



**The Impact of Flexible Working Arrangements on Employee Job Satisfaction in the
Irish Retail Sector**

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Abstract

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Flexible working arrangements are an increasingly common company practice in today's workplace. Employee satisfaction is just one of the outcomes that it has been shown to have a positive impact on.

This study examines flexible working arrangements and employee job satisfaction. These two concepts have been explored jointly in numerous studies across a wide range of sectors and countries. However, the focus of this study is to examine flexible working arrangements and employee job satisfaction specifically in the Irish retail sector.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether flexible working arrangements have a statistically significant impact on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector. The research objectives seek to assess this impact, understand employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector and also investigate gender differences in various categories of flexible working arrangements.

A quantitative research method was undertaken for this study. A sample of 83 participants from various retail companies participated in self-administered online questionnaires. SPSS was used to analyse the data from these questionnaires.

The results from the independent samples t-test revealed there was a statistically significant difference in the mean employee job satisfaction scores for employees that currently have flexible working arrangements and employees without flexible working arrangements. Furthermore, the results of the ANOVA showed there was no statistically significant interaction between gender and the types of flexible working arrangements on mean employee job satisfaction scores. It was also revealed that there was no statistically significant main effect for gender and types of flexible working arrangements, respectively.

The research concludes that flexible working arrangements have a statistically significant impact on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector and that gender differences and the types of flexible working arrangements used by retail employees have no impact on their job satisfaction.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on flexible working arrangements and job satisfaction while providing insights and recommendations to Irish retail employees and organisations.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Submission of Thesis and Dissertation.....	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Justification for the Study	2
1.3 Significance of the Study	3
1.4 Research Aims and Objectives.....	3
1.5 Research Questions	4
1.6 Research Hypotheses	4
1.7 Dissertation Structure.....	4
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 Introduction.....	6
2.2 What are Flexible Working Arrangements?	6
2.3 Significance of FWAS	8
2.4 Benefits of FWAs.....	8
2.5 FWAs in the Retail Sector	9
2.6 Employee Job Satisfaction.....	10
2.7 Flexible Working, Employee Job Satisfaction and Gender Differences	12
2.8 The Relationship between FWAs and Employee Job Satisfaction	13
2.9 Flexible Working and Job Satisfaction in the Irish Retail Sector	16
2.10 Conclusion	16
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	18
3.1 Introduction.....	18
3.2 Research Philosophy	18
3.2.1 Positivism	18
3.2.2 Interpretivism.....	18
3.2.3 Chosen Research Philosophy	19
3.3 Research Approach.....	19
3.3.1 Chosen Research Approach	19
3.4 Research Methodology	20
3.4.1 Chosen Research Method	20

3.5 Research Design	21
3.5.1 Survey Structure	21
3.6 Sampling	22
3.6.1 Sample Size	22
3.7 Procedure	23
3.8 Data Analysis	23
3.8.1 Descriptive Statistics	23
3.8.2 Inferential Statistics	24
3.8.3 Internal consistency	24
3.9 Research Ethics	24
3.10 Conclusion	25
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	26
4.1 Introduction	26
4.2 Demographic Analysis	26
4.3 Inferential Statistics	30
4.4. Summary	33
CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION	34
5.1 Introduction	34
Research Questions	34
Research Hypotheses	34
5.2 Discussion of Findings	34
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION	38
6.1 Introduction	38
6.2 Conclusion	38
6.3 Research Limitations	38
6.4 Recommendations for Future Research	39
References	40
Appendix 1	47
Appendix 2	49
Appendix 3	51
Appendix 4	53

List of Tables

Table 1: Mean score for employee job satisfaction30
Table 2: Tests of Normality30
Table 3: Group Statistics.....31
Table 4: Descriptive Statistics32
Table 5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects33

List of Figures

Figure 1: Bar chart of gender27
Figure 2: Bar chart of ethnicity27
Figure 3: Bar chart of FWAs - yes/no.....28
Figure 4: Bar chart of type of flexible working arrangement28
Figure 5: Bar chart of current job role29

List of Abbreviations

FWAs - Flexible Working Arrangements

FWA - Flexible Working Arrangement

HR - Human Resources

N/A - Not Available

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The implementation of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) has received an immense amount of attention worldwide with many organisations providing some type of FWAs to their employees (Choi, 2018). The general consensus of flexible working is that it is working arrangements that permit employees to vary aspects of their work such as the quantity, the location and the times that their work is conducted at (McCartney, 2021; Chung and van der Lippe, 2020; Rastogi, Rangnekar and Rastogi, 2016; Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014; de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011; Maxwell *et al.*, 2007; Lewis, 2003). Several types of FWAs have been actively encouraged by numerous organisations since the late 1980s. These FWAs include flexible hours and workdays, remote working and non-standard starting and closing times (Almer and Single, 2004). It has been found that work life policies such as part-time work, job sharing, shift work, annualised hours, compressed hours, working from home and career breaks can enhance the levels of job satisfaction (Oludayo *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, there has been a multitude of studies surrounding the area of FWAs and the positive impact it has on various organisational and employee outcomes such as work life balance, organisational commitment, employee engagement, productivity, employee retention, motivation and employee job satisfaction (Andrade, Westover and Kupka, 2019; Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Bukhari, Gupta and Taggar, 2018; de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011; Origo and Pagani, 2008; Maxwell *et al.*, 2007; Croucher and Kelliher, 2005; Eaton, 2003). As noted by Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui (2019) FWAs assist employers in satisfying their employees and customers evolving demands as well as providing benefits to the employees that lead to job satisfaction such as work-time flexibility, decreased work-life conflicts and work-stress.

Job satisfaction is one of many widely researched outcomes of FWAs and numerous studies have reported that various categories of FWAs have a positive effect on job satisfaction (Andrade *et al.*, 2019; Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Azar, Khana, and Van Eerde, 2018; Wheatley, 2017; Rawashdeh, Almasarweh and Jaber, 2016; Kelliher and Anderson, 2010; McNall, Masuda and Nicklin, 2009). Employee job satisfaction is essentially about how satisfied or happy an employee is with their job and whether they like it (Andrade *et al.*, 2019; Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Wadhawan, 2019; Azar *et al.*, 2018; Baeza, Gonzalez and Wang, 2018; Aziri, 2011; Spector, 1997; Hoppock, 1935). While several previous studies have been conducted on the impact of FWAs on job satisfaction in various countries and

sectors, it has been observed that very few have specifically focused on the Irish retail sector. Retail work is typically described as flexible, casual and temporary (Allan, Bamber, and Timo, 2002). Retail employees frequently play a significant role in representing the store and enhancing its image due to their boundary-spanning position. They are also accountable to customers for service quality and internal communications regarding customer needs (Bettencourt *et al.* cited in Chung, Rutherford and Park, 2012). In light of the retail sector environment, the attitudes and actions of retail employees will have an effect on consumer behaviour (Bayraktar *et al.*, 2018). This implies that the success of the retail business will be determined by employees' behaviours towards consumers which may be predicated by the employees' job satisfaction.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address this gap by analysing the impact of FWAs on employee's job satisfaction, specifically in the Irish retail sector. Furthermore, this research will also allow the researcher to gain an insight into employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector. This study will use a t-test to compare the mean job satisfaction levels of employees with FWAs against those without FWAs, to see if there is a significant difference between these two groups. Moreover, a two-way ANOVA will be used in this study to examine two independent variables, gender groups and flexible working arrangement types, to see if they have an effect on the dependent variable, job satisfaction. The two-way ANOVA will investigate the main effect of gender, the main effect of FWAs on employee satisfaction, and whether there is an interaction between gender and certain FWAs on job satisfaction. The findings from these analyses will assist retail organisations in better understanding the interaction between gender and particular FWAs on job satisfaction and determining the most suitable FWAs to provide to their employees.

1.2 Justification for the Study

Previous literature has demonstrated that FWAs have a significant impact on employee job satisfaction across a range of sectors within Europe and Asia. Only a few studies have examined the effect of gender differences and types of FWAs on employee job satisfaction. However, some of these studies have only examined one gender usually women. FWAs are valued by many organisations due to its ability to enhance organisational and employee outcomes as well as aid in retaining and attracting a broad talent pool. This impact of gender differences and FWAs has not been examined before within the Irish context. The current study aims to contribute novel insights into the impact of FWAs on employee job satisfaction, particularly regarding the Irish retail sector. It is commonly known that retail companies offer their

employees full time positions as well as FWAs, usually part-time work. The rationale for this research was due to the lack of information in this area and the accessibility of Irish retail employees. There was an interest to examine the difference in the job satisfaction level of employees with FWAs and without FWAs as well as how gender differences and types of FWAs affected employees' job satisfaction.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The findings in this study will contribute to the academic literature on FWAs and employee job satisfaction by identifying which categories of FWAs are available to retail employees, the gender differences in the Irish retail sector as well as how this impacts employee job satisfaction levels. The findings in the present research will provide useful insights to Irish retail companies about the impact of FWAs on employee job satisfaction. Specifically, this research will benefit management in retail companies in identifying and deciding the most appropriate FWAs to provide to their employees. In this regard, this study will give awareness to employees on how FWAs will impact their job satisfaction as well as deciding which companies they should join based on the FWAs provided. Furthermore, the results presented in this study may contribute to retail companies developing more satisfied employees due to these FWAs, which will lead to a more efficient and productive company.

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this research is to assess the impact FWAs has on the employee job satisfaction of Irish retail employees. Data will be gathered from retail employees from several retailers and businesses within Ireland and analysed to determine whether the impact FWAs has on employee job satisfaction is positive or negative within these retail organisations. This research also aims to assess the levels of employee satisfaction between Irish retail employees with and without FWAs, the impact certain categories of FWAs have on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees as well as gender differences in employee satisfaction that interact with FWAs.

The following research objectives have been formulated to provide guidance along the research process:

1. To assess the impact of FWAs on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector.
2. To evaluate employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector.
3. To explore the potential gender difference in various categories of FWAs.

This study looks at gender differences because previous research indicates that FWAs are still regarded as a women's concern. Women are typically more involved in domestic and family responsibilities than men (Wheatley, 2017; Huang and Gamble, 2015). Previous literature also states that women use FWAs more than men in the workplace because they help to ease their family responsibilities. As a result, women are perceived to gain more advantages from FWAs than men (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014; Scandura and Lankau, 1997). Based on this evidence, it is possible to hypothesise that women with FWAs have higher job satisfaction than other genders.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. Is there a difference in levels of employee satisfaction between Irish retail employees with and without FWAs?
2. Do certain categories of FWAs have more of an impact on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees?
3. Are there gender differences in employee satisfaction that interact with FWAs?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

This study will evaluate the following three hypotheses:

H1: Employees in the Irish retail sector with FWAs have higher levels of employee satisfaction than those without FWAs.

H2: Different categories of FWAs have more of an impact on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees.

H3: Women with FWAs are more satisfied with their jobs than other genders with FWAs.

1.7 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters. The current chapter, chapter one, provides introduction of the topic. This chapter explains the research aim and objectives as well as the research questions and hypotheses. It also provides the reasoning behind this research and the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter two presents a thorough review of the literature that surrounds the topic. This chapter critically examines previous literature surrounding the concept of (FWAs) and employee job

satisfaction. It draws upon theoretical and empirical research from previous journal articles and other resources.

Chapter three outlines the methodology approach conducted within this study. This chapter explains the various methods and tools that were chosen to conduct the primary research. This chapter also provides rationales for implementing these particular methods and analysis of the primary research data.

Chapter four interprets the results from the primary research by means of data analysis and tests that were illustrated in the Methodology chapter. This chapter shows a series of descriptive results, along with various inferential tests in order to observe the results that are relevant to the hypotheses.

Chapter five discusses the research findings that result from the research objectives and illustrates how these research findings relate back to the literature review in order to assess whether previous results align with the current study's findings

Chapter six concludes the dissertation. This chapter provides a conclusion, lists the potential research limitations of the dissertation, and suggests further recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to comprehensively review the existing literature concerning the concepts of FWAs and employee job satisfaction. This review begins by providing an insight into what FWAs consist of and their significance to employers and employees. This chapter then delves into the theoretical framework of employee job satisfaction, discussing its importance as well as the key factors that influence it. Following this, it explores the gender differences between FWAs and employee job satisfaction. Lastly, this chapter analyses the relationship between FWAs and employee job satisfaction and also discuss this relationship in the context of the Irish retail sector.

2.2 What are Flexible Working Arrangements?

Flexible working is a broad and diverse notion that has become a progressively prevalent business practice in today's working environment (Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Rawashdeh *et al.*, 2016; Origo and Pagani, 2008). Several definitions of FWAs have been proposed. According to Perrons (2000), the term flexible working originates from the acknowledgement that a growing proportion of workers were not working traditional hours anymore, they were not employed on permanent contracts, and they were obliged to conduct various types of work. Similarly, Bukhari *et al.* (2018) explain that FWAs differ from typical working schedules as the working hours are variable rather than permanent. Wadhawan (2019, p.59) defines FWAs as "altering the time and hours of working in a week." McCartney (2021) refers to flexible working as a form of working arrangement where workers have some control over how long, where, when, and when they work. Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui (2019) state that FWAs provide employees with more scheduling autonomy as to how they complete their work responsibilities. Wheatley (2017) concurs that FWAs have the capacity to offer greater control over work. Likewise, Rastogi *et al.* (2016) assert that FWAs offer employees the chance to control their own timetables, enhance and develop their welfare and happiness at work. Overall, the general consensus of the term FWAs from these various academics and scholars is that it is working arrangements that permit employees to vary aspects of their work such as the quantity, the location and the times their work is conducted at (McCartney, 2021; Chung and van der Lippe, 2020; Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014; de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011; Maxwell *et al.*, 2007; Lewis, 2003). This is the definition that will be used to describe FWAs within this research.

FWAs can be formal or informal (McCartney, 2021; Maxwell *et al.*, 2007). Formal arrangements are those that were created through alterations to the employment contract and the business's flexible working policy, which usually entails the employee making a written request to their manager and Human Resources (HR) to be considered. Whereas informal arrangements occur from a conversation or agreement among the employee and their manager (McCartney, 2021; de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011). Eaton (cited in Eaton, 2003, p. 147) states that informal arrangements were concealed agreements beyond the range of formal procedures where "Supervisors can permit more flexibility than is formally allowed, encouraging employees to take time off unofficially, so that flexibility becomes invisible to higher-level managers." Hall and Atkinson (2006) identified informal arrangements as the skill to change scheduled working time temporarily in the short term.

There are also several forms of FWAs. The most common forms include flexitime, compressed working hours, job-sharing, part-time, remote working, annualised hours, working from home (McCartney, 2021; Chung and van der Lippe, 2020; Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Wheatley, 2017; de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011). Based on their prevalence, the current study will investigate the following FWAs:

- Flexitime is the most prevalent among these several forms of FWAs. It provides employees with more control in terms of what time they start and finish their work, so long as they complete the total number of hours allocated by their employer (Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Rahman, 2019; Jackson and Fransman, 2018).
- Working from home which is also known as telecommuting refers to working from any other location than the usual workplace which is authorized by the employer. The main aim of this flexible working arrangement (FWA) which is available to employees is to alleviate stress, burnout and exhaustion (Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019).
- Compressed working consists of restructuring the hours in the workweek into fewer and longer days (McCartney, 2021; Wheatley, 2017).
- Job sharing refers to two workers sharing a single full-time position where both workers involved are accountable for the whole job. They benefit from enhanced work-life balance at the same time as keeping their full-time career prospects and position (Wheatley, 2017).
- Part time work is described as working anything less than 30 hours a week (Wheatley, 2017).

2.3 Significance of FWAS

Organizations view these FWAs as a way to attract and retain employees, and thus improve their business. According to Chung and van der Lippe (2020), across most developed countries flexible working has significantly grown throughout the years, and it is becoming more prevalent within the workplace, particularly among the younger generation. As cited by Rawashdeh *et al.* (2016), as employees' attitudes are changing towards more FWAs, organisations are also adjusting to integrate more FWAs with the aim to entice and retain exceptionally talented and skilled employees and hold a competitive market position. Similarly, Choo, Desa and Asaari (2016) state that the demands of employees and the shifting environment have driven employers to provide these FWAs because there is an increase in dual earners, single parent households or individuals with elderly care obligations.

These days many organisations extensively use FWAs as a strategic HR tool to attract, retain and encourage talented employees, increase productivity and manage costs (Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Choo *et al.*, 2016). Rawashdeh *et al.* (2016) concur that FWAs have been implemented by businesses as a crucial strategy in order to strengthen and make the business more sustainable with a more dedicated and productive workforce. According to Origo and Pagani (2008), work flexibility is frequently portrayed as essential to an organisation's competitive success as a result of its direct influence on working conditions, efficiency, profitability and worldwide business and market performance. de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) state that FWAs are beneficial to business because they can help individuals as well as organizations enhance performance, either explicitly or implicitly. FWAs can assist a company's workforce in attaining better work life balance, which is one the main objectives of companies offering them (Bukhari *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, Kipkoech (cited in Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019) asserts that FWAs such as flexible part-time, shift work, compressed work hours and job sharing are extensively used to assist the workforce in balancing family and work-life. Based on these findings, it is concluded that FWAs are seen as important by both individuals and organisations.

2.4 Benefits of FWAs

FWAs have many benefits for both employers and employees. Anderson and Kelliher's (2009) study reveals that FWAs lead to enhanced employee engagement, increased job satisfaction, increased organisational commitment, and also contributes to recruiting and retaining highly skilled people. Similarly, Kelliher and Anderson (2010) state that for the employer FWAs result in greater job satisfaction among their employees which causes improved work commitment.

Several other studies report similar advantages for employers such as enhanced employee engagement, increased job satisfaction, increased organisational commitment, improved productivity, decreased absenteeism, decreased employee turnover, enhanced employee performance, reduced costs as well as recruiting and retaining highly skilled employees (Andrade *et al.*, 2019; Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Maxwell *et al.*, 2007; Croucher and Kelliher, 2005; Eaton, 2003). A study conducted by Bukhari *et al.* (2018) identifies the numerous advantages of FWAs for employees such as autonomy at work, a reduction in absenteeism and improved punctuality which results in enhanced morale and fewer commuting issues.

Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) found that a company that offers FWAs is more likely to retain its employees because this demonstrates to the employee that the company values their welfare concerning when, where and how they conduct their job. The suitability of these FWAs is swiftly rising because it assists in satisfying work and family responsibilities. Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui (2019) also cite that FWAs assist employers in satisfying their employees and customers evolving demands as well as providing benefits to the employees that lead to job satisfaction such as work-time flexibility, decreased work-life conflicts and work-stress. Maxwell *et al.* (2007) argues that disadvantages of FWAs also exist. They state some of these disadvantages of FWAs comprise of reduced workforce levels, mistakes as a result of job exhaustion, lean production lines, communication difficulties and isolation of work. Research by Sulaymonov (2020) agrees with these disadvantages and further mentions disadvantages such as increased workloads and stress, disassociation with the company. Similarly, Bhusan and Sar (2020) revealed that implementing FWAs can lead to problems such as reduced employee communication, stress, depression, and a lack of discipline. Therefore, it may be assumed that Irish retail companies and their employees would experience both the advantages as well as the disadvantages of FWAs.

2.5 FWAs in the Retail Sector

The majority of research on FWAs in the retail sector has been conducted in Europe and Asia. A qualitative study was conducted on FWAs in the retail sector in the United Kingdom to determine whether flexible working assists equal opportunities by allowing women and men to balance their work with family lives (Perrons, 2000). This study considers the gender differences in the retail sector; however, it fails to discuss how gender differences and FWAs impact job satisfaction. A quantitative study conducted in organised retail stores in India identified numerous factors that made employees satisfied within different segments within

organised retail (Sumathi *et al.*, 2020). This study by Sumathi *et al.* (2020) indicates that job satisfaction was highly influenced by the practices and policies of the organised retail's such as salary, job security, teamwork, communication rather than the demographics of the employees at the managerial level. However, in relation to FWAs their study found that employees were not satisfied by the flexibility in their working hours. The study suggests that this could be resolved by offering the retail employees flexible shifts that enable them to function efficiently and improve their job satisfaction (Sumathi *et al.*, 2020). Another study undertaken by Bhusan and Sar (2020) in the Indian retail sector demonstrated the significance of workplace flexibility for improving organisational performance by enhancing job satisfaction among the retail employees. This study found that introducing FWAs into the retail industry had positive effects such as improved employee engagement, job satisfaction and commitment (Bhusan and Sar, 2020). This indicates that FWAs are beneficial to employees in the retail sector. Furthermore, Bhusan and Sar (2020) state that the growing demand for FWAs in the workplace has contributed to the success of firms in India's retail sector by retaining employees thus, these FWAs have become a key factor in employees' decisions to work for a firm. Although these studies mention the impact of FWAs on job satisfaction, they make no attempt to provide information on the usage of different types of FWAs by different genders. As a result of the above literatures shortcomings, it is critical for the current research to attempt better understand the impact of FWAs on employee job satisfaction in the retail sector.

2. 6 Employee Job Satisfaction

The term job satisfaction has been defined by a number of scholars and practitioners in the past and more recently. Job satisfaction, according to Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015), is a vital aspect for employee motivation and performance. Aziri (2011) asserts that organisations consider job satisfaction as a crucial element when it comes to the productivity and success of the organisation. Within the field of HR management, employee job satisfaction is a term that is commonly used and well researched (Bekele and Mohammed, 2020). The concept of job satisfaction, according to Hoppock (1935), is a group of psychological, physiological and environmental conditions that trigger an individual to admit how content they are with their job. Spector (1997) defines job satisfaction as an indicator of how content an employee is with their job, whether they like or dislike the job or specific elements of the job, such as the nature of the job or the administration. Similarly, Armstrong and Taylor (2020) assert that job satisfaction is the attitudes and emotions that a person has towards their job. They maintain that if people have positive feelings towards their job they are satisfied and those that have negative

feelings towards their job are dissatisfied. This definition of job satisfaction was consistent with those of many other scholars (Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Wadhawan, 2019; Baeza *et al.*, 2018). Azar *et al.* (2018) state that job satisfaction is an employee's emotional response to their employment based upon the difference between their actual results and their desired results.

Overall, what one can conclude from these definitions is that employees are happy at work provided that their employment meets their desired expectations. Therefore, a satisfied employee is a successful employee (Aziri, 2011). Andrade *et al.* (2019) report that employees that are satisfied with their job will produce more, provide greater quality of work, and enhance business competitiveness, performance and success. Meanwhile, employees that are unsatisfied are typically late to work, absent and drawn towards leaving the company. Azar *et al.* (2018) assert that employee job satisfaction is one of the most widely studied outcomes of FWAs and FWAs are positively associated with employee job satisfaction. Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui (2019) state that the significance of job satisfaction reflects a general view about an employee's well-being and its association with key outcomes such as work engagement and performance. They further highlight that job satisfaction is a good indicator for employee retention, and it is linked to low absenteeism levels. In their study, Aziri (2011) identified that job satisfaction is affected by numerous factors namely pay, work conditions, development prospects, management and the nature of work. A study by Končar and Marić (2015) conducted quantitative research in the retail sector in five Western Balkans countries: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Montenegro, and discovered a statistically significant correlation between the indicators of job satisfaction for retail employees in the West Balkans. Končar and Marić (2015) claim that job satisfaction is vital in the retail sector mainly because it is a service business activity which predominantly relies on employees that deliver services to consumers. Sumanthi *et al.* (2020) concurs that employee job satisfaction is essential for organised retail stores, because employees interact with the customers, therefore employees must be satisfied in order to maximise their productivity to deliver better services. According to a qualitative study of retail employees in the United Kingdom, reducing the number of working hours improved job satisfaction (Bent and Freathy cited in Huang and Gamble, 2015). Ryu (2016) argues that working long hours can have a negative impact on an employee's job satisfaction because of the difference between the employee's need and the job's demands. Therefore, it can be suggested that FWAs could help to combat this.

2.7 Flexible Working, Employee Job Satisfaction and Gender Differences

Perrons, (2000) asserts that as a result of FWAs, the workforce participation rates for women, particularly women with young children, have increased. Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) argue that FWAs are perceived by men as a means to improve their own organizational commitment, while women perceive FWAs as a way to enhance their work-life. Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) also state that men are now using FWAs, but it has been mainly more common among women in the workplace, and it leads to enhanced loyalty and engagement from employees and also greater job satisfaction. Bender (cited in Huang and Gamble, 2015) claims that women generally dominate workplaces that offer FWAs because they allow the ability to facilitate their family responsibilities. As a result of these perceptions, FWAs can be a beneficial capability-spanning resource that allows employees, particularly women, to tailor their employment to their family obligations (Singley and Hynes cited in Chung and van der Lippe, 2020).

Scandura and Lankau (1997) demonstrate that FWAs are appreciated more by women than men. Their quantitative research also discovered that women have more job satisfaction when their work offers them the opportunity to merge their work and fulfil their work responsibilities. A possible limitation of this research is that it is outdated and may not be as credible today. However, more recent research by Ciarniene and Vienazindiene (2018) who also conducted quantitative research, argues that women usually work more flexibly than men, and women also value the perceived advantages of organisations providing FWAs, such as management of work and family interests, reduced stress, positive effect on health, time and cost savings and ability to earn according to needs. Their findings substantiate that of Scandura and Lankau (1997). Women's job satisfaction is more negatively impacted by work-life conflict than men's because they are more likely to be overworked by their household responsibilities, therefore it is proposed that FWAs may provide women with certain advantages (Ergeneli *et al.* cited in Wheatley, 2017). This implies that FWAs increase women's job satisfaction by decreasing their work-life conflict.

Quantitative research conducted by Wheatley (2017) analysed how gender differences in job satisfaction interacted with different types of FWAs. The most frequently used FWA among men was flexitime and this was reported to be used by 19.3% of men and 15% of women. (Wheatley, 2017). Whatley's (2017) study reveals that statistically flexitime has major positive impacts on men's job and life satisfaction; however, the results from the logit and ANCOVA models indicate that women using flexitime are exposed to negative impacts. Job-sharing was

found to be predominately used by women but is negatively related to women's job and life satisfaction and working from home was found to have beneficial effects for men and women (Wheatley, 2017). Amongst men, part-time work was linked to increased job and life satisfaction, whereas for women, part-time work has more subtle effects (Wheatley, 2017). However, a study by García, Molina and Navarro (2007) found that part-time work was the most frequently used FWA among women (44.7%). They also found that term-time work was mainly used by women, which indicated gender patterns concerning the need to look after school-aged children (García *et al.*, 2007).

Giannikis and Mihail's (2011) quantitative study within the Greek retail sector revealed that the feelings people had towards FWAs were categorised by gender, job sector and their previous involvement in such FWAs. Their study found that women, public sector employees and employees who took part in FWAs are more inclined to perceive more benefits over the use of work flexibility. Furthermore, Giannikis and Mihail (2011) report that part-time employees were assumed to have varying career preferences when compared with full time employees. For this reason, part time employees place less emphasis on pay and promotion and more emphasis on the flexibility of working hours than full-time employees. However, their study found that part-time retail employees are more satisfied with their jobs when they have opportunities to expand their expertise and skills while also pursuing a career path (Giannikis and Mihail, 2011). This could suggest that even with FWAs like part-time work, employees must believe they have the same level of opportunities to be satisfied. In their study of the retail sector in China, Huang and Gamble (2015) investigate the relationship between gender and influential factors of job satisfaction among Chinese retail employees. According to their t-test results indicate that women in the Chinese retail sector had less job satisfaction than men (Huang and Gamble, 2015).

2.8 The Relationship between FWAs and Employee Job Satisfaction

The relationship between FWAs and employee job satisfaction is one that has been investigated by many scholars and practitioners within different countries and various sectors. Rahman (2019) asserts that FWAs are becoming more common, and they certainly have a significant effect on employees' job satisfaction. They claim that numerous organisations are implementing FWAs because these arrangements are believed to enhance the employees' satisfaction. Rawashdeh *et al.* (2016) substantiates this claim that FWAs that are correctly implemented can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction because of employees' need for a

certain level of independence in satisfying both their individual and work lives. According to Chen and Fulmer (2018) employees who believe they have more FWAs at their disposal are more satisfied with their jobs. A number of previous studies have reported that such FWAs have a positive impact on employees' job satisfaction (Andrade *et al.*, 2019; Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Mahmood *et al.*, 2019; Wadhawan, 2019; Azar *et al.*, 2018; Wheatley, 2017; Rawashdeh *et al.*, 2016; McNall *et al.*, 2009).

McNall *et al.* (2009), found that employees feel a lot more enhanced when their companies offer FWAs such as flexitime and compressed work hours, which leads to increased job satisfaction. A recent study by Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui (2019) examined different FWAs such as flexible hours, contractual working, work shifts, and telecommuting within public sector universities in Karachi, Pakistan from a sample size of 200 participants. Their significant t-value results reveal that FWAs have a significant impact on job satisfaction. Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui's (2019) findings also discovered that employees that feel secure and flexible in their positions and have a healthy work-life balance are more content with their jobs and organisations. Wheatley (2017) proposes that employees that engage in different FWAs have better job satisfaction and enhanced work-life balance. He discovered that FWAs and flexitime is associated with lower life satisfaction in women but higher satisfaction in men. Furthermore, it was found that when men and women worked compressed or annualized hours, they were less satisfied with their jobs; however, working from home was related to higher levels of job satisfaction in both men and women (Wheatley, 2017). A positive of Wheatley's (2017) study is that it looks at the gender differences in the relationship between FWAs and employee job satisfaction which is relevant to this current study.

Studies by Anderson and Kelliher (2009) and Kelliher and Anderson (2010) were undertaken, which implemented both qualitative and quantitative research methods in the form of interviews and questionnaires. Although Anderson and Kelliher's (2009) study focuses on the impact FWAs have on employee engagement, they did report that within four of the seven companies they examined that job satisfaction levels were significantly greater for employees with FWAs than employees without FWAs. These findings were consistent with their following study in 2010, which found that employees with FWAs had higher scores of job satisfaction than their counterparts without FWAs (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010). Moreover, Rawashdeh *et al.* (2016) demonstrate that effectively implementing FWAs can directly improve the employee's commitment to their jobs and devotion to the organization. Rawashdeh *et al.* (2016) identified that there was a positive relationship between FWAs and job satisfaction

for 95 employees within Jordanian private airlines. The employees of these private airlines were content with the FWAs that their businesses provided to them and were driven to devote more time at work because they perceived it to be a pleasant environment. A study conducted on 100 employees from various organisations found that employee satisfaction, individual productivity and motivation are positively linked to flexitime (Bukhari *et al.*, 2018). However, in comparison to Wheatley's (2017) study, a limitation of these other studies is that they did not explore gender differences to illustrate which FWAs were used more by particular genders. Given that this gender difference was a key aspect of the previous research, it would have been valuable to this current research if these studies identified this comparison. This would have further strengthened the results of these studies. Furthermore, the study by Rawashdeh *et al.* (2016) did not identify the various FWAs that their employees were utilizing.

According to Rahman's (2019) study, FWAs such as flexitime, telecommuting, and job sharing had a favourable impact on the work-life balance and job satisfaction of 203 female higher education teachers in Bangladesh. Research by Chen and Fulmer (2018) discovered that for female employee's FWAs such as part-time work have a negative link with job satisfaction. However, the sample for Rahman's (2019) and Chen and Fulmer's (2018) research only focused on women and did not consider the impact of this FWA on men. The findings from Rahman's (2019) study was in congruence with the findings of Bekele and Mohammed's (2020) study. Bekele and Mohammed's (2020) study in Ethiopia undertook a quantitative approach that analysed 178 respondents and found that FWAs such as flexitime and compressed workweek had a strong positive influence on job satisfaction. This indicates that increasing the usage of flexitime and compressed work hours for employees in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia improves job satisfaction. Additionally, their study also demonstrated that telecommuting had no major impact on job satisfaction. In contrast, Rahman's (2019) study found that compressed working hours were shown to have no considerable impact on work-life balance or job satisfaction. Based on these finding it is evident that there are disparities in the results of these studies. The various categories of FWAs have positive and negative impacts on the employee job satisfaction. The majority of these studies indicate that flexitime has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction. However, it could be argued that the various sectors in which these employees worked had an impact on these results, and thus the results of this current study will be influenced by the retail sector.

2.9 Flexible Working and Job Satisfaction in the Irish Retail Sector

The retail sector is best known for its use of nonstandard scheduling (Presser cited in Henly, Shaefer and Waxma, 2006). According to Allan *et al.* (2002) retail work is typically described as flexible, casual and temporary. Jameson and Webber (cited in Allan *et al.*, 2002) assert that since the early 1980s flexible work such as part-time and casual employment, has increased by more than doubled in the retail sector. The biggest industry and private sector employer in Ireland is retail (Deloitte, 2020). This sector employs almost 300,000 employees and three out of four of these employees are located outside of Dublin (Deloitte, 2020). According to Retail Ireland Skillnet (2022) the Irish retail sector generates €30 billion in total sales and employs 14% of the country's workforce. Due to this substantial contribution to the economy, it is crucial that this sector continues to develop and expand, create jobs and provide Irish consumers with value as well as options. There is a scarcity of research pertaining to FWAs in the Irish retail sector, therefore it is critical that this current study investigates FWAs in the Irish retail sector.

2.10 Conclusion

As presented in the literature review, there is a multitude of research surrounding the concept of FWAs as well as their impact on different organisational outcomes such as organisational commitment, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. The impact of several types of FWAs on employee job satisfaction has been identified in various sectors such as IT, education, airlines, and within different countries. Furthermore, prior studies have found that there is a positive relationship between FWAs and employee job satisfaction within these sectors. It is, therefore, essential to analyse this impact in this current study. The concept of employee job satisfaction was also extensively examined, including the several definitions the term encompasses, its importance and the factors that influenced it. A limited amount of previous research examined the gender differences in FWAs and job satisfaction and discovered that different FWAs influenced men's and women's job satisfaction differently. However, most of the previous research did not look at the gender differences in the relationship between FWAs and employee job satisfaction, or they only examined one specific gender, typically women. Additionally, this gender difference is of particular interest to this study. The chapter concludes with the Irish retail sector, revealing that little work has been conducted on the impact of FWAs on employee job satisfaction in this context.

This present study will fill the gap in the literature by examining the levels of employee satisfaction between Irish retail employees with and without FWAs, the impact certain

categories of FWAs have on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees as well as how gender differences in employee satisfaction interact with FWAs in order to achieve and answer the research objectives, questions and hypotheses in this study. This study contributes to the theoretical background as well as the managerial perspective. This study will be beneficial in gaining further knowledge about the impact FWAs have on employee job satisfaction, which may be of use to management in retail organisations when deciding which FWAs to implement and provide to their employees to further increase their job satisfaction. Moreover, employees can use the study's findings to inform their decision-making about which retail companies to work with.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to thoroughly discuss the research methods that were used to gather the primary data for this study. This chapter discusses the chosen research philosophy and research approaches, providing rationales for these decisions. The research design which explains the sample selection, the data collection method and the statistical techniques used to analyse the data are also included in this chapter. Finally, the ethical considerations attached to this research will be discussed.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to a framework of theories and beliefs regarding the formation and nature of knowledge in the context of research (Saunders and Lewis, 2018). The main research philosophies are pragmatism, positivism, critical realism, interpretivism and post modernism (Saunders and Lewis, 2018). This research, however, will focus on positivism and interpretivism.

3.2.1 Positivism

Positivism is derived from the natural sciences. It believes that social reality is singular and unbiased and is not influenced by the act of examining it (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Saunders *et al.* (2019) state that positivism examines visible social realities to create law-like generalisations. Positivism guarantees unequivocal and accurate knowledge by using techniques created to produce pure statistics and factual information unaffected by human interpretation or prejudice. Positivist research is usually deductive. It imitates the process of experimental research in the physical sciences, by forming hypotheses, gathering data to test them, attempting to disprove them, and acknowledging the hypotheses as provisionally true assertions about reality if they are not disproven (Bell *et al.*, 2019). This concept believes that since reality occurs impartially and externally, the proper way to collect data is to directly monitor phenomena or to measure them using questionnaires or other means (Bell *et al.*, 2019).

3.2.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is associated with examining social occurrences in their natural surroundings (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). (Collis and Hussey, 2014) state that interpretivism is emphasised by the assumption that social reality is extremely subjective and influenced by human insights. Interpretivism is concerned with interpreting human actions. It also involves the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of social activity, and the procedures in which matters occur (Bell *et al.*, 2019).

Interpretivist research aims to develop new, comprehensive insights and interpretations of social environments and situations (Saunders and Lewis, 2018). Interpretivism generally follows an inductive approach and uses qualitative research methods to develop outcomes founded by interpreting qualitative research data (Saunders and Lewis, 2018; Collis and Hussey, 2014).

3.2.3 Chosen Research Philosophy

The positivist approach was implemented as it was deemed to be the most suited to this research. According to Saunders *et al.* (2019), the purpose of positivist research is to observe social realities and create law-like generalisations. This study aims to observe the Irish retail sector and make generalised conclusions about the impact of gender differences and various types of FWAs on the job satisfaction of the employees in this particular sector. This research seeks to investigate the relationship that exists between FWAs and employee job satisfaction. This research also used the existing literature to create hypotheses that will be analysed using quantitative techniques, which is consistent with the positivist approach.

3.3 Research Approach

According to Saunders *et al.* (2019), there are three main approaches to theory development that a researcher must consider which are deduction, induction, and abduction. A deductive approach entails research hypotheses being established from the literature's theory which are then evaluated (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Induction is a research approach that consists of developing a theory by examining previously gathered data. With the inductive approach the researcher is seeking to gain a deeper grasp of the interpretations people associate with events (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Saunders *et al.* (2019) state that the abductive approach merges both the deductive and inductive approaches. It starts with observing an unforeseen event and then figures out a credible theory of how this may have happened.

3.3.1 Chosen Research Approach

The deductive approach was implemented for this research because positivist research is usually followed by a deductive approach (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). This approach was the most suitable for this research as the research topic is supported by a wealth of literature and attempts to explain the relationship between the two variables in this research which are FWAs and employee job satisfaction.

3.4 Research Methodology

There are two main types of research methods which are qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methodology is characterised as research that is attained through written or verbal communication and perceptible behaviour that produces descriptive information. It aims to examine how things are perceived from multiple angles. (Taylor *et al.*, 2015). Myers (2013) states that qualitative research methods were established in the social sciences to allow researchers to examine people's social and cultural experiences. These methods include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and biographies (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020; Myers, 2013). These research methods offer a thorough understanding of the research subjects that embraces the insights of the study population and their environment (Hennink *et al.*, 2020). Dawson (2009) affirms that qualitative research seeks to obtain comprehensive viewpoints expressed by participants. Hennink *et al.* (2020, p.11) cite that "Qualitative research is useful for exploring new topics or understanding complex issues; for explaining people's beliefs and behaviour; and for identifying the social or cultural norms of a group or society". According to Marshall and Rossman (2016) qualitative research is a rational, explanatory research method that is embedded in the lived encounters of individuals.

Quantitative research methods, on the other hand, involve the procedure of gathering, statistically assessing, and interpreting the findings of a study (Creswell, 2002). Quantitative research methods were formerly developed in the natural sciences to assess natural experiences (Myers, 2013). Schindler (2019, p.76) asserts that "quantitative research is interested in the quantity, frequency, or magnitude of a phenomenon; it is the basis of a statistical study". Bell *et al.* (2019) state that quantitative research includes methods that seek to quantify social phenomena and the connections between them. This form of research method is focused on statistics and figures (Myers, 2013). Quantitative research relies on the quality of the measurement tools used for observation, questionnaires, and experimental trials (Dawson, 2009).

3.4.1 Chosen Research Method

The research methodology that will be used to undertake the research is a quantitative study. Quantitative research is suitable for this research because it aims to investigate the relationships between variables, which are measured numerically and assessed using a range of statistical and graphical techniques (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, this research method is the most suitable because this study aims to assess a specific topic across a large

population to discover trends and patterns (Myers, 2013). Similar research by (Wheatley, 2017; Origo and Pagani, 2008; Lewis, 2003) that has investigated FWAs with employee job satisfaction undertook a quantitative research method approach. Therefore, for this reason a quantitative research approach was the most appropriate choice for the current study.

3.5 Research Design

According to Bell *et al.* (2013), the research design offers a structure for the gathering and testing of data. The research design for the current study is based on a quantitative research methodology that employs self-administered online questionnaires to compile data. A pre-validated, structured self-administered questionnaire was the chosen method to gather the primary data from participants for this research. Collis and Hussey (2013) state that a questionnaire is a research strategy that is used to gather primary or secondary data from a sample, in order to evaluate the data statistically and generalise the results to a population. The benefits of using self-administered questionnaires are they are an inexpensive and quick approach to collecting information from a large sample of people. In addition, they are convenient for the participant as they can complete the questionnaire in their own time (Bell *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, this research study is cross-sectional because it involves gathering information about from a subset of a population at a single point in time (Zikmund *et al.*, 2008). This cross-sectional design enables the researcher to collect data from multiple groups and compare them simultaneously (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The current study is calculating the mean job satisfaction levels of employees' with and without FWAs and comparing them in relation to additional variables such gender, age, and types of FWAs.

3.5.1 Survey Structure

Since this research aims to measure employee job satisfaction within the Irish retail sector a validated job satisfaction survey was adopted from Spector (1985). This questionnaire comprised of thirty-six closed ended questions that were measured on a 6-point Likert scale with the following responses including 1 = disagree very much, 2 = disagree moderately, 3 = disagree slightly, 4 = agree slightly, 5 = agree moderately and 6 = agree very much. During the data analysis, specific items on this scale were reversed scored, so that higher scores indicated higher levels of job satisfaction.

For this research, the questionnaire format was designed online using Google forms and consisted of the following four sections. Section one of the questionnaire included the information sheet, informing participants about the aims and objective of the current research

and assuring them that their responses were completely confidential (See Appendix 1). Section two of the questionnaire consisted of eight demographic questions asking about age, gender, ethnicity, whether the participant lived in Ireland, worked in the retail sector, whether or not they had FWAs, their current job role and the type of FWAs they had access to (See Appendix 2). Section three consisted of Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey (See Appendix 3). Finally, section four concluded the questionnaire with a debriefing sheet (See Appendix 4).

3.6 Sampling

Sampling is a process which uses a subset from a particular population to draw conclusions about the entire population (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). There are two forms of sampling methods which are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling requires choosing a random sample from the entire population, with each member of the population having an equal likelihood of being chosen. Non-probability sampling, on the other hand, involves members of the population being chosen based on personal preference or accessibility with the unknown likelihood of being chosen (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Non-probability sampling was the sampling method most suited for this study. The non-probability sampling method used was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling entails selecting people because of their availability to the researcher (Saunders *et al.*, 2019; Bell *et al.*, 2013). Zikmund *et al.* (2013) states that convenience sampling is a quick and inexpensive way for researchers to collect numerous completed surveys. Convenience sampling was the best approach for this research because it allowed the researcher to easily collect a large amount of data by inviting friends, family and colleagues that work in the Irish retail sector to participate in the questionnaire, sharing the questionnaire link on various social media sites and sending emails with the questionnaire link attached to various Irish retail stores.

3.6.1 Sample Size

The target population for this study was adults that live in Ireland and work in the retail sector. The sample could consist of retail employees of all genders and background ranging from the age of 18 and above that worked in the Irish retail sector with and without FWAs. The sample size refers to the portion of the entire population selected for analysis (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). The selected sample size for this current research was 100 respondents. The justification for this sample size was that previous literature had used a sample size of 100 respondents to conduct similar research (Wadhawan, 2019; Bukhari *et al.*, 2018). However due to the time constraints of this research only 87 responses were collected. From these 87 responses, four

questionnaire responses were ineligible, therefore the total number of usable questionnaire responses was 83.

3.7 Procedure

Once the questionnaire was finalized it was distributed through an online link to participants through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. The questionnaire link was also emailed to retail stores to distribute with their employees and distributed in-person during visits to local retail stores to willing participants. Additionally, since the lead researcher previously worked in a retail environment, their previous employer gave permission to circulate the questionnaire with former colleagues. Lastly, the participants were informed that the questionnaire would take approximately ten minutes to complete. The participants would first read the information sheet and then provide their consent to participate in the survey by completing the questionnaire. After providing their demographic details in section two participants indicate the FWAs that they currently had access to from a list including flexitime, compressed hours, part-time, not available (N/A) which indicated that they have no FWAs and work from home. Finally, the participants completed the job satisfaction survey in section three and were debriefed in section four. The questionnaire was available to participants for six weeks.

3.8 Data Analysis

This study will collect both secondary and primary research data. The secondary research data will be gathered to form the literature review while the primary research data will be gathered through self-administered questionnaires to test the research questions and hypotheses. A validated questionnaire scale from existing literature was adopted and used to assess the impact of FWAs on Irish retail employees' job satisfaction. Initially, the data was compiled from the online questionnaire and imported into SPSS. The ineligible data was removed, the relevant categorical data was numerically coded as required by the subsequent analyses and the negatively worded items in the job satisfaction questionnaire were reverse scored using SPSS. Once the data was properly processed and organised the mean score for the total job satisfaction of the participants was calculated. Then the participants' responses were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

3.8.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics consists of statistical techniques such as tables and graphs that are used to describe the quantitative data (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Descriptive statistics were chosen for this current research to exhibit summaries about the participants' responses using graphical

methods. The graphical methods utilized in this research include bar charts to display data related to the main demographic variables. A table displaying the mean scores across the sample of job satisfaction for each FWA and non-FWA group was also included in this research.

3.8.2 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics consist of various statistical tests that are used to analyse hypotheses and result in conclusions regarding a population (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). The inferential statistics that were conducted in this study included t-tests and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). A t-test is conducted to establish if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). This statistical test was most appropriate because the research intended to assess if there was a difference in the employee job satisfaction levels between employees with FWAs and without FWAs. An ANOVA test is conducted to assess whether there is a significant difference between more than two independent groups on one dependent variable (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). For this research, a two-way ANOVA test was the most appropriate because this research intended to compare the job satisfaction of retail employees based on two independent variables, which were gender and types of FWAs.

3.8.3 Internal consistency

Internal consistency is a method of evaluating reliability. Reliability is the degree to which the data collection procedures will produce reliable results (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The method that was used to calculate the internal consistency of the data for this research was Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha is used to calculate the internal consistency of multi-item scales (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Cronbach's Alpha was calculated by correlating the result for each scale item of Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey with the overall result for every questionnaire response and then comparing that to variance across all individual item results.

3.9 Research Ethics

Within this study there are ethical concerns which must be considered. Ethics describes the "standards of behaviour that guide the moral choices we make which govern our behaviour and our relationships with others" (Saunders and Lewis, 2018, p. 76). To ensure that gathering the primary data was conducted ethically, the participants for this study were fully informed about all the necessary aspects of the study and understood what was expected of them prior to completing the questionnaire. The participant information was presented to each participant at the beginning of the questionnaire, informing them about the study and asking for confirmation

of their consent to participate in the study. The participants were assured complete confidentiality as no identifying information was collected and that any personal information provided in the questionnaire would remain anonymous and would be used solely for the purpose of the research project. Results would also be considered on an aggregate as opposed to individual level further protecting participant anonymity. In addition, the participants were also made aware that their participation in this research was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw themselves from the study at any particular time by simply closing their internet browser window for the questionnaire. The data that was retrieved and analysed from the questionnaire was handled with strict confidentiality. Furthermore, the information of the lead researcher was provided to allow participants to contact them with any concerns about the study.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter began by explaining the main research philosophies and research approaches. The chosen philosophy and approach were then justified. This dissertation implemented a positivist philosophy and a deductive approach as they were the most appropriate to this research. Additionally, a quantitative approach was adopted. The research design was subsequently described, along with the measures and procedure of the study. The chosen sampling method was a convenience sample of Irish retail sector employees. Finally, the data analysis plan was explained, and several relevant ethical issues were considered and addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present, examine and interpret the results gathered from the primary research exploring the relationship between FWAs and employee satisfaction among Irish retail workers. This chapter will present the main results obtained from the questionnaires that were completed by 83 participants who are all presently working in the Irish retail sector and analyse these results using SPSS to provide descriptive statistics, a t-test and a two-way ANOVA test.

4.2 Demographic Analysis

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

As outlined in methodology chapter the purpose of the descriptive statistics is to present and describe the data collected. The questionnaire was completed by 83 individuals who are presently living in Ireland and working in the Irish retail sector which resulted in a response rate of 100%. The demographic questions in the the questionnaire will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sections, with the use of descriptive statistics tables and bar charts.

4.2.2 Gender and Age

The sample consisted of a mixed age group of respondents, ranging from the ages of 18 to 61. Figure 1 displays the gender data of the sampled participants. The majority of participants identified as women. Of the remaining participants, 23 identified as men, one identified as non-binary and one preferred not to state their gender. Based on the data of the gender distribution of the employees in the Irish retail sector, more women participated in the study than any other gender. The non-binary and prefer not to say participants will be excluded from the subsequent gender analysis due to the sample size being too small.

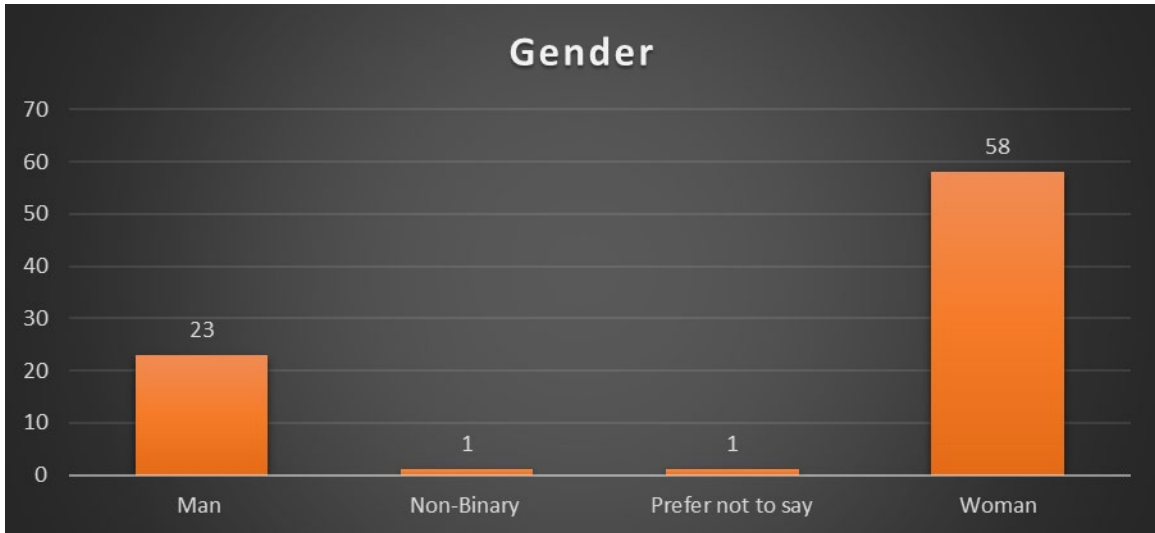


Figure 1: Bar chart of gender

4.2.3 Ethnicity

The participants were asked about their ethnicity. Figure 2 displays that the majority of respondents identified as white Irish. Of the remaining respondents 28 identified as Black or Black Irish, three identified as Asian or Asian Irish, three identified as other (Incl. mixed background), two identified as any other white background and one identified as any other Asian background.

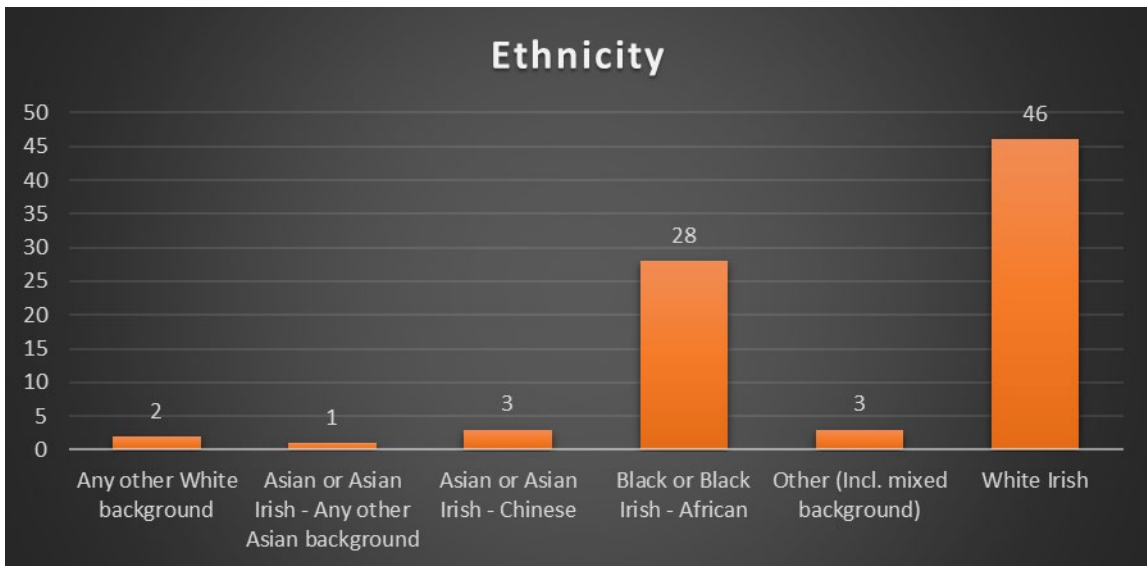


Figure 2: Bar chart of ethnicity

4.2.4 FWAs

The participants were asked whether they currently had FWAs in their retail position. Figure 3 illustrates that 65 respondents responded yes, representing 78.6% of the total population and 18 respondents responded no, which represented 21.4%.

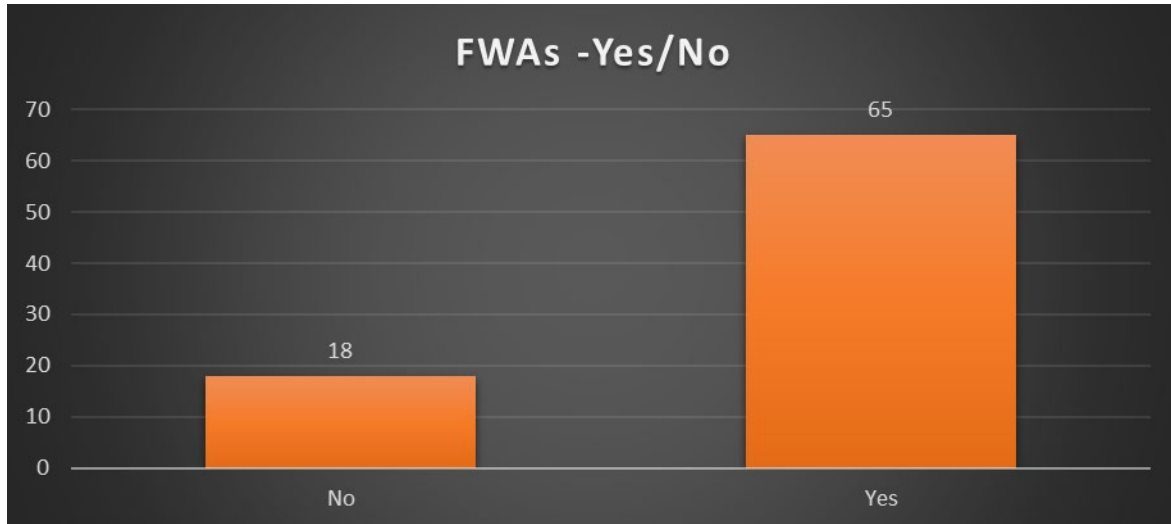


Figure 3: Bar chart of FWAs - yes/no

4.2.5 Type of FWAs

Figure 4 displays the type of FWAs that the respondents have. The majority of the respondents have part time hours. Of the remaining respondents 18 have no available FWAs, 16 have flexitime, seven have compressed hours and two work from home.

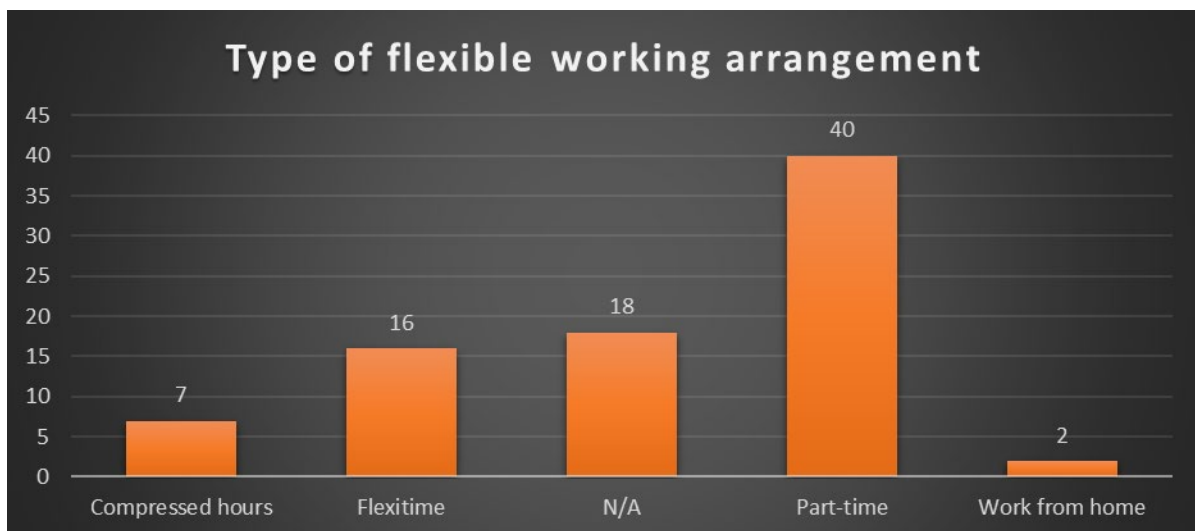


Figure 4: Bar chart of type of flexible working arrangement

4.2.6 Current job role

Figure 5 displays data about the respondent current job role within the retail sector. According to the results the majority of the respondents worked as sales assistants. The remaining respondents included seven supervisors, five managers, two customer advisors while the other five respondents were each in a position of administration, adviser, area manager, assistant buyer, or key holder.

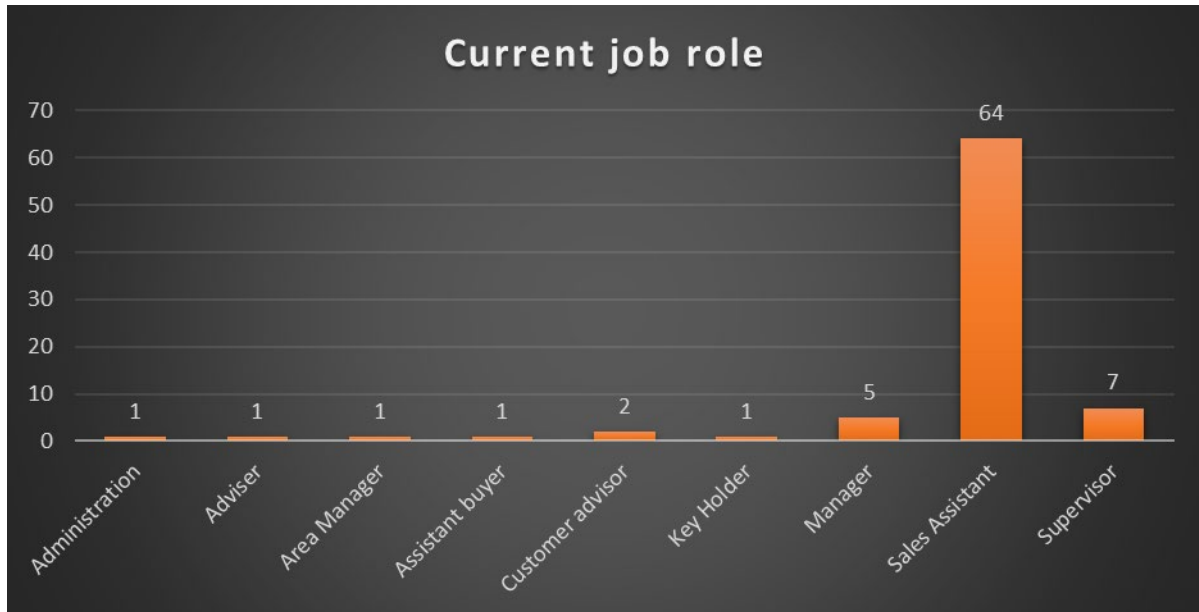


Figure 5: Bar chart of current job role

4.2.7 Mean Score for Employee Job Satisfaction

Table 1 shows the overall mean score for the employee job satisfaction questionnaire. The mean was 3.73, ($SD = 0.83$), with a minimum at 1.86 and a maximum at 5.72. A mean score slightly over three across the sample indicates that the retail employees were slightly satisfied with their jobs.

Table 1: Mean score for employee job satisfaction

Employee Job Satisfaction		
N	Valid	83
	Missing	0
Mean		3.7309
Median		3.5833
Std. Deviation		0.83125
Range		3.86
Minimum		1.86
Maximum		5.72

4.3 Inferential Statistics

4.3.1 Internal consistency

In order to assess the internal consistency of the Job Satisfaction questionnaire developed by Spector (1985), Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. Cronbach's alpha is commonly used to assess the internal consistency scale items used to assess a particular notion. It comprises of an alpha coefficient with values ranging from 0 to 1. Values greater than 0.70 suggest that the scale items are internally consistent (Saunders et al., 2019). All the 83 participants provided full valid responses across the 36-item scale. The results of the Cronbach's alpha analysis indicated that the scale had excellent consistency as determined by Cronbach's alpha of .929.

4.3.2 Tests of Normality

In order to assess the normality of the data, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was conducted to determine whether employee job satisfaction was normally distributed among both men and women. Table 2 indicates that employee job satisfaction scores were normally distributed for both men and women, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$).

Table 2: Tests of Normality

Tests of Normality^{c,d}							
	gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Mean score of job satisfaction	Men	0.139	23	.200*	0.943	23	0.211
	Women	0.089	58	.200*	0.979	58	0.425

4.3.3 T-test

An independent-samples t-test was performed to examine research question 1 - Is there a difference in levels of employee satisfaction between Irish retail employees with and without FWAs.

The independent-samples test was conducted to compare the mean job satisfaction scores for the employees that currently have FWAs and the employees without FWAs conditions. Table 3 displays that the vast majority of employees currently have FWAs. The results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in the scores for employees that currently have FWAs ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.87$) and employees without FWAs ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.61$); conditions; $t(79) = 1.90$, $p = .031$, $d = 0.51$. The one-tailed p value was used for this t-test because it was hypothesised that those with FWAs are more satisfied than those without FWAS based on the literature. According to Cohen's (1988) rule of thumb, this result of $d = 0.51$ indicates a medium effect size.

Table 3: Group Statistics

Group Statistics					
	Currently have any FWAs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Employee job satisfaction	Yes	63	3.8091	0.86674	0.1092
	No	18	3.3935	0.6092	0.14359

4.3.4 Two-way ANOVA

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine research question 2 and 3. These questions were concerned with whether certain types of FWAs have more of an impact on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees (RQ2) and whether there are gender differences in employee satisfaction that interact with FWA types (RQ3).

Prior to conducting the two-way ANOVA, the single non-binary and prefer not to say participants were excluded from the gender comparison because their numbers were too small for inferential analysis. The work from home group, which had only two participants, was also excluded from the types of FWAs variable in the two-way ANOVA. This was done because this group was also too small for inferential analysis. Given that this study focused on the retail

sector, it was logical that there would be a small number of people working from home as retail jobs typically require employees to be on-site to perform their duties.

The descriptive statistics for the two-way ANOVA in table 4 show that women had more FWAs than men in nearly all the types of FWAs. A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of gender and types of FWAs (independent variables) on employee job satisfaction (dependent variable). Table 5 below displays that there was no statistically significant interaction between gender and types of FWAs on employee job satisfaction scores, $F(3, 71) = 0.68, p = .566, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .028$. Therefore, an analysis of the main effect for types of FWAs was performed as presented in Table 5, which indicated that the main effect was not statistically significant, $F(3, 71) = 1.172, p = .326, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .047$. An analysis of the main effect for gender was also performed, which indicated that the main effect was not statistically significant $F(1, 71) = .104, p = .748, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .001$.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics				
Dependent Variable: Employee job satisfaction				
Gender	Type of FWAs	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Man	Compressed hours	4.3056	0.37577	3
	Flexitime	3.4444	.	1
	N/A	3.338	0.77189	6
	Part-time	3.9745	0.80963	12
	Total	3.822	0.78683	22
Woman	Compressed hours	3.6296	1.83677	3
	Flexitime	4.0037	0.92122	15
	N/A	3.4213	0.54791	12
	Part-time	3.6224	0.78364	27
	Total	3.6808	0.84904	57
Total	Compressed hours	3.9676	1.24219	6
	Flexitime	3.9687	0.9009	16
	N/A	3.3935	0.6092	18
	Part-time	3.7308	0.79814	39
	Total	3.7201	0.82963	79

Table 5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Employee job satisfaction						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	5.317a	7	0.76	1.115	0.363	0.099
Intercept	420.421	1	420.421	617.128	<.001	0.897
Gender	0.071	1	0.071	0.104	0.748	0.001
Type of FWAs	2.396	3	0.799	1.172	0.326	0.047
Gender * Type of FWAs	1.392	3	0.464	0.681	0.566	0.028
Error	48.369	71	0.681			
Total	1146.986	79				
Corrected Total	53.686	78				
a. R Squared = .099 (Adjusted R Squared = .010)						

4.4. Summary

In summary, gender demographics revealed that female respondents participated the most in the questionnaire, with over 70% participating. Ethnicity revealed that the majority of respondents white Irish. The majority of respondents working in the Irish retail sector currently had FWAs, with 78.6% having FWAs versus 21.4% having none. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents had part-time FWAs, with sales assistant being the most common job role. Cronbach's alpha demonstrated that Spector's (1985) employee job satisfaction scale was an extremely reliable measure of job satisfaction. The data for employee job satisfaction was normally distributed for both men and women. The independent samples t-test found a statistically significant difference in scores for employees with and without FWAs. These results suggest that employees with FWAs have an impact on employee job satisfaction. Finally, there was no statistically significant interaction between gender and the types of FWAs, nor the main effects of these variables on employee job satisfaction in the two-way ANOVA. These results suggest that both gender and the types of FWAs do not impact employee job satisfaction.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The primary research findings will be discussed in relation to the previous academic literature on FWAs, employee job satisfaction, and the Irish retail sector in this chapter. This chapter will link the key results to the previous literature to demonstrate how the research study achieved the proposed research questions and research hypotheses.

Research Questions

4. Is there a difference in levels of employee satisfaction between Irish retail employees with and without FWAs?
5. Do certain categories of FWAs have more of an impact on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees?
6. Are there gender differences in employee satisfaction that interact with FWAs?

Research Hypotheses

H1: Employees in the Irish retail sector with FWAs have higher levels of employee satisfaction than those without FWAs.

H2: Different categories of FWAs have more of an impact on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees.

H3: Women with FWAs are more satisfied with their jobs than other genders with FWAs.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicated that the employees in the Irish retail sector with FWAs were more satisfied with their retail jobs than employees without FWAs. These results support H1. This result is consistent with that of previous research. Anderson and Kelliher's (2009) study, which discovered employees with FWAs had higher job satisfaction levels than employees without FWAs. Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui (2019) examined the impact of different FWAs in the public sector universities in Karachi, Pakistan, and found that FWAs have a significant impact on job satisfaction. These results also confirm the previous literature on the relationship between FWAs and employee job satisfaction. According to Chen and Fulmer (2018), employees who believe they have more FWAs available to them are happier at work. Numerous studies conducted in various sectors and countries validate these findings that FWAs have a positive impact on job satisfaction (Andrade *et al.*, 2019; Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Mahmood *et al.*, 2019; Wadhawan, 2019; Azar *et al.*, 2018; Wheatley, 2017;

Rawashdeh *et al.*, 2016; McNall *et al.*, 2009). In addition, these results support the theory by numerous authors that FWAs are beneficial to the organisation's employer and employees, resulting in many organisational outcomes including job satisfaction (Andrade *et al.*, 2019; Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui, 2019; Azar *et al.*, 2018; Kelliher and Anderson, 2010; Anderson and Kelliher, 2009; Maxwell *et al.*, 2007; Croucher and Kelliher, 2005; Eaton, 2003). Previous research suggests that providing FWAs to retail employees will improve employee job satisfaction in the retail sector (Bhusan and Sar, 2020; Sumathi *et al.*, 2020; Ryu, 2016; Bent and Freathy cited in Huang and Gamble, 2015).

Contrary to the expectations of this study, the results indicated that there was no statistically significant interaction effect between gender and types of FWAs on employee job satisfaction. These findings imply that gender has no effect on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector, regardless of the type of FWAs retail employees have. These findings differ from Wheatley's (2017) findings, which found that while flexitime had a statistically significant impact on men's job satisfaction, working from home had a positive impact on both men's and women's job satisfaction. Previous research from Rahman's (2019) study did not support these findings either. According to Rahman (2019), flexitime, telecommuting, and job sharing, had a significant impact on the job satisfaction of female higher education teachers, which contradicts these findings. A possible explanation for these unexpected findings is that this current study is looking at the retail sector, whereas previous similar studies looked at sectors such as education (Rahman, 2019). Therefore, it may be assumed that the industry sector also influences how satisfied employees are with their jobs. These findings, however, are broadly consistent with Wheatley's (2017) previous research, which found that compressed working hours had a negative impact on both men's and women's job satisfaction, and job-sharing had a negative impact on women's job satisfaction. Furthermore, part-time work was found to have a negative association with job satisfaction for female employees (Chen and Fulmer, 2018).

The results from this study revealed that employees with different types of FWAs and no FWAs did not have any significant impact on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees. As a result, this result does not support H2. This finding contradicts previous studies that discovered that employees that were provided with FWAs such as flexitime and compressed work hours had significantly higher job satisfaction (Rahman, 2019; Bukhari *et al.*, 2018; McNall *et al.*, 2009). However, Rahman (2019) did find that compressed hours had no significant effect on job satisfaction which appears to support this finding slightly. Aziz-Ur-Rehman and Siddiqui (2019) also found that flexible hours and telecommuting had a significant

impact on job satisfaction. Unfortunately, telecommuting was excluded from this analysis because only a few people worked from home in our sample, indicating that this FWA was not widely used in the Irish retail sector. This information would be useful for retail companies interested in providing other types of FWAs to their employees. Wheatley (2017) suggests that employees that use different forms of FWAs would have higher job satisfaction. However, the findings from the current study show that this is not the case for employees with or without FWAs. This unexpected result suggests that the Irish retail employees with FWAs such as flexitime, part-time work, and compressed working hours had no greater impact on employee job satisfaction than the employees who did not have any FWAs, implying that they all had the same impact on employee job satisfaction. Although other studies have examined the impact of gender differences and FWAs on employee job satisfaction in other sectors and countries. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this current study is the first to look at the impact of gender differences and FWAs on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector.

Surprisingly, gender differences were found to have no impact on employee job satisfaction. The result of the gender main effect analysis noted that regardless of the type of FWAs, both women and men had no significant impact on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector. Consequently, this result does not support H3. This finding contradicts the claims of Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) that although both men and women use FWAs in the workplace, it is more popular among women which can result in greater job satisfaction as well as enhanced loyalty and employee engagement. Scandura and Lankau's (1997) quantitative study states that women are more likely to have greater job satisfaction in their workplace. This finding signifies that no specific gender in the Irish retail sector has more employee job satisfaction than the other. This unexpected result may be explained by the fact that the sample sizes were unequal in the analyses which would have influenced the results. Nevertheless, with a small sample size, caution must be applied to interpret the findings.

However, given that the results show that more women (45) use FWAs than men (16) it can be suggested that within the Irish retail sector, female employees favour FWAs more than men. This aligns with Scandura and Lankau's (1997) study that shows FWAs are valued more by women than men. This finding also supports the claim by Bender (cited in Huang and Gamble, 2015) that workplaces that provide FWAs to their employees are usually dominated by women because these workplaces permit them to facilitate their family responsibilities. According to Ciarniene and Vienazindiene's (2018) quantitative research, they claim that women usually

work more flexibly than men, which is backed up by these findings. This result can be interpreted as the Irish retail sector being more female dominated.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a conclusion that highlights the overall findings from this dissertation. Furthermore, the research limitations encountered are outlined and the recommendations for future research and the retail sector are discussed in this chapter.

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation has assessed the impact FWAs have on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector. The research objectives for this study looked at assessing this impact, evaluating employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector, and also exploring the potential gender difference in various types of FWAs. These research objectives and the related research questions established for this study have been achieved and addressed through the comprehensive literature review and the quantitative research methodology. It has contributed to the existing literature surrounding the concepts of FWAs and employee job satisfaction as well as evaluating them within the Irish retail sector. The study gave a better understanding of the presence of FWAs and employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector. Only one of the three hypotheses was supported by the quantitative study that was conducted in the Irish retail sector. The t-test results confirmed that there is a significant difference in the levels of employee satisfaction between Irish retail employees with and without FWAs. This was proven to be true by previous studies from the literature. The study has identified gender differences regarding the effect of different types of FWAs on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector, which revealed surprising results. In contrast to what was anticipated by the hypotheses, the study's ANOVA test has found that Irish retail employees' job satisfaction is not significantly influenced by gender or any of the different types of FWAs. Although this research found no significant impact of FWAs on Irish retail employees' job satisfaction, it has provided valuable insights and contributions that will assist retail organisations in introducing appropriate FWAs for their employees that will benefit both the employees and the organisation.

6.3 Research Limitations

There were several limitations that were encountered during this research that may have potentially affected this research.

The first limitation was the small sample size. The initial sample size intended to conduct this study was 100 participants. However, due to the time constraints of this study and the difficulty in finding willing participants despite exhausting all efforts to recruit additional respondents, the final sample size was just 83 replies. Furthermore, the sample demographics were disproportionate, with there being more women than men participating in the questionnaire. It could be debated that this small sample size might not be an accurate representation of the entire retail population.

The second limitation was the research methods conducted. This research was conducted using qualitative research methods. However, the researcher's knowledge and experience using this chosen method was minimal, particularly when it came to conducting the relevant data analysis for this research. As a result, the researcher had to invest a significant amount of time and money in learning how to use SPSS.

The third limitation was the time constraints associated with this study. Due to the fact that this research was completed as part of an academic degree and had to comply with a strict deadline established by the National College of Ireland, this research study was time constrained. As a result, a limited amount of time could be spent to effectively complete this research study.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

1. Given that this study had quite a small sample size, which also had disproportionate gender groups. For future research of this study, it would be recommended to use a larger sample size with equal sizes between gender groups, which would lead to more reliable and generalised results.
2. With regards to how gender impacts job satisfaction in the Irish retail sector, it was found that, on average, most people were only slightly satisfied with their jobs. It is recommended that retail organisations should take action to collect regular feedback about how satisfied their employees are through online surveys. Additionally, further research could usefully explore whether the introduction of working from home and telecommuting FWAs can improve employees' satisfaction in the Irish retail sector.
3. The research findings also observed that men utilized FWAs less than women. Therefore, it is recommended that measures are developed by management in retail companies to encourage the use of FWAs within this specific demographic.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Section 1 - Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

I am inviting you to take part in important research on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) and Employee Job Satisfaction in the Irish Retail Industry. This research aims to assess the levels of employee satisfaction between Irish retail employees with and without FWAs, the impact certain categories of FWAs have on the employee satisfaction of Irish retail employees as well as gender differences in employee satisfaction that interact with FWAs by completing the following brief survey. This survey is part of the requirement for the completion of my Masters in International Business at the National College of Ireland.

You are eligible to take part in this research if you are aged 18 and above, currently living in Ireland and working in the retail industry.

The information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. The survey does not require any personal, identifiable information (i.e., your name, email address) or any information which can be traced to you and so your participation is anonymous. The data from this study will be held on a password-protected computer, to which only the lead researcher will have access. A report of the study will be produced to meet course requirements and may be submitted for publication, but the data will be analysed on an aggregate level, and no individual participants will be identifiable. Your data may be shared with other researchers if requested after publication. However, there is no identifying information in the data and your responses will be completely anonymous.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You can discontinue the study simply by closing your internet browser window. However, you will be unable to withdraw after completing the study, as the data analysis process may have begun and as all responses are anonymous, we will not be able to identify your data.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. At the conclusion of this study, you will receive further information to inform you about the nature of this research. Should you have any concerns or need clarification at any point, you may reach out to the lead

researcher through the following email: X20245149@student.ncirl.ie

By completing this survey, you are consenting to participate in this study. If you do not wish to participate you can close this internet browser window.

Thank you.

Mariam Ajayi-Balogun

Appendix 2

Section 2 - Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

Woman

Man

Non-Binary

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify) _____

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your ethnicity?

White Irish

White Irish Traveller

Any other White background

Black or Black Irish - African

Black or Black Irish - Any other Black background

Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese

Asian or Asian Irish - Any other Asian background

Other (Incl. mixed background)

4. Do you live in Ireland? Yes/No

5. Do you work in the Irish retail industry? Yes/No

6. If you do work in the Irish retail industry, do you currently have any flexible working arrangements? Yes/No

7. If yes, please select which type of flexible working arrangement you have, If no, please select N/A

Part-time

Flexitime

Compressed hours

Work from home

Job Sharing

N/A

8. Which of the following best describes your role in your current job:

Sales assistant

Supervisor

Manager

Other (please specify) _____

Appendix 3

Section 3 - Job Satisfaction Survey Questions

Please select the number that best represents your response to each question. Response options range from 1 = Disagree very much, 2 = Disagree moderately, 3 = Disagree slightly, 4 = Agree slightly, 5 = Agree moderately, 6 = Agree very much

1. I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.
2. There is really too little chance for promotion on my job.
3. My supervisor is quite competent in doing his/her job.
4. I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive.
5. When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive.
6. Many of our rules and procedures make doing a good job difficult.
7. I like the people I work with.
8. I sometimes feel my job is meaningless.
9. Communications seem good within this organization.
10. Raises are too few and far between.
11. Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted.
12. My supervisor is unfair to me.
13. The benefits we receive are as good as most other organizations offer.
14. I do not feel that the work I do is appreciated.
15. My efforts to do a good job are seldom blocked by red tape.
16. I find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with.
17. I like doing the things I do at work.
18. The goals of this organization are not clear to me.
19. I feel unappreciated by the organization when I think about what they pay me.
20. People get ahead as fast here as they do in other places.
21. My supervisor shows too little interest in the feelings of subordinates.
22. The benefit package we have is equitable.
23. There are few rewards for those who work here.
24. I have too much to do at work.

25. I enjoy my co-workers.
26. I often feel that I do not know what is going on with the organization.
27. I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.
28. I feel satisfied with my chances for salary increases.
29. There are benefits we do not have which we should have.
30. I like my supervisor.
31. I have too much paperwork.
32. I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be.
33. I am satisfied with my chances for promotion.
34. There is too much bickering and fighting at work.
35. My job is enjoyable.
36. Work assignments are not fully explained.

Appendix 4

Section 4 - Debrief Sheet

Further Information

This study was conducted to examine the impact of FWAs on employee job satisfaction in the Irish retail industry.

Please click the 'Submit' button at the end of this page to submit your data for inclusion in this study. Again, we wish to reassure you that the information you provided is anonymous and will be treated with strict confidentiality. No individual will be identifiable, all data will be analysed at an aggregate- or group-level. If you do not want wish to participate you can close out of this internet browser window. You will be unable to withdraw after completing the study and submitting your responses as the data analysis process may have begun and, as all responses are anonymous, we will not be able to identify your data.

We would like to thank you for your participation. Should you require a follow up or have any further questions, you may reach out to the lead researcher Mariam Ajayi-Balogun at the following e- mail address: X20245149@student.ncirl.ie

Thank you.

Mariam Ajayi-Balogun

Lead Researcher