The Role of Boundary Preference in Irish Media Professional's Attitudes Toward being 'Always on', Leaveism, and the Role of HR Policy a Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Purpose - The workplace is not in one place; it's almost everywhere an internet connection can be found. More and more professionals are 'always on', with the aid or intrusion of the smartphone employees are able to work and expected to work all the time and everywhere. Leaveism is a relatively newly coined term, that bridges the productivity gap between absenteeism (not being in work) presenteeism (being in work while ill), leaveism is working after working hours, while on holidays and/or while on sick leave. Previous studies have focused on the frequency of these behaviours; the aim of this study is to gain insight, and add to existing literature around these topics and gain insight into the attitudes of Irish media professionals toward leaveism and the requirement to be 'always on'; and the motivations that under pin them, as well as the role of Human Resource in the creation of appropriate policy.

Design/Approach – pervious studies have neglected to address the underlying motivations and attitudes towards working outside of traditional working hours, why do employees feel the need to consistently use their smartphones while not in work, and what are their feelings towards this behaviour, as well as the possible ramifications to their work life balance. Through qualitative research methods; semi structured in-depth interviews, a better understanding of the nuance motivating these behaviours will be gained and understanding to the extent that boundary preferences plays in their attitudes.

Value - The results of this study are intended to aid Human Resource departments in the effective creation of strategic HR policy to protect both employees and organisations against the inherent risks to 'always on' working and leaveism

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1. Introduction

The Irish media industry employs over 1,800 individuals directly and indirectly 5,500; and is worth in excess of €1 billion to the Irish Economy annually. The average age profile of the industry is heavily bias towards Millennials with approximately three quarters of the total staff employed under thirty, and only a further 11% over forty-one, according to the 2018 IAPI (Institute of Advertising Practitioners Ireland) industry census. This number does not include the various sales houses across the country working in digital, television, radio, print and outdoor.

There has been extensive research into the phenomenon of absenteeism, and its effects on productivity with in organisations (Johns, 2010). Absenteeism is used most often to ascertain productivity loss within and organisation or the cost to an economy due to employees going out of work on sick leave. Additional studies have highlighted the growing trend of presenteeism, as defined by Cooper (1996) as physically attending work but being functionally absent, or simply put, going to work while ill.

 Bridging the gap between absenteeism and presenteeism is a more recently coined terms '*leaveism'* which has three general deifications as defined by Hasketh and Cooper, first, "employees utilising allocation time off such as annual leave, flexi hours banked re-rostered days and so on to take time off when they are in fact unwell, second; employees taking work home that cannot be completed in normal working hours and third employees working when on leave or on holiday to catch up" (Hasketh and Cooper,2014, p.146).

Compounding the issues pertaining to leaveism, and presenteeism is the prevalence of smartphones, which can facilitate employees being 'always on', everywhere. Employees are increasingly working outside of working hours which would once have been the domain of the family life, thus blurring the boundaries of work and home lives. The workplace is no longer specifically a physical location or office space, thus there is a need to gain more insight into the more intricate work to home interactions and integrations (Keriner, Hollensbe and Sheep, 2009). However not all employees see the use of mobile technology out of working hours as an issue, an employee's work to home boundary preference must be taken into account to

understand how disruptive this practice can be to their mental health and over all well-being. And their attitudes towards their out of office time being interrupted (Derks, Bakker, Peters, and Van Wingerden 2016). In addition to an individual's boundary preference, are those of the organisation to which they belong. To what extent is pressure from the organisation, supervisor and/or colleagues a mitigating factor to their use of smartphones out of working hours (Derks, Van Duin, Tims and Bakker, 2015).

This area of organisational behaviour has come under scrutiny in recent years, with the French government amending the French Labour Code to include the right to disconnect on January the 1st 2016. This law affords French employees the right to disconnect, but also compels organisations to establish mechanisms to regulate the use of digital communicating devices to respect rest periods an annual leave (Article 55(1) amended Article L. 2242-8 of the Labour Code). Even within the Irish media industry, media agency Core, who's chief executive officer Alan Cox recognised the issue as early as 2016, introducing a policy where by emails have been banned between 7pm and 7am and at weekends unless all parties working on a specific project agree. As he noted in an Irish Times interview, "getting people to turn off the audio notifications on their phones. You know, the ping! Every ping is a stress." Going on he states that mails were being sent not because responses were needed but in order for employees to clear their inbox, "some [employees] would respond unnecessarily and it would bring them back into that stressful world." (Slattery, 2018) In the absence of official laws like the one introduced in France, it is incumbent on Irish organisations to introduce communication policies not only to ensure the health and wellbeing of their employees but also as Human Resource Management professionals to safe guard organisations from possible litigation; for example the recent case of Grainne O'Hara versus Keypack Foods in June 2018 where the Labour Court deemed the complainant to have worked in excess of the forty eight hour work week, as outlined in the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, and that her employer in full knowledge did not take appropriate measures to address this.

While the phenomena of 'always on' organisational culture and leaveism are both worthy of further study, there is an identifiable gap in the literature between in the possible exacerbating presence of digital communication devices, such as smart

phones and the 'always on' culture as it relates to individuals work to home boundary preferences; which is the purpose of this study. Though a qualitative research approach, the aim of this study it to explore the attitudes of Irish Media professionals towards leaveism, 'always on' working cultures as it related to their mobile phone usage and the extent to which boundary preferences play in those attitudes. It is the aim of this study to better equip Human Resource Management professionals with data to address this phenomenon and create policy therein, not only to aid in employee health and well-being programmes and the employer brand but also as a preventative measure to the risk exposure of the organisation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Absenteeism

Absenteeism is generally defined as not attending scheduled work as prescribed by their employer (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998). There has been extensive research into the prevalence of absenteeism, and its effects on productivity and ultimately organisational profits (Johns, 2010). It is often used as a benchmark to asses lost earnings as a result of employees going out on sick leave.

According to the CIPD Health and Well-being at Work report published in May 2018 the average employee loses 6.6 days annually in the UK – this report fails however, to highlight the number of sick days taken as a result of child and/or elderly care, as is address by Jensen and MacIntosh (2007). As the workforce composition has transformed in recent years, especially demographically, a larger proportion of employees have regular familial caring responsibilities in addition to their work responsibilities (Giardinin and Kabst, 2008). These two sets of responsibilities can often be conflicting; and can be consider the potential source of much employee absenteeism (Hammer, Bauer and Grandly, 2003). It is also somewhat disappointing when viewed in this context that the data pertaining to absenteeism within the CIPD's Health and Well-being report is not sex disaggregated, given the potential insight to the caring burden, and its effects on organisational absenteeism within the female workforce. As far back at the 1980's Allen (1981) posed this question, finding that family size was directly associated with higher rates of absenteeism particularly for women. Jensen and MacIntosh

(2007) drew the conclusion that older female employees displayed lower incidences of absenteeism because they were less exposed to the difficulties posed by younger more dependent children. Bierla, Huver and Richard (2013) in a literature review on absenteeism found, "higher absence rates for women seem a recurring outcome in the literature." pp1540

2.2. Presenteeism

Additional studies have highlighted the growing trend of presenteeism, as defined by Cooper (1996) as "physically attending work but being functionally absent, or simply put, going to work while ill."(p.12) Much of the research done on presenteeism focuses specifically around possible reasons (Grinyer and Singleton 2000, Johns 2010, Deery, Walsh and Zatzick, 2014, Miraglia and Johns, 2016) while others focus on the possible resulting health effects on employees going to work will ill (Cooper and Lu, 2016).

Johns (2010) contends that enthusiasm pertaining the subject of presenteeism has been spurred on by assertions that going to working while unwell causes more loss in organisational productivity than absenteeism. While there is no universally accepted method of measurement or agreed upon metric of costing Presenteeism; typical organisations measure the associated costs, in work out-put reduction, unforced errors in work and/or the consistent failure to meet industry and/or organisational standards (Shultz and Edington, 2009).

From an employee perspective, presenteeism can play an important role potentially making pre-existing illness worse, have a detrimental effect on one's quality of working life, and lead others to belief ineffectiveness at work as a result of reduced productivity by the employee engaging in presenteeism (Johns, 2010). Cooper and Lu, (2016) also contend that protracted episodes of presenteeism could lead to a downward spiral of worsening health and potentially to, even more pressure to present to work while unwell in the long term. In other words, those employees whom attend work while unwell may not give themselves appropriate recovery time resulting in cumulative fatigue. Employees who had frequent episodes of presenteeism were more likely to describe their jobs as unsatisfying and unduly stressful (Baker-McClearn, Greasley, Dale and Griffith 2010). Presenteeism is also evident when absence from work costs the employee financially, there can be a

substantial difference between monthly wages and statutory sick pay; thus workers may attempt to avoid this financial burden and attend work regardless of ill health (Bierla, et al 2013).

Further, contributing factors to presenteeism illustrated by Grinyer and Singleton (2000) are organisational structures. Often HR systems rolled out to reward good attendance, in particular where there is a threshold of number of episodes of absenteeism; which in turn leads to disciplinary procedures there by making absenteeism a risk-taking action rather than a health promoting decision, thus incentivizing presenteeism.

On the other hand, some incidences presenteeism might be viewed as an act of organisational commitment and gain praise from management (Johns, 2010). From both an organisation and to some extent from the perspective of the individual employee, some degree of productivity is better than none at all, especially when the illness in question is neither incapacitating or contagious, and making some contribution in work could have a positive effect on the employee's self-worth and self-esteem particularly in those suffering from a chronic illness (Miraglia and Johns, 2016).

Incidences of presenteeism may also be caused as a result of high job demands or the volume of work attributed to an individual; where individual employees are solely responsible and accountable for their results, those individuals could be more inclined to go to work while ill (Deery, Walsh and Zatzick, 2014). Grinyer and Singleton (2000) study of UK public sector employees, cite the change to teamwork as a mitigating factor in presentism "being a member of a team instilled an obligation to fellow team members which resulted in a reluctance to take sick leave" (p.13). Under staffing and lack of appropriately cross-trained staff is may also lead to individuals avoiding taking sick leave (Deery et al, 2014). Johns (2010) also highlights this as a potential factor for presenteeism, in that, not attending work can be seen as unfair to colleagues in organisations where self-managed team work is prominent, and as such viewed as an act of organisational citizenship for which the employee may receive praise from management. Bierla et al, (2013) go further, showing that managers attendance should also be taken into account, showing a positive correlation between managers attendance rates and that of his/her team's

attendance rates, thus manager could have a strong impact on the absenteeism or presenteeism rates within their team.

2.3. Leaveism

Bridging the gap between absenteeism and presenteeism is a more recently coined terms '*leaveism*' which has three general deifications as defined by Hasketh and Cooper (2014):

1) "Employees utilizing allocated time off such as annual leave entailments, flexi hours banked, re-rostered rest days and so on, to take time off when they are in fact unwell;
2) Employees taking work home that cannot be completed in normal working hours;
3) Employees working while on leave or holiday to catch up." (p.146)

Hasketh, Cooper and Ivy (2014) further suggest possible motivating factors for leaveism, in some ways are similar to those for presenteeism; first, highly motivated employees that enjoy their jobs and are loyal to their organisations display leaveism, second, the fear of losing their jobs if leaveism is not displayed, and third an overabundance of work, where that work cannot be completed during working hours which is seen as the most likely reason, and forth where attendance policies encourage the use of sick leave in order to work.

Leaveism and similarly presenteeism, are both associated with the perception of low job satisfaction and the expectation that being present at work will further the changes of promotion, these two factors seem to inspire the avoidance of taking leave when ill (Gerich, 2015). In the same study Gerich (2015) suggests there is evidence that presenteeism may be used by employees to ensure work does not pile up while on holiday or sick leave, whereas leaveism may be more strongly motivated as a method of impressing management under conditions of job uncertainty. Employees displaying signs of Leaveism typical behaviour, may constantly check emails when not in the office, struggle to use their allocated annual leave allowance, find it difficult to distribute their workload within their team before taking annual leave, cancelling annual leave plans at short notice upon

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realising that some aspect of their work load will not be covered in their absence, and taking work home and/or abroad when on annual leave (Holmes, 2017).

The behaviours attributed to Leaveism in particular, two and three as outlined above by Hasketh and Cooper, are of interest when viewed in the context of, and adding to, the area of research pertaining to 'Always on' working culture and the increased use of the smartphone out of working hours to conduct work.

2.4. 'Always On'

Communication technologies in general and the prevalence of smartphone in particular have encouraged employees to stay connected to their work regardless of the time and place (Derks, Van Duin, Tims and Bakker, 2015). As the technology and connectivity networks have improved so to have employer's expectations that individuals should be accessible not only within allocated working hours but also outside of them (Dettmer, Bamberg and Seffzek, 2016). Across all levels of organisations email is the most common form of work-based communication, thus there is an expectation that emails are not only read but responded to consistently (Derks *et al*, 2015). Increasingly employers expect employees to be available and reactive regardless of whether they are within work hours or not (Ragsdale & Hoover, 2016). The proliferation of effective communication technology, extends the reach of the employer to the employee, and as such turns the possibility of working outside the office or office hours into a prerequisite (Dettmer *et al*, 2016). The inherent danger with this is, where once the possibility of working anytime anywhere quickly morphs into everywhere and all the time (Jeske, Briggs and Coventry, 2016).

The flexibility the smartphone and increasingly sophisticated internet connectivity brings to the user can obviously help individuals combine their work-life and their non-work life (Derks *et al*, 2015). However consistently blurring the boundaries between work and home has made it significantly more difficult for some people to switch off and recover from work when they are outside of work. This has been linked to more work-to-home conflict, increases in stress levels and episodes of poor mental health such as depression and anxiety, in turn resulting in higher rates of staff turnover, incidences of absenteeism, presenteeism and general low job

satisfaction (Kreiner, 2006, Keriner, Hollensber, and Sheep, 2019 Gadeyne, Verbruggen, Delanoeije and De Cooman, 2018).

Employees find it difficult to have appropriately control over their non-work time when there is an expectation of work-related interruptions, the obligation to respond and react promptly puts employees is a near constant state of readiness (Dettmers *et al*, 2016). However, Gadeyne et al (2018) suggests that not all individuals find this boundary blurring as troublesome as others, for instance some employees may be happier to complete a specific task, even if that means working extra hours rather than leave them incomplete, and for them work-related technology use outside of work hours may in fact make their lives easier both at home and at work.

2.5. Work to Home Boundary Theory

Boundary theory maintains that individuals will differ in how much interplay there can be, between boundaries they prefer; it argues that spill over between home and work life is experienced is dependent on the preference displayed by that individual – as to how they like their work and home life to be *'segmented'* or *'integrated'* (Derks, Bakker, Peters and Van Wingerden, 2016). Kreiner (2006) defines 'segmentation' as "the degree to which aspect of each domain are kept separate from one another"p.485; conversely 'integration' "represents the merging and blending of various aspects of work and home". p.485.

Employees whose aim it is to isolated work life and home life as much as possible, are described as 'segmenters', they may feel more ill at ease when work related smartphone used interrupts their non-work time than those described as 'integrators' who prefer to mesh their work and home lives together seamlessly (Derks *et al*, 2016). Kreiner et al (2009) suggests that these preferences sit on a continuum, and the degree to which an individual wishes to integrate or separate their work from their home lives differs from person to person, as such, so does the degree of discomfort after hours work related mobile phone use causes. Segmenters prefer to stick to more ridged boundaries between work and home and are happier to separate their personal time and their work time, they are likely to delineate their time while at home as personal time and time during specific working hours as being engaged in their work; Integraters by contrast are less likely to be as ridged

in their delineation between work hours and personal time (Gadeyne, 2018). Kreiner (2006) examples for segmenters referred largely to artefacts such as photos of family in the office and not speaking about work while at home, and vice versa; while for integrators the examples given were having colleagues home for dinner, talking to family about work and using one set of keys for both work and home on the same key ring. Derks et al (2016) illustrates that work-related smartphone use includes keeping smartphones turned on while off the job, regularly checking work related mails, looking at them frequently to check for texts sent by colleagues or emergency calls, all contribute to work and home imbalances.

2.6. Organisational Norms

Complicating the matter of individual boundary preferences, are organisational integration norms, this refers to the degree of expectation displayed by the organisation in the integration of home and work life. (Kreiner, 2006). Employers may take the opportunity to exploit the proliferation of smartphones, particularly if the employer pays for that phone, thus making their workforce more agile, responsive and constantly available for work, in this case the employer has a greater opportunity to exert organisational control over their employees (Jeske, et al, 2016).

Employees facing high workloads may feel they need to work outside traditional working hours in order to complete all their assigned tasks (Gadeyne et al 2018). Strong organisation integration norms tend to lead employees to the impression that they must stay connected to work all the time, irrespective of working hours (Derks et al, 2015). In an effort to be cognisant of the proposed risks (episodes of stress and mental illness) several counties for example Germany and Belgium and some organisations such as Puma and BMW have proposed to limit work-related out of working hours mobile technology use (Gadeyne *et al*, 2018). Dettmers et al (2016) suggests that the demand to be available can be temporary, for example, in the case where a new product or service is being launched, thus the period where employees are expected to be available after hours in limited and specific, even if that is while an employee is on weekends or on annual leave.

From an organisational point of view matching an individual's preference to segment or integrate the degree to which they are interrupted by work related messages or emails would prevent the extent to which they may experience work-

family conflict (Derks et al 2016). Gadeyne et al (2018) also proposes that in the instance of organisations with strong integration preferences even employees displaying integration style behaviours may lose their sense of sovereignty and ability to control their mobile communication device interactions; and in turn will lose the motivation for using their mobile phones outside of working hours. In addition to organisational norms, supervisory expectations also effect the integration preference of their subordinates (Kreiner, 2006). Employees complying with a norm set by a supervisor to be available and respond to work related messages, may do so because they respect the supervisor subordinate relationship or are worried that not responding may hinder their promotional opportunities regardless of their preference to integrate or segment their work and home lives (Derks et al 2015).

Norms set by co-workers, to be available and responsive in the evening may make it problematic to switch off post work, as it is a social norm, and not to do so would leave the individual out of the social group, resulting in feelings of isolation (Kreiner, et al 2009). Despite the associated problems with extended availability, it can also foster more communication avenues, consequently boost cooperation and coordination with in teams and their relationships with one another and their supervisors. This can be seen as a resource (Dettmers et al, 2016). Derks et al (2015) study showed the biggest influencing factor on the social norm within an organisation is the one set by the supervisor, that being more prevailing than that of co-workers.

2.7. The Role of HR Policy and Governmental Laws

As work life balance has become more of a topic for Human Resource professionals, roll out of policy and arrangements, as described by Daverth, Hyde and Cassell (2016) as strategies to aid employees to maintain a healthy balance between the demands of the employment and those of their social and personal lives. Within the CIPD Health and Well-being (2018) report is a forward authored by Prof Sr Carry Cooper CBE who reports that the trends demonstrated therein are indictive of the blurring of lines between work life and home life making it impossible for many to leave home life at home and work life at work. Implementation of work life balance programmes, many in the form of flexible

working arrangement have the potential to alleviate organisational expectations of long working hours or taking work home (Lewis, 2001). HR is the position to provide employees with tailored work arrangements, through flexible work arrangement policy (Williams, 2018).

Law makers are also being more aware of this issue with the introduction of The Right to Disconnect law in France in 2016. The French arm of British hygiene and pest control company Rentokill were the first organisation to be found in breach of this right and ordered to pay a former employee €60,000 in compensation, in July 2018, by France's Court de Cassation, it's Supreme Court (Samuel, 2018).

2.8. Conclusion

There is a considerable body of research into absenteeism and presentism, bridging the gap between the two is Leaveism, which is a newly coined term for which there is little in the line of research. However according to the CIPD health and wellness report 67% of respondents have experienced it in their organisation. 'Always on' working culture and smartphones, while affording employees the opportunity and flexibility to work anytime, anywhere; it has also allowed organisations to presume that work is conducted all the time and everywhere, leaving many employees in a constant state of readiness, and with inadequate rest periods. How unsustainable that is can depend on the employee's boundary preference. Those for whom integrating their work life and home live enjoy the flexibility a smartphone affords them, while those who choose to segment their lives between work and home find the smart phone an intrusion. HR however can play a pivotal role in curbing this behaviour and through policy can protect those employees who chose to segment, and also the employer to the risk of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.

3. Research Question

The Role of Boundary Preference in Irish Media Professional's Attitudes Toward being 'Always on', Leaveism, and the Role of HR Policy a Qualitative Study

3.1. Work to Home Boundary Preference

The first research question addresses the potential dimensions of work-home boundary interference. In this section the author demonstrates how individuals' preference for work-home boundaries effect the attitude towards mobile phone use for work purposes both outside of working hours and while on annual leave. As illustrated in the litterateur these comprise of integrators, those for whom working outside of hours and/or while on holiday suited their working lives and home lives and does not pose a perceived problem; and segmenters for whom it is expected that consistent interference in their home lives with work related mobile phone use could be perceived as problematic. (Kreiner, Hollrensbe and Sheep 2009) Derks et al, 2016 found that employees who aim to segment their work and home domains do so by refraining from using their mobile phones for work related purposes, while engaging in none work related family time. They also found that conversely employees for who prefer their work time and family the mobile phone can facilitate this preference, and are capable of using their mobile phones to take advantage of flexibility it affords.

3.2. 'Always On' as an Organisational Norm

The second research question addresses the perceived frequency of mobile phone use for work related purposes outside of working hours, and its context in an organisational setting. One would expect to see that the integrators regardless of organisational norms will want to use their mobile phones outside of working house and its effect on teams, the converse to be true of segmenters, as hypotheses by Derks, et al (2016). The author would also expect to see that the norms practiced by the organisation will play into employees expectation that working outside of working hours is perceived as normal working practice or not (Gadeyne 2018).

3.3. Leaveism & the Mobile Phone

Working while on holiday, and/or sick leave, again we would expect to see this occurrence more in integrators than those who segment their lives as hypothesised by Hesketh and Cooper (2014). Hesketh et al (2014) found that public sector employees were in fact engaging in leavism by using annual leave, flexi hours

banked and so on as sick leave. This question attempts to answer, as called for by Hestketh et al (2104) in the same paper the extent to which employees engage in work related activities while on leave, in an attempt to catch up or work on tasks that were not possible to complete during working hours.

3.4. Organisational Policy for Mobile Phone Usage

Organisations, and colleagues often set the tone for working practices even in the light of policies regarding specific behaviours, the question under investigation in this instance is to what extent does organisational HR policies or the lack there off influence the use of mobile phone working in and out of office hours and when on annual leave or sick leave (Daverth, Hyde and Cassell 2016). The hypothesis here, is that organisations, supervisors and colleagues will influence the way individuals work, regardless of their boundary preference (Derks, et al 2015). As found by Daverth, et al (2016) having HR policies around work life balance are of little help, if managers are unaware of them or are unwilling to implement them. The aim of this question is to ascertain if there are policies and how much the individual is aware of them, and if in fact there are any consequence in breaching these policies.

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the methodological procedures used in this study will be illustrated. Aims of the study as well as its objectives will be discussed. Reasoning behind the research method, qualitative, was chosen, reasoning behind chosen method of analysis, sampling procedures and reliability will also be address. The Methodology chapter will attempt to address the research philosophy, as it pertains to the literature. Qualitative methods were chosen for this particular area of research as it was best suited to the aims and subject matter of this study. As the aim of this study was to ascertain the attitude of its subjects, qualitative approach was best suited.

4.2. Situational Context for Research

Much of the research into 'always on' culture, presenteeism and leaveism have traditionally been dominated quantitate methods, surveys which quantitatively

examine self-reported behaviours attitude and values of participants, most notable work by Ian Heskeith and Carry Cooper into Leaveism (2014) and Derkes et at (2015, 2016) into smartphone use out of hours and Kreiner (2006) into boundary preferences. While Heskeith and Copper's (2014) call for further research to quantify the instances of leaveism, they did not call for insight into the reasons for instances of leaveims within a population. Kreiner et al (2009) by contrast call for a more qualitative approach, "Recent research has called for the use of more qualitative and mixed methods to study the work home interface" (Kreiner *et al*, 2009, pp.707). Derks et al (2015) noted that, they did not have insight into all activity that participants conducted on their smartphones during even hours, this could be approached with a qualitative interview research method. Gadeyne et al (2018) also cited that further study into the reasons why employees use (or don't use) smartphones for work outside work hours and why this does (or does not) affect their stress, wellbeing and attitude towards their employer, for this purpose in depth interview could shed light into the area and add to current research.

4.3. Qualitative Approach to Research

Qualitative research allows for more detailed account of the processes and nuance under investigation with in the research question, that being, and understanding of the attitudes towards leaveims and 'always on' culture. It can be suggested that the most efficient and reliable method of establishing a person's opinion, motivation, and/or attitude toward a given topic is simply to ask, thus the interview is regarded as an important research source (Yin, 1994). The aim of qualitative research is to get a better   understanding of the processes which underpin a phenomenon rather than to obtain a representative overview of views held by participants or to compare the views of different groups by statistical means. The researcher adopted an interoperative constructionist approach, understanding that at its core the research question aims to ascertain what people make of the world around them, how those people interpret what they encounter and what meaning and value they subsequently assign to events (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Multiple apparently conflicting variations of the same event can be true at the same time, in this case, the same or similar amount of time using one's mobile phone to work out side of working hours, on holidays or on sick leave my be interpreted differently by each

individual, thus findings are inductive in nature, explanations are built from the ground up based on the information provide by interviewees. As Strauss and Corbin noted, qualitative methods "can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet know. It can be used to gain novel and fresh slants on thing which quite a bit is already known" (1990, pp.19).

4.4. Research Philosophy

Part of formulation in business and management should involve taking with relevant stakeholders, these being, employees managers and owners of various media outlets and agencies, in order to yield as much rich information as possible. (Adams, Kahn and Raeside, 2014) The author has extensive knowledge of the Irish media industry, having been employed therein for over ten years, thus affording this study with a deep knowledge of the population under investigation. The extent to which the author has knowledge of the industry under investigation leads to a constructionist perspective, accepting that the researcher as well as the research participants will bring their own past experiences and opinions to the issue at hand, however under naturalist-constructionist paradigm differing conclusions are not problematic, they are relevant to the truth as the interviewee sees it. As previously mentioned, the Irish media sector is relatively small, as constructionists understand that groups of people, create and then share understandings and meanings with each other. They routinely live and work together, thus people come to share some meanings and have common ways of judging and interpreting things and events (Rubin and Rubin 2012).

4.5. Sampling Approach

As before mentioned the Irish media industry is relatively small. The author has extensive knowledge of the industry having worked there in for over ten years. A key senior member of staff from various media industry organisations were identified by the author, participants were selected by these key figures. Subjects were selected that were unknown to the author, for interview. Preserving the integrity of the study was vital; thus, the selection process was difficult, proposed interviewees were rejected by the researcher due to previous professional relationships.

4.6 Interview Approach

This study comprises of 6 semi structed in depth interviews conducted on the phone. Interviewees were of varying levels of organisational seniority in a key market leading, broadcasters, media agencies, and digital content producers. Interviewees roles include, a media buyer, media planner, broadcaster sales executive, broadcaster sponsorship manager, digital branded content producer, an agency account manager. The aim of cultural based interviews is to explore the behaviours and choices of the participants, which will ascertain values and attitudes towards the relationship between boundary preferences and mobile working practices, using phrases, terms as codifiers. The advertising and marketing sector would be considered advanced adopters of digital technology (Gray, 2009). Allowing in-depth exploration of mobile technology usage both on an individual and organisational perspectives and capturing the operational and strategic opportunities that mobile technology affords employees while also examining the potential pitfalls associated with leaveism and 'always on' organisational culture. Each interview lasted between twenty and thirty minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. To maintain the ethical principled of confidentiality and anonymity results each interview is labelled using the letter P followed by a number 1 to 6, thus interviews are labelled P1 through to P6.

Interviews followed a naturalist approach guided by a social constructionist paradigm, which focuses on how people perceive their worlds and how they interpret their experiences. (Rubin and Rubin 2012) A value focused thinking approach in keeping with Kriener et al (2009) study, guides the interviewing process where interviewees are asked to share their experiences and attitudes towards mobile technology and its relationship to out of hours working including holidays, and weekends, in a professional context. The extent to which their use of mobile technology effects their work and home lives. Focus groups while useful in qualitative research, the would not be appropriate for this study, as outlined in the introduction the Irish media industry is relatively small, and cross pollination from agency to agency, agency to broadcaster and broadcaster to agency is common. Thus, maintenance of participants anonymity and privacy would be impossible, this could skew any results gained from a focus group approach.

4.7. Analyses of Data

To address the research question, the author applies a grounded theory approach to collate and analyse in depth interviews with media industry practitioners (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). As a result of over ten years' experience the author has encountered an apparent problem in the workplace for which there is no known answer specific to that industry; "good research might help to correct that situation … thus the research problems that they choose are grounded in that motivation" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p35). "Grounded theory is a useful approach when the microcosm of interaction in poorly researched areas is the focus of the research question" (Gribich, 2013 pp.79). Taking into account the constructive paradigm the researcher understands that a Charmaz's constructive grounded theory, recognising that objectivity may be difficult to maintain throughout the data collection and analyse; thus data generation could be viewed as partnership, however for the purpose of this study that method has been rejected in favour of a more Glaserian approach to grounded theory, to develop emerging concepts and enable to development of new theory (Grbich, 2013).   Glaser indicated that through open coding and constant comparison answers will emerge. While Glaser rejects constructivist orientation this researcher remained passive in the receipt of data and the analyse of that data, maintaining objectivity through the constant comparative process.

Employing grounded theory procedures (Glasser and Strauss, 1967) collecting data and analysing that data simultaneously, maintains a constant comparison approach, thus, building a rigorous theoretical conceptualisation of categories and concepts. To analyse each interview a two-step coding system was employed. Coding each word, sentence, paragraph and passage is considered a valuable unit. Codes are short hand terms such as "Keep an eye on" that are used then to categorise units of text. For this step line-by-line coding was employed to identify key phrases. The second step of coding using the key phrases to generate theoretical memos to link research findings to key concepts within current literature, similar approach to data analyses was used by Kreiner et al (2009) in their qualitative study into work to home boundary preferences.

4.8. Ethical Considerations

Interviewees were fully briefed on the aims of the study in writing, they were provided with initial questions and editable consent forms via email. Interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded using the online application for the iphone called TapeACall: Call recorder Pro, this app enabled the researcher to record and store phone calls and delete them when fully transcribed. Interviewees consented to this recording and limited time frame storage. Information about the subject's names, ages, sex, company of employment, and job title will not be disclosed and will remain in a password protected excel spreadsheet for no longer than one year, that only the researcher has access to and the password for. The researcher adhered to the structure of the interview and did not ask any questions that may be considered insensitive or may have caused embarrassment to the interviewee. When one interviewee became upset the researcher stopped the interview to allow the subject to compose themselves, gave them the option to stop the interview, and changed the line of questioning.

4.9. Limitations and Reliability

Qualitative research, however appropriate to this study is not without limitations. Qualitative research is time consuming, conducting interviews while both the researcher and subjects were engaged in demanding full-time employment was a matter of calendar management and posed logistical problems. Interviews needed to be kept short due to time considerations of the study's subjects.

As the Irish media industry is relatively small a qualitative approach was most appropriate as the findings are specific to one industry and as such may not be capable of to producing a statistically generalisable data set but are nonetheless illustrate the reality in the industry under investigation.

5. Findings

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter the author will detail various aspects of the findings, including home boundary interference, organisational norms as an influencing factor 'always on' working culture, incidences of leaveism and how or if organisational policy can or do influence the above behaviours. All of the respondents had their mobile phone paid for by their employer.

5.2. Work to Home Boundary Preference

The first research question addresses the home to work boundary preference, in these questions the author attempts to ascertain the subject's boundary preferences. As Kreiner (2006) asserted, those who integrate as opposed to segment their work life and home life are more likely to have, family photos on their desk, or in their office the findings here are inconclusive; for various reasons as stated by the interviews, three of the subjects work in open plan offices with clean desk policies; or to display photos was outside the organisational norm, or they hot desk in their office so desk space is not allocated.

> *"My office is open plan, and we have a clean desk policy, so no one has photos on their desks at all, we're not allowed. I can't even have my folders on the desk for references – I have to keep them in my [desk] drawers."* P6

> *"nobody in the office has pictures at their desks, it wouldn't have occurred to me that people do that anymore."* P1

> *"We do something like hot desking, we're encouraged to work anywhere in the building. Just get up and work in a different building if we feel like it. That way we get exposure to everyone in the building. We also get exposure to different aspects of the business."* P2

Only one respondent had their own private office, they did however have family photos, but the reasons given for this is not congruent with work to home boundary preference and more in line with a perceived managerial tactic, thus making this response not in keeping with the literature, which is the focus of this study.

> *"I think having [family] photos on my desk makes me look more approachable as a manager. I want my team to see me as a person as well as a boss that they have to report into. It makes for more of a team atmosphere."* P4

Subsequent questions in line with Kreiner (2006) theory that a those who choose to segment their home life and work life would be less likely to invite colleagues to their home for dinner with their family were also inconclusive. Only one responded expressed the preference not to integrate their work colleague into their lives,

> *"I have enough friends, and we socialise as a team reasonably regularly. I don't feel the need for it to go any further than that. It's not that I don't like my work colleagues, it's just I don' feel like I have room for them in my life."* P4

While all of the of the other subjects expressed that they liked to see colleagues outside of work hours at organisation arranged social events; they also expressed they have made keep friendships outside of work, and see each other regularly, for socialising and also include their colleague in their big family occasions, such as weddings and christenings. Thus, fluidly integrating their work lives and home lives and engaging the two at the same time.

> *"I have some brilliant friendships here… [at work] I invited a good few [colleagues] to my wedding. And not because I had to. I wanted them there."* P3

> *"I've made friends for life here, we have our own WhatsApp group and everything. I sometimes share more about myself with them than I do with people I've know all my life."* P5

The researcher then posed the question as to how their information technology, in this case their mobile phones are used to ingrate or segment their work life and home life, and how mobile phone for work propose outside of working hours plays a beneficial or harmful effect on the work like balance of the subjects. Five out of the six research subjects interviewed used their mobile phones to some degree while outside of work hours, and regardless of their integration preferences, or organisational norms. As mentioned, individuals vary in their integration

preference, those who segment their life between work and home and those who integrate their work and home lives (Kreiner et al 2009). As Kreiner et al (2009) go on to state that many individuals are not one or the other but can be fluid in this expression, dependent on circumstance and situation.

Two of the six respondents saw no issue with work related mobile phone use outside of working hours. The researcher views this as an expression of a home to work integration preference.

> *"I think of my life as my life, and I love what I do so I have no issue when my phone pings I just see it as a part of me and what I do. My husband has a very different line of work so I don't think he understands why I'm always on my phone."* P1

> *"It's just makes my life easier! It's like having the office in my pocket. I don't need to be in the office at my desk to be at work. I can get as much done with my phone in a coffee shop as I can in the office. I can be as much use to the company getting my hair done as I would be in the office as long as I have my phone, so do I leave and take a longer lunch to get my roots done than yes I do. And as long as I'm available I can merge the two."* P6

Only one subject expressed dissatisfaction with mobile phone usages outside and working hours and was in the position where it was not an organisational requirement, however this was the same respondent that claimed to like to integrate the time spent with family and friends with their co-workers, seeing both as equally important. This leads the researcher to assert that for this subject work related tasks such as answering emails, or phone calls are an integration of work life and home life. The preference being expressed by this subject is that of a segmenter, however as previously stated they do not see that integrating their social relationships as problematic, thus socially expressing an integration preference between work life and home life.

> *"I just don't allow it any more, I made the decision that I was going to leave work in work and enjoy my time with my friends and family or even when I'm just by myself when I'm not in work, without having to be constantly thing about the next problem… I've disabled the notifications on my phone so I don't see them anymore."* P3

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In follow up questions with this subject the researcher was interested in the phrase 'allow any it any more' and the reasons therein. This subject elaborated on this phrase, with this interesting response.

> *"In my previous job, there was a huge amount of pressure, and I doing long hours, or I was on my phone, I couldn't sustain it. I felt like my mental health and actually if I'm honest my overall health was falling apart. I had to leave that job in the end."* P3

At this point the researcher changed the line of questioning, as the subject became upset. To attempt to delve further would have been unethical.

This finding is interesting as while it is an overt expression of boundary preference, it is born of previous experience. Boundaries have essentially been redrawn as a result of negative previous experience. This is not addressed in any literature pertaining to boundary preference expression to date.

The remaining three respondents varied in their views, from glancing at their mails while watching television and only answering mails if they were urgent, to viewing specific projects as over a set period of time as necessary to respond to. This again shows that boundary preferences may indeed be fluid and situation dependent. It is as would be worth considering that glancing at one's mails while engaging in other house hold tasks may be considered habitual rather than on overt expression of boundary preference.

> *"If we have a pitch on, I will keep and eye on my mails, and respond when they come in, but that's not all the time and our team know that if it's a big pitch then it's all hands on deck. And we all have to agree to do it, so it's not all the time."* P2

These responses are in keeping with Kreiner et al (2009) assertion that integration preference may sit on a sliding scale with few presenting in totality to one or the other, and boundary preferences should be viewed in context with, and depending on situation and context.

5.3. 'Always On' as an Organisational Norm

Regardless of respondent preference, which as illustrated varied substantially, organisational norms and work load pressures also influenced the use of mobile phones for work related purposes outside of working hours. The extent to which was explored in the second set of questions posed by the interviewer. As four of the six subjects used public transport to commute to work, they viewed this commute as an extra hour of work and were here able and to some extend obliged to respond to mails in that time, the remaining two subjects also checked and responded to mails as they readied themselves for work in the morning. Thus, proving the hypothesis of 'always on' culture as an organisational norm.

All respondent interviewed stated that they will engage with their mobile phones for work related correspondence in the hours before their contracted work begins. Even those subjects who expressed overt segmenter preferences.

> *"It starts as soon I get up! I used my phone as my alarm, it's the first thing I check after the weather."* P1

> *"I use my commute to get some work done, it's a long enough train journey and it's a good time for me to get back to queries. And I'm stuck on a train, it makes the journey quicker if I'm occupied."* P2

> *"My Inbox will start to fill up from about 7.30am, getting started at that time is the only way I can keep on top of things, otherwise I will be playing catch up all day."* P5

The degree to which subjects engaged with their phones after work varied, with two stating that they are not expected to answer mails on their mobile phone after working hours, only one of which did so as their organisation had a human resource policy the other was due to the organisation norm of the company.

> *"It's just not the done thing in our office, you might send a mail because you want to, but you wouldn't expect a response until office hours and our clients know this too."* P4

The other four subjects varied in their responses on the degree to which they will answer work related correspondence.

"I get and send mails at all hours. I would get a mail at six or seven in the evening and if I don't respond to it there will be a follow up mail the next day at nine [am] in my in-box, so I don't have much choice really. I have to answer it." P5

"I answer mails that I can when I'm at home, and have my phone on me, it's one less thing to do the next day. If I can do it then and there, why not?" P6

Gaining insight into the extent to which this level of communication is considered the organisational norm questions were posed as to the nature of the correspondence and the level to which responding is deemed mandatory to the subjects, what if any ramifications may result in their failure to respond, as mooted by Dettmers *et al*, (2016). Again, the responses varied in their nature, from no recourse at all, to the perception that the subjects would not be viewed favourably by managers, thus damaging their opportunities to progress in the company. With half of the subjects claiming that the organisational norm was to send and receive mails after contractual hours.

"There is a level of competition for promotion in my company so yes there is a demand for me to answer mails, especially if I see it's from client or one of my managers, I can't be seen to not to respond (sic). There are normally many people across a project and cc'd [copied] on the mails so it would be like having a conversation without me in it. If I didn't respond I would look bad to everyone [on the mail]." P5

"I have never really felt obliged to respond to mails, it I do it because there is something important coming up, or because I want to I will. But I don't view it as something that would affect my chances [of prometon] in my company." P2

As with P5, the pressure to respond to mails depended on the level of seniority of the other employees or clients copied on the mail, and the emphasis was put on the issue that they would appear disinterested or disengaged if they did not respond.

The subjects were asked how they feel about this kind of work pattern, again here responses varied in their nature with four subjects expressing that they felt like they were not afforded adequate time to decompress from work.

"I feel like I'm always on, I'm constantly worrying about when the phone is going to ping even if it doesn't." P5

"My mind is never fully switched off, even if my phone is not with me, I'm thinking about what might happen next or what has to be done next." P6

5.4. Leaveism & Mobile Phone Usage

Addressing Hasketh and Cooper (2014) theory of leaveism interviewees were asked about their mobile phone usage for work propose while on annual leave. The responses provided here were in keeping with Hasketh and Cooper, as only one of the subjects stated that they do not check their mails while on holiday, this was again due to an organisational communication policy implemented in their company. The remaining five did to some degree read and respond to mails while on holidays. The reasons for which were relatively consistent, that being to keep on top of or get a head start on the work they will be presented with upon arrival back to work following annual leave. As also stated by (Holmes, 2017) typical leaveism type behaviours may present as; constantly check emails when not in the office, find it difficult to distribute their workload within their team before taking annual leave or being unwilling to trust that colleague will adequately cover their tasks while they are on annual leave.

The extent to which the five respondents did engage with work varied however with some only checking in on the last day of their annual leave, to those who felt compelled to check in more regularly to ensure their work was being covered to their standard. However all five to some degree quoted that checking, reading and responding to mails while on annual leave, reassured them that work had continued in their absence, armed them with the knowledge of what had happened in the office/team and aided them in 'getting a jump' on the work that lay ahead of them upon returning.

> *"When I'm on holiday I will spend the last day going through my mails, flagging the ones I know I will need to respond to and deleting the ones that I know have been sorted out. I don't like doing it but I feel like if I don't I won't be able to cope with the amount of mails I'll have to get through, and I won't know where we are on certain projects."* P3

"It depends on the length of time I take off, if it's just a day or two, then yeah, I'll respond to mails, as they come in. But if I'm on holidays aboard with my husband then I try to keep it to occasionally checking in, to make sure everything is running smoothly and to be aware of what will be in sort for me when I'm back [in the office] P1

Subjects were asked here also about how they felt about engaging with work related material on their mobile phones while on annual leave. There however the respondents seemed less phased with all five subjects expressing satisfaction with checking their mails before returning to work, which made them feel more equipped and ready for work after a period of absence.

"I like to have a jump on the week, it will save me time in the long run and feel more ready and happy to go in knowing what I've got to do." P5

"If I didn't check my mails at the day before going in, I would worry that I would be out of the loop." P3

5.5. Organisational Policy for Mobile Phone Usage

The subjects were finally posed with the questions pertaining to, the level to which, their organisation has Human Resource Management issued communication policy; and if they deem an official communication policy would be effective to their workflow, work-load and their over-all work life balance. The responses here varied with only one subject having an official communication policy which still affords the opportunity to work well outside of contracted hours;

"we have a policy that we can't send mails before 7am and after 7pm or on weekends unless the team have agreed to it. I like it that way, my time outside that is mine and I don't have to worry about what's happening in my in box outside of that. It also makes me thing that my company value my time and understand that we are people with lives outside of work." P2

To those whom deem a policy incompatible with their work life balance, and would oppose the introduction of such a policy.

"We don't have one, I would hate it. it would totally change how I work and the way I like to work. It would certainly change the way I feel about my

company for sure. I like being able to deal with a problem there and then. Then it's done and on to the next." P1

With half the subjects expressing that they believe a communications policy would aid their work life balance, again the degree to which it would be welcomed varied.

"I would be delighted if we had some kind of communications policy, it's one of the reason's I'm looking for other work, it's just not sustainable. I can feel the burn out coming, and I don't want to end up hating my job because of emails." P5

"It would be good to have something in place, I have made my own rules to some extent because I have had to. I would like to see HR and management set up and see this as a problem." P3

5.6. Conclusion

This study examined the attuites of Irish media professions towards leaveism, 'always on' mobile phone use and the moderating effect of personal work to home boundary preferences. The aim of the study to contribute, a more holistic picture of always on working cultures and leaveism as it occurs within the Irish media industry, and add to the wealth of existing literature.

This study found that employees do not exhibit more traditional expressions of boundary preference, with 5 out of 6 interviewees refraining from displaying family photos at work; however, consideration must be given to more modern office practice, those of clean desk policy or those who are encouraged to work anywhere in the organisation. Thus, it cannot be proved conclusively that this is a true expression of boundary preference. Within the social context however 5 of the 6 subjects did seamlessly blend their work social lives with their personal lives outside of work. The implication here is a clear expression of integration of work lives and personal lives, however subjects in this study appear to be happy to delineate social and work lives seeing them a separate entities. A clearer picture of boundary preference was expressed with regard to the work the subjects did outside of contracted hours; as the subjects varied in their expressions, the researcher's findings correlate with those of Kreiner (2006) that boundary preference is not a

binary behaviours, and more of a scale, with those expressing in totality one or the other but the majority fitting in a middle.

This study also found the boundary preference often took a back seat to organisational norms, and HR communication policy. Only those with official organisation communication policies did not engage in leaveism behaviours. All those how did however expressed satisfaction with the practice of attending to work emails before returning to work after a period of annual leave. This result was surprising, as it contradicts the results found in the previous questions regarding 'always on' working, where two thirds of subjects expressed dissatisfaction with the day to day always on working, but also with boundary preference.

It is clear from the contradictory nature of the results of this study that further, more nuanced study should be conducted it to these topics, for example can boundary preferences be changed over time depending on one's experience of the workplace? Leaveism and its effects on employees outside of the public sector, where Hasketh has focused much of the existing research, and the how effective HR policy can be in relation to employees being 'always on'.

6. Discussion

6.1. Work to Home Boundary Preference Expression

The findings in this study are to some extend in keeping with much of the literature. Derks et al (2016) found that smart phones span the boundary between work life and home life, which poses it challenges for the employee and the employer. Increasingly the workplace is not long in one specific location (Kreiner et al 2009). Findings in this study support these assertions, with employees starting their work day on the commute to work and continuing it well after they have left the physical office. Kreiner's (2006) definitions of overt expressions of boundary preference, where by those who like to integrate their home lives and work lives are more likely to display family photos or invite colleagues to their home for dinner than those who segment their home lives and work lives, was not supported in the results of this study. It is possible that these definitions are somewhat outdated, given the

prevalence of hot desking, and clean desk policies, and as with the finding in this study, displaying family photos was not an explicit boundary preference but was employed as a managerial tactic. Derks et al (2016) definitions of boundary preferences behaviours were more relevant to the subjects within this study, those being; keeping smartphones switched on during non-work time or glancing at smartphones to check for responses to mails. However, as Keriner et al (2009) later mooted expressions of work to home boundary preference are in line with a scale, with few subjects expressing a preference in totality to which to completely segment their work lives and home lives or to integrate their work and home lives completely, the findings of this study support this assertion. Thus, identifying those subjects who fully segment or integrate their work lives and home lives was inconclusive, as many subjects provided conflicting responses, simultaneously integrating their home and work social lives but attempting to segmenting where possible their work to home lives in the context of responding to emails.

6.2. 'Always On' as an Organizational Norm

As Gadeyne et al (2017) states constantly being connected to work and work-related information technology use outside of work hours are highly topical. The use of smartphones to blur the boundaries between work life and home life affords employees the opportunity to be available to work in the morning, evening, on weekends and on holidays (Derks et al 2016). As evidenced in this study, always on mobile phone usages was widespread. Interestingly however, were the responses – with some exhibiting more of a preference to this pattern of work, implying these subjects could be deemed as integrators according to Kreiner et al (2009) boundary preference research. Gadeyne et al (2018) found that employees who prefer to finish up a task after working hours rather than leave it for the next day, see 'always on' working culture as a facilitating, rather than complicating factor to their lives, and does not diminish their work life balance.

Inflating the usage of mobile phone for work outside of working hours are the social, and cultural norms of the organisation, the mere appearance of opportunity to work outside of hours could reinforce an employer's expectation that employees should be available at all times (Dettmers and Bamberg, 2016). Derks et al (2015)

found that it is conceivable that the impact of those in a position of power have over others to engage with work related activities outside of working hours were greater then norms set by colleges, this point is to some degree born out in the results of this study. Respondents stated that the level of seniority impacted on the urgency to which they responded to mails, the more senior the level, the more likely they were to respond. Also, as the organisational norm was to respond to mail, not to do so would be viewed by those in positions of power as being disinterested and not engaged – however as Derks et al (2015) state being engaged at work does not automatically imply that employees must work long hours. The consistent blurring of boundaries between work and home lives, combined with the normality to which answering mails on a mobile phone is viewed, can have an adverse effect to their rest, recovery and ability to switch off post work. This was born out this study with those for who's employers expected them to be available and reactive regardless of whether they are within work hours or not (Ragsdale & Hoover, 2016), found themselves as Dettmers et al, (2016) put it, in a near constant state of readiness. The CIPD health and well-being at work report of 2018 found that the impact of technology on mental well-being, with 87% of respondents showing an inability to mentally switch off.

6.3. Leaveism & Mobile Phone Usage

With 69% of respondents to the CIPD Health and Well-being report of 2018 reporting the leaveism has occurred in the last year, it's clear that employees are working outside of contacted hours to get work done, using allocated annual leave while unwell and using allocated annual leave to work. These findings are supported by the results of this study, with all of the subject, who's organisations do not have an official Human Resource communication policy responding that they do check and respond to mails to some degree while on annual leave. Heskeith et al (2014) study primarily focused on the first of the three typical behaviours of leaveism, that being employees using allocated time off while sick. In the same study Heskeith called for further study into the remaining two typical behaviours, those being taking work home that cannot be completed and using allocated time off such as holidays to work. This study endeavours to address the last of the three typical behaviours that being working while on annual leave. As mentioned all

interviewees without an official organisational policy to the contrary, even those for whom answering mails in post working hours was outside the organisational norm of their company, engaged in this trait of leaveism. Interesting however, the majority of the respondents in this study did not find this practice detrimental to their well-being, stating that working to some degree while on annual leave alleviated any work-related anxiety they may have, and reduced their stress upon returning to work.

6.4. The Role of HR Policy

Work life balance arraignments are often described as a way for organisations to encourage workers to maintain a healthy balance between the demands of their jobs while maintain their personal lives outside of the company. The rationale employed by organisations for the implementation these programmes is primarily of their potential to improve employee commitment, retention and overall productivity, thus profit (Daverth et al, 2016). The CIPD Health and Well-being report 2018 found that the most common negative effect of technology on its respondents 87% of whom were unable to switch off after work. As Human Resource professionals one must as the question to what extent would a communication policy aid in the ability of employees s to switch off? As Alan Cox stated in the Irish Times "Every ping is a stress!" Interestingly the findings of this study would suggest that some sort of organisational restriction to mobile communication would be viewed positively.

6.5. Study Limitations

The most obvious limitation to this study it's is scale, and as such findings will be specific to one industry and have not produced a statistically generalisable data set, but nonetheless illustrate the reality in the industry under investigation and the subjects under investigation. Much of the results in this study are inconclusive, which leads the researcher to concluded that limitations exist not only in the number of interviews conducted but also with the method of research used herein. The researcher would agree that in order to glean a fuller insight into the topics covered in this study, a comparative case study comprising of a mix methods approach would have garnered more insight and provided more generalisable and reliable results.

7. Conclusion

 The aim of this study was to examine the attitude of Irish media industry professional attitudes towards leaveism and 'always on' organisational culture as they related to mobile phone usage out of contracted hours, and the extent to which individual boundary preferences played in those attitudes.

This study found that traditional examples of boundary preference expressions were to out of date. Subjects of this study were unable to display family photos on desks, largely due to the modernisation of the traditional office. The subject that did, did so as, a managerial tactic not an overt expression of boundary preference. In the same vein, the majority of subjects seamlessly blended their work social lives with their personal social lives, with many expressing that friendships made in work crossed the boundary of work life and home life. This study did however find that expressions of boundary preference were exhibited on a scale when viewed in the context of working on mobile phones out of office hours. The degree to which subjects found difficulty with blending their work and home lives was expressed in the context of 'always on' organisational culture, with half of respondents finding it difficult to switch off, after work. They were either engaging with work related emails on their mobile phones or were in a state of anticipation, waiting for mails.

 Interesting attitudes towards leaveism, and indeed to engaging with work in the morning before contacted hours were contradictory to those pertaining to working after contracted hours, with respondents expressing satisfaction with engaging with work to some extend while on annual leave, and in the morning, this also implies explicit integration preferences, however this study found that it was exclusively reserved to engaging with mails on annual leave and in the morning before work not with regard to engaging with work after contracted hours, in the evenings. One could conclude from this, that employees value their time after work more than that time before work. And setting aside time to 'get a jump on' work after a period of annual leave, alleviates stress or anxiety rather than exacerbates it.

Further, more nuanced study should be conducted it to these topics, and the contradictory nature of the finds in this study. As the size of both this study and the industry under investing are small the researcher was unable to produce generalisable results, results on the whole were inconclusive and in fact produced

more questions than provided answers. Further research into these topics would be recommended, taking the form of a comparative mixed method case study, to establish a more rounded view on media agency versus media supplier life as it pertains to boundary preference, always on culture, leaveism and HR policy.

7.1. Recommendations (CIPD Requirement)

This study has shown there is a gap between organisational culture and HR policy, thus it the researchers recommendation that organisations take on the task of assessing the degree who which their employees engage with their phones to work after their contracted hours, and how this reflects on their feelings towards the company and to their overall health and well-being. CIPD Health and Well-being Report of 2018 advise tailoring policies and practices to organisational and employee needs. This suggest that in order to create a standalone communication policy or add to existing health and Well-being policy with communication guidelines intra-organisation research should be conducted to provide solid evidence-based understanding of the challenges smartphones can pose. HR professionals play a pivotal role in illuminating management to the importance of well thought out policy and the beneficial effects they can have on employee well-being and the employer brand.

As proposed in the further study section on this thesis, a mixed method approach that being anonymous staff survey combined with HR, or independent researcher, lead qualitative interview teachings to gain nuance to any statistics gathered; as proposed as future research in previous chapter, a mixed method approach would provide a richer data set on which to base organisational policy.

7.2. Implications of Findings

The creation of a new HR policy that are in line with the strategic goals of the organisation is vital. They can according the CIPD foster cultures of trust fairness and inclusion. The CIPD's Knowledge Hub is a useful resource when researching the creation of new HR policy. Budgetary constraints are often and issue in the creation and implementation of new policy, especially if that policy is based on in-house research. However, many of the tools needed to effectively do so are inexpensive, such as staff surveys, which can be done with no extra cost.

The out lay from a budgetary perspective is reflective of the role involved. For a small to medium sized business a HR generalist may be tasked the introduction of new policy in conjunction with their existing role, this may be a cost effect method of utilising existing staff at no extra cost to the organisation. This should include, research in the form of an audit of current practices. A benchmarking process against other organisations that have mobile communication devise policies within the industry, drafting of policy, giving specific guidance to managers on the effective roll out, roll out and finally review. It would be unrealistic to expect this process to take under eight months to a year at zero extra out lay to the organisation.

The time frame could be speed up, dependant on budget, to free up some of the existing tasks associated with the generalist role and extra member member of staff could be taken a part time role; such as HR administrator the current market rate for a full time annual salary of HR administrator is between €25,000 and €28,000 depending on experience, with could be prorated depending on the hours needed to complete the research and roll-out of new policy.

7.3. Personal Learning Statement

Researching, and writing this thesis has been challenging in a number of ways. As a member of the neuro diverse community having been diagnosed with dyslexia as a child the word count for a thesis alone was enormously daunting, as was the reading required to inform myself satisfactorily on my topics of discussion. Academic writing is dense, and tough to get through for most students, one can, I'm sure, appreciate the extra hurdle for those whom experience academia differently. Similarly, achieving the proscribed tone needed in academic writing was a consistent challenge.

Challenges notwithstanding, I did enjoy the process of research; the excitement of stumbling on relevant journals and seeking out arguments for and against. This research process has armed me with the ability to critically analyse any topic. I have learned a huge amount doing this masters programme, modules covering the entire

HR sphere, it is this ability to research and critically analyse previous research, that has galvanised my commitment to lifelong learning.

While the logistics of organising interviews was very time consuming and posed its own set of challenges, I did not expect the level of cooperation from those within the media industry, which was enthusiastic. In no small part due their own awareness of the problems associated with being 'always on'. The potential effects on employer brand, retention and attraction of talent in what is a small pool.

Professionally speaking, I look forward to taking the learning I have gleaned from this research practice into the work I intend to do a HR professional; it has informed my ability to interview subjects and gain nuanced insight not found in statics alone. I would expect to be in a position, to strategically inform HR policy for my organisation, and ultimately build on the findings of this study.

With the benefit of hindsight, this thesis would have been more effective and its results more practical if I have been in the position of to do a cases study in one organisation.

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