THE IMPACT THAT WORKING FROM HOME HAS ON THE OVERALL MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE LEVELS OF EMPLOYEES WORKING WITHIN A BANKING ORGANISATION

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Abstract

This study is based on working from home and the aim is to assess the impact that working from home has on motivation and performance levels of employees working within a banking organisation. Previous research around this topic has focused on how working from home is an extremely positive way of working and this has been possible due to newer technologies being readily available. The aim of this study was to look in depth at the experiences employees had whilst working from home and how each individual felt their motivation and performance levels were affected.

A qualitative research approach was taken as part of this study which was carried out through the use of semi-structured interviews. This approach was taken in order to gather employees opinions and experiences to see whether any trends emerged in relation to their motivation and performance levels whilst working from home. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to record the interviews with the use of a Dictaphone, all of the interviews were transcribed and coded in order for the researcher to analyse them using a thematic approach.

Conclusions were drawn, outlining that working from home does higher motivation and performance levels of employees. Although there were mixed opinions presented as to whether employee performance levels were higher whilst working from home employees commented on how their performance levels would be affected negatively if working from home was removed. Overall it was clear to see the high levels of positivity surrounding working from home and how this impacts positively on employee motivation and performance levels, which can have positive effects on employee well-being, employee work life balance and also job satisfaction. In addition to this if employees are more motivated and performing to

a higher standard then this is likely to also have a positive effect on the organisation in terms of retaining staff and achieving more from their employees.

Declaration

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Introduction

This study will focus on the banking industry and how employees within a banking organisation have the flexibility within their job roles of working from home, either when they themselves need to or when they are not required by the organisation to work in the office. This can otherwise be known as working from home, mobile working or agile working. This study aims to look specifically at the motivation and performance levels of employees who currently have the flexibility and opportunity of working from home and in addition to this how their work life balance may be affected based upon their motivation and performance satisfaction. This study aims to gain a further insight into working from home and whether this way of working should be introduced as an option for employees who currently do not work from home, this will be dependent on the outcomes of this study and if they are positive or negative in terms of employee motivation and performance levels.

Over the years working from home has developed as a way of working that can be used as part of an agile working programme. Agile working provides the opportunity for the employee to work from home and in addition to this they also have the option of working from any chosen location (CIPD, 2016). This way of working allows employees to work elsewhere outside of the office environment. According to Turcotte (2010) between the years 2000 and 2008 there was a rise of 1% in the amount of staff that carry out agile working in Canada with the majority of these staff members being graduates from university. While there has been a shift in flexible working patterns, this study will have a particular focus on working from home. Working from home can be defined as a form of flexible working that allows an employee to work from home for some or all of the working week that may also be used alongside other flexible working arrangements such as part time working hours (ACAS, n.d.). The term working from home will be used throughout this study to refer to this particular flexible working practice.

By focusing on employees who work from home a further insight will be gained as to whether being given the opportunity of working from home has a positive or negative influence on employees motivation and performance levels and in what way this can affect work life balance. In addition to this, this research should be able to address if working from home is as effective in the banking sector as it is in other organisations. According to a report by Brooks (2014) companies such as Dell and Xerox promote this way of working and look specifically to hire employees who work remotely, this may suggest that working from

home works for these types of organisations due to the fact that they are technology and computer based. This study is specifically being carried out in a banking organisation as currently it is unknown whether this way of working can be as effective throughout all organisations. In addition to this it will be interesting to see if there are any issues surrounding working from home for employees and whether these issues are something that can be overcome or if these issues act as a complete barrier for this particular organisation. This study will also look at any issues that arise for the employee have any particular impact on the employer. Studies such as Mann (2013) believe that flexible working practices should be business-focused, however, there is no indication as to what impact this is having on employees e.g. are employees who carry out these different types of flexible working more motivated, do they have more capacity for work or are they are performing to a higher standard.

This chosen topic of study should gain an overall insight into working from home. Current literature surrounding working from home fails to identify the impact that working from home has on motivation and performance levels of employees. In addition to this, most literature has a focus on working from home in general rather than having a specific focus on one particular industry. Previous studies based on this particular topic also fail to discuss the impact that this way of working can have on the overall organisation in terms of how employee motivation and performance effect the business, for example if this way of working is seen to increase employee motivation and performance then why doesn't the organisation allow more of their employees to carry out this way of working.

Additionally, this topic of study has been chosen as there is currently a gap in research that focuses on the banking industry in relation to working from home, although the amount of employees working from home has increased over the years there is still a gap as to whether this way of working should be an option for more employees. This gap is present due to the fact that currently within the banking industry there are a small number of employees who have the option of working from home, however, due to the nature of the work, working from home could be implemented into more areas within the banking sector. However, there is a sense of uncertainty as to the impact this way of working has on motivation and performance levels, therefore it is important for this study to be carried out to allow this industry to see whether motivation and performance levels are higher when employees work from home. If so can more employees be offered the opportunity of carrying out this way of working. It is important to assess these factors as motivation and performance of employees plays a huge part in employee satisfaction and in turn if

employees are happy in the workplace they are likely to perform to a higher standard and be more motivated to complete work tasks which would also be highly beneficial for the organisation. This study should be able to reflect on this in order to present the bank with the findings, conclusions and recommendations surrounding this research topic. This will allow the bank to get an overall feel and opinion regarding this newer and developing way of working.

Watson and Lightfoot (2003) conclude that working from home can be beneficial for employees due to the fact that it provides them with an opportunity to have a positive work life balance. However, this study also concludes that working from home may encourage employees to work for more hours every day and may also propose a sense of isolation as employees can be away from the office for prolonged periods of time. This study will also look at whether isolation is a factor that is present for employees who work from home within the banking sector.

Many current studies that have been carried out have been very specific to certain organisations or job roles, for example Wade (2011) looks at interviewing Paul Braun, the managing director of a casualty claims consulting organisation and this study has a specific focus on the risks of working from home for this organisation. Whereas other studies such as Pathak, Bathini, Kandathil (2015) looked at how the ban on working from home for the organisation Yahoo was implemented following a perceived lack of staff innovation, which is a key organisational strategy, following the high number of employees that worked from home. Therefore, it will be interesting for this study to be carried out to see what impact this form of flexible working can have for employees working specifically within the banking sector. The nature of the work in a bank can be very tedious and repetitive and is not necessarily team based, therefore the focus is different compared to the likes of Yahoo in that the organisations sets out to do different things that may impact on the work patterns and also the flexible working arrangements.

This research will provide a clearer understanding around working from home with a particular focus on a banking organisation. Mullins (2010) outlined that the use of new technologies has permitted employees to work elsewhere outside of the organisation, this study will look into whether this newer trend has had any impact or influence within the banking industry. A study carried out by Cousins and Robey (2015) looked at how mobile technology influences and contributes to work/life boundaries of staff members who have the opportunity in their work place to work from any location. This study focuses purely on

how the use of new technologies e.g. mobile technology has a huge influence on mobile working and how in the future these technologies may allow room for newer organisational policies and procedures that were never readily available before. Other studies carried out also conclude similar outcomes, Basile and Beauregard (2016) believes that as technology continues to develop the use of working from home is likely to develop and grow vastly. Although there are various researches that have been carried out on this flexible way of working, there are many mixed conclusions as to whether working from home is a positive or negative way of working in terms of how this can impact on employee motivation and performance levels.

According to Hitt, Black and Porter (2012) motivation can be outlined as a group of forces that can both energise and sustain employee behaviour. This study will focus specifically on the degree to which employees are motivated by working from home, which may include whether they are more motivated to complete work tasks, can take on more varied activities, deliver a better service to the customer and be motivated to get the job done so that they can finish work earlier. Mullins (2010) outlines performance as a stage of development to the level of employee performance. Which in terms of this study will depend on whether employees feel they are able to perform to a higher standard whilst working from home and can focus on their tasks more when not distracted in the office environment.

Literature Review

Working from home is known as a form of flexible working due to the fact that it provides employees with an opportunity to work flexibly in order to carry out their job roles within their working environment, this can include when they work, such as, the working hours and also where they work such as the work environment (CIPD, 2016). According to CIPD (2016) flexible working has been introduced into organisations as a way for employees and employers to have flexibility within their job roles therefore allowing them to suit their personal needs. This type of flexible working can be defined as mobile working, allowing employees and employers to work elsewhere outside of the office for either all or part of their working week. Shorthose (2004) outlines that within the private sector some organisations are falling behind in terms of keeping up with this newer way of working. This chapter aims to firstly identify what flexible working is and how this way of working came about. Following on from this, this chapter will then look at previous research and studies carried out in order to discuss working from home in terms of employee motivation levels, employee performance levels, work life balance and also the impact that this may have for employers.

According to Gov UK (2015) the use of mobile working is seen to be beneficial to an organisation, however, there is concern around how to manage employees effectively as this may be extremely challenging for any business. Additionally, ACAS (n.d.) outlines that while working from home may appear to be a positive form of working for many organisations there may be some organisations that this form of working does not suit. Chin (2014) outlines that there appears to be a sense of uncertainty around whether working from home is as beneficial as some other researchers suggest throughout their studies. Shellenbarger (2012) outlines that there is also uncertainty around how employees are splitting their working week e.g. their working from home days may vary each week. In addition to this Geurts and Demerouti (2003) outlines that there is a sense of uncertainty surrounding working times and also the impact of this way of working with regard to employees well-being which can be extremely scarce as there are a range of positive and negative effects that are yet to be investigated further. This may include the level of positivity surrounding new and advancing implementation of technologies that may allow more employees to work from home and the negative factor here may involve employees trying to find a suitable work life balance as organisations are slow at moving towards this newer way of working.

According to Churchard (2015) mobile working is presented as a positive way of working for many organisations, however, there is a sense of uncertainty around whether working from home presents any negativity for employees. This may include the fact that working from home may provide a sense of loneliness that they would not experience while working in the office (Mullins, 2010). A study carried out by Tisal and Awais (2016) summarises that working from home may not be a suitable way of working for all employees as employees would need to be dedicated, self-driven and also focused in order to carry out their day to day work. Additionally, Jizba and Kleiner (1990) outlined that employees would need to decide themselves whether their home environment provides them with the opportunity to carry out their daily jobs correctly/effectively and efficiently, therefore this option of working may work well for some employees but not for others dependant on their home environment.

Additionally, one study outlines that flexible working may work well for staff who work in particular areas of the company e.g. customer services. However, there is a high level of concern for many organisations as it is difficult to measure whether employees working from home are dedicated and are working to their full potential (Bloom, cited in Timsal and Awais, 2016). According to Basile and Beauregard (2016) it is the role of HR to ensure that working from home is a positive experience in allowing employees to work from home effectively. A study carried out by Basile and Beauregard (2016) also has a strong focus around what HR can do to ensure the successful implementation and development of working from home and how, if this way of working is managed correctly by HR, there will be higher levels of success in developing a more agile and diverse workplace. However, Barton (2017) outlines that a recent study carried out by the University of Arizona concludes that in terms of strategic direction 40% of employees feel like they are disconnected from the organisation and around a third of employees working from home feel that they do not receive enough support from their managers. Canonico (2016) also says that employees working from home become isolated both personally and professionally. In addition to this a study by Kattenbach, Demerouti and Nachreiner (2010) concluded that is it the role of HR to introduce and manage a scope for employer flexibility and from this they should be able to identify restrictions that are unnecessary in order to work to reduce these restrictions. This study believes that to effectively manage this way of working HR should be able to increase predictability through the organisation and also reduce any restrictions on time. This study also concludes that employees should be able to present their own preferences and working times whilst working flexibly.

2.1 The history of working from home

Kurland and Bailyn (cited in Tietze and Musson, 2010) outlines that over the past years there has been a shift in the style of work carried out in terms of employees location of work. Employees have expanded their location of the working environment in order to have the opportunity of carrying out their day to day tasks at any time, in any chosen location. In addition to this Ellis (2016) outlines that the number of employees working from home in the UK has increased over the last 10 years by around a fifth which has raised the overall number of employees working from home to 1.5 million. The Trades Union Congress (2013) outlines that more male than female employees are working from home, however, there has also been a noticeable rise over the last few years in the number of women working from home. While both of these studies reflect statistics in the UK it is interesting to see that there is a rise in this way of working and although this study is not Irish based it is clear to see that this way of working is more developed in the UK and could have the same potential impact for Irish organisations. According to Morley, Gunnigle and Haraty (1995) literature at the time outlined that the nature was extremely loose in terms of the Irish labour market which provided and attempted to facilitate to provide higher levels of flexibility. However, at this time there was some concern as to what changes were going to be made in relation to this. This study by Morley et al (1995) suggests that flexible working strategies can assist in more responsiveness within organisations. There was also some concern around working from home and it was suggested in this study that working from home was the least used flexible working option in Ireland. However, this study concluded that there has been a shift in the ways of working due to various labour market changes, including the recession. This study suggests that organisations have had to adapt to these changes in order to survive and manage their costs, demands and inputs which suggests that there has been an increase in flexible working practices across Ireland.

Additionally, Wheatly (2012) outlines that flexible working practices within the public sector are generally available for all employees, however, this way of working may not always be available for managers within the organisations because there is a sense that managers should be available in the office to be responsive towards their employees. This study also indicates that within the private sector there wouldn't be any sort of formal policy put in place for this way of working.

According to Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive and Heelan (2010) most literature at this time focused on categorizing employees in terms of job satisfaction and work/life balance. This literature was said to have a focus on either office based worker and employees working from home. This study concluded that research needs to be carried out to focus on different working activities and arrangements, hence why there is a further need for more studies to be carried out within this area.

2.2 Employee motivation and performance levels

Timsal and Awais (2016) believes that organisations are currently finding different ways to develop and retain their employees and that currently, potential candidates are attracted to organisations that have flexibility throughout the workplace. James (2016) outlines that this way of working provides employees with freedom which can be a huge benefit as it allows employees to carry out their daily work as well as build in other personal tasks that they may need to complete throughout the day. However, a study carried out by Canonico (2016) outlined that working from home can negatively affect organisational performance which in turn may impact on the overall culture within the organisation. This study also outlined how this way of working may increase tension levels due to a shift in the variation of culture climates (Canonico, 2016), meaning that employees often do not react well to change unless it is seen to be beneficial to their needs (CIPD, 2016).

However, Miles (2016) for CIPD outlines that employers will be able to avoid any risks that may be associated with flexible working arrangements if they are able to treat employees fairly and also implement certain working rules such as ensuring that staff have the facilities and equipment available in order to carry out their job roles, ensuring that employees feel supported by their employer and also it is important to take into consideration health and safety aspects. All of these factors may influence upon employee motivation and performance levels as these may contribute to employee satisfaction within the workplace.

Weatherly and Otter (2011) outlines that managers are in a position to reject their employees requests to work flexibly if there is a good business reason to do so. This could be for reasons such as the effect this may have on providing a satisfactory level of customer service, the costs that may be attached to this for the business and also the limitation of

not being able to outline and recognise the level and quality of work that has been produced as it may be more difficult for an organisation to manage this. These factors may impact on employee performance as there is no indication as to whether they are performing to a suitable standard which may also impact on their motivation levels if they are not driven forward to achieve results to the best of their ability.

However, like all forms of working there are also various drawbacks. According to Timsal and Awais (2016) working from home may not suit every employees needs as this form of flexible working requires high levels of concentration, dedication, self-motivation and control. James (2016) also concludes that working from home involves many challenges with the biggest challenge being that it can be extremely hard to retain the motivation to work as it is a struggle to retain the ability to be self-disciplined and self driven to complete work tasks, when working remotely with little support from co-located work colleagues or management. There is no indication here as to what way the employee is affected by these challenges.

Additionally, a study carried out by Jizba and Kleiner (1990) outlines that working from home/mobile working limits the employees opportunities to develop themselves and their skills and is likely to put a hold on their career growth. This may include the fact that employees have less opportunities in terms of training, communication, interaction and interpersonal skills with their colleagues and there may also be a lack of development due to the fact that if the employee is comfortable completing the same tasks while working from home then there is likely to be less variation within their job role. Furthermore, not being located in the office environment may lead to remote employees being left out of key meetings which lead to key decisions. Also, ad hoc meetings are more difficult to organise with employees that work remotely, which could lead to them not being included routinely.

Bloom (2014) carried out a study based around the organisation Ctrip that concluded that allowing employees to work from home will increase performance levels. However, this study was carried out based on employees who worked in a call centre and it was therefore easier to measure their performance levels. During this interview Bloom (2014) was asked whether Marissa Mayer was wrong when she introduced a ban on employees being granted the opportunity of working from home in Yahoo as this ban could have been introduced due to various other factors such as lower levels of morale in the organisation. There is, however another extremely interesting report by Barton (2017) that

focused on Ian Wright who had previously always worked in an office environment and who started working from home as a business owner which gave him the opportunity of spending time with his new born baby whilst continuing to work full time. However, Ian concluded extremely quickly that he was unable to concentrate on work as the demands placed on him by the new born baby were too great resulting in him not being as focused. This resulted initially in him putting his child in childcare, thinking that this was the reason for his lack of concentration. This also failed as Ian still found that he was being less productive due to the amount of distractions at home. Ian eventually ended up renting office space so that he could fully concentrate on his work, choosing not to work from home.

In terms of productivity and performance an article written by Bailey (2012) outlines that this way of working appears to be more productive than office based work. However, a more recent article by the London School of Economics and Political Science (2016) outlines the same as Bailey in terms of how previous research has suggested that employees working from home are seen to be a lot more productive than those who work in an office on a full time basis, however, the research carried out by the London School of Economics and Political Science (2016) outlines that these so called benefits have since disappeared over time. The contrast between these two studies may suggest that working from home is a short term working arrangement and that in the long term the effects may not be as beneficial as previous researches have outlined. The conclusions of a study by Morganson et al (2010) outlined that an employees chosen work location can have various impacts and differences in terms of their job satisfaction, inclusion and also their work/life balance. In addition to this Lewis and Humbert (2010) outlines that organisations need to move away from having a focus purely on company flexible working policies and instead there should be a stronger focus on the actual practice of this newer way of working.

2.3 Technology

Throughout the industry there have been various changes/developments that have influenced these different forms of flexible working, these changes have provided organisations with higher opportunities to allow more of their staff to partake in this way of working. A CIPD report by Churchard (2015) outlines that since 2005 the number of staff working from home has increased to 4.2 million. Additionally, a podcast by Roberts (2010)

looks at how employees working in the UK spend around 22 million hours every single day commuting to and from the workplace, this podcast looks at how this generation of employees rely on technology and how this shift in working styles in allowing employees to make use of flexible working practices which in turn will shorten travelling times and will also positively impact current ongoing environmental issues.

Timsal and Awais (2016) outlines that the use of working from home is made possible due to new technologies being readily available. Cole (2016) also looks at how the use of newer technologies has allowed for flexibility surrounding space/time of work, although this study concludes that these newer technologies may have a negative impact on psychological detachment for employees working from home. Additionally, there have been some innovative influences that have effected some organisations. An example of this is the company Yahoo, Yahoo introduced a ban across their organisation to prevent their employees working from home as this organisation found that working from home had a negative influence on the levels of innovation and also slowed down delivery performance, suggesting that this form of working may negatively impact both motivation and performance levels of employees and employers (Arun Pathak et al, 2015). This study concluded that employees communication levels are moderately higher when employees are working in an office environment as they are able to collaborate more effectively at a higher positive level. In addition to this, other organisations such as Best Buy have also tried to limit the use of working from home (Basile and Beauregard, 2016).

However, the study by Arun Pathak et al (2015) looks at how other technology and IT based organisations such as Google or Hewlett-Packard have not completely banned working from home but they have introduced limits on this form of working. However, a report for The Irish Times outlines that other organisations such as Apple and Amazon purely focus on recruiting employees that solely work from home on a day to day basis e.g. customer service staff, this report identifies that these particular organisations hire these staff in order to limit costs on office space and this way of working is seen to lower levels of absenteeism across the organisation (Reddan, 2015). Miles (2016) for CIPD also outlines that technology advancements have fuelled a rise in working from home and a lot more employees are now working from home than ever before.

During recent years the performance, cost, availability of laptop computers and software has supported the capability of companies to allow employees to work from home. The wider availability of Broadband to most households has also supported working

from areas other than the office environment. Cousins and Robey (2015) also outlines that the use of mobile phones/laptops has presented organisations to allow a growth in allowing employees to work elsewhere outside of the office which may allow organisations to reduce their costs. It is evident to see from these different sources that technology is playing a huge part in the development of flexible working practices, however, there is no indication throughout these studies as to what impact this is having on employees. As suggested by Dixon (2014), employees today would not think twice about flexible working as the use of technology is allowing employees to work in various locations e.g. being able to answer work phone calls from a mobile device at any place and any time. However, an article by Shellenbarger (2012) outlines that this vast development in technology and the huge rise in flexible working is forcing organisations to use "tracking software and other Big Brother checks" (Shellenbarger, 2012) in order to assess whether employees are actually working.

2.4 Work Life Balance

Tietze and Musson (2010) in their study looks at how managers are transitioning from office locations to their own homes and how this poses questions around the ability of managers working from home as this would be a cultural change. This study concludes that the focus of working from home should not be a pure focus on work life balance but working from home should also factor in the different opinions individuals have on working from home e.g. every employee will have a different outlook as to what they feel working from home is and what they class as a balance between work and also home life. Therefore, this may suggest that this way of working cannot be steady or stable. Additionally, this poses a question around whether managers need to be in the office on a full time basis, a case study by McCartney and Evans (2005) outlines that support from a higher levels of the organisation e.g. that managers are key to organisational success. Furthermore, a study carried out by Peters, Den Dulk and De Ruijter (2010) looks at ways in which working from home has an influence on the overall management within an organisation and how organisations can alternate and change their daily working tasks to be able to respond to both internal and external pressures that may be influencing the business. Nevertheless, this particular study summarised that further researches and studies should be carried out in relation to mobile working and the effect that environmental changes may have on managements outlook and attitudes.

According to Timsal and Awais (2016) there are various benefits that working from home has for employees, this includes flexibility in working hours, work life balance and may suggest higher levels of performance. A case study by McCartney and Evans (2005) outlines that work-life balance is key to having a successful organisation and will allow higher levels of competitiveness to run through the business, however, there is no indication as to whether working from home allows employees to have a positive work/life balance. In addition to this Anderson and Kelliher (2009) concludes that working from home increases the commitment levels of employees to the organisation and in turn provides higher levels of job satisfaction. A study by Turcotte (2010) believes that working from home provides employees with the opportunity of having freedom in their working hours and also removes commuting times, leaving employees free to either use this time to fulfil more work tasks, or alternatively utilise the time for personal activities. While Barton (2017) believes that various researches have concluded that working from home increases levels of happiness. Bloom (2014) also outlines that levels of happiness can also be linked to employees being less likely to resign from the organisation as they are more satisfied within their job roles.

According to a study on Lilly UK, a pharmaceutical organisation, McCartney and Evans (2005) concludes that there are various drivers surrounding flexible working, this includes working from home in general. Working from home can be seen as one of many forms of flexible working within this particular organisation which can be seen to motivate, attract and retain staff whilst continuing to hold a competitive edge within this particular industry. Anderson and Kelliher (2009) as part of their study carried out interviews on flexible working and one participant commented on how the organisation managed to retain their staff due to offering a flexible working arrangement.

On the other hand, The McCartney and Evans (2005) case study is based on a pharmaceutical company, this study concludes that the implementation of flexible working policies may not be suited to the needs and wants of the organisation and in turn this may negatively impact customer demands, have impact on the performance levels and the quality of work presented by employees and this form of flexible working may also be costly for this particular organisation. Likewise a study by Bloom (2014) outlined that organisations such as Ctrip are able to cut down on costs by allowing employees to work from home due to saving more space in the office and less money would need to be spent on furniture. In this particular organisation it was estimated that around $1,900 was saved

per employee over the 9 month period, which could be seen to be a huge saving for the company.

Additionally, a study carried out by Mellner, Kecklund, Kompier, Sariaslan and Aronsson (2016) outlined working from home as 'boundaryless' work and this study looked at how working from home may impact psychological detachment. It was believed by the researchers at the beginning of the study that the link between work/life balance would be a crucial factor of flexible working in order to allow employees to wind down from work however, as the study developed the researchers came to conclude that longer working hours can indicate an absence with psychological detachment. However, the overall study concluded that employees working from home increase the risk of always being switched on and being readily available to work.

As mentioned previously, the study by Turcotte (2010) concluded that work/life balance was extremely positive for employees who worked from home in Canada, however, this study also mentioned that staff who worked at home for more than 10 hours every week were dissatisfied in terms of their work/life balance. The statistics for this study showed that dissatisfaction levels were 17% for staff working more than 10 hours every week, 14% for staff working less than 10 hours every week and also 12% for staff who did not work from home at all. Based on this study it is clear to see that employees who worked from home for longer than 10 hours every week were spending too much time working and this was having a negative impact on their job satisfaction.

2.5 Employers

In a study carried out by McCartney and Evans (2005) it was concluded that it is important for employers to take into consideration the below factors when implementing a flexible working policy within any organisation

- To align the policy with the organisations business strategy
- To communicate with all employees taking into consideration their thoughts and opinions
- To provide the correct equipment and tools necessary, to allow both managers and employees to carry out their job roles successfully e.g. to the same level as they would do in an office environment

Kattenbach, Demerouti and Nachreiner (2010) also outlines that flexible working practices have become extremely popular for employers due to market demands and in terms of efficiency through the workplace. However, this change has not presented any conclusions as to what impact this has had on businesses or their employees. Additionally, ACAS (n.d.) outlines that working from home appears to be a form of working that is slowly increasing throughout organisations. Barton (2017) believes that some organisations have adopted hot-desking define this as a way of encouraging more employees to work from home which is more beneficial for the organisation as they are saving on costs and also freeing up more space in the office.

2.6 Summary

It is clear to see from the above literature that working from home is a positive factor, however, there is very little literature surrounding the impact that working from home has upon employee motivation and performance levels. Therefore, consideration needs to be taken in terms of how employees are effected and how employees feel. It is evident to see that working from home has developed due to the huge impact that technology has had, however, this study will aim to address the gap that is currently present which is the degree of motivation and performance levels of employees.

Based on this, this study will continue to explore motivation, performance and work life balance to gain a further understanding and to see whether this way of working should be introduced into more areas of the bank. As outlined previously by Jizba and Kleiner (1990) this way of working may work well for some employees but not for others.

Research Question

Based on the above literature there is a sense of uncertainty regarding the impact that working from home can have for staff working within a banking environment in terms of their motivation and performance levels. While some studies conclude that working from home may have a positive influence on performance there is no indication as to whether staff who are able to work from home have high or low motivation levels whilst carrying out this way of working. Some of the above studies including Canonico (2016) concludes that currently there is an on-going debate around the negative impacts/consequences that working from home is having on overall organisational cultures. Therefore, based on this, this study aims to understand how motivated employees are who work from home and in what ways their performance levels are effected, this study will also look at how these motivation and performance elements affect work life balance. The use of technology is allowing more employees to work from home, however, some organisations are not fully onboard with introducing this way of working as they are concerned as to the impact this will have on their organisation. However, this study aims to address whether motivation and performance levels are higher for employees who work from home, and if so then why aren't more employees allowed to work from home as this will be both beneficial for the employee and also the organisation.

The following research question has been chosen to be answered as part of this study. Hopefully by answering this research question it will give a clear indication as to what the motivation and performance levels are of employees who work from home.

"Taking into consideration motivation and performance levels, is working from home seen to have a positive or negative influence for employees and in what way does this effect their work life balance?"

In addition to this the following objectives have been created to assist in gathering the most relevant data to successfully answer the above research question.

- To gather an understanding of working from home in terms of motivation and performance levels of employees

- To critically evaluate data collected to discover whether working from home working raises motivation and performance levels and whether this has any impact on work life balance

- To assess whether there are any negative factors that could affect motivation and performance whilst working from home

- To examine whether there are any routine practices that can be introduced into organisations to raise employee motivation and performance levels over the next year

Methodology

In order to gain a further insight into working from home and to answer the proposed research questions various research activities will need to be carried out. There are a wide range of research methods including the two most popular data collection methods, qualitative and quantitative. This section aims to explore the different types of research methods in order to outline the most appropriate data collection for this study. This section will also include details on how the data was collected, ethical considerations and also any limitations that were presented at the time of the data collection.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research Philosophy is the approach adapted by the researcher in terms of how they themselves view the world, this is based on assumptions and these assumptions can support the overall strategy of the research and the chosen research method, these factors should be relevant and useful to the research in question (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2009).

According to Modell (2009) it is problematic to try and define or classify ontology and epistemology. However, Saunders et al. (2012) looks at the research onion and how this method can be used to peel away each of the layers dependant on the cause/issue of the chosen data collection method in order to successfully develop and determine a research strategy. There are different philosophical perspectives that can be taken, including Ontology and Epistemology in order to assist a researcher in outlining the design of their overall study.

3.1.1 Ontology

According to Marks and Yardley (2004) ontology is the concept of what can be known in terms of reality. Ontology is a philosophical perspective and according to Bryman and Bell (2011) constructivism as an ontological position outlines that current phenomena is constantly being revised and can also be related to the limited amount of knowledge that is hard to determine within the social world. Due to the nature of this study the researcher

needs to gain employees individual experiences and views with regards to working from home, meaning that the study is of an exploratory nature and will value a constructivism viewpoint (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

3.1.2 Epistemology

Marks and Yardley (2004) summarises epistemology to be the way in which knowledge is or can be obtained. Positivism can be associated with natural sciences in terms of epistemological positioning which generally would be associated with quantitative research (Bryman and Bell 2011). However, the philosophy perspective taken for this research is interpretivism as this has a focus upon the value, behaviours, feelings and the way in which people view the world (Pease, 2013).

According to (Pease, 2013) by having a focus on constructivism and interpretivism a study is likely to take a qualitative approach as the overall research method. Hence why this is appropriate in relation to this study.

3.2 Research Methods

3.2.1 Qualitative vs. Quantitative

Kapoulas and Mitic (2012) perceives qualitative research to be a very popular research method around at this present time, however, this study by Kapoulas and Mitic (2012) outlines that there is concern around how long this interest in qualitative research will last as there may, in the future, be a shift towards using other data collection methods. Qu and Dumay (2011) also believes that some researchers have judged and critiqued the use of interviews as a form of qualitative data collection due to the language used, the way in which the data is represented and also the actual knowledge that is gained.

According to Neuman and Jankowicz (Cited in Anderson, 2009) there are various differences between the most common data collection methods, quantitative and qualitative. This study by Neuman and Jankowicz (Cited in Anderson, 2009) outlines that quantitative approaches would have more of a focus on the analysis of numbers whereas qualitative data would be an analysis of various themes that would come to light from a

variety of sources. Additionally, Bryman and Bell (2011) identifies the same conclusion as Neuman and Jankowicz as they believe that qualitative research has an overall focus on words and allows the researcher to go into more detail, where as a quantitative approach looks at gathering data from a data analysis perspective which would have a particular focus on numbers.

In addition to this Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) outlines that a quantitative data analysis approach allows the research to be designed e.g. the chosen approach and the questions that are to be asked in advance of carrying out the data collection, where as a qualitative approach allows the approach to be changed and adapt as the study progresses. An example of this would be when interviews are carried out the questions could be expanded and developed where necessary. The University of Wisconsin (2017) also suggests that quantitative research would use objective measures and qualitative research would use measures of subjective experience.

3.2.2 Mixed Methods

Some researchers look at carrying out a mixed method of research for their study which would focus on both qualitative and quantitative data collection. According to Anderson (2009) the use of mixed methods research allows:

- A variation of sources to be used in order to present findings
- A development in research questions
- A focus on both qualitative and quantitative
- A development on HR issues in terms of the macro (quantitative) and micro (qualitative) in order to get an overall opinion of the condition

In relation to this study a mixed methods approach would not have been an appropriate method of research as it can be difficult to merge and integrate the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative research. However, Creswell (2013) outlines that the use of mixed methods can provide a clearer understanding rather than carrying out research based on one method alone e.g. quantitative or qualitative. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) the use of mixed methods research does have potential, however, there are some constraints such as the fact that this is a newer research method that is growing and becoming more popular and due to this there is a sense that this method is less reliable than either a quantitative or qualitative research approach.

3.3 Choice of research methodology

According to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) methodology can be identified as the approach taken in order to address problems and be able to seek results. This particular study was carried out by using qualitative research due to the fact that information needed to be collected regarding participants opinions and in-depth descriptions. According to Gopaldas (2016) a qualitative research approach is extremely important for most studies as it allows information to be gathered to combine and gain a further insight into the relevant literature, the proposed problems or issues and the presented research questions. A qualitative approach will look at how participants understand a particular situation and whether they reflect on how a situation may influence their actions (Neuman and Jankowicz, cited in Anderson, 2009). A qualitative approach will be extremely beneficial for this study as over time opinions on working from home have vastly changed and there is a growing concern surrounding the impact that this is having on employees and their organisations. This study also outlines that a qualitative approach allows the researcher to develop on theory rather than test theory as suggested through a quantitative approach (Anderson, 2009). This is extremely relevant for this study as there is a strong focus on participants' overall opinions and thoughts with regards to working from home. A quantitative approach would not have been as relevant for this study due to the fact that a quantitative approach would have collected data based on the number of people who feel more motivated by working from home e.g. out of X number of participants X number felt they were more motivated, where as a qualitative approach has gathered a range of specific opinions and reasons as to why employees feel more motivated, which in turn has led to more valuable and strong conclusions and recommendations.

Through the use of this particular data collection method, various findings and conclusions have been made, allowing recommendations to be presented to the organisation in terms of working from home. To achieve these factors, the aims and objectives outlined in the 'research question' section, were put in place to allow the researcher to come to various conclusions and recommendations.

3.4 Data Collection

In order for this research to be carried out successfully it was important to ensure that a number of factors were considered, including, who the target audience would be, how many people were going to be involved in the research of the study, the approach that was to be taken and also the actual questions that were going to be asked in order to assist in answering the research questions (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The type of research chosen for the study was interviews which would be carried out in a semi-structured format. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) the use of semi-structured interviews allows there to be a chosen list of interview questions, however, the use of semi-structured interviews also allows the interviewer to change the schedule as the interview goes on. The interviewer can ask more questions and may also follow up on each question depending on the interviewees replies. Spender (Cited in Bryman and Bell, 2011) carried out research based upon semi-structured interviews as he believed that this way of interviewing was extremely focused as it allows there to be a combination of unstructured interviews along with a loose agreement in terms of the participant and the context of the research question. In addition to this a study by Lucie (Cited in Bryman and Bell, 2011) also looked at semi-structured interviews and concluded that the use of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to have general questions as they know what they want to achieve from the study, the use of this data collection method also allows the researcher to have less structured questions and ask questions as the study developed by knowing the areas that needed to be covered and the answers that needed to be achieved from the study.

Although semi-structured interviews were selected for this study, other forms of interviews such as structured and unstructured interviews were also considered. Structured interviews would not be relevant for this study due to the fact that structured interviews would be used more frequently in quantitative research to allow validity and measurement throughout the research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Unstructured interviews were also looked at, unstructured interviews allow the interviewer to ask a question that might be open-ended but that relates back to the overall research question. The interviewee will then reply freely and the interviewer can probe the interviewee as the interview goes along (Cachia and Millward, 2011). With unstructured interviews there are no set specific questions that must be asked, the interviewer asks questions based on the reply of the interviewee and probes as and when it is needed (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Therefore, this was not a relevant method choice for this research as specific questions

were needed to be answered alongside the use of probing when it was needed, which semi-structured interviews could offer.

3.5 Data collection – Factors for consideration

In order to take the best approach for this study various research methods were reviewed and different data collection methods were looked at in order to collect the most relevant data. It was extremely important to ensure that the following factors were considered when using a qualitative data collection method:

- To gain consent from each of the participants for the study to be voice recorded. This is extremely useful when transcribing each of the interviews that were carried out.

- To give instructions to the participant and to let them know the structure of the interview. This is important so that the participant knows exactly what they are getting involved in and to set out from start to finish how the interview will be carried out, this may also put the participant at ease.

- The order of the questions were also considered and were segregated to ensure that the first section of questions were quick hit questions and then the second section of questions allowed the participant to go into more detail if they wished to do so. This is likely to ease the participant into the study without bombarding them with intense questions right at the very start of the interview.

- Probing is also a key factor for this type of data collection method as it allows the researcher to assist the participant if they need help in understanding the question or if the participant does not provide enough detail in their answer, the interviewer is then able to probe them into providing more detail.

3.6 Pilot Study

It was agreed that a pilot study would be carried out as according to Bryman and Bell (2011) the use of doing a pilot study allows the researcher to ensure that the interview questions are relevant to the study, to ensure that there is no repetition and to ensure that in general the outlined method works well. The pilot study carried out was based on the interview questions presented in appendix 1 and the pilot study was carried out on one individual who currently works from home as this allowed the questions to be tweaked slightly as there was some repetition and overlap in the questions. The interview questions were made up of a range of questions that were chosen based upon the objectives of this study, ensuring that all of questions asked related to the research question to assist in answering each of the objectives outlined. In addition to this the use of a pilot study provided a general overview of timings as although every interview will be a different length dependant on the answers given it was more so for the interviewer to see whether there were too many questions presented or too little. This study lead to a change in the amount of questions that were to be asked. A total of 4 questions were removed and the finalised interview questions are shown in appendix 2. The original interview questions were amended slightly due to the fact that there were some similarities which led to the participant providing repetitive answers. An example of this in the first set of interview questions the participant was asked *'Can you tell me about how you feel working from home influences your performance levels?'* (question 16) which was very similar to question 26 *'In general, do you feel there are any limitations surrounding working from home with regards to your motivation and performance levels?'* therefore question 16 was removed from the finalised interview questions.

As the chosen method for this research was to carry out interviews, the questions were easy enough to adapt and change as the study went on, however, this wouldn't necessarily be a possibility if the decision was made to gather data through the use of quantitative data collection as the questions cannot be easily changed.

3.7 Data Collection Sample

The following strategy was followed in order to obtain the data collection sample. After carrying out a pilot study the study could be continued, firstly the target audience were selected which for this research was employees who work from home. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) it is difficult to decide on a sample size for any study due to the fact that there are time and cost restraints which include how much time there is to analyse the data collected and also whether there were any costs involved. Based on this it was important to be realistic and considerate of these factors when selecting the sample size. Employees for the study were selected by word of mouth by speaking with employees and managers throughout the organisation who knew people who currently had the opportunity of working from home. Following identification of these employees an email was issued to these employees to see whether they would be interested in participating in the study, a copy of the email issued can be seen in appendix 3. The email was issued to 20 employees with the hope of receiving 10 replies from employees who would be interested in participating and a total of 9 replies were received. All 9 employees that responded were happy to participate in the study, which would provide a successful amount of data in order for this study to be carried out due to lengthy interviews and a suitable amount of data to analyse.

3.7.1 Breakdown of Data Sample

As the first 6 questions asked in the interview were very much yes or no answers it has been easier to present the information in a table. The table shown below provides a general summary of the answers that were gained from each of the participants that were interviewed.

	Length of service	Working full time or part time	Duration of time working from home	Reason for working from home	How many days working from home per week	Job role
Participant 1	11 years	Full Time	2 and a half years	Two small children, able to take them to school and pick them up again	One day per week	Flexible job role, allows flexible location
Participant 2	13 years	Part Time (4 day week)	4/5 years	Convenience due to travel/distance	One day per week	Spread over Dublin, not required to be in the office on a full time basis
Participant 3	Around 18 years	Full Time	10 years	Convenience due to getting older	1/2 days per week	Reading and writing reports
Participant 4	11 years	Full Time	2 and a half years	Breathing space	Once a month	Organising and thinking
Participant 5	Since July 2016	Full Time	Since April	Long commute	Two days per week	Dealing with data
Participant 6	5 years	Full Time	4 months	Family reasons	One day per week	Manage a team
Participant 7	5 and a half years	Full Time	2 years	Family reasons	Once or twice every fortnight	Solo and collaborative work
Participant 8	31 Years	Full Time	7 years	Childs commitments	Once or twice a week	Spread around Dublin, need to be in a variation of locations
Participant 9	Since 1999	Full Time	Around 6 months	Recently returning to work from sick leave / Commute is long	Two or three days per week	Analysis work / training co-ordinator

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Following receipt of the replies, meeting invites were issued to each of the participants in order for the interviews to be carried out. Immediately on meeting with each of the participants the interviewer spoke with the participant to ensure that they were happy for the interviewer to record the interview, following verbal approval the interviewer was able to start the Dictaphone. Participants were then issued with an information sheet (appendix 4) which outlined all of the details that they needed to know before the interview was carried out and they were also issued with a consent form (appendix 5) which they had to sign before proceeding with the study.

Once the participant was happy enough and the consent form had been signed the interviewer was able to start the interview, whereby each of the interviews started in a similar way and the interviewer outlined the terms of the study, this can be seen in appendix 6. Once the interview questions had been completed the interviewer ended each of the interviews by thanking the participant and stopping the recording.

The interviews were carried out over a two-week period and all 9 interviews were transcribed during these two weeks.

3.9 Data Analysis

It is important throughout any study for the data collected to be analysed in a suitable way in order to be able to present findings and discussion based on what the researcher has found. According to Turunen (2013) there are two main types of data analysis for qualitative research which includes content analysis and thematic analysis.

According to Marks and Yardley (2004) content analysis usually provides the researcher with a description of features presented in a numerical format and outlining the number of times the incident occurred, this information would be provided from data collection.

However, this study looked at using thematic analysis, thematic analysis can be outlined as a flexible approach used to analyse qualitative data that identifies reporting patterns e.g. themes in data collected (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A thematic analysis looks specifically at patterns that have emerged from the data (Marks and Yardley, 2004). This

will allow the researcher to look at and identify the key themes from the data collection in order to successfully analyse the responses collected.

The use of a Dictaphone allowed each of the semi-structured interviews to be listened to on a repetitive basis in order to transcribe each of the interviews from start to finish. As a thematic analysis was to be carried out each of the interview transcripts needed to be coded. The use of coding allows patterns to be presented throughout the data collected in order to present key themes that have emerged from the study (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

In addition to the above ethical considerations needed to be taken into account. This may include the fact that participants who have agreed to take part in the study may be working from home due to needing to look after members of their family who may be ill or if they themselves are unable to come into the workplace 5 days a week due to reasons that they would not wish to share.

Other than this there wouldn't be any ethical considerations that needed to be taken into account, however, all participants were made aware at the start of the study what the study would entail and also that any information they provide would be held strictly confidential and keeping participants responses anonymous and unidentifiable would remain. To ensure that participants were fully aware what was being asked of them they were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 5) that outlined each of these factors.

Based on this above point the interviewer needed to ensure that they are sensitive towards each of the participants should any risks/issues arise as they may be discussing upsetting matters that may affect the participant (University of Greenwich, n.d.). However, for this particular study all ethical considerations were taken into account but it was highly unlikely based on the nature of the study that any issues should have arose. If any issues were to arise each of the participants were made fully aware at the start of the study that they are able to withdraw at any given stage.

In addition to this it was ensured that all data provided by participants was held and looked after correctly to ensure that no one else got hold of the data or that the data was lost or destroyed incorrectly. The use of a Dictaphone enabled the researcher to keep

hold of the data until each of the interviews were transcribed, once the interviews were transcribed each of the interviews were removed from the recording device, under the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 data should not be held for longer that required (Data Protection Commissioner, n.d.). Therefore, data was deleted as soon as the researcher no longer needed the recording. All of the transcribed interviews were saved on a laptop in a locked folder.

Findings

This study has provided findings that have assisted in answering the research question. From carrying out interviews, five themes have been recognised in terms of employee motivation and performance levels of employees who work from home. The sample from this study, as outlined previously, was formed from 9 participants who work in a banking organisation and who currently have the opportunity of working from home. This sample was taken through the use of semi-structured interviews which has provided a large amount of data for the researcher to present findings through thematic analysis.

4.1 Themes

Outlined below are the themes that emerged from the study:

1. Individual preferences vary
2. Levels of motivation and performance
3. Work Life Balance as a key factor
4. Isolation from the workplace
5. Technology as a driver

Throughout the interviews participants were asked a number of questions relating to working from home and their individual opinions on how they feel it affect their motivation and performance levels. Participants that took part in the study outlined that overall working from home was an extremely positive way of working.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

4.2.1 Theme 1 – Individual Preferences

It was evident to see the high levels of positivity surrounding working from home through-out each of the interviews. Participant 1 outlined that ***"Its great just to be able to get out of the office, have no interruptions, no meetings and just be able to get your work done."***

All 9 participants that took part in the study mentioned that there were less distractions while working from home and this appeared to be a key factor. Participant 8 outlined that *"it gives you the space to think and concentrate in a way you cannot do in an office environment."* In addition to this participant 6 commented on how there are *"no distractions and your thoughts are a bit clearer."* Participant 1 mentioned *"by working from home I can get more done because you're just pure focused rather than people coming up to you."* Similarly, participant 2 also outlined *"The office is such a busy environment, people kind of stop by your desk whereas when you're at home it gives you that time to do what you need to do."*

Many of the participants hold different reasonings as to why they appreciate working from home. Participant 3 commented on the convenience of working from home and how this makes a huge difference in terms of commuting times to and from work. *"Its less exhausting and as I get older I find the days and the commute very long."* Participant 7 outlined that they are *"100% for homeworking"* while participant 6 outlined there is *"more flexibility"* and participant 2 outlined that working from home provides *"choice and freedom."*

4.2.2 Theme 2 – Levels of Motivation and Performance

A total of 7 out of the 9 participants interviewed felt that their motivation was increased whilst working from home. Participant 6 mentioned *"Yeah, absolutely, you're getting lots done so you can carry on, keep going and power though and stay motivated because you know you can get more things done."* Likewise, participant 4 believed that their motivation levels would be affected positively due to the fact that they are under the impression that they can keep on top of things ready for when they are back in the office, specifically *"being a step of two ahead"* and the fact that *"working from home provides breathing space."* Participant 2 used the term *"plough through."* Participant 3 also made an interesting point that *"there is no doubt in my mind that its very very positive. Erm, simply because it can contribute to my wellbeing, I'm instantly more motivated to get things done as I am in my home surroundings and know that I don't have to commute to and from work."*

On the other hand, the two participants that outlined that their motivation levels were not affected presented different reasonings for their differences in opinions. Participant 7 specified that *"I don't think that the location provides an issue with this, I*

think you are motivated by the job role that you do and not the location." In addition to this participant 9 commented on how it doesn't affect their motivation levels, however, they did suggest that *"you just need to be really careful that you're as productive in both environments but that you don't try to get too much done either."*

In terms of performance levels participants were asked how they feel their performance levels would be affected if working from home was no longer an option in the workplace. Out of the 9 interviewees 6 participants felt that their performance would be affected negatively if working from home was taken away from them, where-as 3 participants stated their performance would be affected both positively and negatively. Participant 7 believes that this would have a huge impact on their overall outlook and opinions on their job *"I wouldn't like the idea of taking away something that I value heavily. It you know, keeps me more engaged and I feel freedom is a huge element."* In addition to this participant 5 outlined their reasoning for this was related to the job role and organisation itself *"so since I've got working from home for these two days a week my retention to stay with the company has increased."* Participant 9 also commented on how their *"performance levels were a lot higher"* and they could *"be more productive"* while working from home due to the fact that they were less tired as their commute was extremely tiring and *"a complete waste of time and its very frustrating."*

On the other hand, there were 3 participants that were very much on the fence with regard to this question and had very much mixed opinions of why this way of working would have both a positive/negative affect if working from home was no longer an option in the workplace. Participant 8 outlined that they would *"be hugely disappointed, however, I've had a long career with the company and have adapted to significant changes in work practices, so I would imagine I'd adapt to whatever new arrangement was required of me."* This suggests that working from home is heavily valued, however, this shows this participants loyalty to the organisation as they would be willing to makes changes based on the organisations needs. Whereas participant 4 outlined a variation of mixed opinions, firstly stating that performance would not be affected but when expanding on their answer they concluded that working from home wouldn't *"dramatically drop"* their performance levels but in terms of their wellbeing they outlined that they would *"feel a little bit more stressed which may impact my performance negatively."* Participant 8 also commented on how they find working from home *"stress inducing."*

4.2.3 Theme 3 - Work Life balance

Findings from this study show that employees who are more motivated and have higher performance levels also have a better and more positive work life balance. Participant 1 linked their response back to the discussion earlier regarding commuting to and from work. They outlined that if working from home was taken away from them and due to having a long commute this affected their work life balance, *"I'd have no work/life balance and no life as the time I would spend travelling I could have completed work in order to finish for the day and spend time with my family."*

Participant 5 stated that they have an *"extremely positive balance."* While participant 1 outlined that it provides them with *"more flexibility to do things at home."* The majority of participants that took part in this study commented on how working from home raised their motivation levels and how this has a positive influence on their work life balance. Participant 6 stated that they were *"a lot more relaxed"* and were more motivated and were able to perform to a higher level as they could start work earlier and therefore finish earlier in order to *"get out and take the baby for a walk."* Likewise, participant 1 outlined that *"being able to bring the kids to school, it makes a huge difference."*

However, one participant, participant number 3, outlined that they did not have a work life balance but this was not just purely down to the fact that they worked from home, they outlined that *"in general I work very long hours, so I do not have a balance, my working day even in work is typically very long."* This point made by this participant was not specifically based around working from home but was based on their job role in general.

Participant 5 provided an example of where they draw the line when it comes to ensuring they have a work life balance, including, *"when they asked if I wanted email on my phone and I said no to that."*

4.2.4 Theme 4 – Isolation from the workplace

All of the participants outlined that whilst they enjoy working from home they felt that this way of working led them to feel rather isolated. Participant 8 noted *"I am quite a sociable person, and love the company of others."* While participant 6 specified that they are *"not a good solo worker."*

A number of participants commented on how they felt isolated whilst working from home, participant 2 outlined their working environment to be *"quiet."* Similarly, participant 9 commented on how when they first started working from home they *"found it very, very lonely. No one for lunch and no one to talk to."* In addition to this participant 5 suggested that they *"couldn't work from home on a full-time basis as there are high levels of isolation, the balance of working from home for 2/3 days per week is fantastic."* Participant 1 also stated *"feeling isolated slips to the back of your mind as you are choosing to work from home, you can usually get more done anyway."*

4.2.5 Theme 5 – Technology as a driver

Technology was a theme that emerged from this study as *"technology has been advanced a lot and has enabled working from home to be a lot easier"* (Participant 6). Participant 7 commented on how employees working from home need to become *"more comfortable in using technology and not replying on someone being at their desk or free at short notice."* Additionally, participant 8 outlined that there is *"amazing technology available"* and that *"technology allows me to literally work from anywhere."* Likewise, participant 2 also outlined that *"without the use of technology I wouldn't be in a position to be able to work from home."*

However, participants were asked in the interview whether they felt there were any limitations or challenges which may affect their motivation and performance levels whilst working from home. Factors that emerged from this included technology in that *"there is an on-going problem where whole software is not available from home"* (Participant 5). Participant 2 also outlined that *"you can have IT issues and access problems which would interrupt your working time."* In addition to this participant 8 had very similar opinions and also outlined that this *"would affect motivation and performance as it can become extremely frustrating not being able to log on and do the work."*

4.3 Summary

As part of the interviews, all 9 participants were asked whether they prefer working at home rather than working in an office environment to which all participants commented that it would be a 50/50 split. Participant 5 said they *"wouldn't prefer either,"* while participant 2 said they *"need interaction and it's a 50/50 mixture, this also provides freedom and flexibility."* Likewise, participant 3 specified *"I think working from home makes it easier, I certainly find myself more productive but at the same time you have to be able to meet with people face to face rather than having telephone meetings."*

It is clear to see the specific themes that have emerged from this study and the findings that have been presented clearly identify the positives and negatives surrounding motivation and performance of employees working from home.

Discussion

Overall there has been a wide range of research carried out regarding working from home in general which has contributed to the aim and objectives of this study. Through looking at different literature and by conducting qualitative research the following discussion has been constructed in order to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this study. This section will look at the findings that were presented using a thematical analysis, following on from the collection of data through the use of semi-structured interviews.

The first three themes that emerged from this study are particularly relevant to the objectives outlined in the 'research question' section, all three of these themes connect with the topic of motivation and performance of those working from home. Themes four and five are separate factors that also emerged from this study but still have a clear link between the research question and objectives outlined in terms of motivation and performance.

5.1 Discussion - Theme 1 – Individual Preferences

This theme emerged from this study as it was clear to see that working from home was an extremely positive way of working for the majority of employees, as outlined by participant 7, they were ***"100% for homeworking."*** This supports previous literature surrounding this topic as outlined by Churchard (2015) that mobile working is presented as a positive way of working for many organisations. Other studies surrounding this topic also suggested that while working from home may appear to be a positive form of working there may be some organisations that this way of working doesn't suit (ACAS, n.d.). However, it is clear to see from this research carried out that working from home is an extremely positive way of working for the participants that were interviewed, as suggested by participant 1 ***"its great just to be able to get out of the office."***

Likewise, participants outlined their individual preferences as to why they enjoy working from home ***"more flexibility"*** (Participant 6) or why they need to work from home

"its less exhausting and as I get older I find the days and the commute very long" (participant 3).

The above factors all contribute to the research objective outlined in this study, due to the high levels of positivity associated with working from home there is likely to be a positive reflection on employees which suggests that their motivation and performance levels will be considerably higher whilst working from home. As outlined by participant 1 *"by working from home I can get more done because you're just pure focused rather than people coming up to you."* James (2016) supports this comment as they outline that this way of working provides employees with freedom which can be a huge benefit as it allows employees to carry out their daily work as well as build in other personal tasks that they may need to complete throughout the day. In addition to this participant 8 outlined that they find working from home *"stress inducing,"* and participant 4 also commented on how they would feel more stressed if working from home was taken away from them. This suggests that working from home contributes to overall employee well-being and satisfaction which can positively impact on their motivation and performance levels. Once these levels are raised it is evident to see throughout this study that work life balance levels are also affected positively.

It was also evident to see that working from home provides employees with freedom, *"flexibility"* (participant 6) and also allows employees to remain focused.

5.2 Discussion – Theme 2 – Levels of Motivation and Performance

As this study had a focus on the motivation levels and performance levels of employees who work from home it was critical to assess the way in which motivation and performance levels were affected. One of the research objectives outlined for this study was to see whether working from home raised motivation and performance levels and to also see whether this had any impact at all on work life balance. Motivation and performance was mentioned throughout each of the interviews and it was evident to see that the majority (7 out of 9) of the participants felt that their motivation levels were considerably higher whilst working from home.

As outlined by participant 9 *"you just need to be really careful that you're as productive in both environments but that you don't try to get too much done either."* Suggesting that it is extremely important for them to find the balance, this could indicate

that employees may feel that they are forced to work harder/achieve more while they are working from home as there may be a sense that they are not actually working whilst at home. Watson and Lightfoot (2003) supports this as they outline from their research that mobile working is beneficial, however, the study looked at how working from home may encourage employees to work for more hours every day.

Literature presented by Roberts (2010) looked at how employees working in the UK spend around 22 million hours every single day commuting to and from the workplace and how shifts in working styles e.g. the use of flexible working practices will shorten travelling times in the future, therefore being more environmentally friendly. This study supported this point in that participant 9 outlined that the commute was a *"complete waste of time"* and additionally participant 3 commented on how *"its less exhausting as I get older."* Both participants spoke about how frustrating this was and how they were likely to be demotivated if they had to go into the office 5 days per week.

As outlined by participant 7, *"I wouldn't like the idea of taking away something that I value heavily,"* this may suggest that staff morale levels will be lower due to the fact that this would have instant effects on employee motivation and performance as they consider this way of working to be heavily valued which enables them to remain *"more engaged."* This co-insides with various studies such as Anderson and Kelliher (2009) as the organisation they looked at in their study was able to retain staff due to offering a flexible working arrangement.

From this it is easy to see that while the majority of participants have the same opinion regarding performance levels there are a few mixed opinions in this regard. However, it is evident to see from this research overall that out of all participants not one of these outlined that their performance would be affected positively if working from home was taken away from them. This therefore suggests that this way of working should be incorporated throughout the organisation, where possible, as it appears to have huge positive impacts on both the employee and the organisation in terms of motivation and performance levels. This links in nicely with the study by Timsal and Awais (2016) in that organisations are currently finding different ways to develop and retain their employees and that currently, potential candidates are attracted to organisations that have flexibility throughout the workplace. Due to the fact that employees value working from home so much and as outlined by participant 8 they would be *"hugely disappointed"* if working

from home was taken away, therefore suggesting that they would be less driven, de-motivated and less engaged within the organisation.

There is a slight contradiction presented between the literature and also the findings of this study. For many participants, distractions in the office appeared to be a key factor that was outlined with some participants outlining that from home their *"thoughts are a bit clearer"* (participant 6), you can be *"more focused rather than people coming up to you"* (participant 1), or that being at home *"gives you that time to do what you need to do."* This provides a clear indication that by working from home employees can perform and concentrate to a higher standard as there are no interruptions. However, literature relating to this by Barton (2017) looked at how Ian Wright worked from home to try and be more productive and perform to a higher standard, however, he commented on how he had more distractions within the home environment.

The reason for this contradiction is that while participants of this study found that there were minimal distractions at home, Ian Wright appeared to have a lot more distractions at home than he did in the office e.g. new born baby at home. Therefore, it can clearly be suggested that it is down to the individual themselves as to how they go about minimising distractions which for all 9 of the participants that took part in this study they achieved as the working office would present high levels of distraction, *"it gives you the space to think and concentrate"* (participant 8).

5.3 Discussion - Theme 3 – Work Life Balance

There is no doubt that work life balance is a huge positive factor for any employee as outlined by previous researchers like Timsal and Awais (2016) There are various benefits that working from home has for employees, this includes flexibility in working hours, work life balance and may suggest higher levels of performance. It is evident to see elements of work life balance from the findings of this study as participants commented on how they were able to *"get out and take the baby for a walk"* (participant 6) and *"being able to bring the kids to school, it makes a huge difference."* This suggests that employees are able to *"plough though"* (participant 2) the work and perform to a higher standard in order to be able to remain motivated to get the task done so that they were able to spend quality time with their families.

However, Mellner et al (2016) suggested in their study that working from home was 'boundaryless' work and this study looked at how working from home may impact psychological detachment. However, based on this point there appears to be a different outcome presented in this current study as participants 5,1 and 6 all commented on how working from home provided them with an opportunity to have an *"extremely positive balance," "more flexibility to do things and home,"* and also *"a lot more relaxed."*

5.4 Discussion - Theme 4 – Isolation

This theme was presented to the researcher throughout each of the interviews and was not a chosen point of topic for this study, however, participants commented on how this was a key factor that they have struggled to get used to. Participant 2 outlined that their home working environment is *"quiet"* and participant 6 outlined that they are *"not a good solo worker."* This suggests that motivation and performance levels may be affected negatively if employees are feeling isolated and *"lonely"* (participant 9), providing a sense that employees may feel left out, uninvolved, forgotten about. This links in and reflects of Mullins (2010) in that there is a sense of loneliness that they would not experience while working in the office, suggesting that this negative factor only arises while employees work from home.

Although, it was also evident to see that while there is this sense of negativity in terms of isolation, employees found that if they had the correct balance between the office and working from home then they were able to manage what worked best for them. Shellenbarger (2012) outlined in their study that there was a sense of uncertainty regarding how employees are splitting their working week e.g. their working from home days may vary each week. However, this study has been able to assess this factor as it was clear to see that having *"the balance of working from home for 2/3 days per week is fantastic"* (participants 5), suggesting that as they have the flexibility to work from home when they want to, isolation therefore isn't as important as employees have the choice and freedom. Additionally, this suggests that participants working from home could not work from home on a full-time basis due to this isolation element.

5.5 Discussion – Theme 5 – Technology as a driver

It is clear to see from both the literature and the findings of this research that *"technology has been advanced"* (participant 6), in connection with this, Timsal and Awais (2016) outlines that the use of working from home is made possible due to new technologies being readily available. While current literature explains how the use of newer technologies has allowed for flexibility surrounding space/time of work (Cole, 2016), there is little indication as to the negative impacts that technology may have for employees. Participants involved in this study support current literature as Miles (2016) for CIPD also outlines that technology advancements have fuelled a rise in working from home and a lot more employees are now working from home than ever before. Participants outlined that *"without the use of technology I wouldn't be in a position to be able to work from home"* (participant 2) or the fact that there is *"amazing technology available"* (participant 8).

Nevertheless, current literature doesn't include issues with technology. If technology doesn't support the work that the employee is doing then their motivation and performance will be negatively effected because being remote from the office they are waiting on others to get back to you. As outlined throughout some of the interviews *"software is not available from home"* (participant 5) and *"access problems"* (participant 2). This suggests a sense of negativity and concern with regards to motivation and performance levels due to the fact technology issues can be *"frustrating"* (participant 8) for employees.

5.6 Discussion – Study Objectives

It is clear to see from the above findings and discussion that each of the objectives set out at the beginning of this study have successfully been answered and have emerged throughout each of the themes. This section aims to address each of these objectives, outlining how the findings from this study have enabled the objectives to be met.

Firstly, the overall research question presented for this study was ""*Taking into consideration motivation and performance levels, is working from home seen to have a positive or negative influence for employees and in what way does this effect their work life balance?."* The overall answer to this question is that working from home considerably

highers motivation and performance levels which also have a positive impact on work life balance. This is clarified through the below research objectives.

5.6.1 Discussion – Objective 1

"To gather an understanding of working from home in terms of motivation and performance levels of employees"

A further understanding was gathered by the researcher regarding the motivation and performance levels of employees throughout the study participants commented on how the use of working from home kept them motivated to ***"be able to get your work done"*** (participant 1). Participants that took part in this study outlined reasons as to why they enjoyed working from home, outlining freedom and flexibility as being key factors, participant reactions to this gathered a sense of positivity with regard to their motivation and performance levels.

5.6.2 Discussion – Objective 2

"To critically evaluate data collected to discover whether working from home raises motivation and performance levels and whether this has any impact on work life balance"

The findings from this study clearly identified that motivation and performance levels of employees were raised whilst employees had the opportunity of working from home, as outlined in section 5.2. It also emerged from this study that employee motivation and performance levels appeared to positively impact not only employee work life balance but also their well-being.

5.6.3 Discussion – Objective 3

"To assess whether there are any negative factors that could affect motivation and performance whilst working from home"

As presented throughout the findings and discussion section of this study there were two key factors that emerged, managers would need to be aware of these factors and work on over coming these. The two negative factors outlined were isolation and the use of technology. Both of these factors may negatively impact employee motivation and

performance as employees will be less driven and less likely to achieve if they are negatively affected by things such as isolation or technology issues that they may face. These limitations can be something that can be worked on by organisations with an aim of trying to overcome them.

5.6.4 Discussion – Objective 4

"To examine whether there are any routine practices that can be introduced into organisations to raise employee motivation and performance levels over the next year to allow more employees to work from home"

As outlined in the recommendations section of this study a Team Development Strategy should be implemented, allowing employees to feel more involved, included and engaged within the organisation. It was clear to see from the literature and also the findings of this study that isolation and having time away from the organisation was a negative factor for employees working from home.

3.11 Limitations

Like anything, there are always going to be limitations that will need to be taken into consideration throughout a study. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the below limitations were considered and needed to be addressed.

Bryman and Bell (2011) outlines that probing appears to be a problem for researchers that are carrying out structured interviews due to the fact that the interviewer is limited in providing help to the interviewee and also the interviewer is unable to steer away from the interview questions in order to gain a further insight or clarification from the participant. However, as the use of semi-structured interviews was chosen for this study was is not an issue for the interviewer but the limitation here is that if the participant requires support as they do not understand the question being asked it was challenging for the interviewer to try not to influence the participants response while probing or prompting the participant in expanding their answer.

Another limitation that may have arose while carrying out the interviews was the use of a recording device, it was important to ensure that the voice recorder used was

small so that the participant was able to forget that it was there. One participant commented on how the use of a recording device put them on edge and made them nervous, they were however, happy to proceed.

Conclusion

This study set out to identify and explore motivation and performance levels of employees working from home and in addition to this to see whether this has any impact upon employees work life balance. This research was successfully compiled through the use of semi-structured interviews and by gathering a wide range of data from participants who work in a banking organisation with the aim of meeting four key objectives, as outlined in the 'research question' section. Based on this, various findings were presented which supported the discussion regarding working from home in terms of motivation and performance levels. This section will provide a summary of the findings presented and in addition various recommendations will be offered.

This research was carried out due to the fact that there was a current gap surrounding working from home, this gap being present as current literature surrounding this topic commented on how working from home was such a positive factor for employees and how this way of working was available due to newer technologies. However, the gap presented to the researcher was that there was no indication throughout previous studies as to the impact that working from home has on the overall motivation and performance levels. The banking sector was chosen to carry out this study on as currently most literature written around working from home had a strong focus on technology companies such as Dell. A further insight needed to be gained to see whether motivation and performance levels of those working from home were higher and if so, why can't more employees within a banking organisation have the opportunity of working from home.

Overall, it is clear to see from this research that there are high levels of positivity surrounding working from home in general, which was evident through previous literature and also through the outcomes of this study. It was evident to see from this study that overall, motivation levels were considerably higher for employees that work from home as they felt there were able to power through their workload in order to complete work tasks and get the job done. Many participants commented on how working from home allowed them to be more motivated to complete work activities so that they can spend quality time with their families, which they would not be able to do if they were working in the office on a full-time basis. Many participants also commented on how working from home allowed them to have a better more positive work life balance due to being more productive, having higher levels of motivation which in turn suggested that they were happier, more engaged and had higher levels of job satisfaction.

This study has assisted in clarifying the motivation and performance levels of employees that work from home, it can be concluded that motivation plays a huge part in employee satisfaction whilst working from home due to the fact that employees working from home are more motivated to complete their work tasks for the day in order to have the flexibility and freedom that they need to do things that are none work related. By remaining motivated and focused employees working from home were able to have a positive work life balance as, for example, they could plan their working day around their family commitments.

Additionally, performance levels of those working from home were slightly higher as employees were more motivated to achieve daily tasks and get though their work which in turn is beneficial for the organisation as their employees will be likely to improve and maintain their performance levels which will contribute to the organisation and its aims and objectives. However, from this research it emerged that there were 3 employees who were classified as 'fence sitters,' the question asked to participants was whether they felt their performance would be effected positively or negatively if working from home was no longer an option in the workplace. These 3 employees providing reasoning as to why they didn't think their performance would be affected either way and none of the reasonings actually provided by these employees referred back to working from home specifically. Therefore, it is easy to conclude from this that by carrying out studies researchers have to be cautious that participants may interpret the questions differently to how they were originally intended.

However, these participants were extremely open about the factors that were an issue / limitation to them whilst working from home, this included isolation and technology. Both of these factors were outlined by many of the participants and they outlined some technology elements to be extremely demotivating. Miles (2016) for CIPD outlined that technology advancements have fuelled a rise in working from home and a lot more employees are now working from home than ever before. However, as discussed previously software and log on problems appeared to be a key issue for employees. Additionally, isolation was also outlined as a key factor that can impact negatively on motivation and performance. This was due to employees feeling alone and left out from the organisation, individuals themselves appear to have found ways of managing this e.g. only working from home 2/3 times per week in order to find the "balance."

These above two issues were seen to negatively impact on motivation and performance levels which in turn may have negative impacts on employee work life balance, as outlined previously in this study. However, there are always going to be negative factors associated with any forms of working arrangements and it is important for organisations to assess, address and find ways to deal with and overcome these factors.

Based on the above conclusion it is evident to see the impact that this way of working has for employees in terms of their motivation and performance levels, based on this managers within banking organisations could look to introduce this way of working into more areas of the bank as it is evident from this research the levels of positivity associated with working from home in terms of motivation, performance and work life balance.

However, there is still room for further research to be carried out. This study has presented various findings based around employees who currently work from home, however, further research could be looked at in order to see the comparison between those who do have the option of working from home against those who do not have the option of working from home and the impacts that this is having for both the employee and the employer.

Recommendations

This section aims to outline various recommendations that can be presented to banking organisations for employers to look at for if they wish to expand on the number of employees that they have currently working from home. As shown previously working from home does appear to have extremely positive reactions from employees that can positively impact on their motivation and performance levels. The below recommendations have been presented as a suggestion for adapting new organisational practices in relation to working from home.

7.1 Recommendation 1 – Working from Home, Implementation

- As shown from this research employers should look at introducing working from home into more areas of the business as there is a high level of positivity associated with this way of working.

- As a suggestion, employers could look at implementing this way of working into more areas of the business. This could be trialled in one or two areas of the bank.

- The organisations HR department would need to ensure that the employees contracts cover the agile working policy, these should be reviewed.

- As this will be a process that would need to be implemented internally into the organisation, the timeline for introducing this should be around 6 months due to the fact that there will need to be a required local agreement in place with employees, this will need to ensure that managers are satisfied with the requirements and reasoning for implementing this newer way of working.

- The organisation may find this way of working cost effective as it frees up desks within the workplace and less space is therefore required throughout office buildings.

- The goal here would be to reduce the amount of office space required.

- In order to measure this senior management could organise routine follow up meetings with all managers specifically looking at the effect that this has had on employee relationships and work load.

7.2 Recommendation 2 – Review current facilities

- As a suggestion, the organisation may review their facilities to ensure that they have the correct facilities in place to allow employees to work from home. Technology being a main factor that participants saw to be their main challenge.

- This could be introduced alongside recommendation one as the organisation will need to ensure that the IT infrastructure supports the working arrangement that is to be implemented with secure network connections.

- This hopefully should not be too costly for the organisation as they will only need to ensure that each employee has the same software and facilities as they would do in the office.

- This should be measured by reviewing every 8 months to ensure facilities support are satisfactory.

7.3 Recommendation 3 – Initiation of a mentoring programme

- Organisations could look at introducing a mentoring programme where by employees who currently work from home can share their experiences of how they manage their time and workload effectively.

- This could be introduced shortly after employees are given the opportunity of working from home as this will allow them to gain an insight into how to best organise not just their time but also their working environment at home.

- Facilitation can be presented either by employees currently working from home or by HR specialists.

- There should be no cost associated with a mentoring programme other than the mentor allocating working time to allow employees to share their experiences.

- This could be measured by checking in with managers routinely.

7.4 Recommendation 4 - Team Development Strategy

- As outlined in the findings section of this study employees currently working from home can feel isolated, to address this a team development strategy should be introduced. HR should drive this across each of the management teams to ensure that this is followed routinely.

- Routine face to face team meetings should be organised for all team members, this will ensure that all employees are kept up to date with work tasks, projects, general information that they might need to know and incorporating HR news letters.

- This should give employees the opportunity to come into the office and provide feedback on their experiences as to whether they feel this new way of working is beneficial both for themselves and the organisation.

- This should be implemented immediately.

- Again, there should be no costs associated with this activity. However, cost would need to be reviewed in line with the requirements of the strategy.

- This should be reviewed by HR on a quarterly basis to ensure that the process is working for both managers and employees.

Personal Learning Statement

This chosen topic of study was extremely interesting for the researcher, the researcher enjoyed carrying out this research overall and found it to be an extremely beneficial but challenging journey.

The researcher found this to be a very good learning experience and by selecting an interesting research topic the researcher was able to gain an in-depth insight into the practice of working from home and how different people carrying out different roles within the same organisation can adapt their working time in order to benefit both themselves and the organisation.

The researcher enjoyed carrying out the interviews and found this to be a great way of developing on their current interview skills. By writing this thesis the interviewer was also able to develop on their thesis writing skills.

There were various challenges that the researcher would need to be aware of if they were going to carry out this study again. This would include the fact that it was difficult to find volunteers to participate in the study and once the researcher found these participants it was difficult to set up face to face interviews as these participants were working from home and when they were in the office, their availability was limited.

If the researcher was to carry out this study again, minor factors would be changed. Time management would be something that could be worked on to ensure that more time was given to carry out interviews. Additionally, the researcher would also set aside more time to transcribe each of the interviews as this was extremely timely and took a lot longer than expected.

Overall, the researcher enjoyed carrying out the research and presenting the findings. It was satisfying for the researcher to be able to make conclusions and recommendations based on the chosen research topic.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview Questions (1st Draft for Pilot Study)

1. How long have you worked for the organisation?

2. How long have you been working from home?

3. How often do you work from home per week?

4. Why do you work from home?

5. Do you work full time or part time?

6. Do you work in multiple locations? (Otherwise known as mobile working)

7. Do you enjoy working from home?

8. What type of role do you do that enables you to work from home?

9. Is it important for you to have the option of working from home & Why?

10. At home, what is your working environment like?

11. Do you prefer working from home rather than working in an office environment? Why?

12. What is your experience of work/life balance while working from home?

13. Describe a typical day while working from home, e.g. working in the mornings/evenings

14. How do you think working from home influences your motivation levels?

15. Do you feel your motivation levels would be affected positively or negatively if working from home was no longer an option in your workplace?

16. Can you tell me about how you feel working from home influences your performance levels?

17. What is your experience of communicating and interacting with other colleagues while working from home?

18. What support do you get from your organisation?

19. Does the level of support you receive from your organisation affect how many days you work from home per week?

20. Is there anything you miss about working in an office environment full time?

21. Do you find you get distracted easily? (Can you expand on this?)

22. In what way does this affect your motivation and performance levels?

23. How do you feel working from home impacts your ability to complete work tasks?

24. Are you able to switch off from work? (Do you feel you find yourself working longer hours)

25. What is your opinion on more people within your workplace being offered the opportunity of working from home?

26. In general, do you feel there are any limitations surrounding working from home with regards to your motivation and performance levels?

27. Would there be a main challenge that you would face on a regular basis while working from home?

28. Are there any additional comments you wish you make regarding working from home / mobile working?

Appendix 2 – Final Interview Questions

1. How long have you worked for the organisation?

2. Do you work full time or part time?

3. How long have you been working from home?

4. Why do you work from home?

5. How often do you work from home per week?

6. What type of role do you do that enables you to work from home?

7. Do you work in multiple locations? (Otherwise known as mobile working)

8. Is it important for you to have the option of working from home & Why?

9. At home, what is your working environment like?

10. Do you prefer working from home rather than working in an office environment? Why?

11. What is your experience of work/life balance while working from home?

12. Describe a typical day while working from home, e.g. working in the mornings/evenings

13. How do you think working from home influences your motivation levels?

14. Do you feel your performance levels would be affected positively or negatively if working from home was no longer an option in your workplace?

15. What is your experience of communicating and interacting with other colleagues while working from home?

16. What support do you get from your organisation?

17. How do you feel working from home impacts your ability to complete work tasks?

18. Do you find you get distracted easily? (Can you expand on this?)

19. In what way does this effect your motivation and performance levels?

20. Are you able to switch off from work? (Do you feel you find yourself working longer hours)

21. What is your opinion on more people within your workplace being offered the opportunity of working from home?

22. In general, do you feel there are any limitations surrounding working from home with regards to how this may affect your motivation and performance levels?

23. Would there be a main challenge that you would face on a regular basis while working from home?

24. Are there any additional comments you wish you make regarding working from home / mobile working?

Appendix 3 – Email issued to potential participants

Hi There,

I hope you are well.

I am currently in the process of completing my dissertation for my Masters in HR and I would really appreciate it if you could take the time to read the below, hopefully you would be interested in participating in my study.

The study I am carrying out has a focus on working from home and how this effects motivation and performance levels of those working in a banking organisation. As part of this study I am hoping to carry out interviews, I have attached a copy of the interview questions.

If you would be available to participate please let me know, it would be a great help and much appreciated!

Thank you in advance

Kind Regards,

Hannah

<u>INFORMATION SHEET</u>

<u>Purpose of this study</u>

The purpose of this study:

1. To see whether working from home has a positive or negative impact on the overall motivation and performance levels of employees working within a banking organisation.

2. To identify whether allowing employees to work from home has a positive or negative impact on the overall organisation.

3. To see whether working from home has a positive or negative impact on employees work / life balance.

Objectives for this study:

-   To gather a general overview of working from home in terms of motivation and performance levels.

-   To assess the impact that working from home has on the motivation levels of employees.

-   To critically evaluate the performance levels of employees who work from home.

-   To assess whether motivation and performance levels have a positive or negative impact on work life balance.

-   To discover the reason why only these selected employees have the option of working from home.

Please find enclosed a consent form which you will be required to sign before taking part in the study.

<u>CONSENT FORM</u>

<u>Purpose of this study</u>
As per the information sheet, the purpose of this study is to see how working from home affects motivation and performance levels of employees working within a banking organisation.

<u>Confidentiality</u>
Any information provided by the participant will be strictly confidential and will be used specifically for the study and purpose intended.

<u>Risks of the study</u>
There should be no risks by taking part in this study, however, if any issues are to arise or if the participant does not feel comfortable answering the questions then they may withdraw from the study at any given time and they are not obliged to give an explanation.

<u>Consent</u>
By signing below I am agreeing to:
- Participate in this study
- Participate voluntarily
- Give permission for the interviewer to voice record the interview

I understand:
- The reason for this study to be carried out
- That all information I provide will be held strictly confidentially
- That any information I provide will be used in aggregate form
- That I will not be identifiable through the any information I provide as part of this study

Signed by participant: ....   Date: ....

Signed by researcher: ....   Date: ....

Contact Details: Hannah Ward ¦ Hannah.ward@student.ncirl.ie

Appendix 6 – Interview Opening Approach

"Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study, I really appreciate it. Just before we start am I ok to voice record the interview today? (Voice recording starts once clarification is received). If you could please take a read of the information sheet and also sign the consent form if you agree to the terms and any questions that you have please just let me know (Participant reads the information sheet and signs the consent form). Just to let you know also that any information you provide will be held strictly confidential and anonymous and if you wish to withdraw from the study at any given time just let me know.

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

Student name: Hannah Ward   **Student number:** X15001636

School: Business   **Course:** Human Resource Management

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

Title of Thesis: The impact working from home has on the overall motivation and performance levels of employees working within a banking organisation

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

I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate:

_____

For completion by the School:

The aforementioned thesis was received by_____
Date:_____

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