

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEMPORARY
MANAGEMENT ROLE IN A HYBRID WORKING SME
PROJECT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY IN THE
CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

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Master of Science in Management

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Project Submission Sheet

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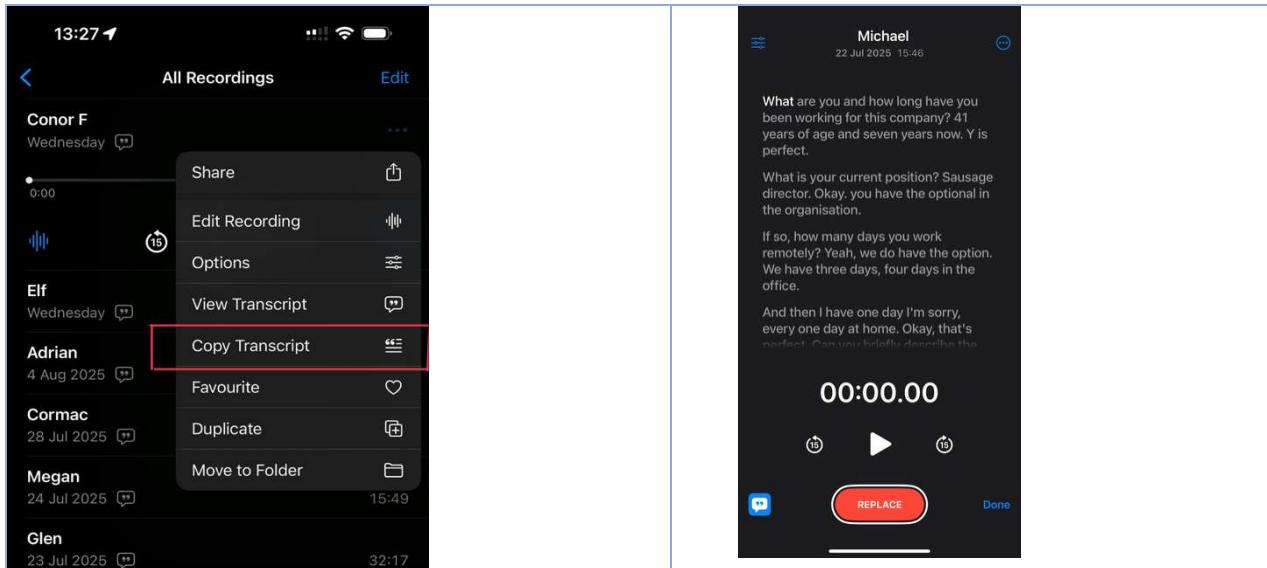
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Otter	Transcription of interviews' audios	https://otter.ai
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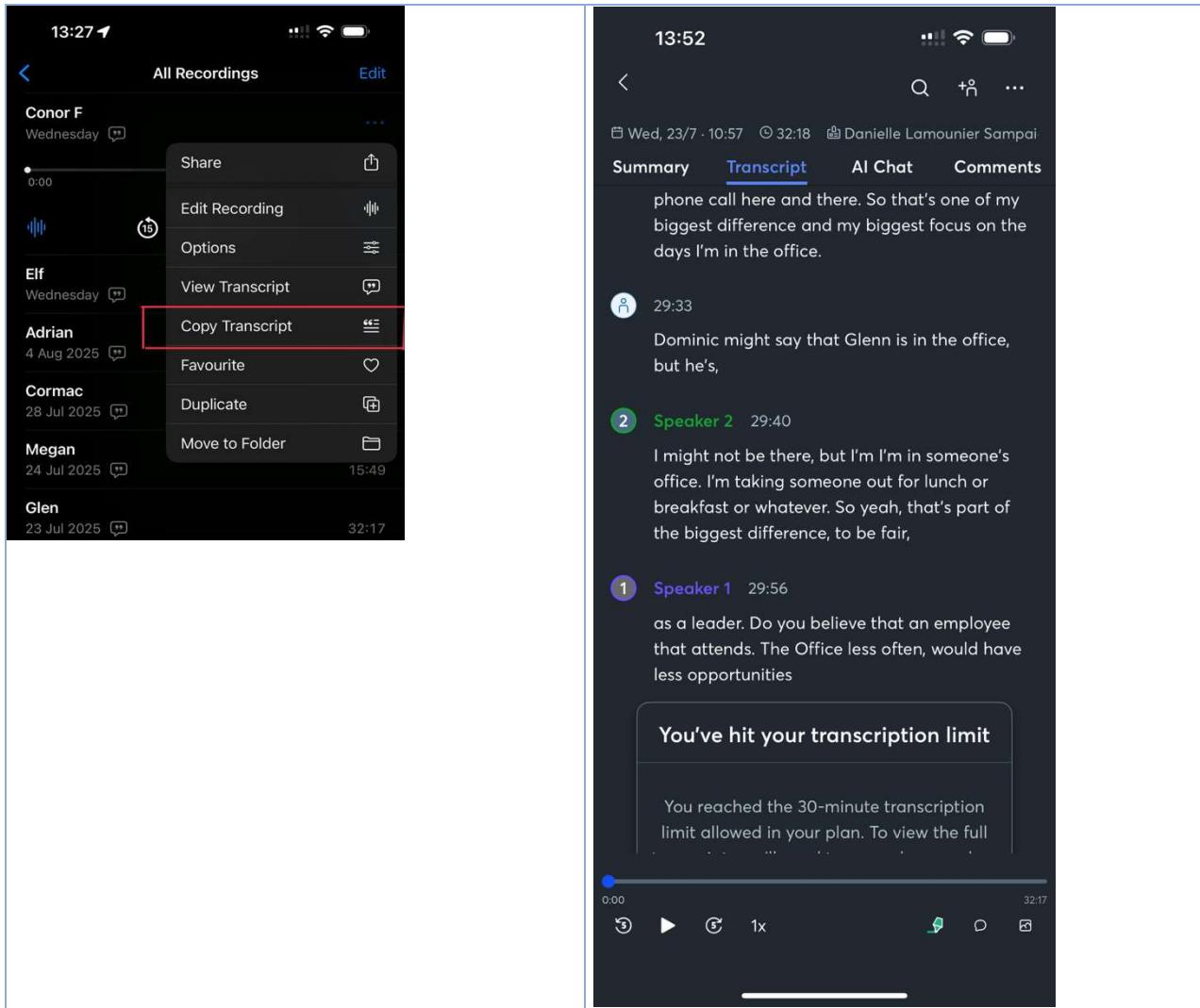
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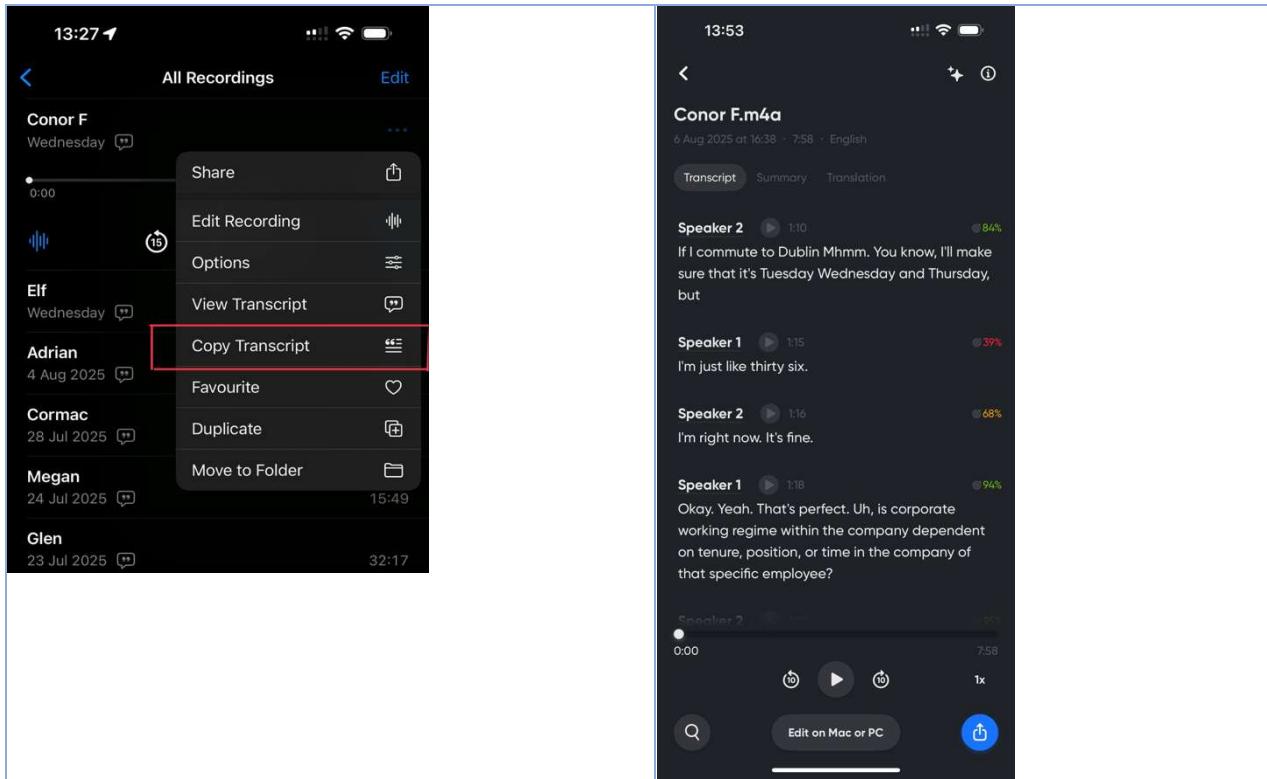
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Abstract

Author: Danielle Lamounier Sampaio

"An analysis of the contemporary management role in a hybrid working small and medium-sized (SME) project management consultancy in the construction industry."

An analysis of the contemporary management role in a hybrid working project management consultancy in the construction industry is explored in this research study. The study aims to establish the suitability of project management within the construction industry for a hybrid work regime, managerial practices that are associated with the change in working structure, the opportunities and challenges associated with a hybrid regime, and the impact on productivity output on project managers working within this regime.

The conducted study offers an overview on the distinct working dynamic brought to light by a hybrid working regime, gathering data to understand the impact of this change in working structure on employees of all levels, and how the management role is impacted, in a specific project management consultancy within the construction industry.

The methodology chosen for this research is an explanatory qualitative research approach, gathering data by way of semi structured interviews conducted with ten professionals all of different levels working within a specific company in the chosen field.

The data gathered was analysed with the support of the extensive literature review of existing literature and peers' studies, ultimately guiding a pathway to the core research questions and study objectives. Both the literature and primary research offer some valuable insights and conclusions, adding weight to the argument that hybrid working is a suitable and efficient working regime for project managers within the construction industry at present. Recommendations, based on the findings of this research, are provided with a view to guiding and enhancing other project management firms within the industry when assessing their own hybrid work strategies.

Keywords: hybrid working, project management, SME, construction

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This dissertation is the closing chapter of one of the most challenging and beautiful journeys of my life yet. It stands as proof that hard work can be demanding, but deeply worthwhile.

I cannot overlook the incredible group of people who formed the foundation that made this possible.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the workplace as a whole has transformed, with hybrid working regimes now solidified among many industries. The possibility and opportunity for employees to work a combination of home working and office working has significantly altered employees' expectations and relationships with colleagues, with many proving that working from home has equal results (Escobedo *et al.*, 2023). Given that a hybrid work regime can be considered the 'new normal' (Buła *et al.*, 2024), the analysis of a contemporary management role within a hybrid regime of work is more appropriate than ever before. This study aims to focus this analysis within a specific sector and role, due to the limited existing research surrounding this topic, namely an SME project management consultancy, specifically within the construction industry, with the overarching research question being "what is entailed in a contemporary management role within a hybrid regime of work in an SME project management consultancy within the construction industry?"

Furthermore, the potential of working from home is now a trend, with job seekers increasingly searching for jobs that facilitate a hybrid approach (Maříková *et al.*, 2024).

Although Maříková *et al.* (2024) states that hybrid working is significantly on the rise and gaining considerable traction with an increased number of organisations adopting this new approach, however, they demonstrate that larger organisations are far more likely to implement a hybrid approach when compared to SME's.

Moreover, both Maříková *et al.* (2024) and Escobedo *et al.* (2023) state that many organisations across various sectors are providing the opportunity for their employees to work from home in a hybrid regime, however, it is evident from the existing research that the findings are widespread and suggest a 'capture all' approach, not focusing on specific roles within specific sectors.

The literature suggests that there are several potential opportunities and challenges associated with a hybrid work regime (Escobedo *et al.*, 2023), although the evidence is not job and sector specific, highlighting a gap in areas such as a project management organisation which has a specific set of characteristics and variables that make it unique.

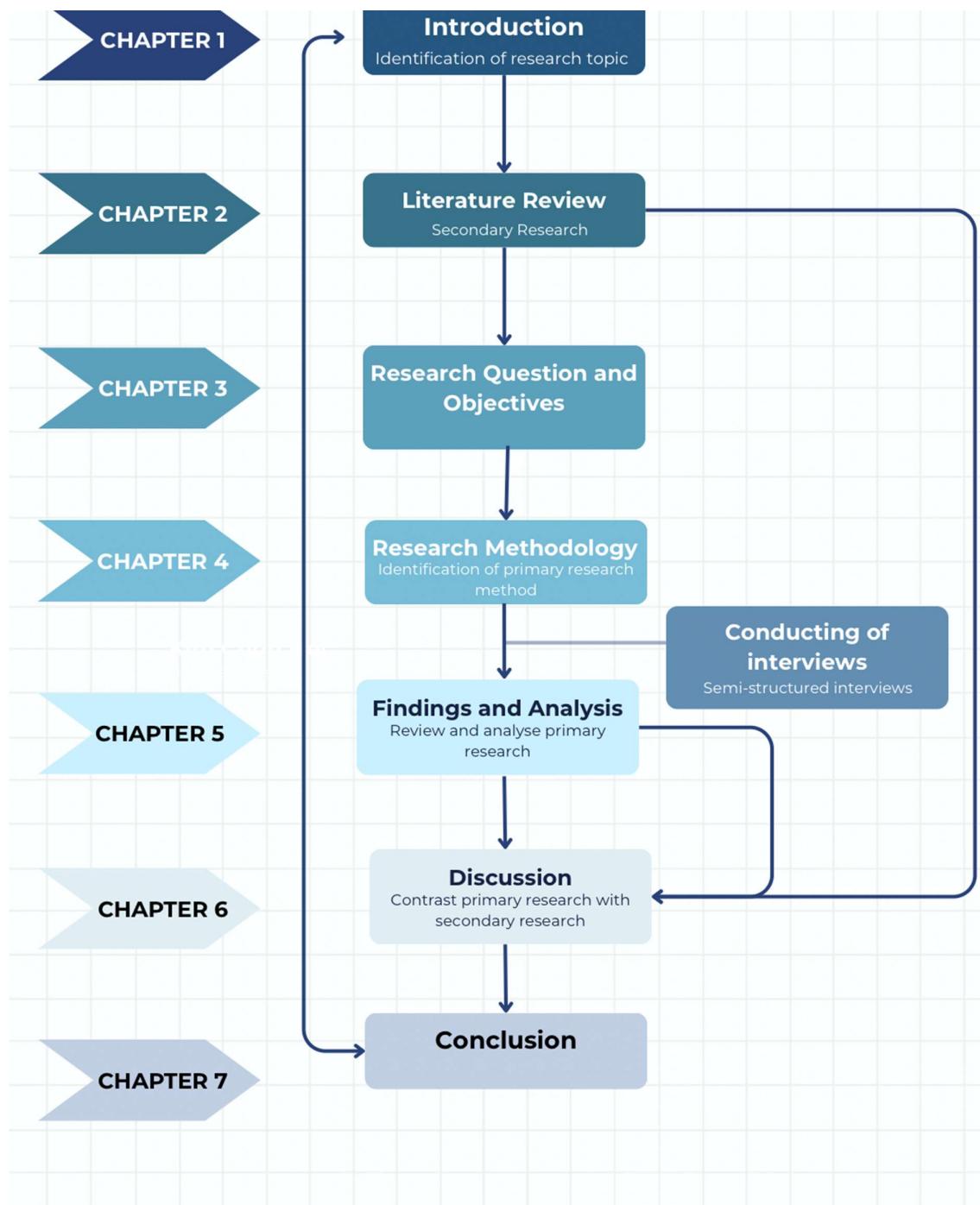
In addition, it has been under studied from a leadership management perspective with regard to enhancing, in particular, employee satisfaction, in addition to productivity and employee development. As discovered by Lalmi (2025), the importance of a highly collaborative working environment in a project management approach is critical, which further raises the questions surrounding how leaders manage a hybrid regime in this unique role and sector.

Furthermore, managerial staff have concerns regarding the adverse impact that hybrid working has on their employees' performance (Bloom *et al.*, 2022), although the research suggests both increased and decreased productivity outputs, particularly understudied in a specific role and unique sector.

1.2 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of seven chapters, identified as chapter 1 to chapter 7, and its workflow is illustrated in Figure 1. The structure of the study is outlined below, setting out the various chapters and their contribution to the overall dissertation.

Figure 1 Research Workflow



Chapter 1: Introduction – This chapter provides an overview of the chosen topic. It identifies what the dissertation is about, provides background information about the

topic, critically evaluates the current research within the literature review, and shares an insight into the research methodologies, summarises the key findings and outlines the overall dissertation structure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review – This chapter contains the secondary research element of the study, with the analysis of existing research on the chosen topic. The literature review captures the current research, critically evaluating the research to identify the gaps and weakness to form the basis of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Question and Objectives – This chapter clearly outlines the overarching primary research question upon which the study is based, secondary research questions developed to facilitate the primary research question and the overall objectives of the study.

Chapter 4: Primary Research Methodology – This chapter explains why a qualitative research approach was chosen, and the method chosen to collect the data. Semi-structured interviews were the chosen method to conduct the primary research element of the study, noting how the interview questions were generated and conducted. The selected professionals are introduced, and a brief overview provided on each.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis – This chapter captures the findings received from the chosen participants by way of the qualitative research approach. It presents and summarises the data recorded from the semi-structured interviews with the participants.

Chapter 6: Discussion – This chapter analyses the findings from the primary research, comparing and contrasting it to the literature review, in order to present a comprehensive analysis of the issues identified.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations – This chapter outlines the conclusions and recommendations based on the overall research carried out within the study. It reintroduces the aim and objectives and states where and to what extent they were achieved. Recommendations for further in-depth research is also included.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Secondary Research

The secondary research was comprised of a literature review in order to collect information relating to the topic. Existing research was obtained and evaluated, with reasonable thoughts and judgements made to identify the gaps (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

Creditable sources were used in order to obtain existing research, information and data to reinforce the effectiveness of the literature review process. Peer reviewed journals, articles and books published by experts constitute the literature review, providing transparent views and opinions on the topics. The critical assessment of the existing literature identified the gaps in research, in advance of the implementation of the chosen primary research methodology.

1.3.2 Primary Research

Primary research was conducted by means of the conduction of semi-structured interviews with a several preselected participants. Collected data was analysed qualitatively, by way of simultaneous collection, interpreted and a critical analysis of the findings carried out (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). Ten participants were interviewed as part of the primary data collection process, all from a specific project management organisation, with positions ranging from junior to senior management level.

1.4 Conclusion

It is evident that hybrid work regimes are increasingly popular post pandemic, although there is an underlying element of understudy in relation to leadership managerial practices surrounding hybrid working, specifically within a unique role and sector, and the opportunities and challenges associated with this approach. This chapter outlines the background of the topic, identifies the gaps in existing research, and demonstrates how the primary research was conducted. A detailed workflow demonstrates the structure and approach of the overall study.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In recent years, the shift towards hybrid working arrangements has significantly altered the role, capabilities and expectations of management across many industries. This literature review will provide a detailed analysis of contemporary management in a hybrid working regime, given the accelerated transformation of hybrid working post the COVID-19 pandemic, continuing to influence workplace norms. This research study will focus on an individual project management consultancy, specifically operating within the construction industry, to unearth common aspects and behaviours among employees and leaders embedded within a hybrid working environment. Despite extensive adoption, the success of hybrid work models varies significantly depending on company specific variables such as industry, business model, structure, culture, and managerial practices. Particularly in skilled, fast paced environments such as project management consultancies, the overall effectiveness and impact of hybrid work arrangements remains relatively underexplored. Given the nature of the role and industry, a detailed study of an individual company is considered more pertinent, to provide a robust baseline for the potential further in-depth studies to compare the reality of different companies to determine similar and/or alternative analysis and conclusions.

This literature review identifies three principal gaps within current available research. Firstly, there is limited existing research analysing hybrid working approaches within the construction industry, specifically in relation to project management organisations. Secondly, existing studies predominantly focus on broad surveys, often lacking depth and failing to capture the first-hand experiences of employees and leaders in complex roles. Thirdly, while many studies outline the risks and benefits of hybrid working, few analyse how these are perceived and managed within specific organisations. To address this gap in research, this study focuses on the feasibility, challenges, and outcomes of hybrid working and impact on workforce development, within an SME project management consultancy.

Firstly, the literature review explores the characteristics of the work environment and the types that are particularly suitable to a hybrid working structure, specifically exploring

whether project management achieves this criteria. The second exploratory aspect is to analyse how hybrid working alters the working structure and dynamics, specifically focused on how leadership practices may be implicated and updated by this developing hybrid modality, exploring the potential challenges and opportunities, and the impacts on employee development. Lastly, this literature review explores workplace productivity to understand how productivity levels react to hybrid working. Project management, specifically within the construction industry, requires extremely high levels of productivity, given the cost and programme constraints of large-scale projects. Due to the time constraints of these projects, productivity is often prioritised to meet these demands, differing from other industries where deliverables have more constant and longer durations, and the ramifications of missed milestones are not as significant.

This literature review aims to offer insights that may inform future research and practical project management approaches for similar organisations navigating a hybrid work regime, or organisations currently not operating a hybrid work approach.

2.2 Project management within the Construction Industry

The definition of a project manager is difficult to define, as the role is common among a range of industries and varies from one organisation to another (Dilawer, 2016). The construction industry is a principal sector in any economy, as it provides the physical infrastructure and facilities that enable social and economic development. Project managers are responsible for overseeing the life cycle of a project from inception through to completion (Lawal *et al.*, 2024). An efficient working environment for a construction project management organisation is crucial to enable the successful delivery of these large-scale projects. Project managers bear the responsibility for the ultimate delivery of a project, by way of coordination with all relevant project stakeholders, delivering the project in line with the overall project programme and budgetary constraints. As stated by Dr. Leonard R. Sayles, “Project managers function as bandleaders who pull together their players each a specialist, with individual score and internal rhythm. Under the leader’s direction, they all respond to the same beat” (Dilawer, 2016, p. 4).

Given the complex, collaborative and demanding nature of the role, project management organisations must maintain a highly collaborative working environment within the workplace. There is limited existing research analysing whether a hybrid working

environment can be adopted and successfully maintained whilst achieving the desired employee productivity required to deliver the required output, potentially indicating that the demands of the construction industry may be too strenuous for a hybrid working approach for project management organisations.

2.3 Influential Factors on the Feasibility of Hybrid Working

The global increase of hybrid working has been ever growing in recent years. However, modalities of hybrid working are not a reality for everyone. Hybrid working modality was widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the support of technology and communication platforms (Maříková *et al.*, 2024; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Mehta, 2021). According to Dingel and Neiman (2020), the macroeconomy is strongly related to the feasibility of working from home, as countries with more developed economies have greater work opportunities that can be conducted from home, while countries with lesser developed economies have reduced work opportunities that can be performed from home.

Cities, demographics and geographical characteristics are also relevant factors that have an influence on the working shift modality. In addition to these factors, the specific type of industry is more likely identified as the main factor, as it is highly influential in the work routine. Usually, jobs that can be performed from home are associated with improved wages and increased levels of education (Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Emanuel and Harrington, 2023; Asgari *et al.*, 2022; Dingel and Neiman, 2020). Employer type, and size are additional elements that influence the specific job arrangement (Maříková *et al.*, 2024; Barrero *et al.*, 2023).

Various characteristics can facilitate the successful performance of hybrid working. They are - analytical, computer intensive and intensely focused activities (Asgari *et al.*, 2022). However, as Bloom *et al.* (2022) exemplify with the automotive industry in the U.S, whilst within the same industry, carrying out similar activities, companies differ with their hybrid working strategy, with 0% of employees working in a hybrid approach for Tesla, whilst 45% of Honda's employees work hybrid. This stark contrast in range indicates that the business model choice is critical in determining a company's hybrid working arrangements. Managerial practices, workplace culture, organizational structure, stigma and role design are considerations that assist a company in defining their business

model, to assist with designing a model that aligns with a company's culture, capabilities and goals (Purba *et al.*, 2024; Krajčík *et al.*, 2023).

The existing literature suggests that there are several factors that influence the feasibility, and successful deployment of a hybrid working arrangement. Given that each company has a unique set of variables, it is prudent to identify and understand the particularity of each individual company, to determine a successful hybrid working arrangement. Based on the wide range of variables that are applicable for various industries, the assessment of the set up and particularities of one specific project management consultancy is required to understand how external and internal factors impact the feasibility of hybrid working, providing material to understand the specific reality to be explored further.

2.4 Hybrid Working Dynamic and Patterns

According to Needle and Mallia (2021), the layout of an office is an influential element on the team's collaboration. In addition, Emanuel *et al.* (2023) state that the positioning of the workforce in the office has a strong influence on the team's relationship, dynamic and performance. Working from home escalates this theory, having a substantial impact on the team's dynamic. It is prudent for a company to reflect on how their workforce is reorganised and managed according to their shift in a hybrid working arrangement. According to Gibbs *et al.* (2023), hybrid working arrangements require specific attention to planning, as it is crucial to coordinate office working routines, to optimise a collaborative environment for improved performance of activities, such as strategic meetings, discussions, presentations, bonding occasions with teammates and clients, mentoring, training and creative processes (Buła *et al.*, 2024; Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Krajčík *et al.*, 2023; Santillan *et al.*, 2023).

According to Gibbs *et al.* (2023), working from home reduces available "focus time", as employees are constantly interrupted by short meetings and/or other direct communications. However, in contrast, many employees consider it easier to focus at home if they have a suitable quiet area available. The opportunity of focusing on hybrid working is supported as hybrid working provides the opportunity to work on individual effort and intensity focused activities such as coding or descriptive writing tasks (Deepa and Dharshini, 2024; Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Krajčík *et al.*, 2023; Yang *et al.*, 2023; Bloom *et al.*, 2022).

It is crucial for a company to continuously update their business model and approach to the contemporary internal and external demand. According to Byczyk (2024), the managerial approach has been transformed, migrating from a technical skills focus to a more human oriented attitude. In addition to management practices, organizations also must invest in a new technique of working, through means of information technology, tools, trainings and policies to optimize effectiveness of working from home (Emanuel and Harrington, 2023; Gibbs *et al.*, 2023; Guidetti *et al.*, 2022).

Business managers were highly impacted with the pandemic (Maříková *et al.*, 2024). Facing the abrupt change in landscape presented by the COVID-19 lockdown, managers were required to update their management practices from one day to the next (Jurníčková *et al.*, 2024). Management in a virtual set up can be extremely complex, having an extensive list of challenges; monitoring team effort is one of the challenges that can be highlighted within the management process (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020).

The evidence maintains the fact that hybrid working alters the working pattern of the workforce within an organisation. This outcome is common across many sectors, however, the evidence remains unclear when analysed within a specific unique sector such as the construction industry.

2.5 Identification of Hybrid Working Tendencies

One of the fundamental features of hybrid working is working shift flexibility. The structure of shifts throughout the working week varies according to specificities and employee needs. According to Bloom *et al.* (2022), a hybrid working regime reduces the hours worked from home but increases the number of hours worked on weekends and office days. Further findings are the reduction of non-worked days due to sick leave, and holidays (Maříková *et al.*, 2024; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Bloom *et al.*, 2022). In addition, employees tend to coordinate their business trips with office working days, to avoid compromising their remote working days.

Gibbs *et al.* (2023) reinforce the reduction of non-worked days but also identify an alternative working week structure. The article outlines that, in general, employees prolong their working hours when working from home, by way of earlier shift starts and later shift endings. In a more detailed analysis, it was established that these hours vary

according to the employee tenure. The more experienced the employee, the larger the parcel of hours worked. It is believed that this is due to additional managerial duties.

Given the nature of the project management role within the construction industry, physical attendance on site is required in order to successfully oversee projects. Bloom *et al.* (2022) highlight a potential flaw with this requirement, as their findings demonstrated that employee visits to external contacts and clients reduced dramatically on remote working days, however, they state that the number of weekly employee visits remained unchanged as visits rose on office days. This approach may be suitable for a wide range of industries, however, construction site visits tend not be flexible, potentially not aligning with employee remote working days.

It is evident from the findings that employees are committed to working whilst in a remote environment, however, there is little evidence from a managerial perspective to reinforce this. Furthermore, employee tendencies to coordinate working trips with office working days is unclear, when analysed from a management perspective. Given the findings, the increased complexity of a managerial role is evident in a hybrid working arrangement.

2.6 Subjective Views of Productivity

Productivity is said to be a contemporary obsession, and this core concept can be seen through different optics, and its different aspects are extensively discussed by specialists, due to its complexity (Haynes, 2020). In order to illustrate this work, we will consider the concept of productivity brought by Madigu and Gil-Alana (2021) as an optimized output with unvaried input.

The main nervousness of a leader is that they may lose control of factors such as the availability and performance of their teams (Krajčík *et al.*, 2023). One of the main concerns of working from home is that it could be detrimental to performance and innovation (Bloom *et al.*, 2022). However, recent attempts to measure productivity have provided conflicting results, as some demonstrate an increase in productivity and others portray a decrease in productivity.

Bloom *et al.* (2022) identified a small increase in productivity, whilst in contrast, Gibbs *et al.* (2023) recognised that productivity output is not affected by hybrid working. However, the study proves that employees' efforts to accomplish their activities is greater, resulting in additional hours worked to deliver the same outcome. Meanwhile, Emanuel and

Harrington (2023) have identified a decrease in work output and quality, highlighting and reinforcing the drawbacks of working from home for the development of junior employees.

As exemplified, the impact of hybrid working on productivity is not a universal agreement, and it is important to execute an analysis beyond productivity alone. Haynes (2020) questions if productivity should be the target, especially when talking about humans, not machines. The author invites managers to look through other perspectives for traits such as employee satisfaction as an output.

From a management perspective, Bloom *et al.* (2022) identified that managers are less likely to work from home due to a sustained reduction in effectiveness, and a forecasted reduction in productivity. The research suggests that management are more sceptical about the negative impact of hybrid working than the results suggest. A lack of detailed sector specific managerial views on the impact of hybrid working on productivity is apparent.

Although being the priority performance benchmark sought by managers, productivity must be assessed in combination with talent retention and employee satisfaction, as these elements directly impact productivity levels.

2.7 Opportunities of Hybrid Working

A pertinent feature of a hybrid working regime is working hours and workspace flexibility, providing the potential for employees to adjust their shifts according to their specific restrictions and preferences, ultimately furnishing employees with greater autonomy to coordinate their daily routine (Deepa and Dharshini, 2024; Maříková *et al.*, 2024; Purba *et al.*, 2024; Gibbs *et al.*, 2023; Krajčík *et al.*, 2023; Beno, 2021). According to Bloom *et al.* (2022), employees value the possibility of hybrid working more than a wage increase of 4% to 8% to return to the workplace.

Employees that have the availability of hybrid working directly relate this opportunity to an improved work-life balance (Maříková *et al.*, 2024; Purba *et al.*, 2024; Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Gibbs *et al.*, 2023; Santillan *et al.*, 2023; Yang *et al.*, 2023). Studies directly correlate with this theory, proving that job satisfaction is greatly enhanced with a hybrid working environment (Deepa and Dharshini, 2024; Purba *et al.*, 2024; Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Gibbs *et al.*, 2023; Santillan *et al.*, 2023;

Aksoy *et al.*, 2022; Bloom *et al.*, 2022), and increased employee satisfaction and an improved work-life balance provoke further positive reactions, as a result, leading to a more refined workplace. This principle is reinforced as employee productivity is improved, when employees are content with their workplace (Maříková *et al.*, 2024; Ballet *et al.*, 2023; Mehta, 2021). This position is strengthened by Oswald *et al.* (2015) who ascertained that productivity levels increase by 12%, when employee well-being is prioritised and enhanced.

Employee satisfaction has an immediate relationship with an increase in morale, enabling a company to attract talent from a broader talent pool (Brady and Prentice, 2025; Maříková *et al.*, 2024; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023), as well as guaranteeing talent retention (Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Bloom *et al.*, 2022). In addition to employee well-being, a hybrid working structure can lend itself to employer benefits in the form of reduced office workspace requirements, leading to a reduction in overall workspace costs, and a decrease of other diverse labor costs (Deepa and Dharshini, 2024; Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Krajčík *et al.*, 2023; Nemteanu and Dabija, 2023; Bloom *et al.*, 2022). Collectively, both employers and employees can profit from a hybrid working structure by way of efficient timesaving, given the reduction in commuting and preparation required for physical work attendance (Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Gibbs *et al.*, 2023; Krajčík *et al.*, 2023; Bloom *et al.*, 2022).

Although the current research demonstrates the many opportunities hybrid working offers for a broad range of industries, they are not industry specific, meaning the evidence does beg the question 'do these opportunities apply to a project management environment?' Given the fast paced, team orientated nature of the construction industry, which is unique to other industries, it is prudent to analyse the challenges applicable to this specific industry, and to determine if these opportunities are all relevant. At first glance, the research can be misleading due to the considerable number of opportunities, however, there are a number of challenges that face a hybrid approach.

2.8 Challenges of Hybrid Working

Haas (2022) has produced a well synthesized analysis of the five main challenges of full remote working – (i) teamwork coordination, (ii) social and emotional connections among team members, (iii) nurturing creativity, (iv) organizational culture, and (v)

communication. Likewise, Gibbs *et al.* (2023) state that employee communication, collaboration and coordination are more difficult with a virtual environment, specifically in an environment where these elements are paramount. These challenges correlate directly with a project management environment within the construction industry. Brady and Prentice (2025) support these findings, although focus more so on the social aspects, identifying that hybrid working reduces face-to-face contact within the workplace with colleagues and management staff, leading to loneliness and disconnection from their associated team.

Additionally, hybrid working is a working dynamic that presents the risk of mixing work-life with private life (Maříková *et al.*, 2024; Escobedo *et al.*, 2023; Nemteanu and Dabija, 2023; Yang *et al.*, 2023; Mehta, 2021). This aspect can be a downgrade for personal life, with employees being available for longer hours, unable to leave the 'work-life', and reduced productivity as employees may be not available for their leaders during the expected hours. Furthermore, the expectation of longer working hours, greater distractions at home, and reduced boundaries between work and home life can lead to increased employee stress levels (Brady and Prentice, 2025). Nemteanu and Dabija (2023) reinforce this theory, stating that working from home can impact the boundaries between work and family responsibilities, also weakening employee boundaries with regards to work interruptions, colleague disturbances and working hours. Due to the need for extreme communication and collaboration within a project management environment, these challenges require further in-depth analysis to determine the extent. The evidence of opportunities and challenges of hybrid working are broad and not job and sector specific, highlighting that a gap exists in areas such as project management consultancy within the construction industry, which has a specific set of characteristics and traits that make it unique. Outcomes have been under studied from a leadership management perspective with regard to enhancing, in particular, employee satisfaction, in addition to productivity, organisational culture and communication.

2.9 Implications for Professional Development

One of the biggest concerns of leaders is that hybrid working has the potential to negatively effect professional development. Face to face relations provide an environment for networking and dissemination of corporate culture (Emanuel *et al.*,

2023; Gibbs *et al.*, 2023). It is particularly crucial for new employees to prioritise their days in the office workplace to experience the organizational culture and atmosphere (Buła *et al.*, 2024).

Proximity affects positive mentorship. Emanuel *et al.* (2023) identified that, when located in the same building, engineers receive 22% more comments on their work, ultimately reflecting on the quality of their work. In addition to work improvement and skills development, the physical distance also reduces employees bonding with leaders (Emanuel and Harrington, 2023).

When hybrid working, employees have less exclusive time with their leaders. Time typically used for feedback, coaching, mentoring and other activities that contribute for their development and performance is replaced by increased group meetings (Emanuel and Harrington, 2023; Gibbs *et al.*, 2023). This dynamic can also impact negatively on promotion plans (Emanuel and Harrington, 2023). It is prudent to coordinate as a team, to ensure that the office working days allow teams to reap the benefit of the atmosphere and face-to-face contact (Bloom *et al.*, 2022).

The decision for employees to attend the workplace and when to attend, has an impact on the whole organization, but specifically the learning process of employees with a lower tenure, as employees with a lower tenure are highly impacted by miscoordination. Junior employees' development is limited when their mentor or senior does not attend the office in tandem, as junior employees receive less feedback when hybrid working. Junior employees have enhanced development when networking, mentoring and training (Barrero *et al.*, 2023; Emanuel *et al.*, 2023; Linos, 2016). The benefits of this relationship are illustrated with the fact that when surrounded by more educated and higher paid colleagues, employees tend to have a superior wage growth (Herkenhoff *et al.*, 2024). In addition, the team lack the opportunity of "productive accidents" provided by in person interaction within the workplace (Gibbs *et al.*, 2023). Employees with extended experience in a specific company appear to suffer less with the adaptation to hybrid working rather than those with greater experience in the industry (Gibbs *et al.*, 2023).

The findings suggest that employee professional development is negatively impacted with a hybrid working environment, specifically more so at junior level. The evidence is a broad perception of many industries, not representing management views within a specific sector and role. The required for connection between junior staff and

management is apparent and is common across a wide range of sectors. This study will delve into the managerial views of project managers' development within the unique construction industry.

2.10 Gap in Existing Research

Based on this literature review, the opportunity of developing a study focused on complex activities within a specific unique industry, involving high-skilled jobs and managerial responsibilities was identified. It was observed that existing research has covered the topic in a broader approach, lacking role and sector specific case studies. Much of the existing research is widespread with regards to employee tenure, rather than managerial views and perceptions, whilst managerial views on tangible employee productivity outputs and experience in a virtual environment is largely unexplored.

In addition to this, most of the studies focus on what are the risks and opportunities of hybrid working. However, there remains a gap for in-depth research that explores how these challenges and opportunities are perceived and managed by both employees and leaders within a specific sector, namely project management within the construction industry.

Recognising the limitations, and aiming to capture the required data, this study aims to conduct a detailed investigation within a specific company. As demonstrated, the variables that influence hybrid working are numerous and can lead to vastly different scenarios. As a result, this research will be limited in scope and will not attempt to generalize findings across the broader industry. Instead, the focus will be on developing a nuanced and comprehensive case study for a specific role within a specific sector.

2.11 Conclusion

It can be said that, due to the re-arrangement in working regimes initiated by the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid working arrangements have reached new heights. Facing this abrupt change, now called the “new normal”, managers, employees, and academics have been working on understanding the impact of this new reality and the restructuring required in order to optimise this work modality, seemingly applicable for companies that have already adopted a hybrid approach.

It is crucial to explore this contemporary topic, which affects an expressive parcel of high-skilled companies, understanding the environment, workforce and singularities. Based on that, this study aims to thoroughly explore how leaders and employees have been adapting to the management style when required to operate within a hybrid working environment, and what their general perceptions are, focusing on a specific industry sector and role.

A hybrid working strategy is not an all-encompassing solution for every company, however, it is a potential option for an improved workplace due to the improvements in employees' well-being, satisfaction, and work-life balance, labour costs reduction, talent prospection and retention, and timesaving. Considering hybrid working is not a universal solution, as each company has its own set of variables that affect a hybrid working arrangement, it is crucial to try and isolate these principal variables to determine the feasibility, and effectiveness of hybrid working. Throughout this research study, a specific project management consultancy organisation was isolated to analyse the attitudes, and perceptions of a hybrid work regime within the same company, maintaining common values, culture, activities, and industry characteristics to establish accurate results.

Facing the challenge of assessing accurate productivity levels, this study focuses on the pillars of behaviour related to managerial practices from leaders and their teams, capturing widespread perspectives from a range of role levels and tenures. Based on the opportunity of study identified within the literature review, a lack of detailed sector specific research based on a specific company was identified. Given this gap in research, this study will employ qualitative research, based on semi-structured interviews, focused on one specific company. That said, however, this research approach has a potential gap of limited scope, as the industry as a whole is not captured, lacking further interviews with a wider range of organisations due to limited time restrictions.

3 Research Question and Objectives

3.1 Primary Research Question

“What is entailed in a contemporary management role within a hybrid regime of work in an SME project management consultancy within the construction industry?”

3.2 Secondary Research Question

To reinforce the overarching research question, a number of secondary research questions were developed and subsequently investigated by means of an extensive literature review. The literature review aims to provide data on the research questions, identifying research gaps and facilitating the delivery of the research objectives. The findings from the literature review formed the basis for the primary research collection, through means of semi-structured interviews.

- What are the characteristics of the working environment that are suitable to a hybrid working structure, specifically exploring whether project management achieves this criteria within the construction sector?
- Does hybrid working change the working structure and dynamics, and how leadership practices may be implicated and altered by this?
- What are the challenges and opportunities of hybrid working?
- Is the productivity output of project managers impacted by utilising a hybrid regime of work?

3.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives are interlinked with the overarching primary research question and secondary research questions. The objectives are:

- To establish if the working environment of a project manager within a construction consultancy is suitable for a hybrid regime of work.
- To explore the changes in working structure caused by a hybrid regime and identify the managerial practices required to facilitate the change.
- To determine the opportunities and challenges of hybrid working.
- To assess the extent of productivity change with project managers when working in a hybrid regime.

4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the chosen qualitative research approach, and various alternative ways in which qualitative research can be conducted to gain further insight and research, some of which were considered as methods for this study.

Given the limitations identified within the literature review, it was concluded that the most suitable method was to conduct semi-structured interviews with industry professionals to obtain their views and opinions in order to bridge the gaps of knowledge identified within the literature and to achieve the overall research objectives. The approach chosen follows a similar line as the research developed by Buła *et al.* (2024), that conducts explanatory qualitative research to investigate a topic without an extended quantity of previous research.

Interview participants are characterised where possible, considering anonymity at the forefront, furthermore, the approach to the generation of interview questions and the conduction of interviews are summarised.

4.2 Qualitative Research Overview

Qualitative research is defined as a methodology used for the collection and interpretation of data. A qualitative research approach aims to understand first hand beliefs, experiences, behaviour and interactions as a humanistic approach, in a non-numeric fashion (Pathak *et al.*, 2013). Qualitative research involves the collection of data by way of verbal, visual or textual data. Verbal data is generally recorded by way of audio, and subsequently transcribed into text, whilst textual data is collated as working notes during interviews, or from written documents or text. Lastly, visual data can be identified from video, digital images or drawings to form collected data (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

It was evident from the literature review that there is limited existing research analysing hybrid working approaches within the construction industry, specifically in relation to project management organisations. Furthermore, existing research focuses on widespread data, often lacking depth and failing to capture first hand experiences of

employees and leaders in complex roles. Lastly, while many studies outline the advantages and disadvantages of hybrid working, few analyse how these are perceived and managed within specific organisations, particularly in relation to management staff.

In order to expand on the issues extracted from the literature review and to develop the research further, a series of interviews with industry professionals were conducted.

4.3 Qualitative Research Methods

There are several suitable procedures and approaches available to conduct qualitative research. Many of these approaches take a naturalistic approach, where the research physically interviews the chosen participants (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). Given the data sought, the following three qualitative methods were considered for this research.

- Focus Groups
- Questionnaires
- Semi-Structured Interviews

4.3.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups can be conducted both virtually and face to face. Focus groups take a similar approach to semi-structured interviews, however, they differ in that the interviewer asks questions and records the responses of a group of participants. Generally, the number of participants range from between 4 and 12 and are selected by way of non-probability sampling. The benefits of focus groups are the possibility of collective knowledge from the chosen group of individuals, however, if in depth-detail is required on a complex matter, a smaller group is required (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). Focus groups were dismissed for this research as the coordination of participants and the lengthy availability of participants required to collect the data was deemed a challenged.

4.3.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are another method of data collection and tend to be most commonly used for descriptive or explanatory research topics. Questionnaires are most effective when developed with regulated questions for all participants but are not as effective for exploratory research where a large volume of loosely constructed questions are provided

(Saunders *et al.*, 2023). This primary research option was considered but decided against, due to the risk of inaccurate data stemming from poorly structured or worded questions (Dillman and Bowker, 2000).

4.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are generated to address specific questions based on issues identified from previous research, in this case a literature review, whilst enabling interviewee participants to elaborate on the topics of study (Galletta, 2013). The structure of semi-structured interviews fluctuate depending on the topic and participants. Semi-structured interviews are based on a series of pre-prepared questions in order to form the basis of a discussion between the interviewer and the participant. The order of the pre-prepared questions may alter throughout the interview depending on the discussion and the information flow between both parties. This method provides the interviewer with the option of investigating a participant's response further, if the interviewer recognises value in the participant expanding on their initial response (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

Given the limitations identified from the secondary research, and the requirement to obtain in-depth data from managerial staff in a project management organisation within a specific sector, semi-structured interviews were chosen due to the explanatory nature of the study, with the aim of understanding participant's decisions, attitudes and thoughts (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). This research method adopts a similar approach to Buła *et al.* (2024), as it was deemed a suitable method of gathering data, through in depth interviews with active hybrid working groups.

4.4 Design of Interview Questions

Effective semi-structured interviews are directly related to the generation of a suitable set of questions, carefully worded, capturing the research topic, whilst avoiding any pre-empted or new content, that can risk skewing participants' responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

The questions were formulated in an open-ended style, allowing for the potential of additional probing questions if the interviewer required a further focus to the participants'

response, for the purpose of gaining as much information as possible by allowing the participants to elaborate on each topic (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

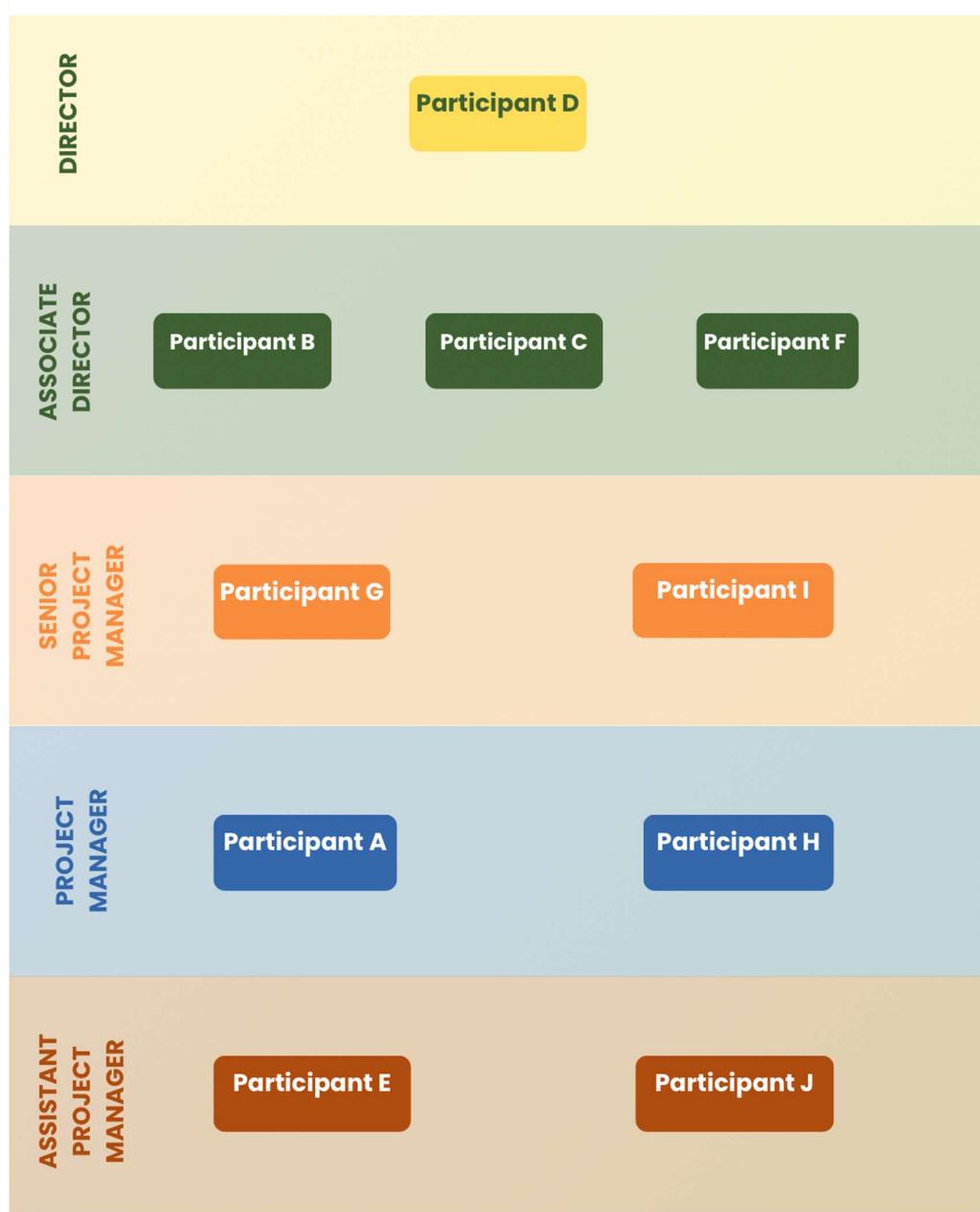
The questions were developed based on the key issues and topics identified from the literature review. Twenty questions were composed based on the identified research gaps. Each question was carefully structured, phrased and tested in a mock interview conducted with an external participant to avoid any uncertainty and confusion during the interviews. A brief explanation of the overarching topic was provided to the participants prior to the interviews, however, participants did not have visibility of the questions in advance of the interview.

4.5 Participants

The participants selected all hold positions as project managers at various levels within the construction industry, in order to provide a broad sample capturing an authentic picture of the organisation. All participants possess widespread knowledge and views on the specific topics and limitations identified within the literature review. The selected participants are actively engaging with project management activities within a hybrid working environment, whilst delivering and managing largescale construction projects.

In total, ten participants based in Ireland were interviewed from one specific organisation. Of the ten, one occupies the position of Director, three occupy positions as Associate Directors, two maintain Senior Project Manager status, two maintain positions as Project Managers and two have the role of Assistant Project Managers, as illustrated bellow in Figure 2:

Figure 2 - Company's organisational chart



Participants are referred to as participant A - J to maintain confidentiality and anonymity amongst participants, and their details available in this study are limited to industry, gender, position and team size. All participants were provided with a consent form prior to the execution of interviews (see Appendix B), to alleviate participant anxiety or uncertainty (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

In advance of engaging with the participants, a mock interview was carried out with an external participant, occupying a senior management role, independent to the specific organisation selected, in order to ensure a thorough evaluation of the interview was undertaken. This preparation for the official data collection was intended to define best practices and identify adjustments prior to carrying out the process, eliminating biases and improving and focusing the research at an early stage (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

4.6 Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed, with a direct link to the main gaps of the research identified within the literature review. The pre-determined questions consisted of standard, structured worded questions, although they were open-style questions, to allow for elaboration or expansion on the topic during the interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). Questions may promote further questions during the interview, which can be captured within the data, and subsequently transcribed.

Questions that suggest a level of bias or provide the participants with prompts were dismissed due to the potential guiding of a participant's responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

The same issues were applied to all questions and interviews carried out to gain transparent and consistent results from the various participants, with questions adopting a thematic approach, and being explanatory in make-up (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). The specificities of question wording were altered slightly depending on the participant's position.

Interview questions are as follows:

1. What age are you, how long have you been working for this company and what is your current position?
2. Do you have the option of a hybrid work regime in the organisation? If so, how many days do you work remotely in a standard working week?
3. Can you briefly describe the role of a project manager within a construction related organisation?

4. Is hybrid working a common phenomenon within the industry?
5. Given the collaborative environment of the construction industry, does a hybrid approach disrupt team collaboration within the workplace?
6. Given the collaborative environment of the construction industry, does a hybrid approach disrupt team collaboration within other stakeholders (ex: clients, design team, contractors)
7. As a manager, is the hybrid working regime within the company dependant on the tenure / position/time in the company of that specific employee? If so, why?
8. What do you find are the opportunities to a hybrid working regime? How are these managed and optimised within your team and organisation?
9. What do you find are the challenges to a hybrid working regime? How are these managed and mitigated within your team and organisation?
10. From a managerial perspective, do you find that employee productivity is impacted when working remotely in a hybrid regime? How do you measure the productivity?
11. From a personal perspective, do you think your productivity is impacted when working remotely in a hybrid regime?
12. From a personal perspective, is a hybrid working approach something you would like to maintain going forward within the organisation?
13. If yes, would you consider an opportunity in a company that does not offer hybrid working regime?
14. From a managerial perspective, is a hybrid working approach something you would like to maintain going forward?
15. Do you believe employee satisfaction and work-life balance are increased or decreased when given the opportunity to operate within a hybrid regime?

16. As a leader, do you believe a hybrid working regime negatively impacts the professional development of employees at all levels? If so, are there any levels in particular? And new employees (even in higher levels)
17. As a leader, do you believe employee remote working days impact on site / client interface, with employees planning physical attendance around their in-office days?
18. If you have been working for the company pre COVID-19, did the company change the shifts to a hybrid working regime during the COVID-19 lockdown? If yes, have you noticed or implemented different managerial practices to facilitate this new working regime?
19. As a leader, do you believe that an employee that attends the office less often would have lower opportunities of career progression?
20. Does the organisation have policies to improve workplace culture to entice employees more often to the office and improve employee relationships?

4.7 Data Analysis

During the interviews, data was recorded for the duration of the interview by way of an audio device, following agreement from the participants in line with the conditions of the interview consent form provided (see Appendix B). Thereafter, following the completion of interviews, the audio recordings were converted to transcriptions by way of AI software, as detailed in AI Acknowledgement Supplement. A detailed analyses and correction of the produced transcribes was then carried out, to ensure complete alignment with the audio recordings, due to the various minor imperfections assumed by the AI software. The interview transcribes were then subsequently analysed using the inductive thematic approach. This approach aims to facilitate the analysis of large amounts of qualitative data without defining patterns in advance, identifying main thematic for further exploration. It is expected that this model supports the logical analysis of extended information without losing the richness and robustness of the research (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). For the purpose of this study, the transcribes were then condensed into summaries for the individual participants, for ease of referencing when reading this study, given the extensive length of the interview transcribes. Please refer to Appendix C

for the summary interviews. Transcribes were archived to an external cloud platform and are available upon request.

4.8 Ethics

The National College of Ireland applies stringent guidelines and considerations with regards to ethics for research studies. Prior approval was sought and received from the college, by way of the Ethical Review Application Form, submitted alongside the research proposal for this study. Please refer to Appendix A for the completed ethics form. In order to protect the identity of the participants and the associated organisation in question, the participants will be simply identified as Participant A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J. Interview consent forms were provided to all participants in advance of interviews taking place for their agreement (see Appendix B). All participants were satisfied and provided agreement to participate in the research. In addition, close consideration was attributed to the guidelines of “Ethics for Researchers” (European Commission, 2013) whilst conducting this study.

4.9 Conducting Interviews

Competent interviewers extract the most from their participants, pursuing robust responses from their interviewees, whilst monitoring the dynamic of the interview, recognising how their questions influence the quality of the collaborative discussion and the responses provided by the participant (Ivey, 2023)

Each interview was conducted individually, over the course of a five-day working week. Seven of the ten interviews were conducted as one-to-one face-to-face interviews, whilst the remaining three interviews were conducted by way of one-to-one online interviews via the Microsoft Teams platform.

Given that the anonymity of the participants was paramount, all interviews were recorded by way of audio device. In addition, to maintaining interviewee anonymity, all interview circumstantial information remained independent to recorded data, solely linked for analysis purposes post interviews by way of a specific number referencing system (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, the use of notetaking can demonstrate the interviewer’s intent and purpose to the participant, whilst assisting the interviewer

maintain consistent concentration throughout the questions and responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2023).

As highlighted by Saunders *et al.* (2023), the physical appearance of the interviewer has the potential to influence the participant prior to the interview commencing, leading to unreliable or swayed responses provided. In light of this, a smart casual dress code was adopted to maintain a similar standard to the participants, particularly as the face-to-face interviews were conducted within the organisation's workplace.

4.10 Timeline

This research study was conducted and primary research gathered during the period of 21-March-2025 and completed on the 15-August-2025.

4.11 Limitations

A limitation to this research is the scale of sample analysis. Given the findings from the literature review, it was evident that a gap in a specific sector, within a specific role existed. Whilst this study captures exactly that, an expansion of this study would be a secondary similar company within the same sector to provide further richness to the data. This can be viewed as a limitation, however, this provides opportunities for future research.

4.12 Conclusion

Chapter 4 introduced the chosen and executed approach of primary research methodology for this study. It was decided that a qualitative research approach executed by way of semi-structured interviews would provide the most suitable approach to gain the views of the chosen participants, given the in-depth data sought.

The chapter identifies the selected participants and their limited credentials to maintain anonymity and provides an insight into how the interviews were developed and conducted. The findings and results from the participants are presented in the following chapter.

5 Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five reports the results of the study, presenting the qualitative data collected by way of the methodology as set out in the previous chapter (Bui, 2014). As previously stated in Chapter Four, the qualitative research data was obtained by conducting semi-structured interviews, with participants responding to the pre-determined questions, providing their views on each of the topics.

In order to accurately gather the information during the interviews, each interview was recorded by way of an audio device and subsequently transcribed upon collection. In order to maintain participant anonymity, the participants remain anonymous throughout the dissertation.

Each semi-structured interview carried out was recorded with the full consent of the participants (see Appendix B). The interviews were then subsequently transcribed to facilitate the comprehensive analysis of the data and findings, with an aim of contrasting with the secondary research.

Due to the methodological approach and limited resources available for this research, this study carries limited scale of sample analysis. While a more expressive sample of participants would bring a more accurate perspective of the industry and the role.

Given that one specific organisation was selected, a common trait amongst all interviews is that the organisation provides all employees with the possibility of a hybrid working regime. Although this approach is provided by the organisation, there is a stark variance in the approaches adopted by the chosen participants.

5.2 Perceived productivity change on hybrid working regime

The results of this research paper confirms that there are multiple views on employee productivity output working within a hybrid regime, and a definitive ‘one size fits all’ direction is non-existent.

A common theme within both the primary and secondary research is that employee productivity varies drastically depending on the research. Whilst Bloom *et al.* (2022), Gibbs *et al.* (2023) and Emanuel and Harrington (2023) all have contrasting views on productivity impact when working from home in a hybrid regime, a similar trend was captured within the primary research. Participants A, C, E, I and J maintained a stance that both from a personal perspective and from a team perspective, productivity levels are unchanged, however, in contrast, Participants B and D stated that productivity is increased. Participants F, G and H took a different approach, all reporting that productivity is reduced when working from home within a hybrid regime. In addition, this principle is reinforced by the views of Participants J and D, who identified junior employees as potential candidates for a reduction in productivity levels when working from home. The fact that each participant maintains a different position, it was evident that there was no trend to lend itself to show that certain positions maintain the same productivity levels, indicating that productivity output is purely dependant on the specific individual and their attitude, capabilities and methods of working.

The disagreement surrounding productivity was already expected, and, according to Barrero *et al.* (2023), even in the same industry and company, factors such as managerial styles and workers' specificities impact the outcome of an uneven perception. In addition to this, Gibbs *et al.* (2023) recognizes that is notoriously difficult to measure productivity for high skilled jobs as is observed by Participant D who affirms that "*There's no science behind us it's probably just perception*". Participant F points out that managers could check the amount of e-mails when working from home vs when working from the office, however it can be said that this data does not cover the whole complexity of the role and, as seen in the Literature Review, the structure of the working week is adapted according to the place the employees are working from. Potentially working on individual effort and intensity focused activities from home.

5.3 Opportunities and challenges for the organization

The evidence from this research paper demonstrates that there are many opportunities and challenges associated with a hybrid work regime. This evidence suggests that the outcome of hybrid work is job and sector specific and that a gap exists in areas such as

project management which has a specific set of characteristics and traits that make it unique. All participants confirmed that there are both opportunities and challenges when working within a hybrid regime. The principal overarching opportunity reported among all participants is the increased work life balance a hybrid regime provides. The fact that all participants at all levels within the organisation provided a similar view, indicates that this is the main driver and attraction of a hybrid regime. This direction evidently correlates to the existing literature, such as Maříková *et al.* (2024), Purba *et al.* (2024), Barrero *et al.* (2023), Escobedo *et al.* (2023), Gibbs *et al.* (2023), Santillan *et al.* (2023), and Yang *et al.* (2023) who all identified the same outcome from their research findings.

In addition, Participants A and D noted that working from home in a hybrid regime can provide greater 'focus time' for descriptive writing or reporting tasks, while Participant G highlighted a hybrid regime can increase talent acquisition as many applicants note hybrid working as a want or a requirement. This body of research points to an interesting link between an improved work life balance and employee satisfaction, as there was a unanimous view from the participants that a hybrid regime improves employee satisfaction at all levels.

Conversely, all participants noted challenges surrounding a hybrid regime. Participants A, B, D, E and G followed a common theme, noting that internal collaboration is impacted whilst working from home in a hybrid regime, with Participants D and E specifically noting collaboration challenges with junior staff. By comparison the research gathered correlates directly with Gibbs *et al.* (2023) with regards to reduced communication and collaboration when working from home. Furthermore, Participants D and J reported that it impacts junior staff's learning and development, while Participants F, G and H noted that the potential negative increase on productivity as a challenge. Alternative challenges were recorded by Participant H who advised that incorrect IT hardware can impact efficiency remotely, while Participant C reported that hybrid working increases the opportunity for time consuming meetings reducing efficiency. It may, therefore, be deduced that reduced collaboration and productivity are the main challenges faced by project managers within the industry.

Despite the challenges posed, the evidence from this research paper shows a widespread acceptance of a hybrid regime from project managers, as all ten participants would like to maintain hybrid working going forward. Conversely, Participants A, B, C, D, F, H and J confirmed that they would consider an alternative role that does not offer hybrid working, however, they crucially advised that hybrid working would be a principal consideration in the final decision. Meanwhile, Participants E, G and I reported that they would outright refuse an alternative role if hybrid working was not on offer. Surprisingly, participants who would refuse an alternative role hold junior to senior positions, so the evidence does not suggest that this decision is age or position related. The research of Emanuel and Harrington (2023) and Bloom *et al.* (2022) confirms that similar to the research findings in this study, employees value a hybrid regime more than an increase in renumeration.

In addition to collaboration being noted as a challenge as a result of hybrid working, during the course of the research, the link between collaboration as a challenge and the evidence when viewing collaboration within project management within the unique construction industry is apparent. The evidence from this research, demonstrates that a widespread acceptance from project managers that internal collaboration within the workplace is negatively impacted, as reported by Participants A, B, D, E, G, H and J. Interestingly, both Participants E and J who occupy junior positions, believe that collaboration for junior staff specifically is more difficult as senior staff are less accessible. Emanuel *et al.* (2023) confirm in their study that physical proximity is directly related to the increase of feedback and mentoring, and the distance between employees can impact their professional development.

Participants C and I noted no significant impact on team collaboration. Contrastingly, Participants B, D, F and J, reported that collaboration with external stakeholders is improved as communication lines with clients, design teams and stakeholders are more accessible by way of virtual platforms, reducing the need to physically travel and attend other workplaces. As highlighted by Participant F, it is not just a matter of reducing traveling time, and optimizing agendas, but there is also a cultural change where people are more understanding “*now people are able to join (meetings) online, cut out to travel,*

and then they can just... they're more flexible, and people are more understanding as well."

Participants A, C, E, G and I suggested that collaboration with external stakeholders remains unchanged. An outlier is Participant H, who believes that optically, clients favour when project managers are working within the workplace. Although Participant D stated "*You can collaborate much easier, which is probably not good, because people can become over reliant on you. To constantly "look at this", "look at that", "look at the other". Whereas five years ago, you'd come out to site once every two weeks and you'd get you all your issues.*" Highlighting that collaboration with external teams is improved, this participant noted that project managers can become too contactable, and therefore, over-relied upon, reflecting on a new challenge for project managers to administrate this new increased demand. This reality was pointed out by Gibbs *et al.* (2023) signlalling that focus time is reduced as employees are more interrupted by meetings and calls.

The results of the research confirm that hybrid working does in fact improve or maintain collaboration with external stakeholders, bringing new challenges but certainly not impacting it negatively.

A significant finding of this research paper concurs with the research undertaken by Barrero *et al.* (2023), Emanuel *et al.* (2023), and Linos (2016) who assert that junior employees' development and learning is limited when coordination of office days with seniors is not done correctly. This study provides additional evidence that junior employees' development is negatively impacted, as all participants reported that junior employees' development is negatively impacted when working within a hybrid regime, due to reduced time spent with their seniors in the workplace and difficulties in communicating with seniors when working from home. It became clear that employees at all levels reinforced the impact on junior members of staff. Interestingly, Participant I stands out in this regard as although a senior employee, they do not point out a negative impact on development at any level. This may be due to the fact that this participant has been working within a hybrid regime pre COVID-19. Even so, it can be suggested, given this extended period of time, the participant has become accustomed to a hybrid regime, noting little to no negative impacts.

5.4 Suitability and widespread of hybrid working in the industry

Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that a hybrid working regime is common in the working environment of a project manager within a construction consultancy, having 100% of the answers affirming that it is a common phenomenon among this role. Participant D reinforces that it is a unique industry and states “*you are kind of out and about anyway. So, you do have to be somewhat remote and flexible.*” However, some stakeholders, who have their activities strictly related to physical presence on site still cannot adapt to the hybrid working regime. Participants B and D mentioned the fact that in a hybrid working regime, project managers get more contactable, which facilitates team collaboration with external stakeholders, and can improve productivity as commuting time for meetings is reduced and their agendas can be optimized. Participant B states “*You would be travelling around the city quite a bit for different projects, whereas now it's very, very much online on call, so there's definitely an efficiency to it. So that would be the biggest change, would be on a day-to-day. There's a lot of time saving with.*” Participant C highlights that hybrid working brings the facility of switching between in person and online interactions according to the need “*So, you have to keep thinking in the back of your head like, is this the best use of people's time or are we getting from these meetings what we need to get from the meetings and its constant tweaking.*” It was also mentioned that the hybrid working regime became more common in the industry since COVID-19, and even some of the technologies were already accessible for their teams, the lockdown had worked in terms of reducing stigma of the suitability of working from home. According to Barrero *et al.* (2023), employees’ perception of working from home routines and stigmas associated with the same, can influence the overall hybrid working structure decisions. This fact was reinforced by the participants when asked if they believe that the opportunities of career progression were reduced when going to the office less often. Even among participants that do not agree with this criterion, the most common answer is that the opportunities would be reduced due to different factors. As stated by Participant I “*I think there's still some directors or upper management that feel like they need to see you. Or to make an impact... that's out there. I don't think it should be. But I think it is out there.*”

The results of this research confirms that all the participants, with the exception of Participants C and G, readily accepted the hybrid working regime offered by the organisation. Participants C and G reported that they generally work full time in the workplace, with Participant C noting that they live in close proximity to the office, and Participant G noting that their productivity is negatively impacted while working from home. It was evident from the research and confirmed by all participants that the organisation prioritises the coordination of core office days, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. This principle concurs with the findings of Bloom *et al.* (2022) and Buła *et al.* (2024), who identify the importance of coordinating face to face office working days for employees to network, develop and build relationships. Participant D who occupies a director position, reinforced this principle further, stating that “*the collaboration is a lot more challenging for management to engage in junior staff when they're remote, because you know (in the office) you're managing people without even knowing you're managing people*”. Although hybrid working has altered the working structure, it was evident from the research that managerial practices are somewhat unchanged from previous regimes. This is reflected as only one leader within the organisation identified the requirement for additional team catch up and coordination meetings. Consequently, it may, therefore, be suggested that although hybrid working has provided a shift in project managers’ working structure, a shift in managerial practices is not significant. This may be due to the specific role of a project manager or the unique set of variables the industry provides.

6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This discussion aims to further analyse and evaluate the various findings that have arisen from this research study. The outcomes from the primary and secondary research questions will be reviewed, and where applicable, the discussion will refer to existing academic literature. The discussion aims to identify a set of recommendations and highlight areas for future research.

6.2 Discussion of Findings

The results of the research confirm that the productivity levels of project managers within the construction industry that work within a hybrid regime have a range of contrasting opinions, with participants noting no change, participants noting an increase and participants noting a decrease. This body of research correlates with Bloom *et al.* (2022), Gibbs *et al.* (2023) and Emanuel and Harrington (2023). Furthermore, given the unique nature of the industry, the research illudes to minimal methods available for managerial staff to analyse productivity metrics of employees working within a hybrid regime. It became clear from both primary and secondary research that productivity is relatively unexplored and managed from a managerial perspective, possibly due to the unique set of variables the industry provides.

Among the findings that are interesting, are the positive opportunities indicated by the participants. Most commonly related to a hybrid working regime was the increased work life balance and notable increase in employee satisfaction. Such opportunity was reported by all project managers within the organisation, highlighting a unanimous agreement. The perceived opportunity creates an interlink with the existing research, as interestingly Maříková *et al.* (2024), Purba *et al.* (2024), Barrero *et al.* (2023), Escobedo *et al.* (2023), Gibbs *et al.* (2023), Santillan *et al.* (2023), and Yang *et al.* (2023) collectively identified that work life balance is improved by way of a hybrid regime. Based on the research and findings, it is difficult to disagree with this common trend.

Contrastingly, the research found that project managers reported challenges in relation to internal collaboration with team members, which correlates directly to the findings of Gibbs *et al.* (2023). In addition, the negative impact hybrid working has on junior employees' development was a widespread concern among participants, with 90% of participants reinforcing this theory. Furthermore, by comparison with the existing literature, a direct association is apparent, as Barreiro *et al.* (2023), Emanuel *et al.* (2023), Linos (2016) all concur with the participants views regarding junior employees' development.

Interestingly, despite the challenges raised by both the primary and secondary research surrounding the internal collaboration with team members and the negative development on junior staff caused by hybrid working, none of the participants would like to see the removal of hybrid working from the workplace, none more so than the senior employees. This points to the fact that projects managers value the improves personal improves offered by hybrid working, more than the challenges faced with in the workplace.

It is evident from the research that as hybrid working increases the requirement for virtual meetings, the primary research highlighted the improved collaboration with external stakeholders. Although this opportunity is a consequence of a hybrid working regime, a senior director among the participants raised the issue of becoming too contactable and relied upon as a project manager Gibbs *et al.* (2023). Based on the findings in can be suggested that hybrid working can improve collaboration with external stakeholders, however, should be managed by managerial staff to optimise this opportunity.

According to the existing literature, typically the list of professions that are more suitable for hybrid working are analytical and computer-intensive in nature. It can be suggested that the role of construction project management is among the professions that are less affected by the negative impacts of hybrid working as their role is less reliant on internal team collaboration, with the exception of engagement with junior staff, and more reliant on external stakeholders, enjoying the benefits of increased stakeholder collaboration and minimising potential reduced internal collaboration. Another point that adds to this hypothesis is that project management professionals tend to be working “on the go” and technology can reduce this distance, improving stakeholder collaboration.

The primary research identified a common trend among 80% of participants, reporting that these project managers make use of the hybrid regime on offer by the organisation. This approach interlinks with the fact that all participants believes that hybrid working increases work life balance. As reported by Buła *et al.* (2024) in the exiting literature, the importance of coordinating office days is critical for the development of employees and interesting this principal is replicated by the organisation on which the primary research was based, with core office days a requirement for all project managers. Although it is

evident that hybrid working lends itself to a shift in working structure for employees, both within and outside the workplace, it is apparent that managerial practices are somewhat unchanged in practice, seemingly adopting a hybrid regime with little change to the approach of managing employees. It can be suggested that this is due to hybrid working still being a relatively new phenomenon, or the unique industry that these project managers are operating in.

A sweeping finding from both the primary and secondary research is the reference to junior staff and the negative impact on their development (Barreiro *et al.*, 2023 and Emanuel *et al.*, 2023). This issue is identified in many of the research objectives, highlighting the concern. Interestingly both junior and senior employees are actively aware of this issue, however, maintain a preference to retain a hybrid regime, due to the increased work life balance.

7 Conclusion

The development of a focused study on the “analysis of the contemporary management role in a hybrid working SME project management consultancy in the construction industry” has major relevance to the industry, representing an initial kick off on studies related to the implications and management practices specifically related to the hybrid working regime in this unique and dynamic industry. This study can provide useful insight for hybrid working researchers and employees, especially those focused on project management within the construction industry and should be disseminated to these groups where possible.

As a result of this study, five recommendations were elaborated for the analysed organisation and other organisations that operate in the same industry, as follows:

- Adoption of hybrid working regime for project managers within an SME construction consultancy, given the increased reported work-life balance and employee satisfaction.

- Coordination of office days for all employees to ensure collaboration between all internal team members.
- Adoption of formal methods to analyse and present the facts and accurate metrics regarding the productivity of project managers, in order to guarantee an unbiased evaluation of professional performance.
- Establishment of full time attendance for initial 6 month period, coordinated with seniors in order to guarantee optimized mentorship.
- Emphasis on the professional development of junior project managers by seniors by ensuring regular coordination and collaboration with junior employees during office days.

As observed in previous literature and evidenced in this study, the topics of research addressed have a profound influence of different and specific variables, that brings extraordinary complexity to the topic analysis and maintains several avenues for further research of distinct scenarios.

This research can assist further studies of alternation and additional companies and employees. Functioning as basis for future comparative research, to analyse different companies with different collection of staff, managerial practices, culture, etc; that would corroborate on a deeper understanding of the characteristics analysed within this study to assess what is inherent to this organisation vs inherent to the industry. Another opportunity is to apply the recommendations of this study to other organisations to comprehend to which extent the best practices can be broadly applied.

The chosen research methodology was suitable to achieve the main study objectives, accomplishing the aim of producing explanatory research, bringing insights to the topic in this specific field, and highlighting specific key points. For future research, exploring a specific layer of the topic would be beneficial. Considering the emphasis provided by the primary research participants on the theme of “professional development of junior staff” a further detailed development of study could be pertinent.

An additional enhancement for this research is to reach a more extensive sample, interviewing further participants within the company, specially in higher positions, such as managing director, in order to generate a more authentic picture of this specific

company. However, further interviews proved a challenge due to personal agendas and availability of senior participants for interviews, specifically with the approach chosen by the author, that requires a considerable time availability from the participants.

This study raised an additional challenge, which was to collect unbiased data. It was noticed that some answers and views could, potentially, be guided by the specific employee's preferences of work regime. However, this risk had been assessed and acknowledged when selecting the research methodology. To mitigate the impacts of this potential risk, the questions were drafted in a neutral manner, and the interviewer delivered the interview in a manner not to guide the participant to any specific positioning.

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9 Appendix A – Ethics Review Application Form

National College of Ireland

Human Participants Ethical Review Application Form

All parts of the below form must be completed. However in certain cases where sections are not relevant to the proposed study, clearly mark NA in the box provided.

Part A: Title of Project and Contact Information

Name

Danielle Lamounier Sampaio

Student Number (if applicable)

23333821

Email

X23333821@student.ncirl.ie

Status:

Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postgraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

Supervisor (if applicable)

NA

Title of Research Project

Contemporary challenges of team management and best practices for leaders in hybrid regime of work

Category into which the proposed research falls (see guidelines)

Research Category A

Research Category B

Research Category C

Have you read the NCI Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Participants?

Yes

No

Please indicate any other ethical guidelines or codes of conduct you have consulted

NA

Has this research been submitted to any other research ethics committee?

Yes

No

If yes please provide details, and the outcomes of this process, if applicable:

NA

10 Appendix B – Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

Research project title: An analysis of the contemporary management role in a hybrid working SME project management consultancy in the construction industry

Research investigator: Danielle Lamounier Sampaio

Research Participant name:

The interview will take an average of 30 minutes. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from my institution require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Would you therefore please sign this form to certify that you approve the participation in this interview.

Printed Name:

Participants Signature Date:

Researchers Signature Date:

11 Appendix C – Interview synthesis

11.1 Participant A

Participant A is a project manager working within a team of six colleagues. Participant A adopts a 3 day in office and 2 day remote approach, maximising the hybrid opportunity provided. Participant A believes that given the collaborative nature of the industry, a hybrid regime does negatively impact on the workplace collaboration, however does not impact collaboration with external stakeholders. The flexibility of hybrid working is the main opportunity, providing employees the opportunity to exploit their personal requirements such as school drop off or personal appointments. This participant noted that a hybrid approach enables them to carry out descriptive writing tasks at home in a more peaceful environment. Participant A noted that they believe the organisation optimises the opportunities by offering remote working days on a Monday and Friday, extending the weekend. This participant reinforces that a major challenge with hybrid working is the negative impact it has on team collaboration, given that communication can prove difficult within the internal team whilst working remotely, ultimately reducing employee efficiency if time is wasted trying to find suitable times for a virtual call if colleagues are busy. Mitigation of this challenge is provided with leaders ensuring that their team are in the office on the correct core days, and ensuring regular team catch ups in the office to reduce the requirement for collaboration whilst at home. Participant A advised that they see no tangible evidence in a reduction or increase in productivity whilst working remotely, both from a personal and team perspective. Given the nature of the industry and the number of ongoing tasks, productivity is measured by way of efficiently executing the management for a project, rather than a quantitative measure. This participant would like to maintain a hybrid approach going forward and noted that they would consider another role with an organisation that doesn't provide a hybrid regime, although it would be a large factor in a final decision. From a managerial perspective, this participant would like to maintain a hybrid approach as they believe it results in increased employee satisfaction, resulting in increased motivation and morale. This participant confirmed that they believe professional development is negatively impacted specifically with junior positions, whilst also possible with senior staff that are new to the organisation. Participant A coordinates site visits during office days, although notes that

if visits are required during a remote working day, these must be facilitated. The participant states that an employee attending the office less than the required three days, would have reduced chances of career progression, whilst attending the office more than the required three days would not improve your chances of career progression.

11.2 Participant B

Participant B is an Associate Director working with the company for just over six years. This participant has a unique regime, differing to the standard company policy, as they operate within a fully remote regime, due to their geographical location on the other side of the country. This employee coordinates their site visits, in person stakeholder meetings and then returns home, rather than working from the office. The exception is if there is an internal management meeting that they must attend in office. This participant believes that hybrid working is a common trend within the industry for consultancy firms, generally operating three or four day office requirement. This participant advised that pre COVID, the organisation did not operate a hybrid approach, and meetings were almost always face to face which required travelling around the city. Participant B confirmed that they believe collaboration with their team is negatively impacted given their working regime, noting inefficiencies with communication with colleagues. However in contrast, they believe that collaboration with external stakeholders, design teams, and clients is greatly improved with the use of virtual platforms. This participant believes that a hybrid regime of work within the organisation is not dependant on position, tenure or time within the organisation, noting that the firm is flexible to specific employee circumstances and requirements. This employee believes that the most significant opportunity with a hybrid regime is the work life balance it provides, both from a personal perspective and from a team perspective, lengthening the weekend and reducing the number of commutes, affirming that employee satisfaction is ultimately increased. They also noted that given the increased number of virtual meetings, there are increased opportunities for junior stay to overhear or join meetings on projects they may not necessarily be involved in, to gain experience. Regarding the challenges, this employee reinforced the disconnection in communication and collaboration with their internal team. To manage this, increased virtual catch up meetings are required to mitigate miscommunication given all the moving parts of a project. This employee confirmed that their own productivity is not impacted

whilst working remotely, noting that their productivity is in fact reduced when working in the workplace. From a managerial perspective they advised that productivity is dependent on the specific employee, noting that a level of trust is required, although overall within their team productivity has increased with a hybrid regime. This participant believes that a hybrid regime negatively impacts the development of junior staff, whereas senior staff are not impacted. This specific employee confirmed they would consider another role in a non-hybrid environment, however the role would have to be extremely close to their residence, however did confirm they would be satisfied to attend the office full time for the initial six months of a new role. Finally, in terms of career progression, this employee confirmed categorically that an employee that attends the office less in a hybrid approach would not face any impacts.

11.3 Participant C

Participant C is a 35 year old Associate Director, working in this current organisation for seven years. This employee attends the office every day, therefore not maximising the hybrid working policy provided by the company. This employee currently has in person external stakeholder meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays, however noted that the client dictates the coordination of in person meetings, and their hybrid approach must facilitate that. This participant believes that hybrid working is a commend trend within the industry, in particular consultancies, suggesting that many if not all are adopting a hybrid approach. According to this participant, pre COVID, there was no hybrid regime in place within the organisation, and meetings with external stakeholders, client's and design teams were in person rather than online., although the organisation did have virtual platform however they were not embraced. Regarding collaboration with their team, this participant does not believe a hybrid regime disrupts this, although does suggest that multiple virtual meetings in the office can be distractive for other employees within the workplace. With regards to collaboration with external stakeholders, this participant states that a balance is required for both in person and virtual collaboration to maximise efficiency. This participant does not believe that the hybrid work regime is linked with tenure, position or time within the company, stating that the hybrid regime is companywide. This participant believes that the main opportunity related with a hybrid regime is the improved work life balance. In addition, the potential to maximise peoples

time if virtual meetings are efficiently structured is another opportunity. In contrast this employee believes that a challenge faced is the ease of setting up virtual meetings, when a meeting may not always be necessary. With regards to team productivity, this participant does not observe any difference in employee productivity, whether at home or in the office. From their personal perspective, this participant does not believe there is a change in productivity output, however given their residential setup, does outline the potential for an impact in productivity with house members, noting that as the reason for a full time office approach. This participant noted that they would like to maintain a hybrid regime within the organisation going forward, and confirmed that a hybrid regime would be a large factor if considering an alternative role. This participant suggested the potential for reduced career progression with junior employees, however does not believe it impacts the progression of more senior staff. This participant believes that it is important to ensure a balance with client interfacing, with a mix of virtual and in person engagement, confirming that a full virtual approach would not be appropriate for maintaining and building relationships. Regarding career progression, this employee suggests that employees that attend the office less frequently, may be hindered slightly, due to the subjective perception of hierarchy. However in contrast, from a personal perspective this participant does not believe working from home more frequently should impact employee career progression, focusing more so on the matter of the work being completed. Participant C reinforces that need for a well-balanced hybrid approach to efficiently project manage a large scale project.

11.4 Participant D

Participant D is a director in the company and has been working there for over 10 years. Participant D reinforces that Mondays and Fridays are flexible days and, if requested, the employees must attend the office. Participant D clarifies the difference of a director of project management, that is not as focused on the day-by-day of the projects, but in the management of the project managers of all levels. In addition to it, building relationship with stakeholders and other business matters. Participant D affirms that the attitude towards modalities of remote working have changed since Covid-19 lockdown as companies were forced to adapt their work shift at the time, using technological infrastructure they already had access to but did not use as often. This change of

mentality possibilities hybrid working becoming a common approach used by the segment nowadays. Participant D highlights the challenge on the learning process, especially for junior employees, that miss out the factor experience, and reduce their opportunity of learning by watching their peers and leaders, and spontaneous moments of learning. Collaboration is more challenging and engaging their team. Other challenge mentioned in the interview is about time management: when working from home managers have more short meetings, that means that they are more interrupted and that juniors have less quality time to chat and develop with their leaders. An opportunity mentioned is the possibility of better focus at home, with less interruptions, that can be used for specific activities. Participant D points out that collaboration in the workplace is increased due to easier access/communication channel between teams. However in c, this can be a challenge as teams can become more reliant on the project managers, while previously hybrid working, project management team would have a specific time on site to deal with these specific topics. This participant confirms that the hybrid regime is not employees specific and is not aligned with tenure, position or time within the company. From a personal perspective, this participant would like to maintain a hybrid approach going forward, confirming that there is value with it from a talent acquisition and work life balance point of view. This participant confirm that they would consider another opportunity that does not provide a hybrid regime, however not currently due to their current personal life commitments. With regards to work life balance and employee satisfaction, this participant believes that they are considerably increased when given the opportunity of a hybrid regime, however they did point out that some employees take advantage of the opportunity, potentially impacting the regime for the organisation. This participant believes that the productivity of junior staff can be impacting with a hybrid regime, purely due to the time burden required for junior staff to engage with senior staff. From a personal perspective, this participant confirm that for focused, and writing tasks, their productivity is greatly increased when working from home in a hybrid approach. This participant believes that there is no exact science behind the measurement of productivity within their team, however did note that the organisation has a general rule of thumb in relation to the output expected from the various roles, and this relates to the manner in which the overall project is being managed and delivered. Given that the role of this participant entails meeting and forging relationships with external stakeholders

and clients, these actions cannot be performed from home, and therefore must be carried out on office days. This participant reinforced that an employee that attends the office less often would have greater challenges and implications with career progression, purely due to the lack of visibility senior management would have with the specific employee. This participant noted that there are social events within the organisation to develop employee relationships, however are informal policies and not necessarily these too attract employees to work within the office more often.

11.5 Participant E

Participant E is a 28-year-old assistant project manager, working in the organisation for a year and a half. This participant utilises the company policy for hybrid working, working twice a week remotely, and three days in the office. According to this participant, hybrid working is a common trend amongst the construction industry, more so with project managers. As a junior staff member, this participant confirms that they find collaboration within the workplace more challenging with a hybrid regime, due to difficulties in communication with senior staff when working remotely, however in contrast, they confirm that collaboration with external stakeholders is not impacted. This participant notes that the hybrid regime within the company is dependent on the employee's time with organisation, outlining that new employees do not have the option of hybrid working whilst on their probation period. This participant believes that a challenge of hybrid working is the difficulty of communication with senior team members, and the tendency to work overtime when working remotely without necessarily realising. Contrary, the main opportunity is the increased work life balance it provides, enabling activities such as exercise, reduced travel, and relaxation. Given the junior position of the participant, they could not comment on the productivity output of their team when working remotely, although from a personal perspective this participant confirmed that their productivity output is relatively unchanged when working from home in comparison to the office. This participant confirmed that hybrid working is something they would like to maintain going forward both from a personal and managerial perspective, and furthermore reinforced that they would not consider an opportunity that does not offer a hybrid regime. According to this participant, the professional development of junior employees is negatively impacted with a hybrid regime, however conversely, this participant does not

believe that the career progression of an employee that attends the office less often will be impeded. Regarding the scheduling of onsite days, this participant confirms that they generally try to coordinate onsite days with core office days, rather than on their remote working days. This participant stated that there are no formal practices to entice employees into the office, noting attendance on core days as a requirement, however, did note that informal social outings are a common theme and assist with team relationship building.

11.6 Participant F

Participant F is a holds an Associate Director position within the organisation, working there for seven years. This participant confirms that they work three days in the office, one day from home and one day they attend site. This participant confirmed that hybrid working is common within all construction consultancies, however less so with site based contracting teams. This participant believes that a hybrid regime improves collaboration within the workplace, as people are more flexible to join meetings and require less travel time to meet one and other within the workplace. With regards to external stakeholders, they believe hybrid working has improved collaboration moreover, as clients or design team members can easily contract you without the need to travel to one or others office. This participant also believes that many external stakeholders are more comfortable when meeting virtually. This participant suggests that managerial approaches must now be flexible, to accommodate the flexible nature of virtual meetings for stakeholders. This participant believes that the more senior you, the less time you need to spend working from the office, however this can have a negative impact on junior staff and reduce their learnings and development. For new employees, this participant sees value in them attending the office more regularly. This participant believes that the main opportunity of a hybrid regime is that it provides greater flexibility, from personal life perspective, and from a mental health perspective, as employees have more time to carry out personal activities. With regards to challenges, this employee notes that a lot of trust is required between the employer and employee, productivity can be reduced, and the building of workplace relationships can be impacted. Participant F points out that they don't have a measure of their team's productivity output, however, notes that there is generally a noticeable difference when employees are working from home on a Fridays,

by the volume of emails circulated. From a personal perspective, this participant confirms that they are naturally more productivity when in the office, rather than at home. It was confirmed by the participant that a hybrid approach is something they would like to maintain going forward, both from a personal and managerial perspective. This participant reinforced that a hybrid regime increases employee satisfaction and work life balance, however in contrast, reveals that professional development is impeded, more specifically with junior staff. In addition, this participant stated that career progression is hindered when attending the office less frequently. This participant coordinates their onsite requirements with remote working days due to ease of travel. This participant confirmed that there are no incentives for employees to attend the office as all employees must work to their hybrid policy, however noted there is flexibility for exceptions from time to time.

11.7 Participant G

Participant G is a 35 year old senior project manager, working within the organisation for 7 years. Whilst the company does offer a hybrid approach, this specific participant does not utilise this, working full time in the office. This participant believes that a hybrid regime disrupts team collaboration within the workplace, specifically with junior staff, as they are removed from the communication within the workplace, ultimately impacting their learning and development. In addition, this participant noted that some employees do not have the appropriate equipment at home to conduct their work correctly. Regarding collaboration with external stakeholders, this employee believes that a hybrid regime does not impact collaboration to anywhere near the same extent as it does with internal colleagues. This participant confirms that the hybrid regime within the organisation is not dependant on tenure, position or time spent within the organisation, noting it is available for all employees throughout the organisation. With regards to the opportunities of hybrid working, this participant suggests that the main opportunity is that the potential to attract and recruit from a larger pool of employees, given that applicants are often seeking a hybrid regime when choosing their next move. Contrary, this participant believes that several challenges are raised with a hybrid work regime. These include reduced collaboration between team members, a reduced social aspect within the workplace and this participant suggests that productivity of some team

members is reduced when working from home. Discussing productivity as a whole, this participant believes that from a managerial perspective, productivity is reduced when their team is working remotely. This issue is mitigated by way of virtual team meetings in the mornings when working remotely, to ensure team members are aware of their required output and have sufficient support to achieve this. From a personal perspective this participant confirms that their productivity is negatively impacted when working from home, noting this as the reason for working at the office full time. Going forward, this participant believes that a hybrid working regime should be maintained. Although it can impact on the productivity of certain team members, this is outweighed by the opportunity to employ new talent that otherwise may not be available. This participant confirmed that they would not accept an alternative role that does not provide a hybrid regime. This participant suggests that employee satisfaction and work life balance are both increased with a hybrid approach, however does have the potential to impact the professional development of junior staff, and new employees from a social perspective. In addition, this participant believes that career progression as visibility within the office is a large factor for progression, rather than just the work output from an employee. Pre COVID the organisation did not provide a hybrid work regime, and since the change, managerial practices have not changed bar additional meetings to compensate for the reduced days in the workplace. This participant does not believe the organisation has incentives to increase employee days in the office.

11.8 Participant H

Participant H is a 24-year-old project manager, working with the company for two years. This participant confirms that the organisation offers a hybrid work regime, three days working in the office and two days working remotely, however this participant only works one day remotely. This participant believes that collaboration both internally and externally is improved when working in the office. With regards to productivity, this participant confirmed that their own personal productivity output is increased when working in the office environment, whilst also suggesting that employee productivity output is reduced when working remotely. This participant does not believe that the opportunity of a hybrid regime is based on the employee's tenure, position, or time within the company, although believes that it is recommended for new employees to attend the

office full time for their first six months. Participant H confirms that the main opportunity of hybrid working is the increased work life balance it provides. Contrary, the challenges are reduced productivity, and the challenges associated with a lack of the correct IT hardware and connectivity to conduct the work efficiently. This participant would like to maintain a hybrid approach going forward, mainly due to a talent attraction point of view, however confirmed that they would very much be open to another job opportunity that didn't offer a hybrid regime. This participant reinforced that they believe work life balance and employee satisfaction are increased when given the opportunity of a hybrid regime. According to this participant, they don't believe professional development is impacted at more senior levels, although did note that junior levels can be negatively impacted. With regards to career progression, this participant couldn't confirm definitively, however did advise that employees that are in the office more often possibly gain greater progression opportunities. This participant stated that the organisation doesn't have any formal policies in place to entice employees to the office more often, although did note that increased office attendance is a common trend recently among many organisations.

11.9 Participant I

Participant I is a senior project manager that has been working in the company for two years, and works Mondays and Fridays from home. This participant had the experience of working in a hybrid working regime in the industry previous to the Covid-19 lockdown, leading the participant feeling more comfortable with this working regime, and does not feel a decrease in their productivity output. In addition, this participant believes that collaboration is not impacted internally as the days working from the office are coordinated, and externally as meeting with other stakeholders are typically done virtually. However, the participant recognizes that some employees can potentially switch off a little bit when working from home. Participant I believes that all employees have the same opportunity of working in a hybrid regime. Some of the opportunities of hybrid working arrangement highlighted by this senior project manager are the reduction in commuting time, flexibility, and an expressive increase of work life balance, especially in cases such as his own, as the participant has kids. Participant I would like to maintain a hybrid working regime within the organization and would not consider an opportunity in a company that does not offer this flexibility, specifically due to the fact that flexibility is

appreciated when having small children. The employee mentioned that they have rejected job opportunities due to the reduced possibility of working from home. This participant believes that the presence in the office still plays a part in the possibilities of career progression, although the employee disagrees with this criterion. This employee believes that their company does not offer stimulus to the presence in the office, whilst not having a differentiated space and being difficult to access due to expensive cost of car parking.

11.10 Participant J

Participant J is a 28 year old assistant project manager that has been working for the company for one year. This participant believes that hybrid working approach does not disrupt team collaboration in the office, however, recognises that at the beginning, especially during the first 6 months of working, being in the office can support team collaboration, and recommends attending the office 4 or 5 days a week during this period. In contrast, hybrid working supports team collaboration with other stakeholders, such as design team, and clients as you have easier access to them and reduces traveling time.

The participant mentions work-life balance, flexibility and employee satisfaction as main opportunities of hybrid working. Participant J does not see any difference on their own productivity but recognizes that it can be diminished, and employees can be more easily distracted. Another additional challenge, is that it can be more difficult to get in contact with senior team members, impacting the professional development of junior staff.

The participant would like to maintain hybrid working if possible. However, although it is an important factor to consider, the participant would not reject opportunities in companies that do not offer this working regime, specifically due to their current career position and moment in life.

Participant J believes that attending the office less often than stipulated by the policy could affect career progression. However conversely, increased frequency of attendance within the office over and above the core days requested, does not improve chances of career opportunities. The employee highlights that the company hosts social

events in the office but does not believe that it is a way of enticing employees to the office more frequently.