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Degree to be awarded:

Masters in business administration

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Factors Influencing Employee Performance on Flexible Working for a Sales Function within an Organisation.

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Programme: Masters in Business Administration **Year:** 2

Module: H9DISSER_A

Lecturer: Michelle Killian

Submission Due

Date: 15/08/2025

Project Title: Factors Influencing Employee Performance on Flexible Working for a Sales Function within an Organisation

Word Count: 14,858

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[Dissertation: Factors Influencing Employee Performance on Flexible Working for a Sales Function within an Organization]

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Tool Name	Brief Description	Link to tool
Chat GPT	Used Chat GPT to anonymize interview transcription and remove filler words	https://chatgpt.com/

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Chat CPT

Used Chat GPT to anonymize interview transcription and remove filler words

“Can you open a document, review the P 1:

interview transcription , don't change Yeah.

anything just remove Shannon and

mohamed Abdel mohty and replace the Interviewer:

person asking the question with Perfect. So hi, thanks again for taking the time to speak interviewer and the person answering as with me today. As you know, I'm Mohammed Abdul participant 1 , remove fillers words so that Marti, and this interview is part of my dissertation is answers the questions immediately , but research on identifying employee performance factors please don't change wording here” when adopting a flexible working model within a sales org.

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Factors Influencing Employee Performance on Flexible Working for a Sales Function within an Organisation.

Mohamed Abdel Mohty

Master of Business Administration

National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August
2025

Abstract:

This research paper aims at identifying employee performance factors for a sales function within an organisation looking to adapt a flexible working model. With the rise of demand of flexible working during COVID 19, we have seen that some organisations have already started working on implementing this approach. However, some organisations believe it's important but have yet to roll this model out to their employees. As the approach to flexible working has become a wide topic, several studies have attempted to measure the impact on flexible working within an organisation with limited studies on how flexible working effects a certain function within an organisation. This study uses a qualitative approach to identify employee performance factors needed within a sales function to help measure performance while adapting a flexible working model. Although the original plan was to conduct 10 interviews, participants availability was limited since interviews were done during quarter three which is considered summer vacation for the sales population. Findings suggest that employee satisfaction and wellness align with other definitions in different studies. However, factors within employee performance are different as managers suggest learning, coaching and sales rigor to be key performance indicators for employees looking to avail for a flexible working model. This study will act as a starting framework for academics who are looking to deep dive in identifying flexible working models for certain functions within an organisation.

Thesis Declaration Page

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation National College of Ireland Research Students Declaration Form

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Form)*

Name: Mohamed Abdel Mohty

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Degree for which thesis is submitted: Master in Business Administration

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- (b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.
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Date: 15th / 08/ 2025

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1.0 Introduction:

Flexible working has been a topic of debate amongst academics. Several researchers were able to provide evidence on how flexible working contributes to employee satisfaction by providing a good work –life balance, reducing stress levels and helping reallocate hours of commute to day-to-day roles. However, there are limited studies when reviewing how flexible working impacts employee performance. For example, some academics don't identify employee performance to form a baseline for their study. Instead, they would tie employee performance to workforce management. Others have linked performance management to how managers supervise their employees. Moreover, there are limited studies on how flexible working affects employee satisfaction within certain functions in organisations within certain industries. Hence, it is safe to say that it is hard to adapt a best practice approach based on papers published since there is limited research on a definition of employee performance for organisations who are looking to adopt a flexible working approach within their departments.

This research aims in identifying employee performance management levers that aligns with flexible working. CIPD (2025), mentions that although performance management depends on organisational outcomes, they mention that performance management is about aligning work objectives with the employee and how it ties with their reward and compensation packages. The objective of this research is to further identify what factors should be included in a performance management system that would help impact flexible working on employee performance. The study will be a quantitative approach to help identify employee performance factors that integrate well with flexible working by focusing on a series of diverse managers within a sales function.

1.2 Research objectives

Extensive research has been done on the impact of flexible working on employee satisfaction and its benefits on reducing stress, managing work-life balance and productivity (Egole et al.,2020; Orshore & Nedudi,2020; Chafe et al.2021; Rasilene,2021). However, when reviewing the impact of flexible working on employee performance, limited evidence is shown on how flexible working could impact employee performance. For example, when reviewing the studies above, authors couldn't provide a clear performance management framework to help set the baseline for their studies. In addition, employee performance in some studies were related to workforce management. However, it should be noted that workforce management and employee performance are different. There is no universal definition for performance management (CIPD,2025).

Therefore, this paper will aim to define the factors that relate to employee performance within a sales function adopting a flexible working model. The Sales function is a stressful role which witnesses supervisory overload for sellers to achieve their targets especially in flexible working environments (Dugan,2024). Based on the latter, selecting a sales function as the main target of this paper will help contribute to identifying employee performance levers that could help reduce stress, enhance performance & accelerate development.

In this paper, the term “factors” will be defined as elements that would support employees during their day-to-day role to achieve overall performance when adapting a flexible working model. It is evident that some studies are either focused on the skills needed to help adapt to a flexible working or the sales output to see if flexible working would be justifiable within an organisation (Agbani,2023; Charoensukmongkol & Pandey 2023). Therefore, the approach to this study will be identifying the factors to help continue to develop the skills needed for a flexible working model outlined in Charoensukmongkol & Pandey (2023) to achieve the desired output when adapting a flexible working model as suggested by Agbani et al (2023).

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Main Research Question

What are the main factors that contribute to employee performance during a flexible working approach for a sales function within an organisation?

Sales employees within organisations are continuously under stress from their supervisors to achieve their targets (Dugan, 2024). Furthermore, with increased supervision from management, stress levels appear to be high and calls for further research to be done to help set expectation on how sales manager should manage their sellers (Duggan, 2024). Zoltners et al (2021), identify a solution on the above by suggesting a digitisation model which consists of enabling sellers with the right digital solutions to enable them to work during flexible working. However, the paper doesn't identify the factors that contribute to employee performance for both the salesforce and the manager. Therefore, the main question is identifying what are the common performance indicators that need to be identified for a sales function to adopt a flexible working approach.

1.3.2 Sub Research Questions:

To address the main question, identifying performance indicators for both the employee and the manager is necessary. This would act a starting point in identifying performance management indicators to flexible working. The latter is supported by Kakkar et al (2020), where through their study were able to proof that performance management needs consistency across the board to ensure performance management contributes to job satisfaction. Therefore, the sub questions below will identify consistent factors for approaches to performance management through a flexible working model:

- *What performance indicators do managers need to identify when adapting a flexible working approach for their employees?*
- *What performance indicators that sellers need to be measured on when adapting a flexible working approach?*

2.0 Literature Review:

Flexible working has been a rising topic within the HR field where employees are seeing the idea as the new normal post the COVID 19 Pandemic (Franklin et al 2021). In addition, with the increase requests by employees for flexible working arrangements, organisations should start adjusting their strategies to accommodate this new approach (Franklin et al 2021). However, a CIPD report (2023) shows that only 39% of organisation offer flexible working arrangements to its employees during their induction process in the UK. The report also mentions that 46% of organisations that don't provide this benefit to employees are sceptical of this approach since it may affect their companies' operations. It is also worth noting that 33% of organisations advertise their roles highlighting flexible working options to attract top talent in the market (CIPD, 2023)

However, it is worth noting a few studies that highlight the factors that could be put in place to facilitate flexible working. Adekoya et al (2022), conducted a study to highlight the factors that influence flexible working instead of highlighting it's benefits. Their study consisted of a qualitative approach where several participants were interviewed through an interpretivist paradigm approach to better understand the factors that help influence flexible working (Adekoya et al, 2022). The findings of the study showed that 35% preferred remote working where employees work in a place of convenience such as home, whereas 65% preferred flexible working whereby employees select a certain number of days to work from the office. Furthermore, the study concluded that flexible working is possible when an organisation invests in skills and tools that enable a flexible working model. For example, upskilling managers on how to adapt to a flexible working environment, investing in digital tools that help facilitate efficient ways of working and providing employees with the flexibility on the number of days of coming to the office through a psychological contract approach (Adekoya et al, 2022).

A study by Sofiani & Soprianta (2021), approach flexible working from a quantitative approach. Their approach was measuring the effect of flexible working on productivity. Their survey questions focused on three key variables which was the impact of flexible working on wellness and productivity, the application of flexible

working during day-to-day roles and the overall benefit of flexible working to employees (Sofiani & Soprianta, 2021). The result showed that employees cared about more flexible hours during their day to day. In addition, employees were seeking more flexible options from their employers to support them in their work-life balance which would give them more options to focus on their family responsibilities. Finally, employee's overall sentiment to flexible working showed to be high amongst employees with the majority asking for flexible working options.

Another Study by Stella et al (2020), discussed the reasons behind flexible working across countries. The study showed that both developing and developed countries consider flexible working with developed countries being the highest. Stella et al (2020), have emphasised that although acceptance of flexible working is low in developing countries when compared to developed ones, they mention in their study that developing countries have 10 - 20% adoption of flexible working which is still relatively high. This is due to flexible working being positioned in developing countries due to high traffic in congested areas which motivates companies to let their employees work from home to allocate their time in productivity rather than transport.

Findings from the studies above mention that although flexible working is a model that is being adopted by organisations, there are still factors that need to be considered to support this model such as support employees with effective equipment to work from home , distinguishing which tasks should be carried out in the office and from home and identifying ways to differentiate an employee's professional life and working life when working from home since this may impact an employee performance (Stella et al. 2020 ; Sofiani & Soprianta , 2021)

In addition, studies support the importance of flexible working within organisations. However, Adekoya et al (2022) approach the topic from a qualitative lens while Sofiani & Soprianta (2021) approach the subject from a quantitative lens.

To elaborate more, Adekoya et al (2022) and Sofiani & Soprianta (2021) mention how organisations need to prepare by providing the right flexible working equipment and skills to enable this model. However, both studies approach the topic from a general context. This means that results of the studies could act as indicator for future studies but would not be used as concrete results since every function within

an organisation has a specific need to continue performing. For example, a manager within a specific function may need specific skills, equipment, and tools to ensure that the department is running smoothly.

In addition, both studies would have been more effective if it would have examined a second layer of the topic. For example, evaluating a specific function would have made the study results more aligned to its outcomes. To elaborate more, when Adekoya et al (2022) mention in their results that upskilling managers to adapt to flexible working is important, having a review on a second layer might have indicated what specific skills a manager would need for a specific function. On the other hand, Sofiana & Soprianta's (2021) quantitative study although did provide valuable results on how employees perceive the importance of flexible working, it also focused on the general sentiment and didn't focus on specific functions within organisations. Although their results mentioned the need of specific equipment to help facilitate flexible working, it didn't provide any examples of what equipment or skills are needed since results were not aimed at a specific population.

Finally, Stella et al's (2021) study, approaches flexible working from a global perspective. They mention how flexible working is increasing in developing countries. However, one might argue the results of this study. For example, a comparative study would have been beneficial to identify the sectors in which flexible working is most demanded globally, identify the common needs between these sectors and what could be the solutions to meet those needs. However, Stella et al (2021), have provided a solid approach when addressing the needs of flexible working and comparing the needs of developed and developing countries from a general context.

Based on the above arguments, the above studies agree on the need of flexible working is evident on a global scale. They further mention that it does contribute to employee wellness by managing work-life balance for employees and enhances performance from a company's perspective (Adekoya et al. 2022; Sofiani & Soprianta's 2021; Stella et al 2021), To further explore those areas a second layer should be examined which is evaluating flexible working on employee satisfaction, its impact on flexible working and how does this effect a sales function with an organisation. By doing so, a focused review will be conducted on a certain function

which will provide clearer insights on the needs and wants of these functions when it comes to flexible working.

2.1 Impact of Flexible Working on Employee Satisfaction

2.1.1 Overview of impact of flexible working on Employee Satisfaction

Based on the above, it is safe to say that there is a high demand from employees to adapt flexible working. However, since the concept of flexible working is a new idea to many organisations, there is still work to be done on how flexible working could be implemented in a way that helps both employee satisfaction on one hand and performance on the other.

Chafe et al (2021), supports the above throughout their case study, as they mention that there has been clear evidence that flexible working does contribute to employee wellness by promoting work and life balance which reduces stress hence resulting in increased employee satisfaction. Throughout their study, they have evaluated the jobs that could be done remotely and identified that 36% of jobs in the EU are eligible for remote working. However, they also argue that tech companies such as Microsoft have published a case study mentioning that remote working contributes to alienation where employees start working in silos instead of working together to accomplish their departments objectives. The study concluded that the topic of flexible working is an approach that needs further study. However, they do mention that a full-time office-based approach is no longer sustainable and propose that organisations should invest in developing skills between employee and managers on how to work in a flexible working environment.

To further understand the study conducted by Microsoft, it is worth considering the drawbacks of flexible working from an organisational perspective. Raislene et al (2021), approach the topic of flexible working from an organisational lens. It should be noted that they talk about flexible working in the context of “telework” as a definition of flexible working. Throughout their study they address three challenges to flexible working. Firstly, they talk about the blurred lines that take place between

work and family obligations when working from home. Throughout their research they mention that employees would go through a lot of stress since it is hard to keep up with both their family obligations and their work responsibilities. Secondly, they mention, that there is a lack of trust between employees and managers when carrying out their day-to-day role. Finally, they mention that organisations must over communicate organisational messaging to ensure employees have received all important organisational announcements which leads to communication overload to their employees. Throughout their review, they mention that with the introduction of telework (flexible working), it does introduce new ways of management towards employees in which skills still need to be developed to help overcome those challenges.

Based on the studies above. it is safe to say that the approach to flexible working is no longer a benefit but a need for employees. Both studies support that flexible working does contribute to employee satisfaction mentioning that it helps provide a good work life balance (Chafe et al. 2021; Raislene 2021). However, they both agree that employees and managers need to be upskilled to help manage a flexible working environment. It is also worth noting that both studies have addressed the concerns that organisations have when adopting a flexible working model from an employee perspective such as employees working in silos, unclarity in communication and fear of employees' work not being visible to their managers.

One should note that the same arguments are mentioned by the studies highlighted in section 2.1.1 when approaching the challenges of flexible working. Which is safe to say that up skilling managers and identifying equipment to facilitate new ways of working is a common theme that directly impact employee satisfaction.

2.1.2 Impact of flexible working on employee satisfaction within Sales.

The above, has showcased the impact of employee satisfaction on flexible working. This section will highlight specific studies on the effects of employee satisfaction within sales. By doing so, we would have a comprehensive review on the general sentiment of how employee satisfaction is perceived from a broader perspective, while also putting in mind specific studies on employee satisfaction within sales.

A study conducted by Prabowo et al (2023) on Yamaha Sales employees highlights the success of the impact of flexible working on employee satisfaction within sales. Throughout their study, they have approached this case with five key hypothesis one of them was that employee morale and quality of life directly contributes to the quality of work and hence contributes to employee satisfaction. The method approached to this study was to survey 18 Yamaha sales dealers based in Jakarta who provide them with an opportunity to achieve their targets by enabling them to take the lead on their own hours to hit these targets. The result of the study showed that flexible work leads to higher employee satisfaction which leads to higher quality and productivity at work. It should be noted that the study identified that each employee worked independently to achieve their targets so that they would have more working flexibility. Hence the study recommended that sales individuals had to be retrained to work as a team to help achieve their overall sales target.

Although the study did proof that flexible working does correlate to employee satisfaction. The methodology in which it was approached could be challenged. For example, Prabowo et al (2023), have distributed a survey to all 18 Jakarta dealers. However, there is no evidence showcasing if these sellers were new hires, mid or top performers. Based on the latter, there is no information on how flexible working contributes to employee satisfaction to different employees within sales. For example, a new hire may need to come to the dealer for the first few months to be onboarded before adapting the flexible working model to achieve their targets.

Another Study by Dugan et al (2024), have proposed a framework to help contribute to flexible working. Through their study they have mentioned that sales representatives have been faced by constant stress and “abusive supervision” from their leaders to achieve their targets. The latter has led to a decrease in employee satisfaction and morale. Throughout their research they emphasise the importance of the relationship between the leader and the employee. In addition, they suggest an integrated approach where they emphasize the importance of workplace social media to help streamline communications between the manager and the employee. The study concluded that to ease stress from sales teams and help with employee satisfactions, HR should integrate flexible working within their policies as we all as

providing the effective tools to sales employees to help manage their day to day while working in the office or working from home.

However, it could be argued that more quantitative evidence is needed to suggest such an approach. Dugan et al (2024), have approached the topic at hand through a review but no study was evident to indicate that integrated workplace social media could help with the impact on flexible working within Sales. However, Dugan et al (2024) did provide solid evidence on the importance of integrating flexible working to HR policies.

2.2 Impact of Flexible Working on Employee Performance

The above review has considered the benefits of flexible working when it comes to employee benefits and addressed the concerns of many organisations behind the idea of implementing a flexible working model. However, one should consider how does flexible working impact performance management. This concept should be addressed since as mentioned by Chafi et a (2021), organisations remain sceptical around implementing this process.

A Study by Egole et al (2020), aimed at understanding how flexible working effects employee performance. Throughout their study they have differentiated their study groups between “Employee Driven” and “Employee Driven Flexible Working Arrangements” (Egole et al 2020, P. 54). Where they concluded that the “employee driven flexible working arrangements” group have seen to be contributing to high employee performance by reducing stress levels and reallocating time to commute to work during their day-to-day role. It should be noted that, Egole et al (2020), mention that flexible work arrangements do contribute to employee performance. However, further studies should be done to determine if this would impact organisational performance overall.

When reviewing the above, there are limitations to Egole et al’s (2020) review. Firstly, although the study cited a variety of definitions with regards to employee performance, the study didn’t provide a clear definition of employee performance that would act as a base line for their specific study. Therefore, without a clear definition of employee performance the results maybe questionable. Secondly, the review

focuses on the impact of flexible working on employee performance in general. This could pose as a challenge since organisations have different needs which means that this study could be used as a reference point but without drawing a specific example of an organisation within a certain industry the results of this study maybe hard to be put into consideration when conducting research for specific functions.

A study by Orishede & Nedudi (2020), have done a similar study as Egole et al (2020), but have focused on employee performance as their main study rather linking flexible working to employee performance and its alignment to organisational performance. They have concluded in their case study that employees who have greater autonomy over their hours of work are the most productive. They further add that managers should allocate the hours in which flexible working could be implemented throughout their team's schedule to ensure productivity. In their study, Orishede & Nedudi (2020), review employee performance in a workforce management approach. This means they review employee performance from a work distribution perspective and how flexible working can help manage employee workload in a sustainable way. Based on the latter, it should be noted that no clear definition of performance management was provided whereby the measure of employee performance was only reviewed based on the employee's workload.

2.1.2 Impact of flexible working on employee performance within Sales.

There are several studies that reviewed the sales organisation's flexibility when it comes to flexible working. Charoensukmongkol & Pandey (2023) conducted a study on measuring the extent of the flexibility of the management team for employees to work from home and how it contributed to their performance. This was a quantitative study that spread across 120 organisations with 277 respondents. Throughout their study, Charoensukmongkol & Pandey (2023) define functional flexibility as the ability for teams to carry on each other's tasks which would help them respond to any macro environmental shocks through a flexible working environment. The survey was distributed to sellers with an average of two or more sales experience in dealing in the international market and two or less sales experience when dealing in the domestic market. The survey concluded that sales teams with a high level of

functional flexibility outperformed teams with less functional flexibility. The study also concluded that management teams with low functional flexibility did have a negative association with sales teams with high functional flexibility. Which means that sales managers need to be flexible as well as their teams to ensure that functional flexibility impact overall team performance.

The above study by Charoensukmongkol & Pandey (2023) , is relevant since it shows cases that flexible working may not only be related to the idea of working remotely but also have a diverse set of skills supported by working remotely could help contribute to an increase of employee performance. Based on the latter, it is safe to say that this study also talks about the diverse skills required that compliment a flexible working environment for sellers to perform during their day-to-day role. Charoensukmongkol & Pandey (2023), concluded their study by supporting the latter, mentioning that having diverse skills contribute to performance in a situational and occupational context.

Although the study talked about the skills that would help accommodate flexible working arrangements. However, there were certain limitations to the study. Firstly, it is evident that there weren't diverse respondents. For example, female respondents (71.4%) were higher than males (28.6%). In addition, seller experience was also limited whereby sellers with 4 years' experience only accounted for 1.8% of the sample population for the domestic sales teams whereas 13.2% accounted for the international sales team. The big gap numbers suggest limited consistency across the number of sales experiences to help inform the results.

A study by Agbani et al (2023), also highlighted the importance of flexible working when it comes to sales productivity within a publishing company within Nigeria. The study focused on reviewing the impact of flexible working across the top 10 book publishers in Nigeria. Through their study Agbani et al (2023), have defined flexible working as the high degree of autonomy an employee would have when working from the office or remotely. In addition, they have defined employee productivity as the total number of outputs an employee would have which eventually should be more than the cost of their employment contract. Their approach was a quantitative study where 200 surveys distributed across the top 10 publishers in Nigeria. The

study found that companies who adopt a flexible working approach directly impacts employee productivity within sales. The study also concluded that organisations should also take into consideration an option for employees to support in switching to part time work if employees prefer since it does impact productivity.

It should be noted that the study above related to employee productivity. However, the case study above, has been provided since employee productivity is factor of employee performance. Therefore it, would be good to get an understanding of how researchers approach different aspects of employee performance and its impact on flexible working. For example, an employee might be productive but not performing since they could be experiencing burnout which could be related to employee wellness. Also, another factor to consider, Agbani et al's (2023) study was focused on Nigeria. While this could provide an indicator on how developing countries perceive impact of employee performance on Flexible working, it would be recommended to replicate this study for a broader population to see if results are the same.

3.0 Methodology:

3.1 Approach:

The approach to the topic was a qualitative approach with an exploratory lens. The qualitative approach was in a form of interviews with sales managers. This approach helped determine the underlying factors that are related to performance management within a flexible working context for a sales function. In addition, the qualitative approach was used through an exploratory and pragmatic lens since understanding performance indicators that align to flexible working is still an emerging topic specifically within a sales function.

Data Analysis followed the same approach as Nicks & Barnes's (2019) study on flexible working. The approach was in a form of a thematic lens where transcripts were reviewed to understand the meaningful statements that were mentioned with regards to employee wellness, satisfaction, and well-being. Data was then organised in an excel spread sheet to help understand the overlapping patterns. Following the latter, codes were generated to understand the broader themes within each quote and were cross checked with the interviews to ensure patterns reflected the transcripts.

3.3 Ethical Protocol:

Participants received an information sheet which provided the reasons why this study is being done. In addition, the information sheet highlighted what topics will they be asked during the interview. Moreover, the information sheet clearly stated the reason why they were selected throughout the process.

In addition, to the information sheet, participants received a consent form which asks them if they would agree to participate. The consent form explicitly mentions that the interviews will be recorded and has assured participants that all identifying information will be removed to maintain anonymity and the study will be retained in NCI's data base until the boards release the result of the study hand.

3.4 Selection Process

The selection process was aimed at 10 sales managers who have worked as individual contributors in sales for a minimum of three years and have a sales management experience of three years. The reason behind the necessity of having both experiences is that they would be able to answer the questions while keeping the employee in mind.

In addition, sales managers were selected based on their inside sales experience which means that managers will need to have experience on handling sales activities through digital means such as Zoom, Microsoft teams and other digital channels that would help them throughout their day -to-day activities.

Finally, to ensure there was balanced representation of the data, the selection process aimed at including five males and five females to ensure that there is a balanced representation of males and females to ensure diverse perspectives are carried out throughout the study.

In addition, the selection process will ensure that all sales managers are from the tech industry. This will help make sure that the results of the study will be focused in a particular sector.

3.5 Interview Questions

The interview consisted of nine semi-structured questions so that the selected population were able to speak freely and provide all the information they needed (Appendix III). The objective of the interview question was twofold. First was identifying the term employee performance for sales and the second was understanding the factors that help support employee performance in a flexible working environment. By doing so, the study would provide a solid base line for the definition of employee performance within a sales context and will act as a solid base line throughout the interview process to identify the factors needed for sales to support the flexible working model.

Based on the literature review, presented above, it was clear the definitions of employee performance and satisfaction have different definitions based on the objective of the studies presented by the researchers. Therefore, this study adopted the definition of employee performance and satisfaction from the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) since it is one of the credible institutes within Human Resources Management. Employee Performance is defined by CIPD (2022), as how well an employee performs in their jobs based on the roles and responsibilities set out in their contract. Where as Job satisfaction is how people feel about their roles, responsibilities, and the work environment they are in (CIPD,2022). However, it should be noted that both definitions are not fixed definitions since as mentioned one of the objectives of the interview is to understand how sales managers understand the concept of employee performance and satisfaction.

Data results from interviews will be help identify a common background on performance management indicators that would act as a starting point for designing the surveys.

3.6 Interview Process:

Since the study is about virtual working, participant interviews took place through Microsoft teams where they were recorded and transcribed. At the start of the interview process, participants were notified that the interview will be recorded, transcribed after and were asked to confirm verbally they agreed to the interviews.

3.7 Limitations

The initial objective was to conduct 10 interviews from sales managers with at least 3 years sales experience as an individual contributor role. However, the study was able to find 6 sales managers to interview. Although the results show cased certain themes. It would have been beneficial to obtain 10 interviews to solidify those themes. The feedback received from interviewers rejecting the interview was because this was done during the summertime where sales managers were on vacation. Therefore, the learnings here is to conduct interviews away from the summer period to ensure there is a bigger scope of sales managers to interview.

4.0 Data Analysis & Findings

4.1 Employee Satisfaction is about employees feeling motivated within their role.

The main themes when identifying employee satisfaction were about the employee's willingness to come to the workplace and perform their day-to-day roles at their best and are compensated based on the work they are doing. All participants have agreed that employee satisfaction is about employees being happy within their day-to-day role. Participant 5 has described employee satisfaction "as a love for certain foods, if they enjoy a certain type of food then they will be back for more". Taking this in a professional context, if an individual contributor enjoys the work, they are doing then they will show up every day to achieve more. Participant 2 has described employee's satisfaction as the feeling that individual contributors are being part of an organisation's journey, while being satisfied with their compensation. All other participants had shared the same themes when it came around defining employee satisfaction.

In addition, participants were also able to draw a few examples on how employee satisfaction was related to their daily tasks. Participant 3 mentioned "it means reaching your goal. The incentive structure in sales contracts usually includes a fixed and a variable component, satisfaction comes from reaching that goal". Participant 5 elaborates more on the latter mentioning "when people love what they do, they enjoy coming to work. If my sellers are satisfied with their work, they'll enjoy it more, do it better, and achieve more"

4.2 Employee Wellness is about work – life balance.

All participants have agreed that employee wellness refers to individual contributors having a balance between their professional and personal lives. However, some definitions were different. For example, Participant 2 referred to employee wellness mentioning "Wellness means that when someone leaves work, they don't take it home. They need time for themselves and the flexibility". Participant 3, related employee wellness to the stressful environment of sales mentioning "it means having

work-life balance. We get paid for a certain number of hours, and during that time, I expect people to be present and do the work. After that, they should shut their laptops and return to their personal lives. Balance is essential in sales because it's a high-pressure, nonstop environment. Both leaders and team members need to step away to maintain well-being". It should be noted that participant 3 integrated wellness with performance as he mentions that an individual contributor achieving their expectations set to them by their manager throughout their day to day. Once these expectations are fulfilled, then managers should have the flexibility to let their employees leave early.

Throughout the interview, a few participants mentioned that employees should disconnect and don't continuously think about work. For example, Participant 3 mentions that people should log on time while Participant 4 mentions that it's important to take a break from their laptop by going for a short walk to disconnect.

In addition, Participant 5 referred to employee wellness is the same as going to the gym "if you're going to the gym, you always make sure you are training muscles in the right way, if you are not, you might injure something and then you won't be able to go to the gym so as wellness". The latter could be interpreted as, just as much an individual is training their body, they should be able to train their minds by relaxing every now and then to focus on what's next.

It is worth noting, that P1 & P4 associated employee wellness to running personal errands or taking care of family commitments with all participants providing examples on the same.

4.3 Flexible working is about blending work rules to complement an individual contributor's personal life.

All participants have agreed that flexible working is related to blending the work rules with an individual's personal life. Participant 3 has provided an example of letting parents leave early to pick up their kids from creche. Another participant mentioned providing employees with the flexibility to leave early to catch their train on time and be home with their families within a reasonable time.

Aside from providing employees with the flexibility to leave work early, Participant 2 mentioned that the ownership of flexible working falls on the organisation mentioning that an organisation must provide the right criteria to support employees working from home. Furthermore, the participant has referred to flexible working as working for a few days from home with mentioning that employees within a sales function could work three days from the office and two days from home could be successful if the organisation implements effective procedures. To support the latter, Participant 2 has indicated that some of their sellers are more productive working from home. Therefore, organisations should put these insights into consideration when reviewing flexible working policies.

Although all participants have agreed that flexible working is related to providing a balance between an individual contributor's professional and personal life. However, limited insights were provided on how organisations should be held accountable to ensure that organisations are helped accountable by drafting effective work policies to help support employees with flexible working.

4.4 Employee Performance within a sales environment should be linked to flexible working.

Four participants (P2, P3, P5 & P6), have expressed support that employee performance and flexible working should be linked. Participant 2 suggested that individual contributors should proof that they are able to perform their day-to-day role before applying a flexible working model. Interestingly, Participant 6 defines employee performance from a flexible working context saying "It's about whether an individual is achieving their assigned targets regardless of whether they're working remotely, hybrid, or in the office. Performance should remain consistent across any setup". The latter could indicate that employee performance should be consistent regardless of the setting.

Another theme that was also observed when identifying employee performance within a flexible working environment was the level of maturity of employees mentioned by Participant 2 & 5. For example, a new hire who requires consistent support would be different from a tenured seller who understand their day-to-day role.

One other theme that surfaced that defining employee performance within a sales context is different depending on the type of sales role an individual contributor is performing. For example, Participant 3 mentioned that business acquisition would require high intensity calls. However, account management would require having quality calls instead of high volume to ensure that all clients are satisfied.

4.5 Factors that affect Sales Productivity include coaching, learning, Work life balance and sales rigor.

The themes identified across varied across the board. There is little alignment with regards to overlapping themes. It is evident throughout the interview that some managers were focused on supporting their employees through a flexible working model. Coaching was mentioned by Participant 5 in a way to continue to drive the right behaviours while adapting a flexible working mode. Furthermore, the same participant indicated that as employees are coached, they are held accountable which leads to high sales productivity.

Work-life balance was another factor that was mentioned, Participants 4 & 6 discuss that when employees are provided with more freedom, then they would be able to distribute their workload to ensure that their targets are met. However, Participant 2, opposed the latter, mentioning that, individual contributors should achieve results first before providing them with the flexibility of a work life balance. Participants in support of the latter mentioned that, with individual contributors driving the right habits to achieve results then they would be more comfortable in approving their employees to work from home.

Sales rigor was a theme that one of the participants felt was important to consider. Participant 3 mentioned that employees should be achieving their sales activities such as calls and account planning since these examples would directly impact sales performance and hence critical for sales productivity.

Learning was a theme was mentioned across participants (P1, P2, P5 & P6). The general sentiment was if the manager provides the willingness for employees to learn on the job, then this would help them develop in their day-to-day role which would help them be productive throughout their day to day. In addition, some

participants mentioned that if people have the freedom to learn and develop within a sales environment then this would help them increase their productivity and help them explore other roles.

It is safe to say from the themes mentioned above that there are a mix of objective and subjective factors when approaching sales productivity. Some participants approached sales productivity from subjective context mentioning work life balance & coaching while others approached the matter from a sales rigor perspective mentioning numbers.

In addition, when asked about the factors from the most important to the least important when applying a flexible working model, there was no insights in which priorities overlapped as each participant provided different factors that affect sales productivity within a flexible working model.

5.0 Discussion

The discussions in this section will be based on the literature review in Section 2.0, the Data Analysis in section 4.0 and finally with the main question and sub questions presented in Section 1. In addition, the discussion will attempt to design a framework that would aid sales functions within organisation to consider while adapting a flexible working model.

Based on the questions proposed at the start of the paper “What performance indicators need to identify when adapting a flexible working approach for their employees. It appears from the research presented that there are a few subjective & objective themes that align with the literature review presented.

5.1 Employee Performance, Wellness & Satisfaction with a sales organisation is perceived the same as universal definitions.

In section 2.0, we have identified that this paper will use the definition of employee performance and satisfaction set out by CIPD (2023) as a starting point to support this study in identifying if the same definition applies within a sales context. Based on the interviews conducted, it is evident that participants mentioned that employee performance is about employee performing their sales activities set out by their manager. Whereas employee satisfaction is about the willingness of employees to perform their day-to-day role and are satisfied with their compensation package. The latter aligns with CIPD’s (2023) description of both employee performance and satisfaction. It is worth noting that based on the interviews, employee satisfaction, wellness and performance are somewhat intertwined. This means that with greater employee wellness, the higher the satisfaction and the higher the performance. In addition, it should be noted that participants have mentioned that flexible working does affect employee satisfaction. The latter aligns with several studies that flexible working helps reduce stress by managing work- life balance (Adekoya et al. 2022; Sofiani & Soprianta’s 2021; Stella et al 2021).

Throughout the interviews, participants have related employee satisfaction with flexible working. Throughout the interviews some participants have agreed that employee satisfaction would be achieved if employees would have the opportunity work from home. The latter, is also supported in some studies mentioned in section 2.0 where it proved that flexible working directly impact employee performance (Egole et at. 2020; Orishede & Nedudi 2020). The latter shows that flexible working within a sales environment does have a direct impact on employee performance. However, some managers were sceptical on providing autonomy for employees to adopt a flexible working model at the early stages of their life cycle. These participants mentioned that they should work in the office at the early stage of the employee life cycle to get a better understanding of the organisations sales rigor and ensure they are achieving their results before availing of this benefit. However, one should note, that some employees are seeking flexible working as part of their job hinting to ensure that their jobs fits within their personal lives (CIPD,2023).

5.2 Learning & Coaching has been identified as an indicator to Employee Performance within a flexible working model.

An interesting performance factor that was identified throughout this study was the element of learning & coaching. Participants have mentioned that learning and continuous manager support should be a performance indicator. When reviewing the learning aspect, managers have indicated that as employees start within a sales organisation, they should continue to learn to understand the organisations sales objectives. Another participant mentioned the element of trust as it was mentioned that new employees should be attending the office to get a better understanding of their day-to-day roles. The latter could contribute to learning, as the more an employee would attend the office the more they will learn and gain manager support which could contribute to their performance. The latter corresponds to studies mentioning that managers should be upskilled with flexible working skills to continue supporting employees when working remotely (Sofiana & Soprianta's 2021; Charoensukmongkol & Pandey,2023).

In addition, coaching was also mentioned as participants indicated that managers should regularly coach their employees so that they could continue to drive the right behaviours and perform in their role. Although coaching was not regularly mentioned across manager, it is worth noting it here since learning and coaching may come hand in hand. This means that as employees learn they will need their managers to coach them so that they are able to ensure that learning outcomes continue to be sustainable throughout their day to day. (Sofiani & Supriatna, 2021). However, further studies should be conducted on exploring how learning impacts employee performance within in a sales organisation.

5.3 Sales Rigor a Critical indicator for employee performance

Sales Rigor such as activities and targets was a topic mentioned by sales managers. Throughout the interview managers felt that in order to trust their employees with flexible working, employees should perform their activities on a daily bases and achieve their targets to ensure that when they are following a flexible working mode they would have the capability to accomplish their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, managers mentioned the “trust” factor. This means that once managers are confident that their employees can perform their day to day duties they can support their employee in availing their work home policy.

It should be noted that further studies are needed to show how the factor of “trust” plays an important role when adapting flexible working. We have seen in studies mentioned above that high performance is contributed to sellers having more control on their working hours (Prabowo et al, 2023) . However, based on the interviews conducted, it could be argued that managers should have a strong relationship with their employees first before providing their employees with the flexible working option.

5.4 Proposed Flexible working Model for a Sales Organisation.

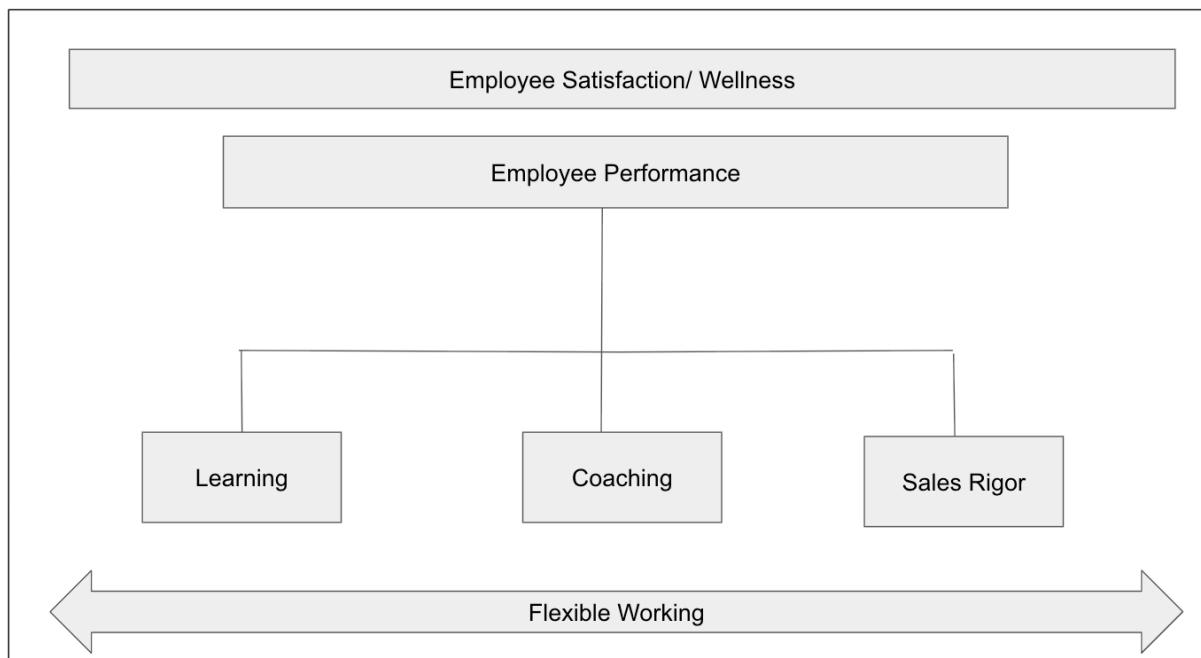


Figure 1.0: Proposed Employee Performance framework for a sales function adapting flexible working.

Based on the above arguments and insights from interviews, a framework has been proposed to aid with further research on identifying employee performance factors when adopting a flexible working model for a sales organisation. This framework stems out of the insights that took place during the interviews as well as the literature review performed. The framework is as follows:

Employee Satisfaction / Wellness: This indicator would act as a starting point before employee performance. The studies and insights proved that employees should be satisfied with their roles and responsibilities as well as their compensation benefits in the workplace. In addition, they should have necessary support systems to look after their wellness.

Employee Performance: Once employee satisfaction and wellness have been established then employees would be ready to perform. Figure 1.0 , highlights the factors in a gradual manner to help make sure employees are set up for success.

The first factor is the element of learning. Interviews have indicated that the element of learning plays a role in employee performance. As employees learn they would be able to perform during their day-to-day role. The second stage is coaching, the study has shown the learning is not enough but continuous coaching by managers to drive the right behaviours is important to ensure the employees continue to develop as they progress through their role. The latter could be done through onboarding new hires, providing continuous learning and leadership and development trainings. It should be noted that both onboarding and learning will be assessed and contribute to overall employee performance. Once the latter has been achieved, then managers would turn their focus on sales rigor, making sure that their employees are set up for success.

Flexible working: Flexible working would be the next and final stage. It should be mentioned that this framework recommends that managers should be confident that their employees are continuously learning, receptive to coaching and performing their daily sales activities before providing their employees with flexible working. By doing so, then the element of “Trust” would be achieved where managers are confident that their employees would perform their day-to-day role and employees are balancing between their professional and personal lives by adapting to a flexible working model.

6.0 Conclusion

Throughout this study, we were able to identify that employee wellness and satisfaction for a sales function has the same definition as other definitions mentioned throughout the study. To elaborate more, the study found that employees are satisfied when they are performing their roles and responsibilities and are compensated in an effective way. In addition, the study showed that employee wellness is about dedicating time to focus on oneself. However, insights from this study showed that employee wellness was focused on employees managing between their personal and professional lives. Therefore, further studies should be conducted to understand other factors that affect employee wellness other than having work-life balance.

Secondly, employee performance indicators while adapting a flexible working model did have interesting findings. For example, the element of learning was a factor that rose within these studies. While learning is an important factor and does contribute to employee performance, further studies should be made to identify how the element of learning could be part of an employee's roles and responsibilities in which could fall under a compensation plan.

Finally, a framework (figure 1.0) was designed throughout the study to aid further research on identifying employee performance factors when adopting a flexible working model. While the research didn't aim to show the relationships between learning, coaching and sales rigor, it is recommended for further research to show how the three factors could be integrated with one another to support seller performance within a flexible working model. For example, does the coaching factor come before or after learning to drive sustainable behaviours?

This study is a starting point that identifies performance indicators for a designated function and could be used as a starting point for other relevant studies looking to focus on flexible working within a specific function.

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8.0 Appendices

Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information

Factors Influencing Employee Performance on Flexible Working for a Sales Function within an Organisation

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide to take part, I would like to provide you with an overview of what research is being done and what would that involve for you.

Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

I am a Student at the National College of Ireland and currently working on my dissertation. The dissertation is with regards to factors that affects employee performance on flexible working within a sales function within an organisation. We've seen that several organisations are taking this approach and I would like to examine the factors that contribute to employee performance and how it impact organisations that adapt a flexible working model. Once this dissertation is successful, I would successfully receive an MBA from the National College of Ireland.

By taking part in the research your input will be included on four main topics which are sales performance, wellness, employee performance and satisfaction. Your participation will involve a one hour interview to make sure that all topics mentioned are covered.

You have been invited to take part in this interview since you are a sales manager who manages a team within an organisation that adapts to flexible working. In addition, your knowledge on team management and employee performance within sales will help identify what factors within employee performance could be added to flexible working.

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to refuse any question and withdraw from the interview at any time without any consequence.

By taking part in this research you will have contributed to providing insights on what support indicators are needed to help adapt a flexible working model within an organisation. The hope is for this study to act as a framework for other researchers who would like to adapt the same approach to different functions within their organisations.

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the NCI data base until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

The results of the study will be for the purpose of passing my dissertation to obtain my MBA degree.

If you have any questions please reach out to myself at: X23118164@student.ncirl.ie or my supervisor Michelle Killian at: michelle.killian@ncirl.ie

Appendix II: Consent Form

Factors Influencing Employee Performance on Flexible Working for a Sales Function within an Organisation

• I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves identifying employee performance factors for a sales function adopting a flexible working model
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in my dissertation.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in NCI's data base until the exam board confirms the results of my dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information. Names, degrees, affiliations and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant).

Signature of research participant

Signature of participant

Date Signature of researcher -----

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher. -----

Date -----

Appendix III: Interview Questions

- 1- What does employee satisfaction mean to you as a sales manager?
- 2- What does wellness mean to you as a sales manager?
- 3- What does flexible working mean to you as a sales manager?
- 4- What does employee performance mean from a sales context when applying a flexible working model?
- 5- What factors do you think effect sales productivity?
- 6- Based on the factors you mentioned that effect sales productivity, can you rate the factors from the most important to the least important when applying a flexible working model? Why?
- 7- By applying these employment performance factors, how do you think this will relate to employee satisfaction?
- 8- How can sales managers continue to drive these factors within their organisation?
- 9- What would it take to implement a flexible working model in which employees can find it beneficial?

Appendix IV: Interview Transcriptions

First Interview

Date: 15/07/2025

Participant 1

Interviewer: So hi, thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, I'm Mohamed Abdel Mohty, and this interview is part of my dissertation research on identifying employee performance factors when adopting a flexible working model within a sales org.

P 1: Please.

Interviewer: You've already received the information and consent form. I just want to quickly confirm that you've read and understood them and that you're still happy to take part.

P 1: Yes, I agree. That's no problem.

Interviewer: So just to remind you, the interview is voluntary, you can skip any questions and you're free to stop at any time. I'll be recording the interview if that's still OK with you.

P 1: Yes, there's no problem there.

Interviewer: Everything you share will remain confidential and any identifying information will be anonymized unless otherwise agreed. There are no right or wrong answers. I'm just interested in your honest views and experiences. If you're ready, we'll go ahead and begin.

P 1: Let's start. I'm excited.

Interviewer: What does employee satisfaction mean to you as a sales manager?

P 1: It's when people feel fulfilled in the workplace and they feel they're contributing to something bigger than themselves, while their own individual needs are being met from a financial and motivational standpoint.

Interviewer: And what does wellness mean to you as a sales manager?

P 1: The work environment contributes to a positive mental state and overall well-being. From a seller's perspective, the space allows them to thrive. From a workplace perspective, there are means put in place to support wellness. Both sides support each other.

Interviewer: What does flexible work mean to you as a sales manager?

P 1: It allows work to be done in line with your schedule. If I have a doctor's appointment or need to collect my kids, I can do that as long as I get the work done. The work is flexible to my schedule.

Interviewer: What does improved performance mean from a sales context when applying a flexible working model?

P 1: Meeting or exceeding company expectations for the role, regardless of when the work is done.

Interviewer: What factors do you think affect sales productivity?

P 1: Incentives, team environment, team culture, and seeing outcomes—whether it's helping others through sales or the pay at the back end. Intrinsic drivers like career motivation and growth, relationship between the seller and manager, and goal alignment.

Interviewer: Can you rate those factors from most important to least important when applying a flexible working model, and explain why?

P 1: One I forgot was seller expectations—making sure sellers understand what's expected. Most important is incentives because they drive behaviour. Second is culture—having a culture that feels bigger than the individual. Third would be sales expectations.

Interviewer: Why did you rate them that way?

P 1: Being a seller myself, I'm driven by money. If incentives are set correctly, they drive behaviour and lead to results. Culture plays a huge role. If the company goal is bigger than the individual, people are more inclined to work to support each other.

Some people need direction—clear expectations and inputs to drive behaviour.

Interviewer: How do you think these factors relate to employee satisfaction overall?

P 1: I'm not sure they always align. There are other factors that could weigh down satisfaction. Wellness should overcome that and contribute positively.

Interviewer: How can sales managers continue to drive these factors within their work?

P 1: Through influence. As a middle manager, I don't make all the decisions. I influence the sales excellence team to align incentives with business goals and desired behaviours. We create something bigger than just making sales—build team culture and set best practices weekly or monthly. It's about getting support from mechanisms and influencers within the team to echo the message and build accountability.

Interviewer: What would it take to implement a flexible working model in which employees find it beneficial?

P 1: Trust. Maybe some structure around setting flexibility, but mostly trust.

Interviewer: That's all the questions I have. Is there anything else you'd like to add or think I should have asked?

P 1: The questions were good. They weren't leading and were open. There are many factors outside a sales manager's scope that influence outcomes. As much as I'd love to build wellness and flexibility, there are business strongholds limiting that. Some structure is good—like coming into the office some days. I'm shaping my role in line with company strongholds.

Interviewer: Thanks. I'll now be transcribing and analysing the interview. Everything will be anonymised as explained. If I need clarity later, would it be OK to contact you?

P 1: Yes, of course.

Interviewer: I'm going to stop the recording now.

Second Interview

Date: 16/07/2025

Participant 2

Interviewer: Hi, thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, my name is Mohammed and this interview is part of my dissertation research at the National College of Ireland. It focuses on identifying employee factors for sellers in an organisation looking to adopt a flexible working model. You've already received the information sheet and consent form, yes? I just want to confirm that you've understood them and you're still happy to take part.

P2: Yes, that's good.

Interviewer: Just to remind you, the interview is voluntary. You can skip any questions and you're free to stop at any time. I'll be recording the interview if you're still OK with that.

P2: Yes.

Interviewer: Everything you share will remain confidential and any identifying information will be anonymized unless otherwise agreed. There are no right or wrong answers. I'm just interested in your honest views and experiences. If you're ready, we'll go ahead and begin.

P2: Let's go ahead.

Interviewer: What does employee satisfaction mean to you as a sales manager?

P2: Employee satisfaction means that my sellers or team members are happy to be in their job and are doing their tasks because they want to and enjoy doing them. The more they are comfortable in their seat, the more satisfaction I can see.

Interviewer: What does wellness mean to you as a sales manager?

P2: Wellness means that when someone leaves work, they don't take it home. They need time for themselves and the flexibility to move around during the day. It's not school or a teller desk. I want them to feel comfortable.

Interviewer: What does flexible working mean to you as a sales manager?

P2: Due to the pandemic, it's been proven that with the right system and criteria, teams can work both from home and the office. Flexibility should be available. Some sellers are more productive when working from home. Not everyone is, but a big percentage is. Flexibility allows us to balance that.

Interviewer: What does employee performance mean in a sales context when applying a flexible working model?

P2: To have flexibility, there needs to be performance. Sellers must prove they're doing the job. There must be trust between manager and seller. For example, I have three team members I could let work from home all month and I'd still trust they're delivering. Maturity level plays a big role. Some sellers take that trust seriously. Others may abuse it. But 80 percent of my team won't abuse it.

Interviewer: What factors do you think affect sales productivity?

P2: If they're not doing their calls, client mapping or tiering, it affects their performance.

Interviewer: Based on those factors, can you rate them from most important to least important?

P2: In sales, these are linked. If you don't do your calls, you won't get revenue. Calls are number one. Tiering is number two. But they're all interconnected. Prep work and calls drive KPIs. Skip one and it doesn't work.

Interviewer: Why do you think these factors are important?

P2: Because we're salespeople.

Interviewer: By applying these employee performance factors, how do you think it will relate to employee satisfaction?

P2: If the team is in their seat because they want to be, they'll hit KPIs. This ties back to hiring the right people with the right culture fit. When that happens, they do the job because it's what they want.

Interviewer: How can sales managers continue to drive these factors in their organisation?

P2: By sharing their vision with team members. From day one, I told my team my one-year, two-year and five-year plans. When you're transparent and clear from the beginning, and they buy into your vision, they're committed.

Interviewer: What would it take to implement a flexible working model in which employees find it beneficial?

P2: We need support from HRBP and logistics. It takes coordination. We used to do two to three days in office. Now we're back to four, and I can see productivity slowing down. It needs structure and support.

Interviewer: That's all the questions I have for now. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

P2: All your questions point to one thing: culture. Everything you asked contributes to a high-performing sales culture. In many companies, that doesn't exist. It's just a job. When people see it as a career, they engage deeper. It's not about promotions or becoming managers, but about growing in their field. For them, it's a learning opportunity and a stepping stone. That builds culture.

Interviewer: Thank you for your input. I'll now be transcribing and analysing the interview. Everything will be anonymized as explained. If I need clarity later, would it be OK to contact you?

P2: Yes.

Interviewer: Thanks again. Your insights have been really valuable and will help a lot with my research. I'm going to stop the recording now.

P2: Thank you.

Third Interview

Date: 17/07/2025

Participant 3

Interviewer: Hi, thanks again for taking the time to speak to me today. As you know, my name is Mohammed and this interview is part of my dissertation research on identifying employee performance factors for sellers in an organisation adopting a flexible working environment. You've already received the information sheet and consent form. I just want to confirm that you've read and understood them and that you're still happy to take part.

P3: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Just to remind you, the interview is voluntary. You can skip any questions and you're free to stop at any time. I'll be recording the interview if that's still OK with you.

P3: Please.

Interviewer: Everything you share will remain confidential and any identifying information will be anonymized unless otherwise agreed. There are no right or wrong answers. I'm just interested in your honest views and experiences. If you're ready, we'll go ahead and begin.

P3: Let's get it started.

Interviewer: What does employee satisfaction mean to you as a sales manager?

P3: I would say it's about enjoying your job. In the context of sales, it means reaching your goal. The incentive structure in sales contracts usually includes a fixed and a variable component. Satisfaction comes from reaching that goal. If you're good at what you do and enjoy it, success becomes part of that definition.

Interviewer: What does wellness mean to you as a sales manager?

P3: It means having work-life balance. We get paid for a certain number of hours, and during that time, I expect people to be present and do the work. After that, they should shut their laptops and return to their personal lives. Balance is essential in sales because it's a high-pressure, nonstop environment. Both leaders and team members need to step away to maintain well-being.

Interviewer: What does flexible working mean to you as a sales manager?

P3: Flexibility can mean location—working from home or the office—or time, like leaving early for an appointment. Sales is result-driven. Whether you reach your target in two hours or ten, it's the outcome that matters. If someone hits their goal and still has time for personal tasks, that's flexibility.

Interviewer: What does employee performance mean in a sales context when applying a flexible working model?

P3: It means reaching your goal and showing that your work had impact. In account management, your results must be tied to client outcomes. In new business sales, you won't generate anything if you don't reach out. You either hit your goal or you didn't. The contribution must be measurable and justifiable.

Interviewer: What factors do you think affect sales productivity?

P3: Everything from goal-setting to the weather. If people feel confident and on track, they'll work harder and more efficiently. Tenure helps. Understanding your role and limiting frequent change improves efficiency. Changes in scope, role, or incentives can hurt productivity. External factors, like seasonality in advertising, also matter.

Interviewer: Based on those factors, can you rate them from most important to least important when applying a flexible working model? And why?

P3: Incentive structure is the most important. In a flexible environment, minimizing change is next. If you constantly have to relearn or adjust, it's hard to be flexible. Flexibility is only useful if it's accessible. Things like weather are less critical but still have an effect.

Interviewer: By applying these employee performance factors, how do you think this relates to employee satisfaction?

P3: It directly relates. If people can reach their goals and the incentives are aligned, they're more satisfied. Change affects people differently, but if they're hitting targets, they tend to handle change better. When things are misaligned, satisfaction drops, and that leads to attrition.

Interviewer: How can sales managers continue to drive these factors within their organisation?

P3: It depends on the company structure and who the key decision-makers are. Teams that set targets, design incentive plans, and define growth expectations play a major role. If you're a public company, shareholder pressure will impact targets and change. Managers must advocate for balance—growth without excessive attrition. Retention is key to sustainable performance. Losing people means you won't hit your targets without significant costs in hiring and training.

Interviewer: What would it take to implement a flexible working model that employees find beneficial?

P3: There needs to be top-down support. Ideally, flexibility should be included in employment contracts—like specific work-from-home days or extra leave. If it's officially defined, employees can rely on it. Verbal agreements are minimal commitment. Writing it into contracts means full organizational buy-in, not just tolerance.

Interviewer: That's all the questions I have for now. Is there anything else you'd like to add or think I should have asked?

P3: Is this in the context of any organisation or specifically Irish, global, or multinational companies? The willingness and ability to support flexibility varies. A startup with €100K in funding will operate differently than a multinational trying to grow from €50 billion to €200 billion.

Interviewer: Is there anything else?

P3: No, that'll be it.

Interviewer: I'll now be transcribing and analysing the interview. Everything will be anonymized as explained. If I need to clarify anything later, would it be OK to contact you again?

P3: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Thank you again. Your insights have been really valuable and will help a lot with my research. I'm going to stop the recording now.

Fourth Interview

Date: 21/07/2025

Participant 4

Interviewer: Hi, thanks again for taking the time to speak to me today. As you know, I'm Mohammed and this interview is part of my dissertation on identifying employee performance factors for sales in an organisation adapting to a flexible working model. You've already received the information sheet and consent form. I just want to confirm you've read and understood them and that you're still happy to take part.

P4: Yeah, I am indeed.

Interviewer: Just to remind you, the interview is voluntary, you can skip any questions and you are free to stop at any time. I'll be recording the interview if that's still OK with you.

P4: Yeah, that's fine. Thank you.

Interviewer: Everything you share will remain confidential and any identifying information will be anonymized unless otherwise agreed. There are no right or wrong answers. I'm just interested in your honest views and experiences. If you're ready, we'll go ahead and begin.

P4: Yeah, go for it.

Interviewer: What does employee satisfaction mean to you as a sales manager?

P4: I think it's about enjoying the work you're doing and feeling motivated in your role. As a sales lead, it's also about making sure your team feels the same. They're happy and motivated, and it's my role to empower them to feel that way.

Interviewer: What does wellness mean to you as a sales manager?

P4: I think about work-life balance. While we work hard, there should also be time outside of work for personal activities. For me, it's important to take a break from the laptop, go for a walk, and disconnect. A good balance between work and personal life is what wellness means to me.

Interviewer: What does flexible working mean to you as a sales manager?

P4: It means if someone needs to leave early to pick up their child or catch a train, they can, and then log back on later. It's about blending work with their life and being flexible with working hours or presence in the office.

Interviewer: What does employee performance mean in a sales context when applying a flexible working model?

P4: It's about hitting targets and overachieving goals. With a flexible model, I believe that trusting the team to manage their time helps performance. If they can manage their schedule, they'll be more motivated and still meet expectations.

Interviewer: What factors do you think affect sales productivity?

P4: Work-life balance is key. If people have that, they're motivated and less fatigued. Support from managers also matters. When employees feel supported and coached, they can overcome challenges and stay on track. A good work culture helps too if people are happy to come to work, that impacts productivity. Flexibility also plays a role by allowing employees to manage their time effectively.

Interviewer: Based on those factors, can you rate them from most important to least important when applying a flexible working model? And why?

P4: The most important is feeling supported and trusted by your manager. When people know they're supported to balance life and work, they're more productive. Least important though still valuable would probably be culture. It matters, but through the lens of flexibility, it's not as directly impactful as support and trust.

Interviewer: By applying these employee performance factors, how do you think this relates to employee satisfaction?

P4: It would have a positive impact. Work today is fast-paced, and people have personal responsibilities. When leaders support that and show flexibility, employees feel trusted and valued. That increases motivation and performance because they know their manager has their back.

Interviewer: How can sales managers continue to drive these factors within their organisation?

P4: A big part is feeding back to HR and leadership. Sharing success stories helps build the case for flexible work. If someone consistently performs well while managing personal commitments, we should highlight that. It helps show that flexibility supports performance and morale, and it also helps with retention.

Interviewer: What would it take to implement a flexible working model that employees find beneficial?

P4: First, we need to understand what flexibility means to employees. We should collect feedback, find common themes, and work with HR to build a model around that. For my team, flexibility in working hours is key. Many commute or have family needs. Allowing them to adjust hours while maintaining performance is important.

Interviewer: That's all the questions I have for now. Is there anything else you'd like to add or think I should have asked?

P4: Just an additional thought—working from home is something I'd love to see continue. I think hybrid models are important. Being in the office for collaboration is valuable, but having the option to work from home a day or two helps with well-being

and morale. My team really values that flexibility, and it has a positive impact on performance.

Interviewer: Thank you. I'll now be transcribing and analysing the interview. Everything will be anonymized as explained. If I need to clarify anything later, would it be OK to contact you again?

P4: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: Thanks again. Your insights have been really valuable and will help a lot with my research. I'm going to stop the recording now.

P4: Thank you.

Fifth Interview

Date: 27/7/2025

Participant 5

Interviewer: Hi, thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, I'm Mohammed and this interview is part of my dissertation research on identifying employee performance factors within a CS organisation. You've already received the information sheet and consent form. I just want to confirm that you've read and understood them and you're still happy to take part.

P5: I've read, understood, and I'm happy to take part.

Interviewer: Just to remind you, the interview is voluntary. You can skip any questions and you're free to stop at any time. I'll be recording the interview if that's still OK with you.

P5: That's OK with me.

Interviewer: Everything you share will remain confidential and any identifying information will be anonymized unless otherwise agreed. There are no right or wrong answers. I'm just interested in your honest views and experiences. If you're ready, we'll go ahead and begin.

P5: Please, let's go ahead.

Interviewer: What does employee satisfaction mean to you as a sales manager?

P5: For me, when people love what they do, they enjoy coming to work. If my sellers are satisfied with their work, they'll enjoy it more, do it better, and achieve more.

Interviewer: What does wellness mean to you as a sales manager?

P5: Wellness is essential. Just like physical training needs proper form to avoid injury, employees need both mental and physical wellness to enjoy and succeed in their roles. It's something they need to do the job well.

Interviewer: What does flexible working mean to you as a sales manager?

P5: It means different things—flexibility in time and location. Especially post-COVID, people have made life decisions like buying homes far from the city. Being flexible prevents us from adding extra burdens on them. Lack of flexibility can demotivate employees, even if they're professional.

Interviewer: What does employee performance mean in a sales context when applying a flexible working model?

P5: Sales today is done online—whether you're in the office, at home, or anywhere else. Prospecting, pitching, closing—it can all happen on the phone or Zoom. Flexible working doesn't affect the ability to perform in that regard.

Interviewer: What factors do you think affect sales productivity?

P5: It depends on the individual. Some experienced salespeople stay productive no matter what. Others may slack off if not monitored closely. Trust is important, but less experienced staff may need more structure and support. In general, strong performers remain productive, but others might struggle away from the office.

Interviewer: Can you expand on the specific factors that affect productivity?

P5: At home, distractions like TV or lack of immediate direction can reduce productivity. In the office, people ask questions, get help on calls, and stay engaged. Sales needs constant motivation. In-person energy from teammates making calls or closing deals can drive that. Working remotely can lack that spark.

Interviewer: Based on those factors, can you rate them from most important to least important when applying a flexible working model?

P5: The most important is being physically away from the team—because you miss out on learning from others. Sales evolves constantly, so you need to keep learning and applying new techniques. Second would be coaching. If someone's not in the office, they may not ask questions or get timely help. Third is team bonding. It motivates people even if it's not directly tied to performance.

Interviewer: By applying these employee performance factors, how do you think this relates to employee satisfaction?

P5: Sales is hard and competitive. When people learn quickly, get coaching, and feel motivated, they're more satisfied. Sitting alone without support, or struggling to close deals, causes dissatisfaction. Getting help and building skills boosts confidence and satisfaction.

Interviewer: How can sales managers continue to drive these factors within their organisation?

P5: Stay humble and focused on enabling your team. Pressure can make leaders micromanage, but it's better to give people space to be accountable. Let them plan and own their strategies. Step in when needed with support and coaching. That's how I try to lead.

Interviewer: What would it take to implement a flexible working model in which employees can find it beneficial?

P5: It's not simple, but I believe a three-day-in-office model works best. It gives people time in the office to learn and engage, while still offering flexibility for commuting and personal life. It balances structure and freedom, creating a fair and productive environment.

Interviewer: That's all the questions I have for now. Is there anything else you'd like to add or think I should have asked?

P5: No, I think you asked good questions.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Sixth Interview

Date: 4/08/2025

Participant 6

Interviewer: Hi, thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today. As you know, I'm Mohammed and this interview is part of my dissertation on identifying employee performance factors for a flexible working model within an organisation. You've already received the information sheet and consent form. I just want to confirm that you've read and understood them and that you're still happy to take part.

P6: Yes, I am.

Interviewer: Just to remind you, the interview is voluntary. You can skip any questions and you're free to stop at any time. I'll be recording the interview if that's still OK with you.

P6: Great.

Interviewer: Everything you share will remain confidential and any identifying information will be anonymized unless otherwise agreed. There are no right or wrong answers. I'm just interested in your honest views and experiences. If you're ready, we'll go ahead and begin.

P6: Sounds good. Let's go ahead.

Interviewer: What does employee satisfaction mean to you as a sales manager?

P6: It means employees feel appreciated within the team. There's recognition for their hard work, opportunities for career progression, and rewards such as bonuses. That kind of appreciation leads to satisfaction.

Interviewer: What does wellness mean to you as a sales manager?

P6: Wellness is the ability to balance stress from work or personal life while still performing your responsibilities. It includes both mental and physical well-being.

Interviewer: What does flexible working mean to you as a sales manager?

P6: It's primarily linked to location—whether someone needs to be on-site, hybrid, or fully remote. Flexibility allows employees to choose what works best for them and supports work-life balance.

Interviewer: What does employee performance mean in a sales context when applying a flexible working model?

P6: It's about whether an individual is achieving their assigned targets regardless of whether they're working remotely, hybrid, or in the office. Performance should remain consistent across any setup.

Interviewer: What factors do you think affect sales productivity?

P6: Wellness, employee satisfaction, and work environment all play a role. For some, working in the office is most effective. For others, it might be at home or a combination. These factors collectively influence productivity.

Interviewer: Based on the factors you mentioned, can you rate them from most important to least important when applying a flexible working model? And why?

P6: First would be employee satisfaction. If someone isn't satisfied in their role, they may disengage or burn out. Second is well-being, which is closely linked to satisfaction. Lastly, flexibility—though important—is more of a deal breaker. Some candidates won't accept roles without it, but it tends to be more black and white. Satisfaction and well-being are more fluid and impactful day-to-day.

Interviewer: By applying these employee performance factors, how do you think this relates to employee satisfaction?

P6: These factors need to remain top of mind. Also, flexibility in how they're applied is important. Someone satisfied today might not be in six months. The same goes for wellness and flexibility. As managers, our ability to adapt to those changing needs is essential for maintaining satisfaction and retaining talent.

Interviewer: How can sales managers continue to drive these factors within their organisation?

P6: We need to keep an open mind, especially after COVID. In sales, where turnover is high, retention is critical. We should aim to be flexible where we can while respecting company policies. If we can't address every need, we should still aim to meet as many as possible within our control.

Interviewer: What would it take to implement a flexible working model in which employees can find it beneficial?

P6: It starts with open conversations with each team member about their career goals and needs. In my team, we have quarterly career check-ins—two major ones and smaller ones in between. For well-being, we host corporate events and informal team activities, including volunteer time off. That openness creates a safe space for discussing any well-being issues. Regarding work flexibility, we follow a three-day in-office mandate, but we coordinate our schedules so we're often there at the same time. This helps with collaboration, productivity, and satisfaction.

Interviewer: That's all the questions I have for now. Is there anything else you'd like to add or think I should have asked?

P6: No, nothing in particular from my end.

Interviewer: I'll now be transcribing and analysing the interview. Everything will be anonymized as explained. If I need to clarify anything later, would it be OK to contact you again?

P6: Of course. Happy to help.

Interviewer: Thanks again. Your insights have been really valuable and will help a lot with my research. I'm going to stop the recording now.

P6: Yeah.