The different perceptions of flexible work arrangements between Millennials and Generation X at work.

Leah Dixon

Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland – 17th August 2022

Abstract

The different perceptions of flexible work arrangements between Millennials and Generation X at work.

Leah Dixon

Flexible work arrangements such as the freedom to choose working hours and location can influence an employee's work-life balance. Additionally, these flexible working arrangements could enhance employee engagement, which in turn helps the organisation succeed. Given the significance of this subject, particularly in light of the working adjustments made during the Covid-19 pandemic, this study examines the different perceptions of flexible working arrangements across both Generation X and Millennials within the utilities industry. Along with the effect of workplace flexibility on employee engagement and work-life balance. The main themes explored throughout this research were flexible working, employee engagement, work-life balance and disparities in among generations. Whilst there has been previous research done on the topic of flexibility, to date there remains a gap in the literature in relation to the generational perceptions of flexible working within the utilities sector, in particular the water subsector where little to no research has been conducted on this topic. For the purposes of this study, a qualitative research technique was employed in the form of interviews with members of both cohorts (Generation X and Millennials) from a company within the utilities industry. The questions were formulated based on recent literature as well as the research objectives. The results of the interviews were analysed using a thematic approach in order to identify five common themes. The findings supported previous literature by showing that Generation X and Millennials have distinct perspectives on flexible work arrangements.

Declaration Form

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

Name: Leah Dixon

Student Number: x17358461

Degree for which thesis is submitted: Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

Title of Thesis: 'The different perceptions of flexible work arrangements between Millennials and Generation X at work'.

Date: 17th of August 2022

Material submitted for award

A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself.

B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access repository NORMA.

D. ***Either*** *I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
Or *I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

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

Signature of research student: *Leah Dixon*

Date: 17th August 2022

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library

Student Name: Leah Dixon

Student Number: x17358461

School: School of Business, National of College of Ireland

Course: Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

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

Title of thesis: 'The different perceptions of flexible work arrangements between Millennials and Generation X at work'.

I agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being available for consultation within 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 NORMA.

Signature of Candidate: *Leah Dixon*

For completion by the school:
The aforementioned thesis was received by:

Date:

Acknowledgements

While this research project has been challenging, it has been a tremendous learning experience and would not have been possible without the assistance, encouragement, and advice from a number of people.

First of all, I want to thank my research supervisor Corina Sheerin for all of her support, patience, and guidance. Without your constant support and feedback, this study could not have been completed.

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who participated in the interviews and made a contribution to the study. This research would not have been possible without you.

I would like to thank my family and friends for their constant support throughout this journey. I would especially like to thank my parents for all of their love, support and encouragement throughout all 5 years of my academic journey. To my brother and sister thank you for patience and support.

I would also like to thank my best friend Aisling. Myself and Aisling began this journey together in 2017 and without her constant encouragement and friendship the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible. I would like to wish Aisling the best of luck with the submission of her dissertation and all her future endeavours.

Lastly I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to my boyfriend Conor whose guidance, support and encouragement has been invaluable throughout this journey. We both started our masters together in September of 2021 and shared this experience together. I wish Conor all the best in his future endeavours and I am extremely grateful for his support over the past year.

Table of Contents

Abstract 2

Declaration Form 3

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library 4

Acknowledgements 5

Table of Contents 6

List of Tables 8

List of Figures 9

List of Appendices 10

Chapter 1: Introduction 11

Chapter 2: Literature Review 14

Flexibility at Work 14
Defining Flexibility 14
Types of Flexible Work Arrangements 16
The Influence of Technology 16

Flexibility and Employee Workplace Wellbeing 17
Work-Life Balance 17
Employee Engagement 18

Cross-Generational Insights regarding Flexibility at Work 19
Workplace Flexibility across the lifespan 19
Generation X and Flexibility at Work 20
Millennials and Flexibility at Work 21
Characteristics of the Sector 22
Working in the Utilities Sector 23
Flexible Working Arrangements in the Utility Sector 24

Flexible Workings: Lessons from Covid-19 24
Hybrid Working 24
Statutory Entitlements for Flexible Working Arrangements 25

Chapter 3: Research Objectives 27

Chapter 4: Research Methodology 29

Introduction 29

Research Problem 29

Research Framework 29

Research Philosophy **30**
Research Approach **31**
Research Methods **32**
Research Strategy **33**
Research Sampling **35**
Time Horizon **37**
Data Analysis **37**
Research Ethics **38**
Research Limitations **39**
Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings **40**
1. Job Satisfaction *40*
2. Positive Company Culture *41*
3. Flexibility is Here To Stay *43*
4. Flexibility in Such a Demanding Sector *44*
5. Flexibility Requirements Across Generation X and Millennials *46*
Chapter 6: Discussion **48**
Research Objective 1: Explore the concept of flexibility *48*
Research Objective 2: Assess the impact of flexibility on employee engagement and work life balance. *49*
Research Objective 3: Explore the generational differences regarding flexible working *50*
Research Objective 4: Explore the demands of the utilities sector and flexible work arrangements available to them: *50*
Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations **52**
Chapter 8: Personal Learning Statement (CIPD Requirement) **55**
References **56**
Appendix **67**
Appendix 1: Information Sheet *67*
Appendix 2: Consent Form *68*
Appendix 3: Interview Questions *69*

List of Tables

Table 1: Categorisation of Interviewees

List of Figures

Figure 1: ‘The research onion’ (Saunders et al., 2019, pg. 130)

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Information Sheet

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

Chapter 1: Introduction

The most recent global phenomena caused by the Covid19 pandemic has disclosed distressed economies, economic and social issues all over the world which brough about huge challenges for organisations in order to ensure survival (George et al., 2016). It has brough about a significant increase in flexible working arrangements for organisations which they believe will positively impact employee engagement and performance (Wheatley, 2017). Flexibility is the adaptability around work practices that are attractive to individuals, the most common being flexibility around working hours and location (Weideman and Hofmeyr, 2020). Resilience around working hours is giving employees control over the time they start and finish work within certain limits, whether that be specific core hours or total flexibility (CIPD (A), 2021). Flexible working location is the adaptability to allow employees choose whether they conduct their work from home or at a satellite location (Ciarniene and Vienazindiene, 2018).

According to Ciarniene and Vienazindiene (2018), work-life balance is becoming a foundation for employees, prompting an increasing number of organisations to become more flexible in order to meet the demands of their employees. Employers benefit from the use of flexible working arrangements in a number of ways, including improved employee performance, a more engaged and satisfied workforce, and higher staff retention (Wheatley, 2017). Additionally, incorporating flexible working arrangements provides several benefits for employees, including increased engagement and independence, less stress and hostility between the workplace and the home, and reduced work-related conflict (Wheatley 2017; Gregory and Connolly, 2008).

According to Piszczek and Pimputkar (2020), the willingness to adapt to flexible working arrangements might vary among generations. For instance, younger employees may seek to further their professional aspirations by utilising flexible working arrangements. Compared to older workers, who look for flexible work schedules to achieve a better work-family life balance.

Thus, the primary goal of this research is to investigate the various perceptions of flexible work arrangements among Generation X and Millennials and the influence these flexible arrangements have on employee engagement and work-life balance for these individuals within the utilities sector, specifically the water sub-sector.

The chapters in this study will be as follows:

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review will provide a comprehensive review of the pertinent research on flexible working and the various perspectives held by Generation X and Millennials. Multiple sources are used in the literature to provide a more thorough understanding of flexible working and its significance for this study. A number of literature themes are discussed, including flexible working and its impact on employee engagement and work-life balance, generational insights regarding flexible working and the impact of Covid-19 and workplace flexibility.

Chapter 3: Research Objectives

The three research objectives for this study are outlined in this chapter based on a survey of the literature in the field. These objectives will help to address the main research aim, which is to "analyse the various perceptions of flexible working among Generation X and Millennials."

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

The methodology chapter will present the steps taken to conduct the research and describe how it differs from or is similar to previous research. It will outline the type of analysis and strategy employed in this research. Semi-structured interviews were employed as a qualitative method in this research.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

The data gathered from the interviews will be covered in depth in this chapter. The information obtained from the interviews was then analysed, transcribed and categorised into themes. The main research aim and three sub-objectives are described together with the data analysis and important themes that emerged from it.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The results will be further analysed, discussed, and contrasted with the findings of earlier studies in this chapter. The significant themes that emerged from the data analysis and findings chapter are provided in accordance with the primary research objective and the three sub-objectives.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

A summary of the overall research will be given in this chapter, along with a discussion of whether the research topic has been successfully answered. Future recommendations on the implementation of flexible work arrangements in the workplace will also be discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Flexibility at Work

Defining Flexibility

Concerned with the burdens that employment places on individuals and their families, researchers and policy makers have given workplace flexibility more attention (Allen et al., 2013; Hill et al., 2008). Workplace flexibility is seen as a crucial work-based resource to meet work and family obligations, especially in light of the rise in dual-earner and single-working-parent households with children over the past few decades. (Hill et al., 2008; Golden et al., 2006).

The literature that exists around flexibility offers various definitions of the term. According to Hitt et al. (2008) workplace flexibility refers to employees' capacity to choose when, where, and for how long they perform work-related duties. Similarly to Hitt et al. (2008), Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) define workplace flexibility as employment practices which allow employees flexibility with regards to how, where and when they perform their tasks.

Numerous studies have shown that flexible schedules that allow employees to vary their work hours and take breaks during the workday are connected with beneficial work-related outcomes, including job satisfaction, decreased intentions to leave the company, and organisational commitment (Costa et al., 2006; Haley & Miller, 2015). As well as advantages away from the workplace, such as reduced work-family friction, reduced stress, higher family satisfaction, more time with kids, and enhanced happiness (Hitt et al., 2008; Hayley & Miller, 2015). However some suggest that flexible work arrangements may not always be beneficial, they may potentially have disadvantages. When overloaded or bringing work home to finish at the end of the day, flexibility may blur the barriers between work and home in disruptive ways. (Schieman and Young, 2010).

Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008), argue that workplace flexibility has multiple dimensions including workplace policies and practices, morals and values, workplace design, hiring decisions and interpersonal relationships which all play a role in shaping and re-shaping the meanings and experiences of flexibility. Flexible work arrangements include modifications to the scheduling, place, or duties of the job; direct provision of caregiving and health benefits; and financial and educational assistance for activities that are not related to the job (Ciarniene and Vienazindiene, 2018).

Whilst Taylor (2019), believes flexibility can be broken down in to two; Structural Flexibility and Cultural Flexibility. Structural flexibility is the sort of contract that organisations give to their employees, as well as the organisation's structure. A structurally flexible organisation offers its employees a variety of flexible options, such as flexible working hours and working locations. An organisation that is structurally inflexible, on the other hand, might be defined as one that hires all employees on the same set of terms and conditions and is controlled through a typical hierarchical structure. Cultural Flexibility is concerned with a company's values, beliefs, and attitudes. Culturally flexible organisations provide a variety of flexible advantages to their employees, such as flexible working hours, location, and even flexible yearly leave choices, all with the goal of increasing employee engagement and performance (De Sivatte et al., 2015).

Another view comes from Gordon (2014) who classifies flexibility into three areas; Flexible or favourable organisations, Flexible or contradictory organisations and Rigid or inflexible organisations. Flexible or favourable organisations have a flexible culture and provide a variety of flexible working alternatives to their workers. Furthermore, employers and workers share the same values and ideas, and employees' opinions are valued and taken into account (Gordon, 2014). Flexible working arrangements are used by flexible or contradictory organisations, although they are less successful than those utilised by flexible or favourable organisations. These organisations' cultures and beliefs do not support flexibility, which has negative effects on employee satisfaction and performance as a result of extra work, difficulties juggling work and family obligations and problems maintaining work-life balance (Gordon, 2014).

Rigid or inflexible organisations provide fewer or nonflexible practices. Rigid organisation try to embrace flexible working methods, but they often do so without first determining whether or not they benefit the firm and its employees. As a result, flexibility is not as good as it should be, which frustrates employees who want a better work-life balance but don't get it.

Armstrong and Taylor (2017) believe the aim of managing flexibility in the workplace is to satisfy the organisation’s needs and in doing so increase employee engagement and motivation. For that reason there must be an understanding of what encourages an organisation to enforce a flexible culture. There are many elements that can determine the adaptability of a flexible culture within an organisation, including increased employee performance, attract and retain valuable talent and create a competitive advantage within the market in which it competes.

Types of Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements refer to a variety of employee-focused work arrangements, such as telecommuting and flexitime, which involve changes to the hours, places, or types of work (Townsend et al., 2016). Telecommuting in simple terms means working from home with the use of technology, while flexitime is described as an employee's right to choose their own work hours during the week as long as they adhere to a minimum number of overall hours (Seal et al., 2021). These are often designed to promote positive behaviours and attitudes about work through enhancing work-life balance and employee engagement (Seal et al., 2021). Employee work attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment, are positively correlated with flexible work arrangements, such as flexible schedule locations and hours, according to Boell et al. (2016).

The Influence of Technology

Technology has continuously changed how people carry out their work in every industry. It has made flexible work arrangements more popular, and many organisations are adopting them for the benefit of both their business and their employees (Wadhawan, 2019). According to Hinds (2003) workplace flexibility derives from the notion that technology improvements encourage organisations to adapt to these ongoing changes.

Its influence on the workplace has reduced time-consuming and ecologically inefficient operations, increased productivity and made working from anywhere simpler than ever (Cattone, 2022). Unnecessary paperwork, the requirement for face to face meetings, travel expenses to attend overseas meetings have all changed thanks to technological advancements. The advancement of technology has eliminated constraints including those related to outsourcing, communication and task performance (Cattone, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic forced organisations to implement flexible working conditions such as working from home in order to reduce the spread of Covid-19. These flexible working arrangements worked well in some organisations with many still having them in place. This transformation from working in the office to working from home would have been impossible without the influence of technology. According to O'Brien (2022) technology has played a key role in making remote working a lot easier for individuals. Through Google meet, Microsoft teams and many other platforms working from home was made easier than ever (CIPD (b), 2021).

Flexibility and Employee Workplace Wellbeing

Work-Life Balance

According to Haar (2013) a person's ability to juggle all of life's responsibilities, such as a job, family and other key obligations is referred to as work-life balance. In contrast, Kelliher et al. (2018) believes work-life balance is the relationship between work and non-work elements of an individual's life, where establishing an acceptable work-life balance is generally seen as reducing one aspect (generally work) to have more time for non-work elements. Balance does not necessarily imply an even split, as for some employees this is not possible or in some circumstances not desirable (Haar, 2013). It is crucial to keep in mind that work-life balance will mean various things to different people since work may be a priority in life for some and it may be secondary responsibilities for others (Kelliher et al., 2018).

A greater emphasis on work-life balance has emerged in recent years as a result of changes in workforce demographics (Haider and Azmi, 2019). Flexible working hours are one of the many flexible work arrangements that organisations can put in place in order to help employees achieve a work life balance. According to Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) work-life balance is greatly influenced by flexi – time which gives individuals control over what time they start and finish work.

Finding a work-life balance has several advantages for workers, including increased job and life satisfaction (Haar, 2013). Flexible work arrangements can benefit both the employee and the employer, as it will improve employees general well-being and enable them to balance their professional and personal lives. Studies have found that happiness can boost productivity (Oswald et al., 2015). According to Kelliher and Anderson (2010), flexi-time has been linked to improved levels of job satisfaction among workers, and those who work from home say they do more at home than they would typically do at their regular jobs. Employers must be attentive of and respect their workers' obligations outside of the workplace for flexible work arrangements to be successful (Kelliher et al., 2018).

Although there is a great amount of literature on the general subject of work-life balance, the question of work-life balance at the individual level requires additional research. In particular, choosing which responsibilities to prioritise between work and non-work obligations demands thought (Hirschi et al., 2019). Without guidance from their employers, individuals may find it challenging to strike a balance between the two. Employers must acknowledge this challenge and do everything in their power to help their employees find the desired work-life balance.

Employee Engagement

'It has been shown that engagement is beneficial not just to organisations but also to the individuals who experience it, thus having an engaged workforce should be a win-win situation' (Truss et al., 2006). Employee engagement, according to the CIPD (A) (2021), corresponds to work engagement, which is defined as an individual's effort, devotion, and engrossment in their work. Employee engagement is also connected to improved decision-making and commitment. As a result, those who are more engaged are typically more enthusiastic about their job and the company they work for (Kruse, 2012). Kahn's (1990) definition of employee engagement is commonly used across literature, he states that employee engagement can be considered a combination of an employee's physical, emotional and cognitive commitment to their role. Similarly Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020), believe employee engagement is a combination of an individual's attitude towards work in light of:

- *Physical engagement* being the level of commitment an individual is prepared to put in to their job.
- *Emotional engagement* being an individual's sense of purpose and security.
- *Cognitive engagement* being an individual's focus on their work.

Maxwell et al. (2010) believe employee engagement has become a growing topic in recent years and is specifically relevant for organisation's that recruit a younger generation of employees those being Millennials and Generation Z. It is assumed that people in these cohorts have a proclivity to change employment several times during their careers, therefore organisations must develop incentives in order to engage and keep these people (Maxwell et al., 2010).

According to Zafari et al. (2019), employee benefits, rewards and advancement opportunities can all influence employee performance and engagement. High levels of engagement and job satisfaction can stem from such benefits and advancement opportunities (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016). There can't be a one-size-fits-all solution since there are so many distinct generations in the workforce, with the largest generational distribution ever observed in the workforce (Burton et al., 2019). As will be observed throughout the rest of this study, each generation relies on distinct motivational elements in the workplace to experience improved engagement in their jobs. As a result, it is critical that organisations understand the various needs of each generational cohort (Mahmoud et al., 2020).

Employers are more concerned about their employees' performance, which is why employee engagement has become a growing topic in recent years. (Idowu, 2020). As a result, it is an important component for every Human Resource Department. Organisations gain a

competitive edge by keeping highly trained personnel and, as a result, minimising absenteeism and turnover by enhancing employee engagement and performance (Idowu, 2020).

Employee engagement and performance may be influenced by a variety of factors, including the employee's interest in the job, opportunities within the organisation, perks, and rewards (Zafari et al., 2019). Furthermore, flexible working practices are one of the many factors that influence employee engagement at work, favourably impacting an organisation's outcome, particularly when it comes to achieving high levels of employee engagement (Kelliher and Anderson 2009; Weideman and Hofmeyr 2020).

Organisations that adopt flexible working arrangements can gain a competitive edge in the labour market by attracting and retaining highly skilled employees. (Idowu, 2014). Furthermore, by providing employees with the freedom they require, these organisations gain from flexibility by enhancing employee happiness and dedication to the job. As a result, people are more motivated and satisfied at work (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014).

Whilst flexible working practices are generally associated with positive outcomes, Zafari et al. (2019) outline that there is still an uncertainty to whether flexible working practices positively affect employee engagement.

Cross-Generational Insights regarding Flexibility at Work

Workplace Flexibility across the lifespan

Generations are groups of individuals that have experienced comparable cultural and economic events, which have influenced them to adopt similar views in the workplace (Andrade and Westover, 2018). As a result of changes in demographic trends, it is now possible that for the first time that four different generations could be working alongside each other in today's workplace (Haynes, 2011). The generations can be divided into four main categories:

Generation Z: Born between 1997-2012 – Ages 10-25.

Millennials: Born between 1981-1996 – Ages 26-41.

Generation X: Born between 1965-1980 – Ages 42-57.

Baby Boomers: Born between 1946-1964 – Ages 58-76.

Kapoor and Solomon (2011) suggest that communication, technology and expectations may be influenced by generational variations in the workplace. Every generation has its own set of requirements and preferences. Diverse age groups/generations have different incentives for flexible working, which range from professional aims to personal family aspirations (Piszczek

and Pimputkar, 2020).For instance, an older workforce are more inclined to utilise flexible working arrangements for personal reasons like family or health whilst a younger workforce are more inclined to utilise flexible working arrangements to work towards career objectives and a work life balance (Piszczek and Pimputkar, 2020).

According to Loretto and Vickerstaff (2015), flexible working arrangements such as part-time work, less hours or the option to choose when to work may have persuaded some older people to work past the traditional retirement age. On the other hand Douglas and Roberts (2020) argue that older workers, or Generation X in this study, may be less interested in the workplace than younger workers because they gradually lower their job efforts as they approach retirement age.

Thompson et al. (2015) indicate that different age groups have noticeable preferences when it comes to different types of flexibility. Flexibility is considered a crucial element for the majority of younger individuals when applying for jobs, demanding a work-life balance. Whilst older individuals favour defined working days, hours and non-working days (Thompson et al., 2015). Likewise, Pitt-Catsouphes et al (2009) state that flexible working arrangements that appeal to older individuals may differ from what drives flexibility in younger individuals.

Generation X and Flexibility at Work

Generation X, according to Andrade and Westover (2018), is known for being self-sufficient, amusing, casual, well-educated, and disloyal to organisations. Similarly Bosco et al. (2013) described Generation X as pessimistic, arrogant and untrustworthy. They are viewed as arrogant since it is anticipated that they had minimal direction as children while their parents were at work (Hoole and Bonnema, 2015). Various literature suggest that members of Generation X are extremely autonomous, value leisure and spare time, prefer a work-life balance, whom view employment as contracts and prefer addressing issues in the way they like (Bosco et al., 2013; Haynes, 2011; Smith, 2012). According to Lapoint and Liprie-Spence (2017) people from Generation X feel that they work primarily to maintain their lifestyle. This attitude can be ascribed to the fact that they did not spend much time with their parents while they were growing up and took care of their family and themselves when their parents had to work. As a result, this generation were independent from their adolescent years (Lapoint and Liprie-Spence, 2017). Work-life balance, stability, and happiness are among their top priorities. As a result, they are more likely to have a dispute over family-work arrangements and place a priority on flexible working options in the workplace (Bennett et al., 2017). Generation X are

seen to be the first individuals foreseen to earn less than their parents due to their upbringing in an extremely demanding labour market, company layoffs and limited business mobility (Ashraf, 2018). As a result individuals from the Generation X cohort think of themselves as being undervalued and disrespected (Agrawal, 2017). It is said that because members of Generation X are more self-sufficient and competent, they may not be devoted to organisations and are therefore more likely to leave their job in search of one with improved benefits, higher pay and complex work (Wong et al., 2008). In comparison to other generational cohorts, Generation X is more cooperative and gives less thought to formality. Their attitude toward work is portrayed as one that values a healthy work-life balance, through which the individual's aspirations and ideals are supposedly regarded as more important than career-related aspirations (Agrawal, 2017; Wong et al., 2008).

Although individuals from the Generation X cohort are perceived as being pessimistic, they are known to be hard workers who are engaged as long as there is a work-life balance (Mohsen, 2016). In comparison to Wong et al. (2008), Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) believe that individuals from Generation X are known to be extremely devoted to the organisation at which they work for rather than aiming to advance professionally. According to Lamm and Meeks (2009) Generation X values leisure, informality, and originality and views work as a rigorous challenge. As a result, they use their free time and activities as a means of escape, reasoning that it is preferable to work more cleverly rather than harder and that this will create a healthy balance between activities and enjoyment. As a result, employers should take into account their employees' demands and desires for a work-life balance by introducing flexible working arrangements in order to retain them (Hansen and Leuty, 2012).

Millennials and Flexibility at Work

Literature portrays members of the Millennial cohort as the most recent generation to enter the workforce, team players who value training and growth, self-satisfied people who live in the moment and appreciate work-life balance (Wong et al., 2008; Zabel et al., 2017; Hoole and Bonnema, 2015). This generation was raised in such an expanding economy, so they are very familiar with technology breakthroughs like smartphones and computers. They actively use shared media and take full use of the tools' versatility for their own benefit (Lapoint and Liprie-Spence, 2017). Although there are differences throughout the generations, overall values, goals, and behaviour are relatively similar, with the differences being how much emphasis is placed on these areas (Lapoint and Liprie-Spence, 2017). The constant encouragement,

guidance, persuasion, and strong compassion from their parents contributed to Millennials' strong desire, optimism, confidence and propensity for high achievement (Mohsen, 2016; Lamm and Meeks, 2009). Individuals from the Millennial cohort frequently depend on others more so that earlier generations (Lapoint and Liprie-Spence, 2017). They occasionally require more direction, frequent constructive criticism, organisation, material that is specifically tailored to them, and readily available resources (Mohsen, 2016). Similarly Andrade and Westover (2018) believe Millennials frequently seek instructions at work because they are not as self-sufficient as previous generations. They do, however, desire the freedom to do the task in their own way.

According to Lamm and Meeks (2009) the primary purpose of employment for this generation is to add to their resumes, they have no loyalty or responsibility to the employer. In contrast Yadav and Chaudhari (2020) believe that if Millennial's are provided with flexibility they can be very productive, engaged and committed to the firm. Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) suggest that millennials desire immediate gratification in return for better pay, professional advancement, job challenge and a healthy work-life balance.

The Utility Sector

Characteristics of the Sector

The Utilities Sector refers to a group of businesses that offer services for providing necessities including water, sewage, electricity and natural gas. Utilities are essential to the economy because they provide the necessary infrastructure to guarantee access to light, heat, clean water, and adequate sanitation (Grant, 2020). The industry comprises businesses that supply consumers with water, gas, and power via extensive networks.

Energy producers can create energy from many resources, including natural gas, nuclear energy, coal energy, solar energy, wind energy, and hydropower, so that customers can heat their homes and switch on the lights. The main objectives of the utility sector are to satisfy the power and energy needs of its customers, foresee demand peaks and troughs, and deliver energy as effectively and cheaply as they can (ESB, 2022). Since its founding in 1927, ESB has been Ireland's leading energy provider, motivated by an unrelenting commitment to advance society and provide a net-zero future for customers and the communities in which we operate (ESB, 2022).

Water and sewage utilities are in charge of delivering clean water to residential, commercial, and industrial buildings as well as of collecting, handling, and disposing of wastes. As the

foremost expert in water treatment and the market leader in Europe, Veolia Water Technologies (VWT) is a division of the Veolia company. VWT provide drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities as well as more compact, standardised water treatment equipment for commercial or municipal clients (Veolia, 2022).

Gas utilities offer services related to the transmission, distribution, and transportation of natural gas through pipelines. These natural gases are distributed to ratepayers including homes owners, companies, and large industries like power plants. Gas Networks Ireland own and run Irelands national gas network (Gas Networks Ireland, 2022). Gas Networks Ireland serves over 710,000 households and companies and provides a dependable and efficient source of energy for cooking and heating. The cornerstone of Ireland's energy system is its gas network, which securely supplies more than 30% of the nation's total energy, including 40% of all heating and over 50% of the nation's power production (Gas Networks Ireland, 2022). Gas Networks Ireland is assisting Ireland's transition to a greener energy future by supplementing intermittent renewable power and replacing natural gas with renewable gases.

Water, electricity, and gas are necessary utilities that are crucial to the growth of the economy and society.

Working in the Utilities Sector

Throughout each day, we utilise electricity, gas, and water continually. This means that for many utility workers, split, weekend, and night schedules are typical. In order to meet demand surges and fix damage brought on by weather, accidents, and other incidents, certain workers occasionally have to put in extra hours (Deloitte, 2022).

The utilities sector is evolving into one of the most inventive and adaptive industries due to growing environmental concerns throughout the globe. It makes sense that the development of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels have increased (Dean et al., 2021). Even the largest gasoline firms, are starting to create fuels that are more ecologically friendly.

Engineers naturally play a significant part in the energy and utilities industry (Aguilar, 2021). Power plants, pipelines and water treatment facilities all require a lot of large, specialised machinery that must be developed, constructed, and maintained.

Utilities perform more than just technical and practical work. These activities need systems, strategies, and financial planning to function well, just like any other industry in the globe. As a result, there are many management, financial, administrative, and IT employment opportunities within the energy and utilities sector.

Flexible Working Arrangements in the Utility Sector

The nature of work for utilities has changed tremendously due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a thorough examination of the future of work, Aguilar (2021) discovered that utility workers had a wide range of attitudes, from dissatisfied/pessimistic to optimistic/energised/thriving, with the remainder best characterised as apathetic or ambivalent. While onsite employees are more likely to be unhappy, hybrid employees are more likely to be prospering. It should come as no surprise that the majority of individuals preferred to work in a hybrid setting, but for the utilities sector this is extremely difficult. As mentioned above many utility workers work weekends, nights and on call shifts. Whilst flexible work arrangements may be easier for office based staff it is impossible for field based. According to O'Connell (2021) roughly two-thirds of the labour force are only able to engage in a conversation regarding flexible work arrangements.

The Covid-19 pandemic has change the way of work for everyone, O' Connell believes that the new ways of work will include greater flexibility around start and end hours to accommodate commuting and personal obligations individuals may have.

Flexible Workings: Lessons from Covid-19

Hybrid Working

At the start of the pandemic, many people in Ireland switched office life for remote employment, with many individuals now preferring their Work From Home (WFH) arrangements. As many businesses return to the office in various degrees, opposing desires are resulting in new and emerging hybrid workforces. The world of work is clearly evolving, and work-from-home teams, office employees, virtual nomads, and flexible preferences are all a part of it. In almost every business, there is a demand for hybrid work models. Construction, food and hospitality, and even industries with major onsite, in-person requirements have tasks that may be handled remotely on a full or part-time basis. As a result, employers within all sectors are faced with the task of adjusting to a hybrid model.

The term "hybrid working" refers to a flexible work style that allows workers to work from a number of places (CIPD (B), 2022). The concept is the next step in the evolution of flexible remote working, which was inspired by employees' desire to split their time between the office and their home. The Covid-19 outbreak forced many people to work just one or two days a week in the office, if at all. This sparked a new trend of hybrid working.

Employers and workers gained unprecedented independence, flexibility, improved performance, and even new kinds of collaboration as a consequence. Hybrid working, on the other hand, isn't a brand-new notion. This has been an increasing trend over the past decade, but due to the pandemic has become topical in recent years (Gratton, 2021).

The unmistakable driving factor behind these developments has been Covid-19. Many changes that experts predicted would occur over the next decade have been accelerated to meet the rapidly changing requirements of the workforce. Lack of technology and the misconceptions about the capability of IT systems would have been significant obstacles, but Covid-19 surmounted them and proved to organisations that it was viable.

According to CIPD (B) (2021) the increased need for more flexible work arrangements particularly hybrid working, has changed employee expectations and desires. Organisations that do not provide flexible working options risk higher employee turnover, reduced employee engagement, and a likely inability to recruit top talent. Additionally, organisations may gain from hybrid working by reducing estate and facility costs, enhancing employee wellbeing, and promoting inclusion and diversity.

Despite the advantages of working from home for both individuals and organisations, the pandemic has highlighted workers' emotional and social needs. According to Stewart (2021) many employees found that spending a few days at work improved their mood, allowed them to interact with their co-workers and encouraged collaboration throughout the company.

As a result of Covid-19, employers have been compelled to think about how to create a balance between home and office work, and many think that hybrid working is a way to do this.

Statutory Entitlements for Flexible Working Arrangements

In Ireland flexible work arrangements are supplied by individual employers or, to a lesser extent, by legislation. This is comparable to what is happening globally, as leave policies are gradually shifting to a hybrid system that combines fundamental citizenship-based leave entitlements with employer-based benefits (Dobrotić & Blum, 2017). The most common legislative alternatives for Flexible Working Arrangements tend to be related to caring obligations, particularly child care for example; Maternity Leave, Adoptive Leave and Parental Leave to name a few.

Remote working and hybrid working became more popular as a result of the pandemic with many individuals seeking to keep this flexibility. According to CIPD (C) (2021), legislation granting the ability to seek remote work has yet to take effect. Currently, any employee in

Ireland can seek the right to work remotely from their employer, but there is no legislative structure in place to govern how such a request should be made or handled by the company. The new law will specify how these requests should be addressed in detail.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the literature on flexibility and how Millennials and members of Generation X perceive flexible work arrangements. In conclusion, flexibility refers to the freedom that employees have to manage their time and activities in a variety of ways, including flexible working hours, locations, contractual arrangements, and employment in a variety of jobs and tasks. Once organisations realize the benefits of having an engaged and highly productive workforce, flexible working arrangements may benefit both employers and employees. Flexible work arrangements, increased happiness, improved work-life balance, and lower stress levels are all benefits for employees.

Many studies view flexible work arrangements as a shared objective which extends across generations. However, younger and older workers may have varied levels of interest in various forms of flexible working.

Moreover, a discussion of the utilities sector in Ireland was presented in order for the researcher to gain an insight into the sector and establish the different flexible arrangements offered to workers within the sector.

Chapter 3: Research Objectives

The starting point of systematic research is a research problem, which identifies the study's main objective (Mildeová 2013; Ary et al., 2014). Its clarity and definition are crucial for a successful research study because they enable the selection of the most appropriate methodologies and the accurate interpretation of the research findings (Saunders et al., 2019).

This research focuses on the different perceptions of flexible working across Generation X and Millennials as well as the impact flexible work arrangements have on employee engagement and work-life balance. Given the rise in flexible working arrangements in organisations, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is a topical subject.
Although many organisations claim flexible working arrangements assists the work life balance of their employees it is necessary to find out whether flexible work arrangements influences increased employee engagement and job satisfaction. Furthermore it is important to acknowledge that all employees are diverse and that different generations can have different views on the same topic.

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the different perceptions of flexible working across Millennials and Generation X within the utilities sector. For the purpose of this research an organisation within the utilities sector, specifically the water subsector was chosen in order to collect data.

In order to respond to the main research objective, the following sub-objectives are listed:

- **Explore the concept of flexibility:**
  To explore the concept of flexibility, assessing how well it is managed in firms, and examining how flexible working arrangements affect employees' experiences at work

- **Assess the impact of flexibility on employee engagement and work life balance:**
  More precisely this study aims to determine whether flexible work arrangements have a positive or negative impact on work-life balance and employee engagement.

- **Explore the generational differences regarding flexible working:**
  This study investigates the characteristics of different generations, more specifically Generation X and Millennials, identifying their interests and values and assessing their preferences and viewpoints towards flexible work schedules.

- **Explore the demands of the utilities sector and flexible work arrangements available to them:**
  Finally, this research also investigates the specific demands within the utilities sector and the flexible working arrangements that are available to employees within the sector.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Introduction

Research is an organised way to acquire knowledge through analysing and examining theories in order to gain information (Adams et al., 2014). A research process is an academic strategy that comprises a critical assessment of prior research, rational and empirical support, and explanation of the techniques used to understand a topic (Quinlan, 2019). This chapter discusses critical elements for gathering the data needed to analyse Generation X and Millennials employee engagement and satisfaction with flexible working arrangements at an organisation in the utilities industry. It includes the motivations behind the study, the methodology chosen, the sample chosen and the data collection techniques. In addition, the relevant research to address the research questions, the ethical considerations, and the research limitations to provide detailed information about the research methodology chosen for the study.

Research Problem

A research problem, which identifies the study's primary goal, serves as the starting point for systematic research (Mildeová, 2013). Its definition and clarifications are crucial for a successful research project because they enable the selection of the most appropriate methodologies and the accurate interpretation of the research findings (Saunders et al., 2019).
This research focuses on the perceptions of flexible working across Generation X and Millennials and how these impact employee engagement and work-life balance. It is important to keep in mind that people are subjectively diverse, and that people of various generations may have quite different perspectives on the same issue.
Given the rise in flexible working arrangements across organisations particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
Therefore my research objective is ‘To explore the different perceptions of flexible working across Generation X and Millennials in an organisation within the utilities sector’

Research Framework

Saunders Research Onion model served as the foundation for the research approach adopted for this study. Saunders' research onion provided a roadmap for reaching the research objectives and conclusions in a systematic manner. This model is built on layers that

correspond to each research phase, illustrating the various ways that research might be developed which can be seen below in Figure 1.

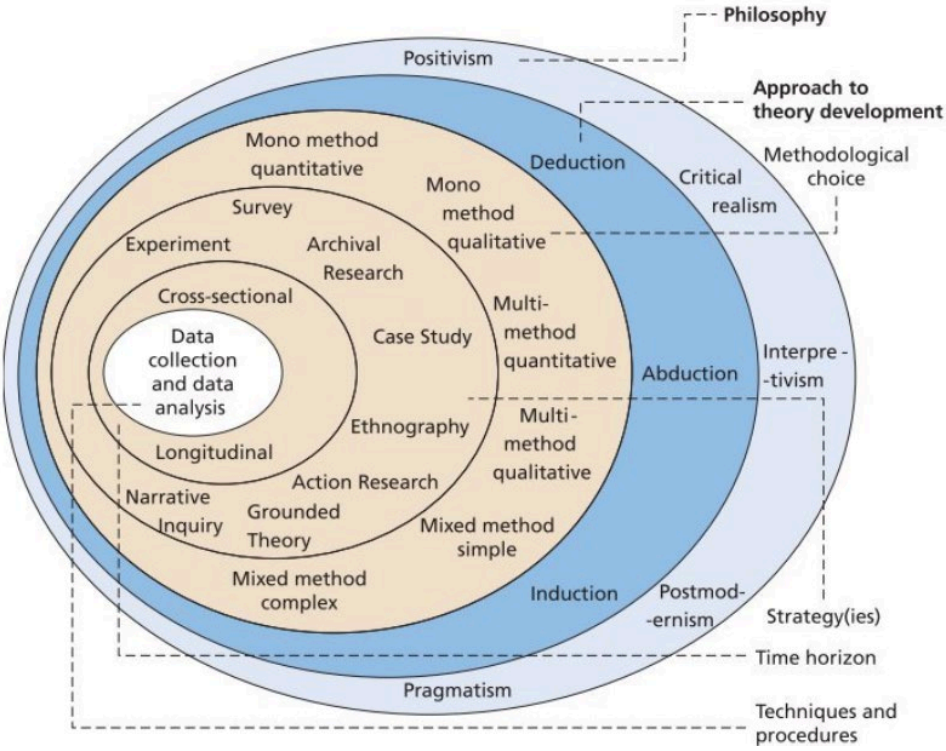

Figure 1: 'The research onion' (Saunders et al., 2019, pg. 130)

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is described as a set of assumptions and ideas about how knowledge is developed (Saunders et al., 2019). Similarly Collis and Hussey (2014) define research philosophy as a conceptual framework that directs how research should be conducted. Research philosophy may be seen from two perspectives: epistemology and ontology. The underlying premise of epistemology is concerned with what we recognise as legitimate knowledge and how this information is acquired. (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Ontological presumption is associated with the nature of reality, which is either objective or subjective (Collis and Hussey, 2014). In this research, both epistemology and ontology will be used to examine how the participants see their environment in a subjective manner by attempting to ascertain how individuals from each cohort perceive flexible working. This is comparable to the study that Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) conducted, which likewise took an epistemology and ontology approach.

The main philosophical principle of this research is interpretivism, which means that all responses will be subjective as it explores the various perspectives on flexible working among Generation X and Millennials. Interpretivism views people as distinct from physical phenomena because they give meanings greater depth, and it makes the assumption that people cannot be studied in the same manner as physical phenomena (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). When conducting interpretivism research, results are drawn from qualitative rather than quantitative data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Interpretivism entails the researcher having empathy for the participants and viewing the world from their perspective. Since this research focuses on how individuals view flexible working, each participant's opinions will be unique because no two people will have the same perspective. Since this study includes humans, interpretivism was deemed to be the best approach. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) an interpretivism approach to research generally means that responses are accurate as interviews provide an excellent portrayal of how people are actually feeling, painting an accurate image and assessing the variables the researcher set out to examine.

Research Approach

According to Saunders et al. (2019) the two primary research approaches are deductive and inductive, both of which fall within the positivist and interpretivist ideologies. Prior to selecting which was best for this study, the researcher carefully considered both approaches. A deductive approach involves using a theoretical structure to formulate a hypothesis or assumption, followed by statistical tests to verify the validity of the hypothesis (Silverman, 2013). Given that quantitative research frequently concentrates on statistical data, it is frequently associated with a deductive approach (Adams et al., 2014). As the purpose of this research is to explore participants' feelings, perceptions, and attitudes, the researcher discarded the deductive approach. An inductive approach is more frequently associated with qualitative research since it focuses on understanding people and how they interpret situations (Saunders et al., 2019). This study aims to investigate the participants' experiences, viewpoints, and perceptions to enable the researcher to recognise and extract recurring themes from the data presented. In this study, the researcher used an inductive approach in order to collect and analyse data to develop theories about the two generational cohorts and their perceptions of flexible working. This is comparative to the research approach taken by Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) who also conducted qualitative research.

Three methods were explored for conducting the study, explanatory, exploratory and descriptive (Saunders et al., 2019). Similarly to Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020), the approach taken for the purpose of this research was exploratory which enabled the researcher to learn new things, analyse issues, and ask new questions (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). As the researcher is obtaining information from the participants by way of questions, this approach is considered exploratory.

Research Methods

The two most common research methodologies that may be employed to investigate social situations are qualitative and quantitative methods (Saunders et al., 2019). Depending on the kind of data needed to answer the research questions, a certain research methodology will be used. In order to choose the best way for gathering data for this study, it is crucial to take into account both approaches. Quantitative research employs quantifiable data, whereas qualitative research looks at unmeasurable information (Williams, 2007).

The focus of quantitative research is on accurate measurements, statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, surveys and other forms of research, as well as the alteration of statistical data that has already been received using computerised techniques (Babbie, 2007). It utilises natural scientific techniques that yield quantifiable data and tangible findings (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Qualitative Research on the other hand offers understanding and insights into the problem context (Ahmad et al., 2019). It focuses on developing in-depth understandings of human behaviour, experiences, attitudes, and motives on the basis of observation and interpretations employing smaller sample sizes and thorough descriptive data (Ahmad et al., 2019). According to Kvale (2007) the most common method of gathering data for qualitative research is through interviews. It is feasible for a study to adopt a mixed-method approach, in which data are gathered and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches (Williams, 2007).

Despite the fact that the majority of the research included in the literature review section has been quantitative, a qualitative methodology was used for this study due to the non-numerical nature of the required data and the necessity for a thorough analysis to meet the research objectives. The aim of this study is to develop new, deeper understandings of the various conceptions of flexible working arrangements among Generation X and Millennials within the utilities sector; as a result, this research technique is interpretivist in character.

The main objective of the study is to determine the beliefs, ideas, and practices that the participants have. A better insight of the participants is provided by qualitative research since it enables participants to be more honest and detailed in their replies to the interview questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Secondary data analysis is the process of making new discoveries using data that has already been obtained by other researchers and may be found in sources including publications, books, journal articles, and websites (Williams, 2007). For the literature review portion of this study, the author gathered secondary data from internet sources including journals, websites, and eBooks. The researcher was able to identify the gaps in the literature and understand what material was openly available on the subject.

Research Strategy

For the purposes of this study, interviews were the main qualitative research technique used to elicit information from people about the research topic. This is comparable to the study that Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) conducted, which likewise used interviews as their qualitative research technique. According to Quinlan et al. (2019) there are three types of interviews structured, unstructured and semi-structured. For the purposes of this study, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted as it is considered an effective qualitative method to delve deeply into critical and sometimes personal matters as well as participant ideas, feelings, and opinions regarding a specific topic (Quinlan et al., 2019).

Choosing categories that were appropriate for the research study and developing interview questions was the first stage of the interview process. Each participant was asked a total of 18 questions which are detailed in the appendix. A series of 18 questions posed to the participants by the author served as the interviewer's script, guiding the conversation and ensuring it remained on the research topic. The interview questions were divided into five segments with the first segment focusing on employee engagement and the second on flexible work arrangements. The participant's work-life balance was the subject of the third portion, generational disparities in flexibility needs were the subject of the fourth section, and the participant's background was the subject of the fifth section. By using semi-structured interviews, the interviewer was able to ask open-ended questions and obtain detailed responses. It was important to record the interview so the results could be carefully examined.

Pilot Study

Prior to conducting the interviews, a pilot study was completed in order to ensure that every question was viable. The participant in the pilot research was a member of the millennial generation within the same organisation that all interviews were conducted. According to Kraemer et al. (2006) one of the crucial phases of a research project is the pilot study, which is carried out to spot any possible issues and flaws in the research frameworks and tools before they are used in the larger study. Similarly Kvale (2007) believes that a pilot study enhances the interview process by allowing the investigator to adjust and refine the questions prior to performing the actual interview. The interviewee was given the opportunity to provide critical feedback on the interview questions. The feedback prompted the researcher to change Q5; *Do you feel engaged at work?* to *What does engagement look like for you? Do you have any examples of a time you felt disengaged at work and why did that happen*?

This enabled the researcher to gain a more detailed answer. The feedback also prompted the researcher to amend the focus on questions where required. The interviewee gave positive feedback, stating that the questions were straightforward and morally suitable.

Semi Structured Interviews

According to Alsaawi (2014), semi-structured interviews often refer to a situation in which the interviewer has access to a variety of questions that are comparable to those in a structured interview but allow for some flexibility in the questions' arrangement. Semi-structured interviews enable the use of open-ended questions that encourage concise, free-flowing responses from the participants and permit respondents to address themes they believe to be relevant (Adams et al., 2014). Using semi-structured interviews, the author is better able to address certain concerns, in this example the divergent perspectives of flexible work arrangements among Generation X and Millennials. Additionally, semi-structured interviews provide interviewers the chance to “probe” participants for a response (Saunders et al., 2019). The interviewee is better equipped to express their unique views and feelings about the selected issue during the one-on-one chat with the interviewer. According to Awasthy and Gupta (2015), semi-structured interviews offer specific information that may be difficult to obtain using quantitative methods like questionnaires or surveys since they restrict the amount of data that can be gathered because the questions are pre-set. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews help the interviewer prepare for the interview since they include questions that usually have a predetermined outcome (Quinlan et al., 2019). This frequently results in the exploration of concepts that the author may not have thought of before the interview, which may aid in

addressing the research objectives and building understanding of the research area (Saunders et al., 2019).

Research Sampling

Regardless of the study topic or purpose, a researcher must constantly assess whether they will need to choose one or more samples (Saunders et al., 2019). Using sampling methods, the researcher can acquire the data from a subset rather than the entire population, hence reducing the amount of data required. Turner (2020) defined sampling as a technique for choosing elements, such as people and things, from a certain interest group in order to collect essential information needed to get a result. Individuals born within these cohorts were selected in order to acquire a deeper understanding since this study only focuses on the attitudes of flexible working among Generation X and Millennials. In addition, individuals within these cohorts were drawn from the same population within the utilities sector.

According Saunders et al. (2019) the two main types of sampling techniques are; probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling: This technique selects population samples at random and usually involves a bigger population. Surveys and experiment research frequently use this methodology. Every person in the population has an equal chance of being chosen for the sample (Quinlan et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2019).

Non-probability sampling: The sample is chosen to reflect the population, but it is impossible to determine if it is a representative sample. This approach does not provide the population equal chances of being chosen for the sample and permits the researcher to choose participants based on their own discretion (Quinlan et al., 2019; Adams et al., 2014).

A non-probability sampling approach was employed for the purposes of this study. In this instance, the researcher decided who should be included in the sample. This entails making a choice based on the potential qualities and characteristics that somebody may have. This involves the researcher selecting certain individuals with expertise in the research subject (Quinlan et al., 2019). For the purpose of this study, participants within the Millennial and Generation X cohort were chosen to fulfil the research objectives to distinguish the different perceptions of flexible working between the two cohorts.

Sample Participants

Participants who were members of the Generation X and Millennial Cohorts and who were all employed by the same organisation in the utilities sector provided the primary data. The researcher sought candidates via convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was used to specifically focus on the utilities sector and due to time constraints all participants were identified within the one setting. However, in adopting this convenience sampling approach, care was taken to identify persons from different departments and demographic profile to ensure a holistic understanding of the topics.

After explaining the study's objectives, participants were asked if they would be open to participating in an interview. Seven out of ten people consented to participate in the research. Each participant received an email with a consent form attached that explained the research aim and objectives, the conditions of confidentiality and the rationale for interview recording. Ethical approval was sought and obtained as well as approval from senior management within the organisation where the interviews were drawn from. The participant information shown in Table 1. below, which has been anonymised alphabetically to protect the identity of participants includes the participant's gender, generational cohort, department within the organisation and term of employment.

Table 1: Categorisation of Interviewees

Participant	Gender	Age Generation	Department	Term of Employment
A	Female	Millennial	HR	2 years
B	Male	Millennial	Procurement	1 year and 4 months
C	Female	Generation X	Service	1 year and 3 months
D	Male	Millennial	Tech Support	1 year and 6 months
E	Female	Generation X	Quality control	21 years
F	Male	Millennial	Engineering	2 years
G	Female	Generation X	Sales	5 years

Interview Process

The researcher provided the seven participants with a broad overview of the research subject. This included details about the research objectives, the length of the interviews, participation,

and ethical details like confidentiality and the recording of the interview. Each participant answered and gave permission before the interviews started. The interviews were carried out in person and some on Google Meet in order to facilitate the hybrid working policy in place. The interviews took place between the 11th–18th of July. The interviews were recorded using a mobile phone and the findings were stored on a google drive in case of any faults with the mobile device. To guarantee there is an alternative backup, the data will also be encrypted and stored on a memory stick. The information was gathered and kept exclusively for this research. To protect their anonymity and maintain confidentiality, each participant's interview has been saved and categorised alphabetically.

Time Horizon

A cross-sectional study is best suited when there is a time constraint on academic research endeavours since it provides accurate phenomenon investigations when set time frames and deadlines are in effect. This approach was used for this study since the interviews had a deadline and had to be completed within a specific timeframe. The researcher scheduled two weeks for the interview-based data collection.

Data Analysis

Transcribing the data was the first stage in the data analysis process. According to Halcomb and Davidson (2006) transcription can be defined as reproducing spoken words into textual context, such as those from an audio recording of an interview. So, after carefully listening to the interview audio recordings, the author reproduced the data in writing form for analysis.

The researcher used Braun and Clarke's six-step approach (2006) to thematically analyse the material after transcribing the seven interviews. When analysing qualitative data, a thematic analysis is a simple and adaptable method for finding new themes or patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Below is a description of how Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase analysis was used to this study:

1. Making yourself familiar with your data

   The audio recordings of the interviews were meticulously transcribed by the researcher. The recordings were played several times in order to guarantee familiarity with the topic, allowing the researcher to write down initial ideas and thoughts.

2. Producing initial codes

   All seven interview transcripts were reviewed, and all the information that had been revealed in the interviews was then objectively and methodically entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The coded information was entered in a way that made it simple for the researcher to locate the participant who contributed the data. This made it possible to find patterns and differences in the data as well as unexpected or surprising insights.

3. Discovering themes

   The researcher was able to identify fundamental themes and patterns by cross-referencing the obtained codes. However, further research showed that certain themes overlapped, leading to the creation of new sub-themes.

4. Evaluating themes

   To make sure there were no errors or omissions made during the procedure, the review process included additional analysis of the themes as well as a re-examination of the transcripts and discovered codes.

5. Identifying and defining themes

   Each theme was examined, and a suitable name was given to each one to ensure that it appropriately represented the data it contained.

6. Developing the report

   From the Excel tables generated during the study, the researcher retrieved the main themes, subthemes, and participant direct quotations. The findings are discussed in the next chapter.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Research Ethics

Consent

Participants were contacted by email and made aware that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to revoke their permission at any time. The participant information sheet as per Appendix 1, and the interview consent form, as per Appendix 2 were both attached to the email sent to participants. The researcher made oneself accessible to participants' questions and made sure that all consent papers were completed, signed, and returned before the interview.

Confidentiality

The researcher assigned each participants a letter and used that letter to identify them in the findings, ensuring participant anonymity in the research's reporting. The personal information gathered, such as the consent form, was moved from the email onto the researchers' external drive and encrypted. After the interviews, the audio recordings were preserved in the same location and labelled with the participant's assigned letter. The National College of Ireland's requirements for the retention of this data shall be followed.

Research Limitations

Despite the degree of precise consideration that is done beforehand, it is apparent that there will be limits that are beyond control connected with every research study.

Due to the conflicting priorities of the interviewees and the time limitations associated with the research there were challenges scheduling interviews According to Saunders et al. (2019), a sample size of 8-10 participants is sufficient, as the sample size of this study was only 7 participants this was a limitation in itself. As the sample size was derived from the same environment within the utilities sector, the researcher acknowledges that is not a representation of the population within the utilities sector. Therefore, drawing a firm conclusion will be challenging. However, the sample findings will provide a percentage representation of how differently the two cohorts in the utilities industry perceive flexible working.

Additionally, there was restricted literature associated with the utilities sector. Although the researcher made extensive use of the online college library and related websites, the research findings to date are limited. The lack of current research on the sector made it more difficult for the author to try to grasp the industry in depth.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

Introduction

The data collecting process and the information obtained from each semi-structured interview will be discussed in this chapter in addition to the outcomes of the researcher's actions. Each participant was asked a total of 18 questions in order to analyse the research aims. Five major themes were found in the qualitative data. The examination of each theme will be accompanied by direct quotes from the seven participants to highlight the key themes identified throughout the data analysis.

The five key themes that emerged from the interviews were:

1. Job satisfaction
2. Positive company culture
3. Hybrid working is here to stay
4. Flexibility in such a demanding sector
5. Flexibility requirements across Generation X and Millennials

1. Job Satisfaction

The researcher asked the participants 'What motivates and demotivates them at work?'. With the majority answering that satisfying the customer and seeing projects through to the end indicates a high level of job satisfaction. Participant B answered that *"getting the job done effectively and satisfying the customer is a strong motivator, whereas as not completing the job or letting people down such as stakeholders, customers and colleagues down is a demotivator"*. Participant D demonstrated that "*solving customer queries and satisfying customer is a key motivator whereas the opposite is a demotivator, when a client calls and I can't solve the problem which can happen from time to time*". Participant F believed "*seeing a project through to the end is a great motivator along with all the benefits the organisation provides such as Flexi time, Hybrid working, competitive pension scheme and health insurance to name a few*". A strong demotivator portrayed by participant F was "*busy periods - where projects are pushed out and clients are let down*". The other four participants stated the flexibility provided by the company was a key motivator. According to Boell et al. (2016) job satisfaction and organisation commitment are positively associated with flexible work schedules, including flexible hours and locations. Similarly

Pongton and Suntrayuth (2019) state that an employee's job satisfaction can be influenced by their ability to complete required tasks, their level of communication in the company, and how management treats them. These results support the findings and portray that among the employees that took part in the interviews, there is a strong sense of job satisfaction and positive communication with management which stems from the top down. Another question asked participants 'What does engagement look like for you? Do you have any examples of a time you felt engaged/disengaged at work and why?' All participants agreed that they feel engaged at work more so than disengaged and believe there is a strong level of engagement throughout the organisation which stems from the top down. Participant B stated "*I have never felt disengaged at work, I have weekly meetings with management which keeps me engaged, management are very forthcoming they keep connected with employees. You can even see that from the Managing Director, he meets the management team on a weekly basis which is mirrored on management to employees*". Participant D also demonstrates "*Engagement with management is always there, I probably talk to my manager two or three times a day even if it hasn't got to do with work which is also good to see*". Participant E stated "*I feel engaged at work more so that disengaged, I like the company updates they keep us aware of where the business is and recent promotions within the business. The fact they are done on a regular basis is great, that wouldn't of been the case when I started here 21 years ago*". This supports the findings portrayed by Vidal-Salazar et al. (2016) that increased levels of engagement and job satisfaction can result from such company benefits and opportunities for career progression. All other participants stated that they feel engaged at work as they enjoy the work they do along with all the perks the job brings such as company benefits and company events big or small. According to Mozer (2020) when workers feel valued, their engagement increases, which in turn improves their performance. According to Mozer (2020) a corporate event that offers a distinctive experience can express your passion for your employees and help them see how important they are to your business which can be seen by the positive opinions expressed by the participants.

2. Positive Company Culture

The researcher asked the participants 'Give me an insight into the company culture and in particular in relation to employee engagement'. With all positive feedback from participants. Participant A demonstrates "*there is a great company culture, from big events*

at Christmas and summer to small inhouse events. Engagement has increased significantly as targets are being achieved and even surpassed". Participant D stated "*The company culture is great, from the managing director down everyone is so friendly. There is a great team culture and everyone works together to solve any issues*". Similarly participant F stated "*the company culture is great, everyone supports one another which stems from the top down*". The rest of the participants stated that there is a positive company culture and believe it is a result of the flexible work arrangements that have been introduced in recent years. Participant G stated "*When I started five years ago it was much more strict, you clock in at 9am and not a minute later. It has changed significantly since then with the flexibility which is amazing for engagement*". As Armstrong and Taylor (2017) stated increased employee performance, attracting and retaining employees, and increased employee engagement can all stem from how adaptable a flexible culture is inside a company. This has been portrayed throughout the results with participant E being with the company 21 years and participant G being with the company 5 years.

Another question asked participants 'What do the organisation do to support and encourage engagement'. The results portray a variety of measures that the organisation takes to support and encourage engagement which range from the list of benefits provided by the company, monthly 1:1 meetings with management to express positive or negative things and in-house company events. Participant D stated " *the company do all they can to support and encourage engagement, the introduction of our health insurance this year along with the hybrid working policy I genuinely believe we have it easy in such a demanding sector".* Participant A also stated "*the organisation support and encourage engagement through the flexible benefits they provide to employees along with inhouse company events*". With the majority of participants stating that the company provide many benefits along with flexible working arrangements this supports the findings of Kelliher and Anderson (2009) along with Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) that flexible working practices along with company benefits are one of the many factors that influence employee engagement at work. It also supports the findings expressed by White and Maniam (2020) whom believe the implementation of flexible work arrangements positively correspond to company culture.

3. Flexibility is Here To Stay

Flexibility is the new way of work for many individuals since Covid-19. The researcher asked the participants 'How do you define flexible working and what does it look like for you'. The responses from the participants were quite diverse as flexibility requirements differs from person to person which reinforces the findings of Thompson et al. (2015) that the degree of flexibility needed varies depending on age group. Participant B stated "*Flexibility to me is having the choice to work from home or in the office, I think the days where you have appointments or something happens at home that two sides of the relationship have that flexibility. I like having the option but I generally like getting out of the house and coming to the office and engage with others as I am a people person".* Participant B enjoys having the option to work from home but only utilises it when needed. Participant D believes "*Flexibility to me is having the flexi time and hybrid working policy. The 3 days in the office and 2 days at home is great and management are lenient with days that are from home. For example I play football so on training nights etc its' nice to work from home so I have more time to get organised etc".* Whilst participant E believes "*flexible working is the opportunity to have a better work life balance. It means that if there were morning/ evenings where there is something going on at home you don't feel pressured to start work at a certain time or finish at a certain time*". Flexibility looks different for every individual with some requiring flexibility for better work-life balance like participant D who plays sport.

The researcher then asked the participants 'Do you think the organisation is facilitating your flexibility requirements' all responses were positive with many individuals stating it is a must and if there were any other job opportunities to arise flexibility would be essential. Participant A stated "*Yeah the organisation is definitely meeting my flexibility requirements and is something I wouldn't be able to live without now*". Participant D advised that "*I absolutely think the organisation are facilitating my flexibility requirements, I don't think they could do anymore for us. Now that I have experienced such flexibility in an organisation I wouldn't settle for less anywhere else if opportunities were to arise* ". This supports the findings in literature that organisations that don't provide flexible working arrangements risk higher employee turnover, poor employee engagement, and even failing to recruit top talent (CIPD (B), 2021). Flexible working is an essential component for individuals when it comes to employment and whether that be for family commitments or for a better work-life balance it is essential that organisations implement these

arrangements in order to prevent higher employee turnover. Whilst the organisation are fulfilling all respondents flexibility needs, participant B stated "*Yes they are most definitely fulfilling my flexibility needs but I don't have a proper work station, it is just my dining room table which is why I don't really make use of the hybrid working policy in place that allows us to work 2 days at home and 3 days in the office*". Participant B believes that without a proper work station it is hard to avail of the hybrid working policy that is in place at the organisation. Participant F in agreement states "*Yes all flexible requirements are being met, it would be beneficial to have sufficient equipment like a second screen and monitors but that is just me picking out minor problems*". Whilst these minor problems deter some from utilising the hybrid policy in place it deters others from changing employment to organisations that do not provide these flexible requirements. This conveys a lot about the flexibility requirements or even demands of today's work force. For the purpose of this research it is important to note that four out of seven participants are millennials, which reinforces the findings of literature that state most young people seek a work/life balance when searching for jobs, and flexibility is seen as an important component (Thompson et al., 2015).

4. Flexibility in Such a Demanding Sector

The researcher then asked participants about their work life balance. The question asked 'What is your work-life balance like currently? What is exacerbating/supporting it?" The answers varied depending on the individual and the department that he/she worked in. Participant A stated "*Work-life balance is good, but I work too much especially when I work from home I forget to log off and then I don't do anything for myself*". Participant A felt that when working from home you can forget to log off. Participant C felt " *The flexibility is good. I would say my workload is exacerbating it as I feel my role would be a lot more demanding than others so I don't think I have as much flexibility as others*". This is because of the constant demands within the service department that Participant C believes she does not have the flexibility that other departments may have. Participant E believes "*Work-life balance is good, I must admit that when I leave work or shut the laptop that I am done for the day – I am happy to accommodate if extra hours are needed on certain days . I don't feel my personal time is interrupted but I think different team members in other departments will say different, especially the service & commissioning engineers"*. Participant E believes she has a good work-life balance and when she clocks out, her work

day is over, she doesn't check emails etc. She does believe that other departments may say different which we see from Participant C who works in the service department. Participant E also mentioned that work-life balance will especially be difficult for the "*service & commissioning engineers*" which reinforce the literature that flexible work arrangements may be simpler for office-based employees, but they are not practicable for field-based employees (O'Connell, 2021). Participant F stated "*Work-life balance is pretty good. I try to be strict on myself and log off at a certain time but sometimes that is just not doable. As an engineer the role is very demanding so I would say flexibility isn't there as much as it is for other".* Participant F believes working as an engineer in the utilities sector is quite demanding and flexibility wouldn't be there as much for him as it would be for others. Similarly Participant D states "*Work life balance is good. Obviously there is days where you can get tied down with stuff or receive phone calls after hours, which can happen maybe once or twice a week but that's the nature of the role".* Participant D accepts that there are days where you may have to stay later or answer the phones out of hours and understands it is the nature of the utilities sector. All other participants believe their flexibility is good but agree that other departments may have a more demanding workload meaning they wouldn't have as much of a work-life balance as others may have.

Another question asked 'Do you think, as an employee within the utilities sector, that it has any particular characteristic which make having a work-life balance more difficult/easier?'. All participants agreed that flexibility is not there for all field based employees in comparison to the office based employees. In particular participant D states "*The utilities sector itself is very demanding which makes it at times difficult to obtain a work-life balance, you have plants running, hospitals running around the clock 24 hours which need constant support, while we do have an out of hours services set up it can be hard if you see an email or a call coming through not to answer it and help where possible*". Similarly participant E demonstrates "Definitely more difficult particularly for our field team and any department that has face on interaction with clients". While the sector itself is very demanding because of the nature of it, all participants agree that it is the organisation at which they work at that makes it possible to achieve some sort of work-life balance. For example participant B believes "*I believe the organisation itself is what makes work-life balance easier, as the utilities sector is extremely pressurised*".

All other participants agreed that while the utilities sector is demanding, pressurised and constant that it is the organisation that makes having a work-life balance easier. They also

acknowledged the constant effort from the field team whom do not get the flexibility that the office based staff get.

5. Flexibility Requirements Across Generation X and Millennials

The next question gathers the opinions of the participants on generational differences when it comes to flexibility requirements. The question asked 'Do you believe there is generational differences in flexibility requirements? So for example considering employees that bit younger/older do they have different requirements and why?'. All participants believe there is generational differences when it comes to flexible requirements but agree there shouldn't be any discrimination over it, what is offered to one individual should be offered to all. Participant A demonstrates "*Yeah and I believe this is something we need to take a look at in the HR department . Older employees would place an emphasis on work-family life balance with family commitments or obligation demanding that flexibility whereas younger employees demand the flexibility for a better work-life balance".* This supports the literature found where younger workers are more likely to use flexible working arrangements to further their careers and maintain a work-life balance, whereas older workers are more likely to use them for personal reasons like family or health (Piszczek and Pimputkar, 2020). Participant C stated "*I believe so as someone with kids may have more obligations. For example I have two kids and if one of them falls ill, I need to leave work. Someone that bit younger with no kids wouldn't demand that flexibility, that doesn't say that they shouldn't get it though".* Participant C admits that whilst someone with kids may have more obligations or commitments than someone that bit younger with no kids, it doesn't mean they shouldn't be offered the same flexibility. Furthermore participant E demonstrates "*Yeah definitely different requirements but I don't feel there should be discrimination against either. I think whatever flexibility is offered to one member of staff should be offered to all".* Both participant C and E agree that all options offered to one should be offered to all, which is exactly the policy at the organisation where the interviews were conducted.

Participant F expresses "*Yeah for sure there are different requirements. As a millennial I wouldn't say they are a need, they are more so a demand. I don't have kids or family commitments that I require flexibility but I do think it is a great benefit to have whether than be to pursue further studies or simply for a better work life balance*". Similarly participant D who is also a millennial believes "*there would be different requirements but I wouldn't say that there is less flexible requirements the younger you are if anything there*

is more a demand for a better work-life balance". This reinforces the findings of the literature by Thompson et al. (2015) which demonstrates that the majority of younger people believe that flexibility is important when searching for employment and demand a work-life balance. The remaining three participants believe there is most definitely different flexibility requirements from generation to generation and that whilst individuals with children have more commitments and obligations everyone should be offered the same flexible arrangements.

Conclusion

The seven semi-structured interviews were quite informative in total. The amount of information or detail offered by the interviews exceeded the researcher's expectations. The researcher spent a significant amount of time transcribing the interviews, and while doing so, experienced several moments of personal fulfilment since the data matched the findings of the literature review and the direction of the dissertation. Flexible work arrangements is something that all participants look for in a job whether that be for a better work-life balance or for family obligations. The results from the seven semi-structured interviews concluded that when individuals are provided with flexibility in the workplace it increases over all engagement and job satisfaction along with a better work-life balance. The results also demonstrated that there are different flexibility requirements between both Millennials and Generation X but the flexibility offered to one should be offered to all. In light of everything, the experience exceeded all expectations, and the material gathered was of the highest importance to the research study.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The findings stated in the previous chapter will be thoroughly discussed by the researcher in this chapter, and references to earlier literature and the literature used for this research will be made. The purpose of this research was to explore the different perceptions of flexible working across Generation x and Millennials at work. Furthermore, to analyse the impact implementing such flexible working arrangements have on employee engagement and work-life balance. Several distinct themes were generated by the examination of the interview data; job satisfaction, positive company culture, the long term demand of flexibility, flexibility in such a demanding sector and flexibility requirements across Generation X and Millennials. According to this study, flexibility leads to both an improved work-life balance and higher levels of employee engagement in organisations. This research has also identified that there are different perceptions of flexible working between the two cohorts, flexibility is important for all employees and implementing such arrangements can bring about many benefits.

Research Objective 1: Explore the concept of flexibility

One of the key themes of this research was flexibility in the workplace, thus the researcher asked the employees questions about it and what it meant to them. The literature that exists around flexibility offers various definitions of the term which is why all participants explained flexibility in a unique way. Flexibility in the workplace was deemed crucial for all employees with some participants stating it would be the deciding factor if other job opportunities were to arise. The research demonstrates that workplace flexibility can be extremely effective and can foster a more desirable outcome for both the organisation and the person. The deficit principle, according to Maslow (1943), holds that once a need is fulfilled, it ceases to be a motivation since a person will only act to meet unmet wants and gain. Per this belief, each person's requirements should be addressed, and allowing for flexibility in the workplace will satisfy such needs and in return will increase employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Participants claimed that when the flexible arrangements were brought in to the organisation it brought about higher levels of employee engagement.

Research Objective 2: Assess the impact of flexibility on employee engagement and work life balance.

Employee engagement was evident throughout all interviews conducted, this may be due to the sample size chosen and may not be the case with all employees. This supports previous literature by Truss et al. (2016) where employee engagement not only brings advantages for the organisation, but also the employees. It is abundantly obvious that there are strong levels of employee engagement at the organisation where the interviews were conducted, which many believe stem from the benefits provided by the organisation. his links to previous literature stated by Vidal-Salazar et al. (2016) whom believe high levels of engagement and job satisfaction can stem from such benefits and advancement opportunities.

Employee engagement was seen to be of utmost importance to all seven participants and it is crucial that organisations make every effort to build highly engaged workforces through such flexible arrangements and company benefits, since doing so benefits both the business and the employee. Similarly Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) stated that by providing employees with the freedom they require, these organisations gain from flexibility by enhancing employee happiness and dedication to the job and as a result, people are more motivated and satisfied at work. Employees who are devoted to the organisation are more engaged than those who are not which corresponds with Kahn (1990) that engaged workers demonstrate a commitment to the business, motivation, cooperation, engagement, and completion of responsibilities.

All of the interviews throughout the research placed a high value on work-life balance, and this is a recurring theme: the employees believed the company actively supported excellent work-life balance for all employees even within such a demanding sector. All participants believed that finding the correct balance between work and personal life was crucial to overall levels of engagement and job satisfaction. This directly corresponds to literature where Haar (2013) stated that finding a balance between work and life can bring about many benefits for employees such as job and life satisfaction (Haar, 2013). It is evident from research and previous literature that a work- life balance is crucial in everyone's lives. work-life balance undoubtably boosts engagement levels and guarantees that individuals are more driven and content with their lives.

Research Objective 3: Explore the generational differences regarding flexible working.

According to Thompson et al. (2015) different age groups have notable preferences when it comes to flexible work arrangements. The results of this research concluded that there are different requirements for flexible work arrangements, with younger employees demanding the flexibility for a better work-life balance in comparison to individuals with caring responsibilities or family obligations where it may be considered more a requirement. This supports the literature found where younger workers are more likely to use flexible working arrangements to further their careers and maintain a work-life balance, whereas workers that bit older are more likely to use them for personal reasons like family or health (Piszczek and Pimputkar, 2020). Thompson et al. (2015) believe flexibility is a crucial element for younger employees when applying for jobs, demanding a work-life balance, whereas older employees favour defined working days. In contrast to this literature the results of this research concluded that individuals from both cohorts favour a work life balance, there was no evidence that older individuals favoured defined working days. All individuals were happy with the flexibility options provided to them and felt their work-life balance was positively related to the flexible work arrangements provided at the organisation.

Pitt-Catsouphes et al. (2009) discovered that the majority of employees of all ages and generations agree that flexible work arrangements have a positive effect on their work-life balance.

Research Objective 4: Explore the demands of the utilities sector and flexible work arrangements available to them:

With the 24/7 nature of the utilities sector, there can be constraints or barriers to offering these flexible work arrangements. As mentioned in the literature review many utility employees work weekends, nights and on call shifts so for staff who work office hours these flexible work arrangements may be significantly easier but for field based employees there are more constraints and limited opportunities. This was also portrayed throughout the interviews. Participants from customer-facing departments like service and engineering agree their workload may be more demanding in comparison to others in different departments. Participants also acknowledged that the service engineers would not have half as much flexibility as officed based employees and a work-life balance may be unreachable in such role.

The results of this research also portrayed that whilst the utilities sector is considered demanding due to the nature of the work it doesn't mean organisations cannot offer some flexible work options . The organisation that which these research interviews were conducted is in a niche market in the water subsector of the utilities industry. This organisation provides staff with flexible hours which consist of flexi time and the core hours being 10am-4pm as well as a hybrid working policy which allows employees to work from home two days per week and three days in the office. This reinstates O'Connell (2021) point that the new way of work is flexibility and organisations will have to put these arrangements in place in order to recruit and retain individuals of each generation.

This chapter presented relevant insights into the different perceptions of flexible working across Generation X and Millennials and the impact such flexible arrangements has on employee engagement and work-life balance, especially on the organisation studied. As previous studies have shown employee engagement is an important factor in how well organisations perform. Employers now place a greater emphasis on increasing employee engagement and satisfaction As a result, even if it may vary depending on an employee's age, flexible work arrangements may be a key role in boosting employee engagement and productivity (Anderson and Kelliher 2009)

Through critically analysing previous literature this chapter provided insightful information on how Millennials and members of Generation X perceive flexible work arrangements and the effects of such arrangements on work-life balance and employee engagement. The data study yielded intriguing results on how employees perceive flexible working arrangements and the benefits they provide to the organisation and employees.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

This section seeks to give a general summary of the study, consider the main research objectives, and drawing an overall conclusion and research limitations.. Additionally, recommendations and potential expenses for additional study will be listed. The most outstanding objective, which had a huge impact on the results was the impact flexible working had on employee engagement and work-life balance.

The main research objective and the research title 'The different perceptions of flexible working arrangements between Millennials and Generation X at work" impacted the research direction, placing a strong emphasis on how Generation X and Millennials view such flexible arrangements distinctively as well as the benefits these arrangements offer for work-life balance and employee engagement. Additionally, it was evaluated within the area of utilities, which is recognised for its 24/7 obligations.

The study's overall finding was that, despite the fact that both cohorts desire flexibility for a variety of reasons, it is still a necessity for both cohorts. The significance of flexibility in organisations for both employers and workers was proven by a thorough analysis of previous literature. Increasing engagement in the workplace and providing a better work-life balance for employees benefits both the organisation and the employee.

The study included a critical analysis of earlier ideas and literature as well as a qualitative investigation of the various perspectives on flexible work among Millennials and members of Generation X and how they positively link to higher levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction. To acquire a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives of flexible working and what it meant to them, a qualitative approach was taken.

Flexible working arrangements are a strategy that is increasingly important for enhancing the performance of businesses and employees, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has compelled businesses to adopt and apply these practices. Gaining employee opinions on such arrangements incorporates the generational differences and, giving employees a chance to be heard. This significantly increases engagement giving employees an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Limitations

A restriction is anything that affected a study's findings and exposed its flaws, which are frequently beyond the researcher's control. The sample size was likely the primary drawback of this study. Due to the needs of the utilities industry and time constraints, it was challenging to acquire participants from a variety of departments, in such a short amount of time.

Once of the constraints of the data collection is that it came from a single organisation in the utilities sector, which may not accurately reflect the service wide population. Therefore the results of this research may vary or differ if the data was collected from more organisations within the industry.

The final limitation is the limited available research on the utilities sector. Despite the researcher's thorough usage of the online college library and connected websites, there wasn't a lot of pertinent information available. It was more challenging for the author to attempt a thorough understanding of the industry due to the scarcity of recent research in the field.

Recommendations and Costs

The most significant recommendation is that employers should integrate any potential flexible working practices with and as part of the future strategic goals of the organisation before implementing them. In addition, businesses could adopt flexible working arrangements after determining which activities workers would value and if they reflected age differences. However, if a company currently has flexible working arrangements, it would be advisable to look at how well they function and take into account employees views. Organisations should review and continually improve these arrangements if necessary in order to maintain or increase employee satisfaction and engagement through flexibility. Finally, it's crucial for businesses to regularly examine policies in order to continually innovate and develop.

Cost-wise, it may include giving them the equipment they need to work from home which is considered standard in most organisations, which was suggested by one of the participants. Another suggestion is for businesses to provide a platform/ communication method for employee input. They are the most important component for the organisation's success, thus their opinions must be taken into account. Additionally, finding ways to reward and acknowledge workers may enhance their productivity and dedication to their work.

Timeline for implementation and recommendations

The timeline for implementing flexible work arrangements or changing existing policies will specifically depend on the organisations resources and budget for supplying equipment to employees to work from home. However if organisations are implementing such flexible work arrangements creating the policies could take a few months. However, it is important to note that businesses should regularly assess their policies and procedures to make them effective and keep employees engaged and satisfied in the organisation.

Chapter 8: Personal Learning Statement (CIPD Requirement)

From the higher certificate in business to the undergraduate degree in business, I would have never imagined myself progressing on to do a Master of Arts in Human Resource Management. Completing a Masters has been one of the most challenging, insightful and rewarding things I have done to date. In contrast to other Masters, it is a requirement of the Master of Arts in Human Resource Management to conduct research on a particular area of Human Resource Management. The topic of flexible working is the area I have selected as the focus of my research study.

Through the course of this research study, I have explored and increased my understanding of the various perspectives on flexible working among Generation X and Millennials in the utilities sector. The research was one of the most complex tasks I have embarked on to date, but it was also a unique and compelling experience for me.

I was introduced to new learning experiences throughout the course of the research study, including an understanding of analytical abilities. I critically analysed existing academic studies on the different perceptions of flexible working among Millennials and Generation X as well as the impact flexible working has on employee engagement and work-life balance.

Since the chosen study was qualitative in nature, I obtained valuable knowledge on this method of dada collection. Semi-structured interviews were used for the qualitative analysis, and the exposure to the field improved my interviewing confidence and abilities, which will be useful as I advance in my HR career.

There were many challenges that arose while conducting this research. Due to the demands of the utilities sector I was only able to interview seven individuals. The seven interviews were limited to the one organisation which meant the results were not a representation of the utilities sector itself. Given that all of the participants and the researcher are employed full-time, it was challenging to determine and schedule appropriate times to conduct the interviews.

Overall this research has been a valuable experience. I have significantly improved my time management skills, interviewing skills as well as research skills. Furthermore I have greatly enjoyed this experience as the topic of flexibility has become recently popular as a result of the pandemic.

References

Adams, J., Khan, A. T. H. and Raeside R (2014) '*Research Methods For Business and Social Science Students'* 2nd Edition. New Delhi; Sage Publications.

Agrawal, S. (2017) 'Personality Traits and Organisational Commitment of Gen X and Gen Y Employees', *Journal of Organisation & Human Behaviour*, 6(1/2), pp. 10–17.

Aguilar, L. (2021) 'Productivity anywhere is the new nature of work', *Accenture Utilities Blog.* [online] Available at: https://www.accenture.com/us-en/blogs/accenture-utilities-blog/productivity-anywhere-future-utilities-work.

Ahmad, S., Wasim, S., Irfan, S., Gogoi, S., Srivastava, A. and Farheen, Z. (2019) Qualitative v/s. Quantitative Research- A Summarized Review. Journal of Evidence Based Medicine and Healthcare, 6(43), pp.2828-2832.

Al-Asfour, A. and Lettau, L. (2014) 'Strategies for Leadership Styles for Multi-Generational Workforce', *Journal of Leadership, Accountability & Ethics*, 11(2), pp. 58–69.

Alharahsheh, H.H. and Pius, A. (2020) A review of key paradigms: Positivism VS interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *2*(3), pp.39-43.

Allen, T.D., Johnson, R.C., Kiburz, K.M. and Shockley, K.M. (2013) Work–family conflict and flexible work arrangements: Deconstructing flexibility. *Personnel psychology*, 66(2), pp.345-376.

Alsaawi, A. (2014) A Critical Review of Qualitative Interviews' *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences,* 3(4), pp. 149-156.

Andrade, M. S. and Westover, J. H. (2018) 'Generational differences in work quality characteristics and job satisfaction', Evidence-based HRM: *a Global Forum for Empirical Scholarship*, 6(3), pp. 287–304. doi: 10.1108/EBHRM-03-2018-0020.

Armstrong, M. and Taylor, S. (2017) 'Armstrong's Handbook Of Human Resource Management Practice' 14th Edition, Kogan Page, London, pp. 45-68.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L., Sorensen, C., and Walker, D. (2014) Introduction to Research in Education. 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Ashraf, R. (2018) Multigenerational Employees: Strategies For Effective Management, *International Journal of Economics & Management Sciences,* 7(3), pp1-3. doi: 0.4172/2162-6359.1000528.

Awasthy, R. and Gupta, R.K. (2015) '*Qualitative research in management: Methods and experiences'*. SAGE Publications India.

Babbie, E. (2007) '*The Practice of Social Research'* 11th ed. Belmont: Thompson Wadsworth.

Bennett, M., Beehr, T. and Ivanitskaya, L. (2017) 'Work-family conflict: differences across generations and life cycles', Journal of Managerial Psychology, 32(4), pp. 314–332. doi: 10.1108/JMP-06-2016-0192.

Boell, S.K., Cecez-Kecmanovic, D. and Campbell, J. (2016) Telework paradoxes and practices: The importance of the nature of work. *New Technology, Work and Employment,* 31(2), pp.114-131.

Bosco, S.M. and Harvey, D.M. (2013) 'Generational Effects on Recruitment and Workplace Productivity', *Proceedings of the Northeast Business & Economics Association*, pp. 17–20.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Burton, C., Mayhall, C., Cross, J. & Patterson, P. (2019) Critical Elements for Multigenerational Teams: a systematic review. *Team Performance Management*., 25(7), pp. 369-401.

Cattone, C. (2022) 'How Tech is Shaping The Way We Work' *California Business Journal* [online]. Available at: https://calbizjournal.com/how-tech-is-shaping-the-way-we-work/#:~:text=Technology%20has%20improved%20working%20conditions,anywhere%20more%20straightforward%20than%20ever.

Ciarniene, R. and Vienazindiene, M. (2018) 'Flexible Work Arrangements from Generation and Gender Perspectives: Evidence from Lithuania', *Engineering Economics*, 29(1), pp. 84–92. doi: 10.5755/j01.ee.29.1.19247.

CIPD (a). (2021) 'Employee Engagement and Motivation', *CIPD* . [online] Available at: https://www.cipd.ie/news-resources/practical-guidance/factsheets/engagement-motivation#6227.

CIPD (b) . (2021) 'Flexible Working Practices', *CIPD* . [online] Available at: https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/factsheet#6655.

CIPD (c) . (2021) How to request flexible working | Guides | CIPD. [online] Available at: <https://www.cipd.ie/news-resources/practical-guidance/guides/requesting-flexible-working#gref>.

Collis, J. and Hussey, R. (2021) *Business Research: A Practical Guide for Students*. 4th ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research (3rd ed.): Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks, California, United States: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi:10.4135/9781452230153.

Costa, G., Sartori, S. and Åkerstedt, T. (2006) Influence of flexibility and variability of working hours on health and well-being. *Chronobiology international*, 23(6), pp.1125-1137.

Creswell, J.W and Creswell, D.J. (2018) Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Los Angeles: SAGE.

De Sivatte, I., Gordon, J. R., Rojo, P., and Olmos, R. (2015) The impact of work-life culture on organizational productivity. *Personnel Review*, 44(6), 883–905. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-12-2013-0226.

Dean, B., Jain, N., Perl, S., Saraf, A. and Yanace E. (2021) Transforming Customer Experience in Utilities. *McKinsey & Company*. [online] Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/electric-power-and-natural-gas/our-insights/transforming-customer-experience-in-utilities.

Deloitte (2017) 'The Connected Employee; The Utilities Most Important Asset'. *Deloitte.* [online] Available at: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/energy-resources/deloitte-uk-er-connected-employee.pdf.

Dobrotić, I. and Blum, S. (2017) "Parental leave reforms and policy ideas: are European countries heading towards an employment led social-investment paradigm", *paper presented at the ESPAnet Conference 2017*, 14–16 September, Lisbon.

Douglas, S. and Roberts, R. (2020) Employee age and the impact on work engagement, *Strategic HR Review*, 19(5), pp. 209–213. doi: 10.1108/SHR-05-2020-0049.

ESB. (2022) *About Us*. [online] Available at: https://www.esb.ie/who-we-are/our-story/about-esb#:~:text=At%20ESB%2C%20we%20have%20been,Goals%207%2C%209%20and%2016.

Gas Networks Ireland. (2022) *What we do*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/corporate/company/our-business/what-we-do/>.

George, G., Howard-Grenville, J., Joshi, A., & Tihanyi, L. (2016). 'Understanding and Tackling Societal Grand Challenges Through Management Research', *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(6), 1880– 1895. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.4007.

Golden, T.D., Veiga, J.F. and Simsek, Z. (2006) Telecommuting's differential impact on work-family conflict: Is there no place like home?. *Journal of applied psychology*, 91(6), pp366-381.

Gordon, C. E. (2014) 'Flexible Workplace Practices: Employees' Experiences in Small IT Firms', *Industrial Relations*, 69(4), pp. 766-784.

Grant, C. (2020) 'Why the Utilities Sector is Essential to The Economy' *Learn.* [online] Available at: https://www.stash.com/learn/why-the-utilities-sector-is-essential-to-the-economy/.

Gratton, L. (2021) How to Do Hybrid Right, *Harvard Business Review,* [online] Available at: https://hbr.org/2021/05/how-to-do-hybrid-right.

Gregory, M. and Connolly, S. (2008) 'Feature: The Price of Reconciliation: Part-Time Work, Families and Women's Satisfaction', *The Economic Journal,* 118(526), pp. F1-7.

Haar, J.M. (2013) Testing a new measure of work–life balance: A study of parent and non-parent employees from New Zealand. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *24*(17), pp.3305-3324.

Haider, M. and Azmi, F. T. (2019) A Review of Literature: Work-life Balance and Job Satisfaction. *Journal of General Management Research,* 6(1), pp. 65-77.

Halcomb, E.J. and Davidson, P.M. (2006) Is verbatim transcription of interview data always necessary?. *Applied nursing research*, 19(1), pp.38-42.

Haley, M.R. and Miller, L.A. (2015) 'Correlates of flexible working arrangements, stress, and sleep difficulties in the US workforce: does the flexibility of the flexibility matter?', *Empirical Economics*, 48(4), pp. 1395–1418. doi:10.1007/s00181-014-0836-4.

Hansen, J.I.C. and Leuty, M.E. (2012) Work values across generations. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 20(1), pp.34-52.

Haynes, B. P. (2011) The impact of generational differences on the workplace, *Journal of Corporate Real Estate*, 13(2), pp. 98–108. doi: 10.1108/14630011111136812.

Hill, J. E., Grzywacz, J. G., Allen, S., Blanchard, V. L., Matz-Costa, C., Shulkin, S., & Pitt-Catsouphes, M. (2008). *Defining and conceptualizing workplace flexibility*. Community, Work & Family, 11(2), 149–163.

Hinds, M. (2003). '*The triumph of the flexible society: The connectivity revolution and resistance to change*'. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Hirschi, A., Shockley, K.M. and Zacher, H. (2019) Achieving work-family balance: An action regulation model. *Academy of Management Review*, 44(1), pp.150-171.

Hoole, C. and Bonnema, J. (2015) 'Work engagement and meaningful work across generational cohorts', *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 13(1), pp. e1–e11. doi:10.4102/sajhrm.v13i1.681.

Idowu, S. A. (2020) 'Role of Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement on Employee Job Performance and Retention in Manufacturing Industries in Agbara, Nigeria', *Economic Insights - Trends & Challenges,* (3), pp. 23–37.

Kahn, W.A. (1990) Psychological Conditions Of Personal Engagement And Disengagement at Work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), 692-723.

Kapoor, C. and Solomon, N. (2011) 'Understanding and managing generational differences in the workplace', *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 3(4), pp. 308–318. doi: 10.1108/17554211111162435.

Kelliher, C. & Anderson, D. (2010). 'Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work'. *Human Relations,* 63(1), 83-106. doi: 10.1177/0018726709349199.

Kelliher, C., Richardson, J. and Boiarintseva, G. (2018) 'All of work? All of life? Reconceptualising work-life balance for the 21st century', Human Resource Management Journal, 29(2), pp.97-112. doi: 10.1111/1748- 8583.12215.

Kraemer, H.C., Mintz, J., Noda, A., Tinklenberg, J. and Yesavage, J.A. (2006) Caution regarding the use of pilot studies to guide power calculations for study proposals. *Archives of general psychiatry*, *63*(5), pp.484-489.

Kruse, K. (2012), 'What is Employee Engagement', *Forbes*, Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2012/06/22/employee-engagement-what-and-why/?sh=2ea343227f37.

Kvale, S. (2012) '*Doing interviews'*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Lamm, E. and Meeks, M.D. (2009) 'Workplace fun: the moderating effects of generational differences', *Employee Relations*, 31(6), pp. 613–631. doi:10.1108/01425450910991767.

Lapoint, P.A. and Liprie-Spence, A. (2017) 'Employee Engagement: Generational Differences in the Workforce', *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 17(5), pp. 118–128.

Loretto, W. and Vickerstaff, S. (2015) Gender, age and flexible working in later life, *Work, Employment & Society*, 29(2), pp. 233–249.

M. Dolores Vidal-Salazar, Eulogio Cordón-Pozo and José M. de la Torre-Ruiz (2016) 'Flexibility of benefit systems and firms' attraction and retention capacities', *Employee Relations*, 38(4), pp. 487–504. doi: 10.1108/ER-07-2015-0152.

Maguire, M. and Delahunt, B. (2017) Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9(3).

Mahmoud, A.B., Fuxman, L., Mohr, I., Reisel, W.D. and Grigoriou, N. (2020) "We aren't your reincarnation!" workplace motivation across X, Y and Z generations. *International Journal of Manpower,* 42(1), pp. 1-17. doi: 10.1108/IJM-09-2019-0448.

Maslow, A. H. (1943) 'A theory of human motivation'. *Psychology Review.* 50 (4), pp- 370-396.

Maxwell, G. A., Odgen, S. M., and Broadbridge A. (2010) 'Generation Y's Career Expectations and Aspirations: Engagement in the Hospitality Industry', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management.* (17)1, pp53-60.

Mildeová, S. (2013) "Research Problem Description and Definition: From Mental Map to Connection Circle", *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, 6(4), pp. 328-335. doi: 10.7160/eriesj.2013.060409.

Mohsen, M.A.M.S. (2016) 'Committed generations: a case study on generations X and Y employees in Saudi hotels', *Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Research*, 27(4), pp. 456–467. doi:10.1080/13032917.2016.1160416.

Mozer, L. (2020) 5 Corporate Event Ideas to Boost Employee Engagement'. elle cuisine. [online]. Available at: https://www.ellecuisine.ca/5-corporate-event-ideas-to-boost-employee-engagement/.

O'Connell, J. (2021) The remote-working challenge: 'There are huge issues'. *The Irish Times*. [online] Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/the-remote-working-challenge-there-are-huge-issues-1.4615771.

O'Brien, C. (2022) Flexible work, positive culture top reasons for work moves, study finds. *The Irish Times*. [online] Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/business/technology/flexible-work-positive-culture-top-reasons-for-work-moves-study-finds-1.4847903.

Oswald, A.J., Proto, E. and Sgroi, D. (2015) Happiness and productivity. *Journal of labor economics*, 33(4), pp.789-822.

Piszczek, M. M. and Pimputkar, A. S. (2021) Flexible schedules across working lives: Age-specific effects on well-being and work, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(12), pp. 1907–1920. doi: 10.1037/apl0000844.supp (Supplemental).

Pitt-Catsouphes, M., Matz-Costa, Ch., & Besen, E. (2009). 'Workplace Flexibility: Findings from the Age & Generations Study'. *The Sloan Centre on Aging & Work*. Issue brief, 19, 1–21.

Pongton, P. and Suntrayuth, S. (2019) Communication satisfaction, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and job performance in higher education institutions. *ABAC Journal*, 39(3), pp.90-110.

Quinlan, C. (2011) *Business research methods* : [electronic book]. Cengage Learning. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=cat05743a&AN=nci.29639&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Quinlan, C., Babin, B., Carr, J., Griffin, M. and Zikmund, W. (2019) '*Business research methods'*. 2nd ed. Cengage Learning, pp.1-414.

Rubin, J. H. and Rubin, S. I. (2012) '*Qualitative Interviewing'* 3rd Edition. London: Sage Publications, Inc.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) '*Research Methods for Business Students*'. 8th ed. Harlow, England: Pearson Education, pp.128-436.

Schieman, S. and Young, M. (2010) Is there a downside to schedule control for the work-family interface?. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(10), pp.1391-1414.

Seal, C.R. et al. (2021) 'Flexible Work Arrangements and Employee Work Attitudes: A Case-Based Inquiry of a Small Non-Profit Response to Crisis', *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 27(4), pp. 93–101.

Shagvaliyeva, S. and Yazdanifard, R. (2014) Impact of flexible working hours on work-life balance. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*. 4, pp20-23.

Silverman, D. (2013) Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook. 4th edn. London: SAGE.

Smith, R. (2012) Overview of the Generations – Generation Y, Generation X, Boomers and Veterans (Part 4), *The SHRM Blog.* Available at: https://blog.shrm.org/blog/overview-of-the-generations-generation-y-generation-x-boomers-and-veterans.

Stewart, A. (2021) 'What is Hybrid Working', *breathe,* [online] Available at: https://www.breathehr.com/en-gb/blog/topic/flexible-working/what-is-hybrid-working.

Taylor S. (2019) '*Resourcing and Talent Management'* 7th Edition, CIPD, Kogan Page, UK.

Thompson, R. J., Payne, S. C. and Taylor, A. B. (2015) Applicant attraction to flexible work arrangements: Separating the influence of flexitime and flexplace, *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 88(4), pp. 726–749. doi: 10.1111/joop.12095.

Townsend, K., McDonald, P., & Cathcart, A. (2016) Managing Flexible Work Arrangements in Small Not-for-profit Firms: the Influence of Organisational Size, Financial Constraints and Workforce Characteristics. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29, 1–23.

Truss, C., Saone, E., Edwards, C., Wisdom, K., Croll, A. & Burnett, J. (2006) '*Working Life: Employee Attitudes and Engagement'*. London: The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Turner, D. P. (2020) Sampling methods in research design. *Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain*, *60*(1), pp.8-12.

Vidal-Salazar, M.D., Cordón-Pozo, E. and José, M. (2016) Flexibility of benefit systems and firms' attraction and retention capacities. *Employee Relations*, 38(4), pp.487-504.

Wadhawan, S. (2019) Impact of Flexible Working Arrangements on Employee Satisfaction in It Sector, *BVIMSR Journal of Management Research*, 11(1), pp. 59–65.

Weideman, M. and Hofmeyr, K. B. (2020) 'The influence of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement: An exploratory study', *South African Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(1), pp. 1–18. doi: 10.4102/sajhrm.v18i0.1209.

Wheatley D. (2017) 'Employee satisfaction and use of flexible working arrangements,' *Work, Employment & Society*, 31(4), pp. 567–585.

White, C. and Maniam, B. (2020) Flexible Working Arrangements, Worklife Balance, and Working Women. *Journal of Business and Accounting*, 13(1), pp.59-73.

Williams, C. (2007) 'Research Methods' *Journal of Business & Economic Research,* 5(3), pp 1-8.

Wong, C.-S., Hui, C. and Law, K.S. (1998) 'A longitudinal study of the job perception-job satisfaction relationships: a test of the three alternative specifications', *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 71(2), p. 127.

Yadav, R. and Chaudhari, S. (2020) 'Work Values Influencing Career Choice in Non-Life Insurance PSUs: A Study of Indian Millennials', *BimaQuest: The Journal of Insurance & Management*, 20(2), pp. 34–47.

Zabel, K. et al. (2017) 'Generational Differences in Work Ethic: Fact or Fiction?', *Journal of Business & Psychology*, 32(3), pp. 301–315. doi:10.1007/s10869-016-9466-5.

Zafari, S., Hartner-Tiefenthaler, M. and Koeszegi, S. T. (2019) 'Flexible Work and Work-related Outcomes: The Role of Perceived Organizational Alignment', *Management Revue*, 30(1), pp. 63–92. doi: 10.5771/0935-9915-2019-1-63.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Information Sheet

Dear Interviewee,

I am currently completing my dissertation for my Masters in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland.

The title of my dissertation is "The different perceptions of flexible work arrangements between Millennials and Generation X at Work".

The main objectives of my dissertation are to explore the benefits of flexibility within the utilities sector and the various perspectives on flexible working arrangements among Millennials and Generation X.

All information gathered as part of my research will be entirely anonymous. My supervisor and I will be the only individuals with access to the responses. I anticipate that the interview will take between 20-30 minutes.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

If you have any questions please contact me at leah.dixon@rocketmail.com

Kindest regards,

Leah Dixon

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Title of Research Project:

"The different perceptions of flexible work arrangements between Millennials and Generation X at Work".

Name of Researcher:

Leah Dixon

Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

- I confirm that I have read and comprehended the information sheet that was supplied in relation to the research of this project.
- I am aware that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw at any time.
- I consent to having the interview recorded using an audio recording device.
- I give permission to the researcher to use direct and indirect quotes in their dissertation.
- I agree to participate in this interview solely for the purpose of this research project and I am aware that the data will be stored securely and confidentially.

Name of interviewee: Date:

Name of Researcher: Leah Dixon Date:

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What is your current job title and how long have you been employed at the organisation for?

Employee Engagement

2. Tell me what motivates/demotivates you at work?

3. Have your motivations changed along the years since being employed at the organisation?

4. Can you give me an insight into the company culture and in particular in relation to employee engagement?

5. What does engagement look like for you? Do you have any examples of a time you felt engaged/disengaged at work and why?

6. What does the company do to support and encourage engagement?

Flexible Working

7. How do you define flexible working and what does it look like for you?

8. Are the organisation facilitating this?

9. Do you think they could do anything differently to support you?

10. Has your flexibility needs changed over time?

Work-Life Balance

11. What is your work-life balance like currently? What is exacerbating/supporting it?

12. Do you believe that work-life balance impacts employee engagement? If so, in what ways?

13. Do you think, as an employee in within the utilities sector, that it has any particular characteristic which make having a work-life balance more difficult/easier?

14. Have you had personal experience or do you have any examples of the ways in which work-life balance has influenced your engagement?

Generational Differences

15. Do you believe that there is generational differences in flexibility requirements? So for example considering employees that bit younger/ older – do they have different requirements? Why?

Background to Employee

16. Do you have any children and if so, may I ask how many?

17. Do you mind me asking what age generation do you fall under?

Generation Z: Born between 1997-2012 – Ages 10-25.
Millennials: Born between 1981-1996 – Ages 26-41.
Generation X: Born between 1965-1980 – Ages 42-57.
Baby Boomers: Born between 1946-1964 – Ages 58-76.

18. Are you married/cohabiting?