywhere anytime has morphed into an expectation to work everywhere, all the time”, which is damaging many other elements, including employee work-life balance, productivity and employer/employee relationship.

Although, some participants mentioned that their employers already demonstrated a strong culture and policies in this regard: *“With our company we’re giving wellbeing time off and all sorts of mental health support to support employees to get some time off or away from work. This impacts at least my team in a very positive way as people knows that our company is in fully support on letting us know that if we need to disconnect, we can disconnect” (Participant P18).*

After contemplating these points, it is possible to notice, as mentioned in Findings Section 4.2.3.2, having the “Right to disconnect” implemented in organisations makes employees feel taken care of, which can increase their trust and job-satisfaction. Therefore, if the organisation aims to implement the practice successfully, it is necessary to ensure their employees’ safety and well-being by adopting these policies.

5.5. Discussion of Research Objective 5: Comparing the Employee Perspective

The last objective to evaluate is to:

‘Analyse each respondent’s perception regarding Remote Working in Ireland during the pandemic and their views for the future and compare with other organisations employees’ opinion.’

As mentioned in section 4.3 from the Findings Chapter, a comparative analysis of each group of participants’ answers was made in parallel with the Thematic Analysis in order to answer this objective. The purpose was to find patterns between each group, which could lead to perceiving similarities inside each organisation that could show essential factors regarding RW that need to be assessed.

According to the findings from the Comparative Analysis, apart from the patterns which originated the themes, there were no consistencies found correlated to specific organisations. Most of the participants' opinions were diverse and corresponded only to their own realities. These findings referred to participants' perspectives about RW itself, its advantages and difficulties and views for the future. Respondents from different groups mentioned the need for good support and for organisational culture in place. Some also mentioned that their organisation already provided that.

Moreover, as mentioned previously, participants throughout the whole sample mentioned difficulties with communication within their teams. However, one participant mentioned to be facing issues with excessive "Zoom" meetings, which was solved by the team itself once they realised that as an issue. This can make us consider that the organisation should give their employees the flexibility to solve their teams' problems the way they see fit, likewise the "Flexibility to choose" mentioned in the Findings Chapter.

These findings demonstrated that organisations need to consider that each individual has their own reality with their personal problems and demands, as shown by Hill *et al.* (2003). It is undeniable that RW is ascending in this new era, but there are many variables to be considered.

However, independent of where the employee works, people's necessities are different. Because of this, some of them may not adjust to RW, not even if the organisation provides strong support. In this case, it is up to them to decide what is best for them and to the organisation to offer what they need.

5.6. Limitations of the Study

As mentioned previously, like any other research, this study also faced some challenges during its execution. The main limitation was that as the research strategy convened an online questionnaire, there was not enough rapport built between researcher and participant. Some participants provided short answers, lacking in-depth information from the participant's perspective. However, there was enough data from the majority of respondents to build an overview of their opinions.

It is also important to note that, as pointed out in the Research Methodology, one of the research limitations is the impact that the lockdown itself has imposed on people. It is necessary to

consider that in a normal situation, the lack of social interaction might not be that impacting (Richter 2020).

5.7. Conclusion

This section discussed the research findings accordingly with the objectives proposed, aiming to answer the research question. It is incontestable that the majority of participants were attracted by the flexibility provided by RW. The majority agreed that using a hybrid model and ensuring disconnection after work hours could address most of the problems faced whilst working remotely.

Although, as each individual knows their own needs best, it might be more important for them to be able to choose to work remotely or not, instead of having it forced on them. Having that option and having the flexibility to choose between is what may attract and retain employees even better.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

The choice of researching the remote working impact in the society after Covid-19 derived from the perception on how this trend would escalate among people, and that organisations would need to assess this in no time. Throughout the years, RW has slowly conquered its own space, captivating employees with the flexibility promised. Although until 2020, the practice was mainly limited to employees from the technology sector or people focused on having a different type of lifestyle, as the digital nomads.

After 2020, the majority of the population and organisations realised they could perform their jobs from their homes. Considering we are currently watching the development of these changes, it is critical to investigate the theme the best we can.

With that in mind, this study aimed to examine the research question: '*How can organisations use the employee perspective of the Remote Work experience in Ireland during the pandemic to draw effective Retention Strategies?*'. In contrast to other papers that investigated the decrease of turnover intentions as a consequence of the RW (as Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Martin and MacDonnell, 2012; and Hill *et al.*, 2003), this study suggests the use of the practice as a retention method, which had not been addressed yet.

To assess the main question, five objectives were proposed and discussed by comparing the literature researched with the data collected using a qualitative online questionnaire. Furthermore, seeking to gather data that would enable a comparison of the employees' opinions regarding their organisation's RW approach, the sample was focused on five different organisations, all based in Dublin. In addition, a range of respondents from non-focused organisations also participated in the research, allowing a more comprehensive comparison.

The research findings suggested that people link RW with flexibility and saving commuting time. The practice is also often linked with increased work-life balance and productivity, although it depends on how the organisation tackles barriers as communication between co-workers and after-hours disconnection. For the employees to be on-board with the practice, the organisation must guarantee an efficient support, assisting them whenever needed.

Although the majority of the participants are enthusiastic about the practice, it was noted that what works for one employee might not work for everybody else. As mentioned in the discussion section, this research and others showed that people are willing to adopt RW (or a hybrid system);

however, they prefer to have the flexibility to choose within the options according to what suits them best. In this case, organisations need to consider that people have too different necessities, requiring different approaches.

These findings enable the drawing of an answer for the research question proposed. It was clear that giving the option for the employees to choose whether to work remotely or not, would increase retention levels and even attract talents. This outcome derives from the analysis of the participant's experience with RW during the lockdown and their perspectives for the practice in the time to come.

For the majority of them, RW offers more benefits than imposes difficulties, and the flexibility it gives is now a priority for them. On the other hand, some of them note that the lack of interaction with colleagues and the communication barrier imposed by the practice makes them more inclined to prefer a mixed approach. Furthermore, these issues combined with personal circumstances lead a small part of the respondents to prefer to continue working onsite.

When deliberating these factors, the path that arises for organisations that focus on maintaining their employees' needs as a priority is to give flexibility to choose between working remotely, onsite or with a hybrid system. This approach might demand a higher level of management control and maintenance from the organisation's part, but from the research's findings, it would be most effective in retaining employees.

In conclusion, by assessing the participants' views and expectations from their experience with RW, this study outlined that organisations can use RW as a retention and attraction tool since the barriers are addressed successfully.

6.2. Research Recommendations

Considering that the research purpose was to investigate how organisations can use the lockdown experience to understand their employees' difficulties and opinions regarding RW, the findings can already be considered recommendations. The data collected provided means for the researcher to suggest how organisations can improve their employer/employee relation regarding RW and improve their workforce work-life balance through RW.

According to the findings presented and discussed previously, the author raises the following recommendations:

- 1. Flexibility to Choose:** As shown in the previous section, the research findings showed that even though a hybrid system was the common choice for most participants, having the option to choose whether to work remotely or onsite is growing amongst employees. This approach can ensure more autonomy and full flexibility for employees, offering a better work-life balance. Although it may require more control from organisations and managers to align tasks and supervise employees, it can increase retention and attraction levels. One possible suggestion to how organisations can manage this approach is to give the teams the autonomy to negotiate what is best for the members and ensure a good communication level between all teams. This scenario also raises the necessity to plan and communicate ahead if face-to-face activities or general meetings arise, not affecting the employee's flexibility in this way.
- 2. Organisational Culture and Support:** According to the findings, most employees find it crucial to have good support, especially when working remotely. In order to ensure this, it is recommended for organisations to start by adding the remote culture on their own. The organisational culture shapes behaviours and values that will be followed by the stakeholders. Anita and Begum's (2016) study shows that a strong organisational culture can be linked to increased retention levels, as it has a strong influence on employees' motivation and gives them a sense of direction. Including RW in the organisational culture and providing support ensures that employees are all onboard with the practice, sharing the organisation's culture. The support mentioned includes providing technical support for any employees' issues with systems, programmes, or physical devices. It is also essential to provide mental and social support, enabling communication lines if employees need to discuss personal/work issues, ensuring that they have all the support they need in any scenario.
- 3. Ensuring Employee Disconnection:** One of the main barriers of the practice is that some people face difficulty in disconnecting from work, imposing a home/work barrier. As mentioned previously, the 'Right to Disconnect' aims to prevent remote employees from having their family and rest time affected. It is highly recommended that organisations adopt this policy and other practices to ensure that the employee clearly distinguishes between working and resting times, even though the

environment is the same. Organisations can encourage employees to remove all work-related content from their personal devices and not use working devices when off, allowing them to switch off. Another recommendation in this issue is for organisations to encourage employees to make use of remote working hubs. The hubs allow employees to continue having a separate and designated work environment, free from family and home distractions, closer to their home, which would still decrease commuting time and provide better flexibility for employees.

- 4. Encouraging Social Interaction:** The last recommendation is to address the reported lack of social interaction and the communication barrier noted. One of the research participants suggested that organisations need to ensure that their employees have enough interaction between them so that teams and co-workers' relations are not harmed. This can be done by encouraging video meetings and online coffee breaks, where employees can chat freely about anything, building up a relationship. Once social restrictions are lifted, organisations can also set face-to-face meetings and social gatherings with all stakeholders. To avoid communication issues between employees, organisations need to have clear and efficient communication canals, scheduling weekly online/face-to-face meetings between teams and managers.

6.3. Financial Costs and Timeframe Expectations

Since most recommendations involve internal changes and policies implementations, it is expected that employees and management will require a period of adaptation, especially regarding culture change and offering flexibility to choose. The period each organisation will need to adapt will depend on the extent of the change that will take place, possibly varying from three months until one year. Organisations with more experience with RW would need less time since they might already have similar policies in place.

Regarding costs, the implementation of recommendations 3 and 4 can be added to HR responsibilities, and they may be distributed between the team, depending on the organisation's size. Otherwise, it may be needed to hire a new individual, avoiding overburdening employees. Recommendations 1 and 2 would require higher alignment between the teams responsible for its

dissemination and organisation leaders, probably requiring several staff meetings and training until the successful implementation of the changes.

These costs would be investments in employee's well-being, varying from requiring the recruitment of new employees or maybe increasing salary and responsibilities from members of the teams related to the projects.

6.4. Recommendation for future research

Considering the magnitude of the Covid-19 impact how we all expect our lives to change in the future, researching more about RW is critical for both employees and organisations' benefit. This research investigated the link with retention strategies, looking into how it can improve people's lives and how to address possible issues. However, it was noted that other factors also need to be addressed.

Acknowledging this research findings, issues involving the 'Flexibility to choose' need to be assessed in future research since it requires better management of employees and organisational necessities. On the same note, given all these changes, it is evident the necessity also to adapt the performance management systems, since RW requires a different approach from what managers and HR are used to in the office environment.

Lastly, there is also a demand to investigate how the home-office environment is treated by organisations. According to the Duty of care the employer has with the employee, it is expected that organisations also need to provide ergonomic equipment and support so their employees can work remotely safely. Analysing this matter can provide a better understanding of what is really expected from organisations.

Personal Learning Statement

Noticing how the pandemic impacted people's lives instigated me to understand how RW could affect society. Although enthusiastic and impacting, the study's thematic imposed various challenges to the research since it was new to the academic community, and, until recently, few papers discussed Covid-19 consequences.

Notwithstanding that, I was able to use the research knowledge developed whilst completing the Master's modules and link past studies with recent papers and reports, enabling the answer to the research question and objectives that I proposed at the start of the research.

The decision to use an online qualitative questionnaire also imposed some challenges for the research. As it is still a new research method and since the practice implies a rapport barrier, the difficulty of finding researchers using it was high. The limitation of this approach also affected the answers collected since a few of the participants did not provide detailed answers.

It was also challenging for me since this research was my first dissertation at this level and in my second language, and all the structure, requirements and depth of literature research were new to me. Nevertheless, I feel highly satisfied with the skills I have acquired and the network I was able to build during the research process. These skills will certainly aid me in my professional career and future roles/courses.

Finally, though I did not have experience with RW before, choosing to research it was a way I saw to prepare myself for the new necessities that organisations might have in the near future. I also hope that my findings can be relevant to Irish organisations and remote workers who hope to continue with the practice after the pandemic.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Informational Message Sample

“Hi _____, hope you are safe and well.

My name is Amanda and I'm currently working on my Master's dissertation. I'm a student of HR at NCI college, and my research is regarding how organisations can use the experience of remote working during the lockdown to draw retention strategies that will work within the society post-Covid-19.

In order to study this theme, I'll be applying an online questionnaire and I would really appreciate your participation in it. As the questions are focused to collect your opinion and perspective regarding remote work and your experience with it during the lockdown, most of them require discursive answers. I know it can be boring to answer too many text questions, but I would be really grateful if you could spare about 15 minutes to answer them properly. It would really help me with my research.

All the answers you provide will be treated confidentially and will be used only for academic purposes.

If you need any other information, please contact me at x19134487@student.ncirl.ie / amandaqosantos@gmail.com

Once again, thank you for your participation.

Amanda S.”

Appendix 2: Consent Questions on the Questionnaire

As informed previously, this research has the primary purpose of comparatively study the viability of using Remote Working as part of the organisational's Retention Strategies considering the society's mindset after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The information you will provide in this questionnaire will be treated confidentially, and the reports elaborated with it will treat participants anonymously.

You can refuse to answer any questions or withdraw your participation in the questionnaire at any time without any consequences.

You can also answer the questions in English or Portuguese (Brazil), depending on your preference.

Your information will only be used if you agree to participate freely in the research.

I understand and consent the researcher to use the information for academic purpose.

I do not consent.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from my participation in this research.

Yes

No



Appendix 3: Questionnaire Sample

For which company/organisation are you currently working for?

What is your current position in this organisation?

Did you have any experience with remote work before the Covid-19 lock-down?

Yes

No

Before the Covid-19 lock-down, what was your opinion regarding Remote Working?

Were you able to successfully perform all of your usual daily tasks digitally when remote working?

If no, please specify what problems you faced when working remotely that you did not experience in the office.

Yes

No

From your perspective, what are the positive points that remote work can offer for employees?

What are the biggest challenges you are currently facing while working remotely? (You can choose more than one)

- My physical workspace
- Too many distractions at home
- I don't have access to the tools or information I need to do my job at home
- Internet connectivity
- Childcare
- Social isolation
- Communication with coworkers is harder
- I'm sick or helping others who are sick
- Keeping a regular schedule
- General anxiety about the impact of coronavirus on my life
- Getting enough food
- Other

If you have the choice, would you be interested in continuing to work remotely in the future? Please explain your choice pointing out what led you to it.

If you are interested in continuing working remotely, do you think it would be best mix it with working onsite or maintaining with only one practice (onsite or remote)? Please explain briefly why.

Considering the work-related problems and obstacles you faced during your experience with remote work, how would you suggest, for your company, to assess these problems?

Comparing your working hours when you work remotely to when you work in the office, in which location would you say you work longer? Please explain shortly why.

The Right to Disconnect is a policy that encourages remote workers to disconnect from any work-related issues, emails and calls during non-working hours, guaranteeing they can rest and focus on their personal lives.

What is your opinion regarding the necessity for organisations to ensure this policy?

Would you say that remote work enables employees to have better autonomy and flexibility with work? (Not considering a pandemic situation)

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="radio"/> |
| Somewhat agree | <input type="radio"/> |
| Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="radio"/> |
| Somewhat disagree | <input type="radio"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="radio"/> |



Do you think remote work can provide a better balance between work and your personal life? Consequently also improving your quality of life?

Some researchers state that Remote Work is known to improve levels of productivity and job satisfaction for employees. Considering your experience, do you agree with this affirmation?

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

With your previous answers in mind and considering a situation where your current organisation does not offer remote work as an option, would you consider changing companies to continue working remotely?

Balancing both positive and negative points of the remote working practice, would you say that it can be used to attract and retain employees? Please, shortly explain why.

If, after the analysis of the answers you provided above, some more information is required to draft the research findings, would it be ok with you for me to contact you?

If yes, please provide your e-mail below:

Thank you for participating in my dissertation. I really appreciate your help.
Your response has been registered and will be dealt with confidentiality.

Appendix 4: Participant P2 Answers

Q1. As informed previously, this research has the primary purpose of comparatively study the viability of using Remote Working as part of the organisational's Retention Strategies considering the society's mindset after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The information you will provide in this questionnaire will be treated confidentially, and the reports elaborated with it will treat participants anonymously.

You can refuse to answer any questions or withdraw your participation in the questionnaire at any time without any consequences.

You can also answer the questions in English or Portuguese (Brazil), depending on your preference.

Your information will only be used if you agree to participate freely in the research.

I understand and consent the researcher to use the information for academic purpose.

I do not consent.

Q2. I understand that I will not benefit directly from my participation in this research.

Yes

No

Q3.

For which company/organisation are you currently working for?

cloudsphere

Q4. What is your current position in this organisation?

software developer

Q5. Did you have any experience with remote work before the Covid-19 lock-down?

Yes

No

Q6. Before the Covid-19 lock-down, what was your opinion regarding Remote Working?

I enjoy not having to leave the house and finish my work day not having to take a commute.

Q7.

Were you able to successfully perform all of your usual daily tasks digitally when remote working?

If no, please specify what problems you faced when working remotely that you did not experience in the office.

Yes

No

Q8. From your perspective, what are the positive points that remote work can offer for employees?

To be able to eat homecooked food taking care of my diet is a plus, and also being able to do house chores during my lunch break improved my relaxation time on the weekends.

Q9.

What are the biggest challenges you are currently facing while working remotely? (You can choose more than one)

- My physical workspace
- Too many distractions at home
- I don't have access to the tools or information I need to do my job at home
- Internet connectivity
- Childcare
- Social isolation
- Communication with coworkers is harder
- I'm sick or helping others who are sick
- Keeping a regular schedule
- General anxiety about the impact of coronavirus on my life
- Getting enough food
- Other

Q10.

If you have the choice, would you be interested in continuing to work remotely in the future? Please explain your choice pointing out what led you to it.

I would like to keep working from home for more than half of the week.

Q11. If you are interested in continuing working remotely, do you think it would be best mix it with working onsite or maintaining with only one practice (onsite or remote)? Please explain briefly why.

I believe that a balance between working remote and from the office would be the best, for example working on the office twice a week when you can align the tasks with your team

Q12.

Considering the work-related problems and obstacles you faced during your experience with remote work, how would you suggest, for your company, to assess these problems?

More training and knowledge sharing would be the best thing, it's hard to work without support

Q13.

I think I work longer being at home, because I take my time on doing the tasks and I don't feel the pressure of it's time to go home

Q14.

The Right to Disconnect is a policy that encourages remote workers to disconnect from any work-related issues, emails and calls during non-working hours, guaranteeing they can rest and focus on their personal lives.

What is your opinion regarding the necessity for organisations to ensure this policy?

My company doesn't have a problem with disconnecting, we are oriented to keep slack and all communications tools on our work computer and not mixture personal items with work items.

Q15. Would you say that remote work enables employees to have better autonomy and flexibility with work?
(Not considering a pandemic situation)

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q16. Do you think remote work can provide a better balance between work and your personal life?
Consequently also improving your quality of life?

yes, the comute can be quite stressfull

Q17. Some researchers state that Remote Work is known to improve levels of productivity and job satisfaction for employees. Considering your experience, do you agree with this affirmation?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q18. With your previous answers in mind and considering a situation where your current organisation does not offer remote work as an option, would you consider changing companies to continue working remotely?

yes

Q19. Balancing both positive and negative points of the remote working practice, would you say that it can be used to attract and retain employees? Please, shortly explain why.

yes, specially on tech companies. Tech workers can work for any company in the world and being able to not be stuck on a place is the beauty of be a tech worker.

Q20.

If, after the analysis of the answers you provided above, some more information is required to draft the research findings, would it be ok with you for me to contact you?

If yes, please provide your e-mail below:

[REDACTED]

Appendix 5: Participant P13 Answers

Q1. As informed previously, this research has the primary purpose of comparatively study the viability of using Remote Working as part of the organisational's Retention Strategies considering the society's mindset after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The information you will provide in this questionnaire will be treated confidentially, and the reports elaborated with it will treat participants anonymously.

You can refuse to answer any questions or withdraw your participation in the questionnaire at any time without any consequences.

You can also answer the questions in English or Portuguese (Brazil), depending on your preference.

Your information will only be used if you agree to participate freely in the research.

- I understand and consent the researcher to use the information for academic purpose.
- I do not consent.

Q2. I understand that I will not benefit directly from my participation in this research.

- Yes
- No

Q3.

For which company/organisation are you currently working for?

Airbnb

Q4. What is your current position in this organisation?

Team Coordinator

Q5. Did you have any experience with remote work before the Covid-19 lock-down?

- Yes
- No

Q6. Before the Covid-19 lock-down, what was your opinion regarding Remote Working?

I honestly had no opinion regarding remote working, and was not even thinking about it prior Covid. To me, the norm was working in an office. That being said, even before covid, Airbnb allowed its employees too have between 15 days and 20 days per year of working from home, which I found great even without having experienced it, as I love the idea of being able to remain at home on the last day of my working week : less commute, more sleep, and a more relaxed and of week.

Q7.

Were you able to successfully perform all of your usual daily tasks digitally when remote working?

If no, please specify what problems you faced when working remotely that you did not experience in the office.

- Yes
- No

When starting to work remotely, I felt way more productive on a daily basis (I don't have kids, which probably helps from my colleague's feedbacks) for the following reasons :

- No distractions
- Colleagues who used to come by my desk with questions now come to me via slack, which allows me to prioritise and organise my time better (if not available straight away, I can schedule some time with them to discuss, whereas in the office, I would have had to drop everything)
- I feel more rested and energised due to the fact that I don't have to commute and thus I can sleep longer, and take more time for my personal wellbeing in the morning

Q8. From your perspective, what are the positive points that remote work can offer for employees?

More flexibility, the possibility to work from anywhere (larger sense of freedom in that way), more time dedicated to wellbeing, more time to spend with my loved ones, easier to focus and more productivity, having the sense of being trusted in performing my job while being able to organise myself the way that suits me.

Q9. What are the biggest challenges you are currently facing while working remotely? (You can choose more than one)

- My physical workspace
- Too many distractions at home
- I don't have access to the tools or information I need to do my job at home
- Internet connectivity
- Childcare
- Social isolation
- Communication with coworkers is harder
- I'm sick or helping others who are sick
- Keeping a regular schedule
- General anxiety about the impact of coronavirus on my life
- Getting enough food
- Other

Zoom meetings exhaustion : it is literally tiring for the eyes and can be causing headaches when having zoom meetings all day. However, my team has adjusted, and we now have less team meetings than before, which allows us to focus on the essential during team meetings, and be less tired

Q10. If you have the choice, would you be interested in continuing to work remotely in the future? Please explain your choice pointing out what led you to it.

Yes, I can't see myself going back to the office right now. I would love to be able to be fully remote, and even consider this as a "Must" should I ever change job / company in the future. This is very personal, but I hate the idea that the society forces us to "settle" somewhere / some area / some country we don't necessarily like because of work. When thinking of "work life balance" I believe that since work is part of our lives (and represents most of our time on earth), we shouldn't define our lives solely on our jobs. I would love to have the flexibility to work for 6 months in a country, and 6 months somewhere else, having the flexibility to keep performing in my job, while finding true happiness and freedom a personal level, without the frustration of my life being fully defined by a work place. Also, as a manager, I truly believe that wellness, happiness and personal growth are the best motivational vectors to allow people to perform in a job, hence, it is in the best interest of any 21st century company to redefine themselves to allow their people to thrive.

Q11. If you are interested in continuing working remotely, do you think it would be best mix it with working onsite or maintaining with only one practice (onsite or remote)? Please explain briefly why.

The ideal for me would be 100% flexibility : whoever wants to stay remote can stay remote (or at least, having the possibility to work remotely up to 183 days in a row), anyone who wants to go to the office 2 days / week could be able to do so, anyone who wants to go everyday to the office could do so. I acknowledge that this would require extra organisation, however on a leadership perspective, I believe this could be possible in my company. I wouldn't like a hybrid system that would force everyone to join 2 days in the office on the same days, because then, my freedom and flexibility would be taken away again, and I would still have to stay most of the year in the same expensive city, same country, would still need to commute on some days just for the purpose of performing a job I do at home in an office. To me there is no point of doing it half way, even though I understand this might already be an amazing transition for some companies that are moving from a very traditional organisation.

Q12. Considering the work-related problems and obstacles you faced during your experience with remote work, how would you suggest, for your company, to assess these problems?

1.) Missing social connection with colleagues : create dedicated time for the team to reconnect (eg: we are currently using the app "Donut" to allow the team to reconnect during coffee breaks, create a lot of team events (virtual ones for now, but can be adjusted to a non covid world), more ludic / playful team meetings, making sure as Managers that we take time to acknowledge our people's wellbeing and don't go straight to "work talks" 2.) Some people are less productive working from home, and need more structure in order to be efficient : Flexibility should apply to everybody, and if more comfortable doing so, these people should be allowed to work in an office. While being remote, it is Manager's responsibility to make sure we're here to support their needs, being understanding, and help them find a better balance. 3.) Internet connectivity : At Airbnb we have allocated a 30\$ budget per person, for our people to be able to increase their internet speed as needed

Q13.

Comparing your working hours when you work remotely to when you work in the office, in which location would you say you work longer? Please explain shortly why.

I would say I work longer at home, but I still finish my shift at the same time : the reason I work longer is mainly that when back in the office, I would spend more time to have a chat with my people during the day, or stay a bit longer on my coffee / lunch breaks

Q14.

The Right to Disconnect is a policy that encourages remote workers to disconnect from any work-related issues, emails and calls during non-working hours, guaranteeing they can rest and focus on their personal lives.

What is your opinion regarding the necessity for organisations to ensure this policy?

I believe it is absolutely essential ! Being working from home, does not mean working all the time, and it is the social and legal responsibility of organisation's leaders to make sure their people are protected, and can be able to detach work time from their personal life, even though the physical spaces where all of it happens can create confusion. We need to take the time to listen to our people and have these conversations to let them know it's absolutely essential to disconnect, not promoting extra working hours, providing them with all necessary resources to make sure they can log out without stress, even though it's tempting for them to keep working longer. I personally do not have any of my emails or professional apps related on my personal phone, and when off, I'm off.

Q15. Would you say that remote work enables employees to have better autonomy and flexibility with work? (Not considering a pandemic situation)

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q16. Do you think remote work can provide a better balance between work and your personal life? Consequently also improving your quality of life?

100% I would go fully remote on the long term if I could

Q17. Some researchers state that Remote Work is known to improve levels of productivity and job satisfaction for employees. Considering your experience, do you agree with this affirmation?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q18. With your previous answers in mind and considering a situation where your current organisation does not offer remote work as an option, would you consider changing companies to continue working remotely?

I would absolutely consider change company, and depending on where my organisation's decision lies in the future on this topic, even though I absolutely love my job and organisation, I would consider changing company

Q19. Balancing both positive and negative points of the remote working practice, would you say that it can be used to attract and retain employees? Please, shortly explain why.

I believe that organisations need to understand that what works for someone may not work for someone else. Hence, taking a decision such as being only fully remote, or only fully in the office has an impact to attract or retain employees, and will have even a bigger impact now that more people have actually experienced it. For this reason, I believe the smartest choice would be to combine both systems, and to allow people to be fully flexible depending on their needs. This is essential, and again, strategically, allowing people to feel secured and free to decide how they want to work, actually allows people to work at their best. they know what works best for them, they know in which circumstances they are the most efficient : so let's give them that.

Q20.

If, after the analysis of the answers you provided above, some more information is required to draft the research findings, would it be ok with you for me to contact you?

If yes, please provide your e-mail below:

[REDACTED]

Appendix 6: Participant P16 Answers

Q1. As informed previously, this research has the primary purpose of comparatively study the viability of using Remote Working as part of the organisational's Retention Strategies considering the society's mindset after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The information you will provide in this questionnaire will be treated confidentially, and the reports elaborated with it will treat participants anonymously.

You can refuse to answer any questions or withdraw your participation in the questionnaire at any time without any consequences.

You can also answer the questions in English or Portuguese (Brazil), depending on your preference.

Your information will only be used if you agree to participate freely in the research.

I understand and consent the researcher to use the information for academic purpose.

I do not consent.

Q2. I understand that I will not benefit directly from my participation in this research.

Yes

No

Q3.

For which company/organisation are you currently working for?

Accenture

Q4. What is your current position in this organisation?

Consultant

Q5. Did you have any experience with remote work before the Covid-19 lock-down?

Yes

No

Q6. Before the Covid-19 lock-down, what was your opinion regarding Remote Working?

I thought I would give remote woke a shit someday to cut down on commute time

Q7.

Were you able to successfully perform all of your usual daily tasks digitally when remote working?

If no, please specify what problems you faced when working remotely that you did not experience in the office.

Yes

No

I feel like I would get distracted too easily at home and not be as productive as I would be in an office

Q8. From your perspective, what are the positive points that remote work can offer for employees?

No commute, no need to pay high rent to be closer to company

Q9. What are the biggest challenges you are currently facing while working remotely? (You can choose more than one)

- My physical workspace
- Too many distractions at home
- I don't have access to the tools or information I need to do my job at home
- Internet connectivity
- Childcare
- Social isolation
- Communication with coworkers is harder
- I'm sick or helping others who are sick
- Keeping a regular schedule
- General anxiety about the impact of coronavirus on my life
- Getting enough food
- Other

Q10. If you have the choice, would you be interested in continuing to work remotely in the future? Please explain your choice pointing out what led you to it.

Maybe a couple of days a week, I would prefer to go in to office for better networking as well as for a sense of community

Q11. If you are interested in continuing working remotely, do you think it would be best mix it with working onsite or maintaining with only one practice (onsite or remote)? Please explain briefly why.

I think mixing it with on site would be great as it would help with staying connected with your team and understanding your business better

Q12. Considering the work-related problems and obstacles you faced during your experience with remote work, how would you suggest, for your company, to assess these problems?

Addressing needs for a distraction free space, could be a budget for a closer co-working space or a team meet up, especially on days with deadlines.

Q13.

Comparing your working hours when you work remotely to when you work in the office, in which location would you say you work longer? Please explain shortly why.

I think working at home had longer hours as the lines between work and personal life are blurred, but they were compensated through saving on commute hours

Q14.

The Right to Disconnect is a policy that encourages remote workers to disconnect from any work-related issues, emails and calls during non-working hours, guaranteeing they can rest and focus on their personal lives.

What is your opinion regarding the necessity for organisations to ensure this policy?

I think it's a great policy and really important to implement, especially for people who have dependants living with them

Q15. Would you say that remote work enables employees to have better autonomy and flexibility with work? (Not considering a pandemic situation)

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q16. Do you think remote work can provide a better balance between work and your personal life? Consequently also improving your quality of life?

Yes, if we figure out a way to have a distraction free environment (which is possible when the pandemic is over) , quality of life along with a better work life balance can go a long way

Q17. Some researchers state that Remote Work is known to improve levels of productivity and job satisfaction for employees. Considering your experience, do you agree with this affirmation?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q18. With your previous answers in mind and considering a situation where your current organisation does not offer remote work as an option, would you consider changing companies to continue working remotely?

No, I wouldn't look to switch because I see tremendous growth in this organisation and the organisation is known to have a work culture that supports its employees needs

Q19. Balancing both positive and negative points of the remote working practice, would you say that it can be used to attract and retain employees? Please, shortly explain why.

Yes, it can because employees can build or relocate to an environment that is comfortable to them (given that the pandemic is over) and thus, maintain a healthy work life balance.

Q20.

If, after the analysis of the answers you provided above, some more information is required to draft the research findings, would it be ok with you for me to contact you?

If yes, please provide your e-mail below:

[REDACTED]