

**THE ROLE OF FLEXIBLE WORKING IN ACHIEVING A WORK–LIFE
BALANCE:**

A CASE STUDY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANTS OF
KESTREL BUSINESS SOLUTIONS – LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

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DECLARATION

I, Tinashe Nyamujara, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not been previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'T' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Signature

29 September 2020

Date

ABSTRACT

This research was a Case Study on the role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work – Life Balance, based on the Information Technology Consultants of Kestrel Business Solutions – a company based in London, the United Kingdom. The study set out to determine what aspects of flexible working can reduce work - related stress; home - related stress; improve personal wellbeing; identify the pitfalls of flexible working, and to recommend mitigating actions.

The literature review identified five different, but complimentary theories that included: The Spill over Theory; Balanced Theory; Resource Based Theory; Compensation Theory and the Wellness Theory to unpack and explore the concept of Work - Life Balance.

The study followed a predominantly qualitative methodology approach and used thematic analysis to identify key ideas from the data. Interviews and questionnaires were used to obtain data from the respondents, in addition to being a data triangulation exercise.

From a population of 10 subjects - purposeful sampling was used to select a sample of 10 respondents - made up of 3 males and 7 females. All respondents were employees of Kestrel Business Solutions. 6 respondents were interviewed and given questionnaires to fill out. 6 face to face interviews were conducted, and 6 questionnaires completed until saturation was achieved - indicating a survey response rate of 100%.

The results from the data collection generally showed how aspects of flexible working like telecommuting, flexitime and homeworking ultimately helped the employees to achieve a Work-Life Balance - by primarily influencing how they balanced their work, home, and personal commitments. Importantly, the study also identified pitfalls of flexible working; like employees feeling isolated and the pressure to perform. Potential mitigating efforts identified in the study included, providing more company support and education for flexible working initiatives.

The study concluded by acknowledging the limitations of the study, which included time constraints and the small population, and sample size of the study. In its conclusion, the study identified recommendations for future studies like: increasing the population and sample size, and devoting more time to the study, for more generalized and conclusive findings.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my dearly beloved late mother - ***Nyaradzai Musariri.***

This is for you dear mother!

I would also like to thank my dear beloved sister Tapiwa Chitendera and my mentor Carol Cuthbert for all their support, and words of encouragement throughout.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research study, by providing a background informing the study. This is followed by a discussion of the problem context; problem statement and the rationale for undertaking this study. The purpose, goals and more importantly - the study objectives are highlighted. The chapter concludes with an overall outline of the contents of the rest of the chapters in the study.

1.2 Research Introduction

Research has shown that most workers in the United Kingdom (UK), are struggling to find the right balance when carrying out their work commitments (Independent, 2018). This also includes meeting family obligations. This has been exacerbated by globalisation and its resulting consequences on both workers and organisations (Gales, Houkes and De Rijk, 2014, p.1). Therefore, when this balance is not properly managed, together with the added challenges of globalisation, there is a huge risk to workers, their families and ultimately the organisations that they work for.

In a study of call centre employees in South Africa, Potgieter and Bernard (2010, p.1) observed that the balance between work and family commitments is now more important than ever, especially considering the ever-changing demographics in employee profiles. Potgieter and Bernard (2010, p.1) believe this changing demographic profile is evidenced by the increased number of women and previously disadvantaged racial groups entering the South African workforce. Similar views are echoed by Glynn and Venator (2012) who observed that most working-class Americans faced difficulties in trying to manage long working hours as well, whilst also juggling family commitments. More concerningly, Glynn and Venator (2012) observed that in most instances – employers were not providing enough support to help employees manage this conflict.

Organisations, therefore, have a huge onus and incentive to ensure that their employees have the necessary facilities, such as flexible working in place, to help them balance their work and family commitments. Tomažević, Kozjek and Stare

(2014, p.1) show in their study that flexible working has the potential to benefit both the employee, as well as the organisation. Hence, Chandra (2012, p.4) argues that if one can equally carry out both their home and work commitments - without disregarding one over the other, they would have achieved a work-life balance. Therefore, this research looks in depth at how flexible working can be used to influence and ultimately achieve a work-life balance.

1.3 Background

Over the last decade, there has been considerable interest and debate in flexible working by organisations, trade unions and governments across Europe (Freyssinet, 1998, p.1). These debates have centred on the impact of flexible working, and how it can potentially help workers manage their home and family commitments and consequently the benefits accruing to organisations (Preston, 2014). This led to the formal recognition of flexible working by the European Union, in its 'Guidelines for Member States' employment policies 1998', which aimed to underlie the importance of flexible working in 'employment creation and preservation' (Freyssinet, 1998, p.1). The UK, currently being a member of the EU, undertook to implement this policy on flexible working, and by the end of 2018, there were more than 1.5 million UK workers working flexibly (Addecco, 2018).

However, significant research conducted on UK workers found that only 33% of them were satisfied with their work-life balance (Independent, 2018). Most importantly, the study revealed that most workers were of the firm belief that their work was taking up as much as half of their entire life (Independent, 2018). Furthermore, a similar survey showed that nearly as much as 50% of Information Technology (IT) workers felt they had too great a workload (Qualtrics, 2018). This, in turn, caused them to be stressed out and anxious (Qualtrics, 2018). This finding is quite significant and will form the backbone of this research study. Specifically, this research study will expand on this specific finding by attempting to determine whether flexible working can be used help Information Technology workers in the UK better manage their workloads and ultimately have a better work-life balance. Based on this survey finding, the work-life balance of these UK-based IT workers, will be the focus of this research study, presented as a case study.

The definition of an IT worker is informed by the British Computer Society (BCS). The BCS (2018) define an IT worker as 'one who is employed using skills within the scope of the Information Technology Profession; and working in a complex role or multiple roles, requiring underpinning knowledge and competence.' For this research, the description of an IT worker is extended to workers who are mainly employed in the following roles; IT Project Managers; Business Analysts, Developers, Systems Designers, Testers, Trainers, Change Management Consultants and Database Administrators, as these are typical roles that require the application of the 'skills' defined by the BCS.

1.4 Problem Context

This study is informed by a New Economics Foundation (2018, p.5) research finding that approximately 526 000 general workers, out of the total workforce in the UK, suffered from depression, work-related stress or anxiety in 2016 and 2017. These conditions can be traced back to a lack of a work-life balance (New Economics Foundation, 2018). Significantly, the cumulative financial effect of this was a cost of 72 million pounds to the taxpayer, as well as '165 800 days where beds were occupied due to stress and anxiety' (National Health Service, 2018). Hence, as more people struggle with the additional stress of debt, financial security, job security and retirement concerns amongst others, the human and economic cost will only increase, adding more pressure on an already overstretched National Health Service (New Economics Foundation, 2018).

1.5 Problem Statement

The problem statement that guides this study is the unknown role of flexible working and its potential impact on employees, and organisations in achieving a work-life balance.

1.6 The Rationale for the study

Thousands of workers across the United Kingdom are struggling to effectively manage their work commitments, in addition to their home obligations. This delicate balancing act is referred to in literature by Chandra (2012, p.1) as the work-life

balance. If left to spiral out of control, the human cost on employees, as well as their families and the economic cost on organisations, could lead to far bigger and unmitigated disasters. Therefore, the human and economic cost of an employee with an unhealthy work-life balance is one that is simply too great to ignore for organizations and nations alike.

1.7 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research study is to determine what role flexible working can play to help workers manage their work and family commitments. This will help to reduce conflict between their home and work spheres, and ultimately help workers to achieve a better work-life balance.

1.8 Goals

The overall goal of this research is to explore the role of flexible working in achieving a work-life balance.

1.9 Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- I. Determining what aspects of flexible working can reduce work related stress
- II. Identifying what aspects of flexible working can reduce family related stress
- III. Discovering what aspects of flexible working can improve overall personal wellbeing
- IV. Assessing the pitfalls of flexible working and recommending mitigating action.

1.10 Outline of the Study

This study contains a total of six chapters as indicated below:

Chapter 1 is an outline of the introduction and context of the study. This provides the definition of key concepts, a summary of the research methodology used in the study and an outline of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 deals extensively with the literature review informing the study. This chapter goes into detail identifying and describing the key concepts of the study. This includes the role of flexible working and its perceived impact on work-life balance. This also includes a discussion on the resulting consequences on employee wellbeing, as well as organisational success. The review of the literature will encompass an examination of Organisational Culture; Employee Wellness; work-life balance; and the role of flexible working in helping to achieve a work-life balance.

Chapter 3 deals with the research methodology and provides a detailed explanation of the research paradigm used in the study, together with the research aim and objectives. In addition, the nature of the research study typified by the case study is further explained, together with how the participants of the study are chosen; the data collection methods and analysis thereof; and lastly, the ethical considerations for the researcher.

Chapter 4 presents and explains in detail the results of the study. This includes a qualitative and quantitative presentation of the data from the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the results of the study in relation to the key research goals. This involves analysing the data, to as to determine whether the research goals have been met or not. The research goals are presented separately and studied in relation to both sets of research data, as well as relevant literature. Various assertions and contributions are formed and highlighted, as informed by the research data and supporting literature.

Chapter 6 is a summary of the research conclusion. This concludes the study by highlighting the major components of the study, as well as the research limitations and suggestions for future research.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter provides an introduction of the research study. The research context, purpose, goals and objectives are discussed. The outline of the study and the

discussion of the subsequent chapters is summarised and highlighted. The next chapter presents a review of the literature informing the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of existing literature; exploring and articulating how the key literature, concepts and theories all link together. The literature review discusses how globalisation is disrupting already established routines of work, thereby adding extra pressure on employees. Most importantly, this extra pressure and its stress implications on employee wellbeing and, consequently, organisational, and national economic performance are also reviewed. This chapter also discusses the nature and types of flexible working, and how it can be utilised by employees and organisations alike - and consequently its impact on Work - Life Balance. Key theoretical perspectives informing the study are also discussed.

2.1.1 Key Definitions

For this study, the following key definitions are identified: Work - Life Balance and Flexible Working.

Work - Life balance is defined as ' the interaction between one's work commitments as well as personal life responsibilities' (Chandra, 2012, p.4). Lewis, Gambles and Rapport (2007, p.1) argue that work-life balance is a social construct that gained prominence in the 1960's, with the focus being women as they began to enter the male dominated labour force in the 1960s. Over the years, this construct has taken a variety of names and evolved in response to societal concerns at different points in time. This has included terms like 'work-family', 'family-friendly', with a major emphasis on working mothers, 'work-life' and now, 'Work-Life Balance' (Lewis *et al.*, 2007, p.1).

This research study, therefore, broadly defines Work- Life balance as the interaction of the home and work interfaces of workers. The other key component of the research study is flexible working. Radcliffe and Cassell (2015, p.836) define flexible working as any form of working arrangement that has some degree of leeway on when, where and how long employees can carry out their work.

The UK Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce (2009, p.3) argues that flexible working was borne out of the need to get, 'modern working practices to fit the needs

of the 21st century workplace'. Flexible working has been around for a long time in various forms, although never formally recognised (The UK Family Friendly Working Hours Taskforce (2009, p.3). For this research, flexible working will be defined as any working arrangement that allows one to change their traditional working patterns and schedules to suit their personal circumstances.

2.2 Globalisation and its effect on the workforce

Galea, Houkes and De Rijk, (2014, p.1) define globalisation as the activities undertaken by an organisation, to operate and develop influence in international markets. Consequently, this has made the operating environments of many organisations extremely competitive. More significantly, globalisation is on an exponentially upward trend, and is being driven by the fast-paced innovations in technology (Chandra, 2012, p.2). With all this happening, UK-based organisations have not been spared either, and in addition to their normal business challenges they must now contend with the challenges and opportunities presented by globalisation (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), 2015, p.4). UK-based organisations have, therefore, been forced to respond and adapt the way in which they traditionally produce and deliver goods and services (ACAS, 2015, p.4).

However, the challenge for most UK-based organisations has been to find a balancing act between responding to globalisation, whilst also continuing to create value for their customers (ACAS, 2015, p.4). What is indisputable is that globalisation is now disrupting long established patterns of paid work; whilst also simultaneously creating new burdens on families, individuals and households (Taylor, 2003). This extra pressure on the UK workforce is significant and has serious consequences on employee wellbeing and organisational performance. It is, therefore, imperative that UK-based organisations rethink and reimagine their ways of doing business, to make the best use of their resources (ACAS, 2015, p.4). As such, innovative ways of working must be found that allow UK-based organisations to respond decisively to globalisation, whilst also being cognisant of their employees' best interests. Importantly, Russell, O' Connell and McGinnity (2007, p.2) believe the extra pressure on employees to meet their customer's needs, can lead to a conflict between work and home boundaries. Chandra (2012, p.2)

argues that work constitutes a significant portion of the lives of many people, and that if the demands of work significantly get in the way of home life, there is bound to be significant strain and stress in the work–home relationship.

2.3 Work-Life Balance

This relationship between the work and home life, is commonly referred to in literature as the work-life balance. Chandra (2012, p.4) defines work-life balance as 'the interaction between one's work commitments as well as personal life responsibilities'. Work-life balance describes the hours that are spent between carrying out both work and personal obligations. As such, it is important that the cumulative amount of time spent at work, is also matched by an equal measure of time spent at home. Russell *et al.* (2007, p.7) believe that if this balance is not achieved, there is likely to be negative consequences on employee productivity; personal wellbeing; parent child relationships; and marital relations. Hence, Galea *et al.* (2014, p.2) believe that as organisations respond to stimuli in their environments, their responses need to be cognisant of ensuring employees have a work-life balance.

2.4 Case studies of Work- Life Balance

A survey by the Independent (2018) revealed many workers in the UK felt that their work activities were taking up as much as half of their life. The same research Independent (2018), noted that in an ideal scenario, employees preferred dedicating only 30% of their time to work, and the rest to non–work related activities. Similar sentiments are echoed in a Qualtrics (2018) employee survey of more than 4000 UK employees, which showed that 47% of workers in London alone, were overwhelmed with their work. The same survey when interrogated by industry, showed that nearly 50% of all Information Technology workers surveyed felt that their workloads were too great, which was causing them to be stressed and anxious (Qualtrics, 2018). This phenomenon is not unique to the United Kingdom alone. In a study of South African call centre workers by Potgieter and Barnard (2010, p.4), most respondents noted that they experienced conflict in trying to balance their work and family commitments. Potgieter and Barnard (2010, p.7) also observed that the

work – life divide for most people was subjective and a continuous process that evolved as the employees took on new roles in both their work and family lives.

A similar study by Oktosatrio (2018.p.1) on local government employees in Jakarta – Indonesia – revealed that most of the employees felt that their home commitments significantly affected their work. More importantly - as a result of this conflict – most of the employees believed that conducting their work activities from home significantly helped them to reconcile the conflict between home and work commitments. An equally important study is that of about Hong Kong public sector workers by Tai, Pang and Chung (2013) which noted that most workers faced difficulties in managing their work and family commitments. However, Tai *et al.* (2003) observed that this conflict and its impact on job satisfaction was not homogenous across generations. Tai *et al.* (2013) observed that Boomers were the least dissatisfied as compared to Generation X and Y who recorded a higher job dissatisfaction as result of an unhealthy work-life balance.

2.5 Human and Economic Cost of an unhealthy Work–Life Balance

Hospital data from the National Health Service, for the years 2016 and 2017, showed that there were 17 500 cases related to stress and anxiety (National Health Service, NHS, 2018). The aggregate effect of this was a cost of 72 million pounds to the taxpayer, as well as ‘165 800 days where beds were occupied due to stress and anxiety’ (National Health Service, 2018). Hence, as more people struggle with the additional stress of debt, financial security, job security and retirement financing, amongst others, the human and economic cost will only increase, adding more pressure on an already overstretched NHS (New Economics Foundation, 2018).

According to the Mental Health Foundation (2018), the pressure of trying to balance work and family commitments, is arguably one of the UK’s biggest obstacles to mental health wellbeing. The Mental Health Foundation (2018) believes that work-related stress, accounts for nearly 10.4 million lost workdays annually in the UK. This is a hugely significant amount, which can have detrimental effects on organisations and the entire UK economy. Hence, the Mental Health Foundation (2018) strongly advocate for a shift in the mind-set of employees and organisations

alike, to help combat work related stress and ensure a healthy Work-Life Balance for workers.

2.6 The Impact of an Unhealthy Work–Life balance on an economy

Hassard, Teoh, Visockaite, Dewe and Cox (2018, p.2) did a review of at several studies from Canada, Australia, France, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, the EU and the UK - to determine the economic cost of an unhealthy Work-Life balance. From their review, they estimated that the total cost of work-related stress on these economies, was perceived to be significant and substantial, ranging from US\$221 million to US\$187 billion. Most importantly, observed business losses emanating from reduced productivity, contributed a significant portion, ranging between 70% and 90% (Hassard *et al.*, 2018, p.3). The rest of the cost, Hassard *et al.* (2018, p.3), estimated between 10% and 30%, was due to the health and medical consequences of work-related stress. This strongly suggests there is enough evidence to conclude that stress emanating from work and causing an unhealthy work-life balance, places a substantial economic burden on society (Hassard *et al.*, 2018, p .3). However, finding solutions that create a positive Work - Life balance, should not only be looked at in economic terms, but rather should be holistic and encompass health and social aspects (Hassard *et al.*, 2018, p.4).

2.6.1 Benefits of a Positive Work-Life Balance on the Workplace and the Organisation

In a study carried out by Tomažević, Kozjek and Stare, (2014, p.1), there is evidence to support the existence of the benefits of a positive work-life balance. The positive consequences can be extended from employees to employers, and ultimately to organisational performance and profits. A Commission of the European Communities (2008, p.4) study found that the implementation and promotion of work balance friendly practises, have a variety of positive benefits for employees. A study conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies identified that one of the positive benefits of a healthy Work-Life balance to organisations is a reduction in absenteeism (Gifford, 2007, p.3). By being able to effectively meet all their work and home commitments, employees do not have to have to skip work, thereby reducing absenteeism (Gifford, 2007, p.3). Another important benefit of a work-life balance

identified in the literature is a reduction in the burnout and stress levels of employees (Tomažević *et al.*, 2014, p.85). Tomažević *et al.* (2014, p.85) argue that once an employee is free from the worry and anxiety of trying to balance their work and family obligations, there is a significant reduction in their stress and burnout levels. Similar sentiments are echoed by Malik, Wan, Dar and Akbar (2014, p.4) who in their study observed that a good work-life balance plays a significant role in improving job satisfaction, and employee commitment to their organisations. Tomažević *et al.* (2014, p.85) also identify another important benefit of a positive work-life balance for organisations, as the reduction in staff turnover costs. Tomažević *et al.* (2014, p.85) believe that once employees have a good work-life balance, this will reduce absenteeism and can lead to a reduction of in the recruitment and hiring costs for covering the replacement of absent staff (Tomažević *et al.*, 2014, p.85).

2.6.2 Consequences of Work-Life Imbalance on the Workforce and the Organisation

Additionally, there is also a broad consensus of literature that acknowledges the existence of negative consequences of a Work-Life Imbalance (Kumarasamy, Pangil and Isa, 2015, p.2). Kumarasamy *et al.* (2015, p.2) argue that the absence of a work-life balance can adversely impact employee wellbeing and inevitably organisational performance. One of the most significant adverse effects on employees, identified by Kumarasamy *et al.* (2015, p.2) is an increase in stress and anxiety. This is significant, as an anxious and stressed employee is less likely to be productive in their work (Tomažević *et al.*, 2014, p.85). A similar observation is made by Malik *et al.* (2014, p.4), who argue that an unhealthy work–life balance is likely to lead to a reduction of time for leisure and recreational activities, and consequently a lesser quality of life. Gifford (2007, p.4) believes the rollover effects of an unhappy employee can lead to a reduction in employee motivation; performance; and ultimately decreased organisational productivity. Tomažević *et al.* (2014, p.87) argue that if no corrective action is taken, this can potentially lead to a deterioration in team dynamics; communication; and efficiency, which can result in decreased organisational competitiveness and profits.

2.7 Flexible Working

Radcliffe and Cassell (2015, p.836) define flexible working as any form of working arrangement that has some degree of leeway on when, where and how long employees can carry out their work. There are various forms of flexible working, which can include:

- a) Home working and teleworking (conducting work off-site and being in communication via telecoms);
- b) Flexitime (involving variations in work schedules that do not follow traditional working hours);
- c) Job sharing (involving the allocation of work and responsibilities of a full-time job to two or more individuals who work part-time) and Compressed working weeks (which involves working extra hours on certain days and getting days off in lieu of extra days worked) (Joyce, Pabayo, Critchley and Bamba, 2009, p.2).

Authors agree that flexible working is now a widely accepted practice in advanced countries (Joyce *et al.*, 2009, p.2; De Menzes and Kelliher, 2017, p.1052). This is due to its perceived positive impact on employee wellness; productivity and Work-Life balance. Notably, the UK, US and Australia have legislation to promote and regulate flexible working (Joyce *et al.*, 2009, p.2).

2.7.1 Legislative Framework on Flexible Working in the UK

In the UK, flexible working is a statutory right to all employees and is enshrined in the Flexible Working Regulations of 2014 (UK Government, 2014). The regulations both for organisations and employees, provide guidelines on the process to follow in considering and making flexible working requests (UK Government, 2014). This legislation is designed to ensure that organisations have a 'duty of care' to protect their employees from health and safety risks (ACAS, 2015, p.4). Some of the risks might include the stress induced by long work hours and failure to balance work and family commitments (ACAS, 2015, p.4). However, Clark (2000, p.1) believes progressive organisations have gone beyond just adopting flexible working. These

progressive organisations have opted for more radical and holistic changes in their organisational cultures to be more family-friendly (Clark, 2000, p.1)

2.7.2 Telecommuting and Homeworking

Clarke and Holdsworth (2017, p.4) define Homeworking as a scenario where an employee can perform their work activities at home, or at another location other than their normal office workplace, one or more days per week. For example, an employee may have an arrangement where they work three days a week in the office and the remaining two days from home – dialling in to Skype for meetings and appointments. In a research study conducted by ACAS (2016, p.4), it was noted that a very important benefit of homeworking identified by employees was their joy in having days where they would not have to commute. This is particularly significant, as most employees surveyed commuted more than two hours and 30 minutes, to get to and from work every day (ACAS, 2016, p.7). This is similar to sentiments raised by Clark (2001, p.2), who observed that homeworking helps employees who are parents to be less stressed in carrying out the morning run of dropping of their kids at school and also having to worry about getting to work on time.

2.7.3 Flexitime

Flexitime describes an arrangement in which employees have leeway in when they can start and finish their work, provided the total number of agreed hours are still worked per week (Clarke and Holdsworth, 2017, p.4). For example, an employee's core hours might deviate from the normal standard 9am to 5pm and take the form of 8am to 4pm or 10am to 6pm or another variation. In their study, Downes and Koekmoer (2011, p.3) observed a savings in overtime costs, amongst others, for organisations that have implemented flexitime. An equally important advantage of flexitime for organisations is an increase in employee motivation and productivity (Clark, 2001, p3). Downes and Koekmoer (2011, p.3) concur with the above assertion, as they argue that employees feel less stressed if they can change their work routines to fit in with their family commitments.

2.7.4 Job Sharing

Job sharing describes a scenario where two or more employees share and split the responsibilities of one job (Clarke and Holdsworth, 2017, p.4). For example, two employees can work one job, whereby one employee can work three days a week and the other employee works two days a week, amongst other variations. Williamson and Baird (2015, p.3), in a study on UK teachers participating in job sharing, observed that the most important benefit was the ability to reconcile work and family commitments. This stemmed from the amount of time that was freed up by being able to share a job with someone else. However, Williamson and Baird (2015, p.3) warn that one of the unintended consequences of job sharing is that most people participating were only part-time and as such would not be able to access other job benefits, which could only be accrued to a full-time employee.

2.7.5 Compressed Work

A compressed work week is a scenario that involves employees working a full weeks' worth of hours in fewer days (Clarke and Holdsworth, 2017, p4). For example, an employee might put in five days' worth of work in four days by working extra hours or not taking their lunch breaks. A study done by Titopoulos, Ganeva, Staykova and Titopoulo (2017, p.4) showed that one of the major benefits for employees was fewer working days and reduced commuting expenses. This view is shared by the Hong Kong Department of Labour (2017, p.5), who observed that employees taking advantage of compressed working weeks were much happier, as they had more time to devote to their families, as well as their own leisure activities.

2.8 Technology as Enabler of Flexible Working

Technology plays a unique and important role to ensure flexible working is successful (Bennet, 2017). ACAS (2016, p.4) observed in their research that technology is now cutting across all aspects of life and has given an opportunity for employees to work more innovatively and more efficiently. ACAS (2016, p.4) identifies three major and innovative technological tools that organisations and employers can use as effective enablers of flexible working.

2.8.1 Smart Devices

Smart devices like cell phones, laptops and tablets are commonly used by many people in the workforce. The use of smart devices can be used to fully complement and fully exploit flexible working arrangements (ACAS, 2016, p.5). Whether an employee decides to use their personal devices or work issued devices, they can connect, get online and carry out most work activities like reading and sending emails; typing work correspondence; and attending meetings online (Wales Government, 2016). However, ACAS (2016, p.5) noted in a survey that most employees were not getting adequate technological support when working from home, and this made them unhappy and frustrated with their homeworking arrangements. In a later survey, ACAS (2016, p.5) observed that once the same group of employees - who previously complained of inadequate technological support when working from home - were eventually given proper technological support, they were happy with their homeworking arrangements. The Wales Government (2016), in its own surveys, noted that with adequate technological support, smart devices can be used by employees to work flexibly, thereby allowing them to be self-sufficient; work with fewer hassles; work efficiently; and work productively. However, great care and caution must be taken as there are a host of inherent risks, like hacking and cyber security when people carry out work activities over online networks (Wales Government, 2016).

2.8.2 The Internet/ Cloud

ACAS (2006, p.6), in an internal survey of their workforce, observed that one of the most highlighted technological issue relating to flexible working was the 'speed and reliability of internet/network connections'. This is significant in the context of most organisations now moving away from having expensive and hugely complex in-house IT infrastructure to cloud-based services and applications. The Wales Government (2016) believes that cloud-based applications are a critical component to organisations that have flexible working arrangements. They argue these arrangements provide employees with the platform to access the work correspondence; data storage and retrieval; and collaborative tools, to enable work to be carried out by various people at the same time remotely, wherever in the world

they may be and at any time. This view is substantiated by ACAS (2016, p.6) who observed in their survey that reliable internet connections were a huge contributing factor in the happiness of employees who worked flexibly.

2.8.3 Video Teleconferencing

Video teleconferencing is a widely used platform that supports flexible working. Video teleconferencing is the use of mobile and laptop devices to carry out meetings online. The Wales Government (2016) observed that this was a very low-cost method to enable their workforce to work flexibly. According to ACAS (2016, p.7), the provision of video teleconferencing facilities was not only low cost but was very much compatible with their already existing flexible working infrastructure. This is like the findings by the Wales Government (2016) that video teleconferencing was an advantage, as it allowed them to save time and money as meetings were held outside conventional work hours and reduced the need for travelling.

2.9 Theoretical Perspectives

The intersection of work and family boundaries is one that is explained not only by one theoretical perspective, but rather a multitude of different and complimentary theoretical perspectives (Mitu, 2016, p.70). By using a plethora of different theoretical perspectives, one is able to build a rather comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of work-life balance and its implications on the workforce and their organisations.

2.9.1 Spill over Theory

Mitu (2016, p.70) describes the Spill Over theory as a scenario whereby the experiences in one situation affects another different scenario until both scenarios are the same. Lakshmypria and Ramakrishna (2016, p.5) argue that several research studies that have been conducted, identified the spill over of behaviours, mood, skills and anxieties between home and work boundaries. Mitu (2016, p.71) believes the spill over effects can be superimposed on work and family situations and can go either way. Mitu (2016, p.70) believes that the effects of spill over can be either beneficial or detrimental. Edwards and Rothbard (2000, p.24) argue there are benefits, like a happy and satisfied employee, for organisations who encourage

a positive association between home and work boundaries. This is ultimately beneficial for the organisation, as a happy and satisfied employee tends to be more productive and engaged in their work (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000, p.24). A conversely detrimental spill over is when, for example the demands of work get in the way of home life and lead to stress and conflict in the home (Mitu, 2016, p.70). Mitu (2016, p.70) observed that workers who were stressed at work, tended to be have higher proportions of family and marital troubles. The Spill Over theory therefore provides an important lens to investigate how the work and family divides interact with each other, and most importantly the resultant positive and negative effects of this interaction. There is therefore potential to explore how flexible working can be used to better manage the spill over effects in the home and work environments.

2.9.2 Compensation Theory

Mitu (2016, p.71) identifies the Compensation Theory as a scenario whereby an individual expends effort in trying to counteract the negative experiences in one situation, by expending a complimentary positive effort to achieve a positive experience in the other situation. Zedeck and Mosier (1990, p.2) argue that compensation can be viewed in two dimensions, namely reactive and supplemental. Edwards and Rothbard (2000, p.24) argue a supplemental reaction is observed in most workers who were not happy with their work and who tended to allocate more attention to their family as a compensating mechanism. The reverse, which is the reactive compensating mechanism, was also observed to be true for some workers, who were not happy at home and tended to spend more time at work as a compensating mechanism ((Edwards and Rothbard, 2000, p.24). The Compensation Theory is hence useful in helping to identify and understand the behaviours of individuals, when the work and home divide are likely in conflict. Therefore, there is potential to explore how flexible working can help ensure the experiences in both the home and work boundaries are equally positive.

2.9.3 Balanced Theory

Heider (1946) in his Balance Theory suggests that once people see a set of cognitive elements as being in a system, there is enough evidence to suggest that

they will have a strong preference to see these elements in a balanced state. Heider (1946) believes that once individuals view or feel that they are out of balance, there is a strong desire to return to a sense of balance. Kumarasamy *et al.* (2015, p.2) argue that once one's work-life balance is out of equilibrium, there is a strong preference by the employee to balance the two. Clark (2000, p.748) argues that the family and work domains, however different they maybe, are very much interconnected. Therefore, people spend most of their time trying to fill in the gaps between these two domains (Clark, 2000, p.4).

If this balance is not maintained, Kumarasamy *et al.* (2015, p.2) believe there is a serious risk to performance at work and the quality of life at home. In that same breath, Clark (2000, p.5) argues that when the work and life interfaces are in balance, there exists evidence to support that employees are happier, satisfied with their work, and can carry out their family commitments. However, Kumarasamy *et al.* (2015, p.2) argue that a good balance of work and family commitments is not an easy feat, especially if the employee does not have enough personal capacity or organisational support in providing an enabling environment to achieve this balance. The Balanced Theory therefore provides the study with a basis as to why employees and organizations are vested in trying to achieve a healthy balance between the home and work interfaces. Therefore, there exists potential to explore how flexible working can be a useful tool to ensure the right balance is achieved in both the workers' home and work environments.

2.9.4 Wellness Theory

The National Wellness Institute, NWI (2018) identifies Wellness 'as an active process through which people become aware of and make choices towards a more successful existence'. In an organisational setting, Machen, Cuddihy, Reaburn and Higgins (2012, p.11) define wellness as any organisational initiative or activity that is intended to promote healthy behaviour and lifestyles in the workplace. Abe, Fields and Abe (2016, p.3), in a study on the effectiveness of wellness programs on work-life balance in the South African Public Service, noted that there is substantial evidence to support the assertion that wellness programs have a positive impact on achieving a work-life balance. Abe *et al.* (2016, p.3) observed that most

municipalities studied, who had no or poorly designed wellness programs in place, had a significant majority of their workforce complaining of having a poor work-life balance. Abe *et al.* (2016, p.3) conversely observed that most municipalities studied, which had well designed wellness programs in place, had a significant majority of their workforce happy and satisfied with their work-life balance. Therefore, the Wellness Theory is a valuable concept that helps to explore and understand why employees and organizations engage in activities that help to ensure overall wellbeing and ultimately help employees achieve a work-life balance.

2.9.5 Resource Based Theory

The Resource Based Theory identifies a strategic resource as one that provides a competitive advantage to drive superior organisational performance (Barney, 1991). Barney (1991), however, argues that it is important to distinguish a strategic resource from any other resource at the organisation's disposal. Therefore, Barney (1991) defines a strategic resource as one that is 'valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and non-substitutable.' A valuable or rare resource would, therefore, be one that is costly to acquire. The hiring of specialised staff for an organisation in the high tech or aerospace industry is a prime example. The difficult to imitate attribute refers to those strategic resources that are not so easily copied or duplicated by competitors. Barney (1991) argues these are usually legally protected by instruments like patents, copyrights and trademarks. And lastly, the non-substitutable attribute is characterised as one that makes it hard or difficult for competitors to use alternative resources to gain the same amount of benefit derived from the strategic resource. Barney (1991) argues that it is, therefore, imperative for organisations to identify their own strategic resources, as they are sources of competitive advantage for improved performance and bigger profits. Moreover, literature has consistently shown that human resources are one of the most important strategic resources of any organisation (Barney, 1991). The Resource Based Theory is therefore a useful lens to help interrogate and understand why organizations are invested in ensuring that their employees have the necessary tools in place, to ensure their work-life balance is optimized for both the employees and organization's benefit.

2.9.6 Merging of Theoretical Perspectives

All the above theoretical perspectives will be used in the research to explore the role of flexible working in helping workers achieving a work-life balance. The theoretical perspectives are all complimentary to one another and help to unpack the key concepts of flexible working and work-life balance from the workers as well as the organisation's point of view. The use of different theoretical perspectives enables the researcher to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of work-life balance and its implications on the workforce and organisations.

2.10 Conclusion

Research and studies globally have shown that most workers are not satisfied with their work-life balances. This has been shown to have detrimental effects on both employees and the organisations that they work for. Consequently, this negative impact has been extended to economies, resulting in massive economic costs. However, studies have shown that there are significant positive benefits for employees and organisations alike when employees have a good work-life balance. Studies have also shown that flexible working can be utilised to help employees achieve a good work-life balance. Literature identifies a variety of different but complimentary theories to help understand the work-life balance and its implications for organisations and employees alike. The next chapter presents the Research Methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research is of an exploratory type in nature. Reiter (2017, p.2) argues that an exploratory research is one that “investigates a problem which is not clearly defined and, is conducted to have a better understanding of the existing problem but will not provide conclusive results.” This chapter provides an outline of the exploratory nature of the research methodology used, which includes outlining the case study methodology; data collection techniques; data analysis; data reliability and triangulation, and lastly ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This research adopted an Interpretivist Paradigm approach. Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as the principle or a belief system the researcher uses to guide them in carrying out their research. Willis (1995) contends that the Interpretivist paradigm is 'concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals'. Chowdhury (2014, p.434) suggests that Interpretivism provides a lens to critically understand contemporary social issues in our everyday lives. Chowdhury (2014, p.435) asserts this approach implies that the research approach is underpinned by the idea that people's knowledge and experiences are shaped by their interaction with other people, and hence rules out the scientific procedures employed in natural sciences. Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) suggest those researchers using the Interpretivist paradigm use measurement techniques like interviews and observations that strongly depend on the subjective type of relationship that exists between the subject and the researcher. Therefore, Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) believe that researchers informed by an Interpretivist paradigm, don't “depend on a set of predetermined independent outcomes, but rather focus on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges”.

3.3 Research Design – Case Study

De Vaus (2001, p.25) believes that a research design is the ‘overall strategy’ that a researcher uses, to combine the different aspects of a study so that it is logical,

coherent, and ultimately enables the researcher to comprehensively answer the research problem. The strategy chosen for this study is a Case Study. This study was therefore a Case Study of Kestrel Business Solutions – a specialized IT company based in London, United Kingdom. The unit of focus were the IT Consultants in the employ of Kestrel Business Solutions.

Shuttleworth (2018) defines a Case Study as an in-depth examination of a situation of particular interest to the researcher, that identifies ‘the boundaries of the case, and the complexity of the behaviour patterns of the bounded system (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2018). The reason for choosing a case study in this instance was that it allowed the researcher to investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon, by identifying the context of events and their relationships (Zainal, 2007, p.2). And as shown in literature, work – life balance and flexible working are arguably present day and real - life complex issues that affect people and organizations alike. Hence, there is a greater need to explore and understand how the two concepts interact, and their impact on people and organizations.

Importantly, a case study is also able to provide the researcher with a chance to unravel the research question, and to, "discover new relationships of realities and build up an understanding of the meaning of experiences" and to gain "insight and comprehension" (Babbie and Mouton 2007, p.80; Riege, 2003, p.77). Yin (2003, p.2) believes that case studies are particularly useful, especially when trying to ‘understand complex social phenomena’ as it allows the researchers to ‘retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events’. Yin (2003, p2) goes on and asserts that case studies are generally valuable tools when trying to answer contemporary issues in a real-life context in an exploratory and descriptive manner.’

3.4 Research Approach

The research used a predominantly qualitative methodological approach - with a quantitative approach that was used as an extension of the qualitative approach. The quantitative data thereof was to a lesser extent used to validate and corroborate the principal findings from the dominant qualitative data. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.2) a qualitative research study is one that is ‘multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter.’ This

therefore involves the researcher studying 'things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994.p.2). This method is mostly useful when trying to understand social phenomenon that occurs predominantly through human interaction (Shorten and Smith, 2007, p.1). Most importantly, the main goal of qualitative research is anchored in trying to recognize and appreciate the , 'social reality of individuals, groups and cultures as its participants feel it or live it' (Shorten and Smith, 2007, p.1). As already shown in literature – the boundary between the home and work interface, and its interaction with flexible working arrangements is one that involves the lived reality of people and families. Therefore, qualitative research provides a useful lens to explain how and why people behave in a particular manner in response to their environment and in certain contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002, p.2).

3.4.1 Qualitative Case Study

Yin (2003) argues a case study is most useful when answering how and why questions - and equally importantly when the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions relevant to the study and, also where the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear. This is quite evident in this study where the role of flexible working is analysed in the context of a work - life balance. To fully understand work - life balance, one has to understand how it is affected if any, by the availability of flexible working arrangements. A case study was therefore chosen because the work - life balance of the IT Workers of Kestrel Business Solutions, has to be considered in the context of the available flexible working arrangements. Without which, it would have been impossible for the researcher to have a true understanding of how the work - life balance of the workers is impacted - without considering the availability and impact of their flexible working arrangements.

However, over reliance on one approach might not be enough to fully explore and understand natural phenomenon. Babbie (2010, p.60) believes that a predominantly qualitative methodological – coupled with a quantitative approach as an extension tool - is useful, 'when one wants to rigorously examine a research question from

different angles, and clarify unexpected findings and or potential contradictions.’ Shorten and Smith (2007, p.1) believe the predominant use of a qualitative approach – combined with a quantitative approach used as an extension tool - provides a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This arguably has the potential to enrich the study findings and recommendations. Therefore – that is why this research study made use of a predominantly qualitative methodology approach.

Therefore, the research combines the two identified elements: Qualitative Methodology and the Case Study - to form a Qualitative Case Study. Baxter and Jack (2008, p.1) define a Qualitative Case Study as a method of inquiry for a particular phenomenon using a variety of data sources. Baxter and Jack (2008, p.1) argue this method of inquiry allows for phenomenon to be explored through a, ‘variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood.’ This is further buttressed by Yin (2002, p.2) who argues that the hallmark of any case study research ‘is the use of multiple data sources’ to enhance data credibility.

Therefore, the study primarily uses qualitative data – that is complemented by quantitative data to fully explore the phenomenon of work - life balance using flexible working arrangements. Baxter and Jack (2008, p.3) argue that ‘potential data sources may include, but are not limited to interviews, documentation, direct observations and archival records.’ To enhance data credibility, the study therefore made use of a combination of semi - structured interviews and questionnaires to collect data. However, Yin (2002, p.3) argues the major drawback of having multiple data sources is the risk of having overwhelmingly large amounts of data. This is arguably one of the biggest challenges of using a Qualitative Case Study (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p.3). Baxter and Jack (2008, p.3) warn that often at times researchers have too much data , and consequently fail to manage and analyse it accordingly. Hence, there is a great emphasis that is placed on the selection and management of data sources in a Qualitative Case Study. This is the major reason why the study chose to focus on Kestrel Business Solutions, and its relatively small

staff complement of only ten personnel. Any data that was to be obtained through the semi – structured interviews and the questionnaires, could be sufficiently managed and analysed by the researcher. This would therefore enable the researcher to be able to sufficiently organize, manage and analyse the data without the risk of being overwhelmed - from the two data sources.

3.4.2 Qualitative data

Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2) argue that qualitative data is obtained by ‘studying things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’. This view is echoed by University of Utah (2018) which believes that the cornerstone of a qualitative research lies in its subjective nature, instead of the objective nature. Hence, the researcher can gain more understanding of the subject under investigation by observing and learning from them (University of Utah, 2018).

3.4.3 Quantitative data

On the other hand, quantitative data is numerical information that is usually obtained through surveys, questionnaires, polls and is usually manipulated through statistical means to generalise phenomena across object or individuals (Barbie, 2010, p.54). Babbie (2010, p.54) argues that the main aim of gathering quantitative data is to either determine the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable, or to simply describe the relationship between variables.

3.5 Study Location

At the time of the study all the participants were based in London – United Kingdom. All the respondents also lived and worked in London, United Kingdom.

3.6 Study Population

Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbon (2015, p.1) define a research population as a collection of objects or people that make the focus of a student enquiry. Kestrel Business Solutions is selected in in this study to provide the population. Due to its highly specialized nature – Kestrel Business Solutions has a small staff complement

of only of 10 employees. The composition is 7 females and 3 males. The 10 staff members hence made up the study population.

3.7 Study Sample

According to Gentles *et al.* (2016, p.2) sampling is the process or activities involved in 'selecting a representative part of a population for the purposes of determining characterises of the whole population.' From the total staff complement of 10 - a total of 6 employees availed themselves for the study, and the rest either declined or were not available. Of the 6 available employees to participate in the study – 3 were females and 3 were males. Due, to the small population size of IT workers in this case study, which is the unit of analysis - this was used as the sample size until saturation was achieved. Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs and Jinks (2018, p.1) argue that saturation - now a widely accepted principle in qualitative research - postulates that that once data has been collected and analysed, further data collection and analysis is not necessary. This means that 'researchers reach a point in their analysis of data that sampling more data will not lead to more information related to their research questions' (Seale, 1999, p.87). From an initial population size of 10, saturation was achieved when the first 6 participants were interviewed. The themes emanating from each of the first 6 research participants were consistent with each other, and as a result saturation was deemed to have been achieved

3.7.1 Sampling Method

Purposeful sampling was used to select and create the sample of respondents from the population. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016, p.1) purposeful sampling is non-probability sampling technique to recruit research participants, and where the units to be investigated are primarily based on the judgement of the researcher. There were two main reasons for choosing Kestrel Business Solutions and its IT Consultants as respondents for the study. Firstly, Kestrel Business Solutions is an IT Consultancy based in London. Based on its location in the UK – this is makes it a suitable choice, as it ties in with the important problem context already identified - that approximately 526 000 general workers, out of the total workforce in the UK, suffered from depression, work-related stress or anxiety in

2016 and 2017 (New Economics Foundation ,2018, p.5). By virtue of its location – Kestrel Business Solutions is selected as the case study. Secondly, the IT Consultants of Kestrel Business Solutions have Flexible Working arrangements available to them. This therefore provided the researcher with an opportunity to explore how effective flexible working, if at all, is in helping to achieve a work-life balance of the employees.

3.8 Data Collection Techniques

The Data for this study was obtained using the following techniques:

- Semi Structured interviews with the respondents
- Questionnaires that the respondents filled out

The data for this research was collected through semi structured interviews and questionnaires. Open ended questions around the participants' own perceptions and understanding of flexible working and work-life balance were posed to allow the participants to provide their own thoughts. These interviews were done face to face and recorded verbatim to enable cross checking and to construct data validity. Self-administered questionnaires which the respondents completed online in their own space - with the same themes were also provided to the participants. Both the interview questions and questionnaires focused on:

- Work–Life Balance, Wellness, Organisational Culture and Flexible Working
- And how and why flexible working can be utilised to achieve a work-life balance

3.8.1 Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a technique that entails the identification, scrutinising, and reporting patterns of behaviour within the data collected, to have a clear understanding of what has occurred and the reason for that occurrence (Aronson, 1994). Aronson (1994) believes that explanations are reassessed, and modified as more research data is analysed, until a point is reached where there is a casual explanation that fits the

research data. To that end, a mind map was used to group and present the various resultant key concepts identified using thematic analysis. The Oxford Dictionary (2017) defines a mind map as 'a diagram in which information is represented visually, usually with a central idea placed in the middle and associated ideas arranged around it.' The quantitative data was analysed using simple descriptive statistics. Shorten and Smith (2007, p.1) define descriptive statistics as a technique to analyse quantitative data by providing simple summaries and measures about a sample under study. These descriptive statistics were minimally used to support the findings of the qualitative data.

3.9 Validity and Triangulation

The gathering of data in a research context is a very vital element, as the data certainly provides a better comprehension of the theory. Therefore, it becomes quite vital to ensure that the method used to select and collect the data and from whom the data will be acquired to be used in the research, is done carefully – as 'no amount of analysis can make up for improperly collected data' (Etikan *et al.*, 2016, p.1). Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2010, p.1) define validity as to the extent to which the findings of the study are true as supported by the evidence. To determine this validity, methodological triangulation was used. Riege (2003, p.79) defines methodological triangulation as a process that 'involves using more than one option to gather data, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents. Therefore, the research participants were both interviewed and given questionnaires to reinforce the validity of the findings of the study. External validity was maintained through the development of 'thick descriptions' with data recorded electronically and stored to reinforce reliability (Riege, 2003, p.79).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines of Rhodes University. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Rhodes University Ethics Committee, as well as from the organisation under study (Appendix C – Institution Consent Form). The Individual Consent Forms were provided to the Research Participants prior to taking part in the study (Appendix D – Individual Consent Form). The researcher got both the gatekeeper and the respondents' permission to conduct the

study at the gatekeeper's premises and utilizing its employees. The research respondents' privacy and anonymity were of utmost importance and any identifying features in the data was removed. In addition, the researcher asked and got permission from the respondents to record their conversations during the interviews. All this was done to protect the participants as well as the organisation, as the results of the study could be potentially embarrassing for their organisation

3.11 Conclusion

This exploratory nature of the research is discussed including the methodology used. The research design informing the research - the case study method is also discussed including the data collection techniques; data analysis; data reliability and triangulation. Lastly, the ethical considerations that the researcher had to consider from both the organisation and the respondents' perspectives are also discussed. The following chapter is a presentation of the study results.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of the results of the research study. The results are predominantly qualitative with a relatively small quantitative component. Consequently, the presentation of the results is of a qualitative nature – with a quantitative component which is an extension of the qualitative component. The results are presented in line with the research goals and objectives. The chapter includes both data from the semi - structured interviews and the questionnaires.

4.2 Participants Demographics

The research had a total of six participants. Their biodata, which includes research coding, gender, ethnicity, job title, number of years with the company and marital status, are shown below in Table 4.1

Code	Gender	Ethnicity	Job Title	Number Years with Company	of with	Marital Status
RESPONDENT 1	Female	Black	Business Analyst	5		Married
RESPONDENT 2	Female	Indian	Tester	4		Married
RESPONDENT 3	Female	White	Project Analyst	7		Single
RESPONDENT 4	Male	Indian	Consultant	15		Married
RESPONDENT 5	Male	Indian	Developer	5		Married
RESPONDENT 6	Male	White	IT Analyst	2		Single

Table 4.1 Biodata of Respondents

4.3 Interview Results

The results of the interviews are grouped according to the interview questions posed to the respondents. The corresponding responses to each question are shown verbatim in table format as per the coding derived in Table 4.1. The questions that were posed to the respondents revolved around: the availability and options of flexibility in their work life to meet family life; whether their current work and home hours are in sync and fit into each other; the state of their personal wellbeing; and lastly their ability to fulfil their home and work commitments. The interview questions are shown in Appendix A.

4.3.1 Available and utilized flexible working arrangements

Question: What flexible working arrangements are available to you that you have utilised and why? (n = 6)

- a) Homeworking
- b) Teleworking
- c) Flexitime
- d) Job sharing
- e) Compressed work weeks

Respondent	Answer
1	Homeworking. These are the ones agreed to between my manager and I
2	Homeworking and Flexitime. The company believe in Flexible hours working so that we can work along with colleagues which are based around the world.
3	Homeworking and Teleworking. My office has recently moved to Canary Wharf and my Journey time has doubled. My Manager has agreed 2 work from home days per week, which includes Skype meetings and tele-conference calls.

- 4 Homeworking, Teleworking and Flexitime. As a senior consultant I am now responsible for planning how my time is spent.
- 5 Homeworking, Teleworking and Flexitime. This is what has been made available by the business and these are my preferences.
- 6 Homeworking and Flexitime. It makes travelling easier, I am more productive earlier in the day and I am able to balance work and home commitments more easily.

The first question from the Interviews that the respondents were asked is on the different types of Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) that they had utilised or were utilising. Firstly, all the respondents agreed that they had used homeworking. This popularity of homeworking is consistent with Joyce *et al.* (2009, p.5), who observed in their study that homeworking is the most commonly used and adopted FWA in most organisations. The second observation from the interview data is that flexitime was the second most popular FWA used by the respondents. RESPONDENT 2, RESPONDENT 4, RESPONDENT 5 and RESPONDENT 6 noted that they had used flexitime at some point in their organisation. This is also consistent with Joyce *et al.* (2009, p5), who argue that flexitime is one of the popular FWA available and used by employees and organisations alike. The last observation from the data is that Teleworking is the least popular of the FWA used by the respondents. Only RESPONDENT 3, RESPONDENT 4 and RESPONDENT 5 admitted to having adopted and used Teleworking in their organisation. Notably none of the respondents identified Job sharing and Compressed Work weeks as the types of FWA available to them or ones that they had utilised before. This is simply due to the reason that the organisation does not have Job sharing and Compressed Work Weeks as FWA options.

Also, the interviews were able to provide us with a glimpse of why the respondents chose to use the FWA available to them. There was a wide array of reasons for using certain types of FWA over others. However, there was no highly dominating discourse with the responses. These responses were varied and ranged from, "These were the FWA types agreed to between the manager and myself"

(RESPONDENT 1); “This is what has been made available by the business and also these are my preferences.” (RESPONDENT 5); “They are encouraged by the company” (RESPONDENT 2); and lastly that “It makes travelling easier, I am more productive earlier in the day and I am able to balance work and home commitments more easily” (RESPONDENT 6). However, it is also important to note from the data, the amount of influence by the organisation in the types of FWA identified and utilised by the respondents. This is exemplified by Job sharing and Compressed Work Weeks as FWA options not being provided by the organization. Additionally, as directly put by RESPONDENT 2, “The organisation believes in Flexible hours working so that we can work along with colleagues which are based around the world.” As such, it is important that any analysis thereof is cognizant of the role played by the organisation in determining and supporting the types of FWA utilised by employees.

4.3.2 Flexible Work Arrangements and their influence on Work – Related Stress

Question: Has utilising Flexible Work Arrangements helped you to reduce the pressure induced by trying to balance work commitments? How? (n=6)

Respondent	Answer
1	Yes. Transportation time is eliminated when I WFH hence creating more time with family
2	Yes. I can avoid rush hours and can work efficiently. I can save travelling time when WFH and can dedicate more time to finish work.
3	Yes. Without it I would be losing 20 hours per week in travel. Working from home means I only lose 12
4	Yes. I can spend as much time as necessary to complete a task and I am free to prioritise what needs to be done.

5 Yes. They allow me to be able to come in early to work and be more productive, and also leave work early to avoid the London rush hour. Also provides with an opportunity to have a bit of control, over when I start and finish work

6 Yes. Quieter time in the early morning means I am more productive

The second question posed to the respondents in the interviews, asked if FWA helped them to reduce the pressure of trying to balance work commitments and how. All the respondents agreed that FWA helped them in some way to ease the pressure of trying to balance work commitments. As put by RESPONDENT 2, "I can avoid rush hours and can work efficiently. I can save travelling time when WFH and can dedicate more time to finish work". This is consistent with RESPONDENT 4, who says, "I can spend as much time as necessary to complete a task and I am free to prioritise what needs to be done." This is repeated across all the responses with RESPONDENT 6, saying, "I'm more productive." What is clear from all the responses is a general belief that FWA helps the respondents to better manage their work and helps to reduce the stress of trying to balance work commitments.

4.3.3 Flexible Work Arrangements and their influence on Home – Related stress

Question: Has utilising Flexible Work Arrangements helped you to reduce the pressure induced by trying to balance home commitments? How? (n=6)

Respondent	Answer
1	Yes. Transportation time is eliminated when I WFH hence creating more time with family

- 2 Yes. I can drop kid to school and socialise a bit with teachers and other parents. I can attend to some personal work as well (fixing lighting issue, water issue, boiler issue) when WFH
- 3 Yes. The extra time I would be travelling, I can now spend with my family. It also means I am available earlier in the evenings on the days I am working from home.
- 4 This change means I can spend more time with my family while still being able to work.
- 5 I can spend more time with the family and be able to attend to household chores
- 6 Being home earlier in the evening means I can balance family commitments more easily

The second question posed to the respondents in the Interviews asked if FWA helped them to reduce the pressure of trying to balance home commitments and how. All the respondents agreed that FWA helped them in some way to ease the pressure of trying to balance home commitments. As RESPONDENT 1 put it, “Yes. Transportation time is eliminated when I WFH hence creating more time with family.” This is also consistent with RESPONDENT 3, who says, “Yes. The extra time I would be travelling, I can now spend with my family. It also means I am available earlier in the evenings on the days I am working from home.” This recurring theme is also seen in the responses of RESPONDENT 4, RESPONDENT 5 and RESPONDENT 6, who all agree that FWA helps them to be able to spend more time with their families. The importance of FWA to balancing home commitments is aptly put and summarised by RESPONDENT 3, who says, “I can drop my kid to school and socialise a bit with teachers and other parents. And I can attend to some personal work as well (fixing lighting issue, water issue, boiler issue) when WFH.”

4.3.4 Flexible Work Arrangements and their influence on Personal Wellbeing

Question: Has utilising Flexible Work Arrangements helped to improve your Personal wellbeing? How? (n=6)

Respondent	Answer
1	Yes. Sleep better, wake up refreshed and less stressed
2	Yes. I have enough time to spend on my sporting and personal activities like going to the gym and socializing with friends
3	Yes. Travelling is difficult for me due to medical complaints. The less time I have to spend travelling, the less pain I am in and the less stressed I am
4	Yes. I can schedule time for myself without being to restrict with the work, i.e. begin able to go out for a walk, bike ride etc.
5	I am able to do thigs like sports and having some down time to myself. I am also able to socialise more with my friends and family
6	Yes, less stressed, easier commuting.

The fourth question posed to the respondents in the interviews, asked if they thought FWA helped them to improve their personal wellbeing. All the respondents agreed that FWA helped them to improve their personal wellbeing. The responses from the interview data generally showed that the participants use of FWA helped them to spend more time doing things dedicated to their personal welfare. As put by RESPONDENT 2, "I have enough time to spend on my sporting and personal activities like going to the gym and socializing with friends." This view is echoed by RESPONDENT 5 who says, "I am able to do thigs like sports and having some down

time to myself. I am also able to socialise more with my friends and family.” This theme is repeated across all the responses and RESPONDENT 1 simply states that as a result of FWA, “I sleep better, wake up refreshed and less stressed.” RESPONDENT 3 attributes FWA as helping them manage their personal health issues as they state, “Travelling is difficult for me to do medical complaints. The less time I have to spend travelling, the less pain I am in and the less stressed I am.”

4.3.5 The negatives of Flexible Working Arrangements and potential solutions

What have been the negatives of utilizing the Flexible Working Arrangements available to you? In your opinion what can be improved?

Respondent	Answer
1	Pressure to prove to colleagues that you are actually working. Probably better help with setting up work from home for employees
2	Sometimes I miss meeting people or socializing in office.
3	I don't get to see my colleagues as much. This can make you feel isolated. More team building events and nights out. Although this is a struggle to organise due to flexi working, I think many people would benefit
4	This is not really a negative, but you have to be much disciplined in how to schedule you working hours. You also need to be able to have a space/room specifically allocate for working. Being a senior consultant there is nothing that can be improved to which I don't have control over
5	I was used to seeing my colleagues every day and had lunches together with them which I don't anymore. Synchronizing my schedule with my colleagues' flexible working schedules
6	I haven't found any yet.

From the research data, all the respondents, except of for RESPONDENT 6, were able to point out the disadvantages of FWA and how they can be improved. RESPONDENT 6 simply stated, “I haven't found any yet”, when asked about the pitfalls of FWA. However, the other respondents were able to point out pitfalls, with RESPONDENT 1 saying, there is “pressure to prove to colleagues that you are actually working”, and that a possible solution involves, “better help with setting up work from home for employees.” RESPONDENT 2, RESPONDENT 3 and RESPONDENT 4 were consistent about not being able to see their colleagues as frequently, with RESPONDENT 2 saying, “Sometimes I miss meeting people or socializing in office.” RESPONDENT 3 weighs in with similar views and adds, “I don't get to see my colleges as much. This can make you feel isolated.” RESPONDENT 3 even suggests that a potential solution involves, “More team building events and nights out. Although this is a struggle to organise due to flexi working, I think many people would benefit.” RESPONDENT 5 weighs and suggests “synchronizing my schedule with my colleagues' flexible working schedules” as a possible solution to the challenges identified by RESPONDENT 2, RESPONDENT 3 and RESPONDENT 4.

4.4 Presentation of the Questionnaire Data

This chapter is a presentation of the questionnaire results. The results are grouped and based on six questions which were presented to the respondents. The questions that were posed to the respondents revolved around: the availability and options of flexibility in their work life to meet family life; whether their current work and home hours are in sync and fit into each other; the state of their personal wellbeing; and lastly their ability to fulfil their home and work commitments. The questionnaire used for the study is shown in Appendix B. These are discussed below. This exercise was conducted as a data triangulation exercise to confirm and substantiate the findings from the qualitative interview data.

4.4.1 Availability of Flexible Working Arrangements

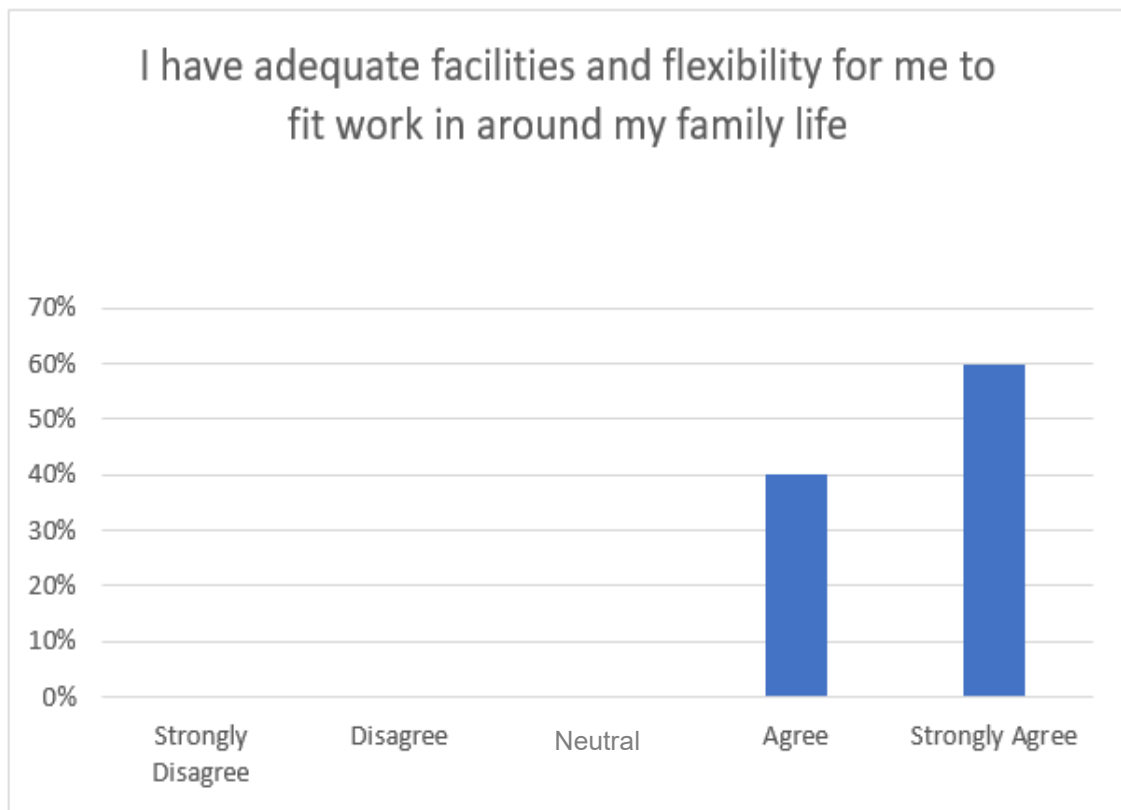


Fig 4.2 Availability of Flexible Working Arrangements

The graph above shows the results of the questionnaire, when the question regarding whether there were adequate facilities and flexibility for the respondents to fit in work around their family lives. From the graph, all the respondents agreed that they had some form of FWA in their work environments, to be able to fit in their families. This is highlighted by 60% of the respondents strongly agreeing to the statement and the remaining 40% agreeing as well.

4.4.2 Balance between working hours and family commitments

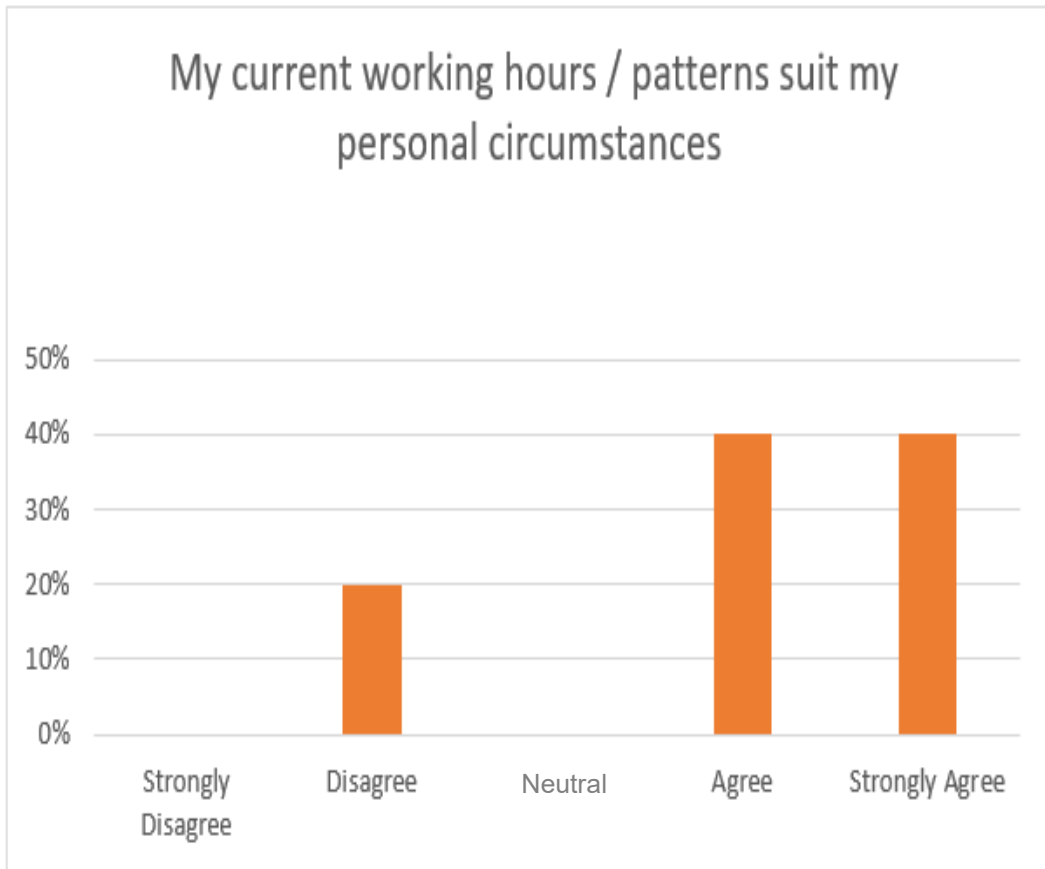


Fig 4.3 Balance between working hours and family commitments

The graph above shows the results of the question regarding whether the respondents' working hours and patterns suit their personal circumstances. From the graph, an overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that their current working hours and patterns suit their personal circumstances. This is highlighted by 80% of the respondents overall agreeing to the statement and the remaining 20% not agreeing. Therefore, it is evident that a large majority of the respondents were able to successfully carry out their personal commitments, like leisure and socialising, by using the FWA available to them.

4.4.3 Ability to fulfil work commitments

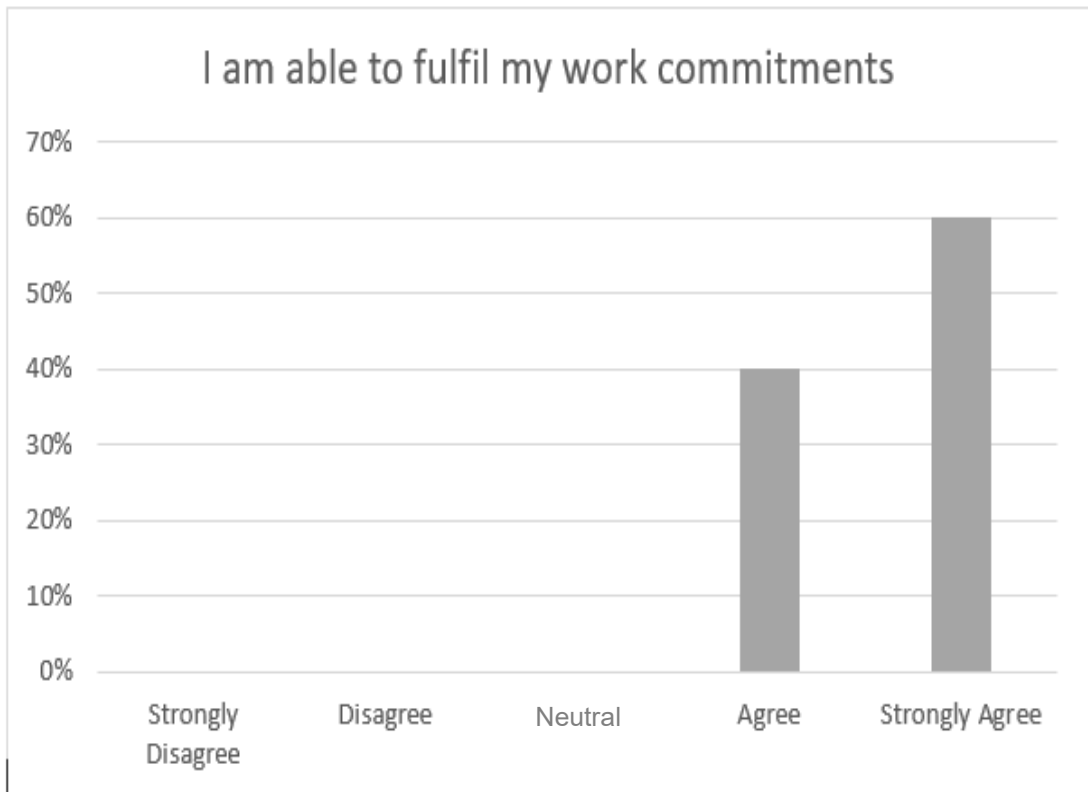


Figure 4.4. Ability to fulfil work commitments

The graph above shows the results of the question whether the respondents were able to fulfil their work commitments. From the graph, all the respondents agreed that they were able to fulfil their work commitments. This is evidenced by 60% of the respondents strongly agreeing to the statement and the remaining 40% agreeing. Therefore, it is evident that a large majority of the respondents were able to have more control over their work, work time and their commuting time by using the FWA available to them.

4.4.4 Ability to fulfil home commitments

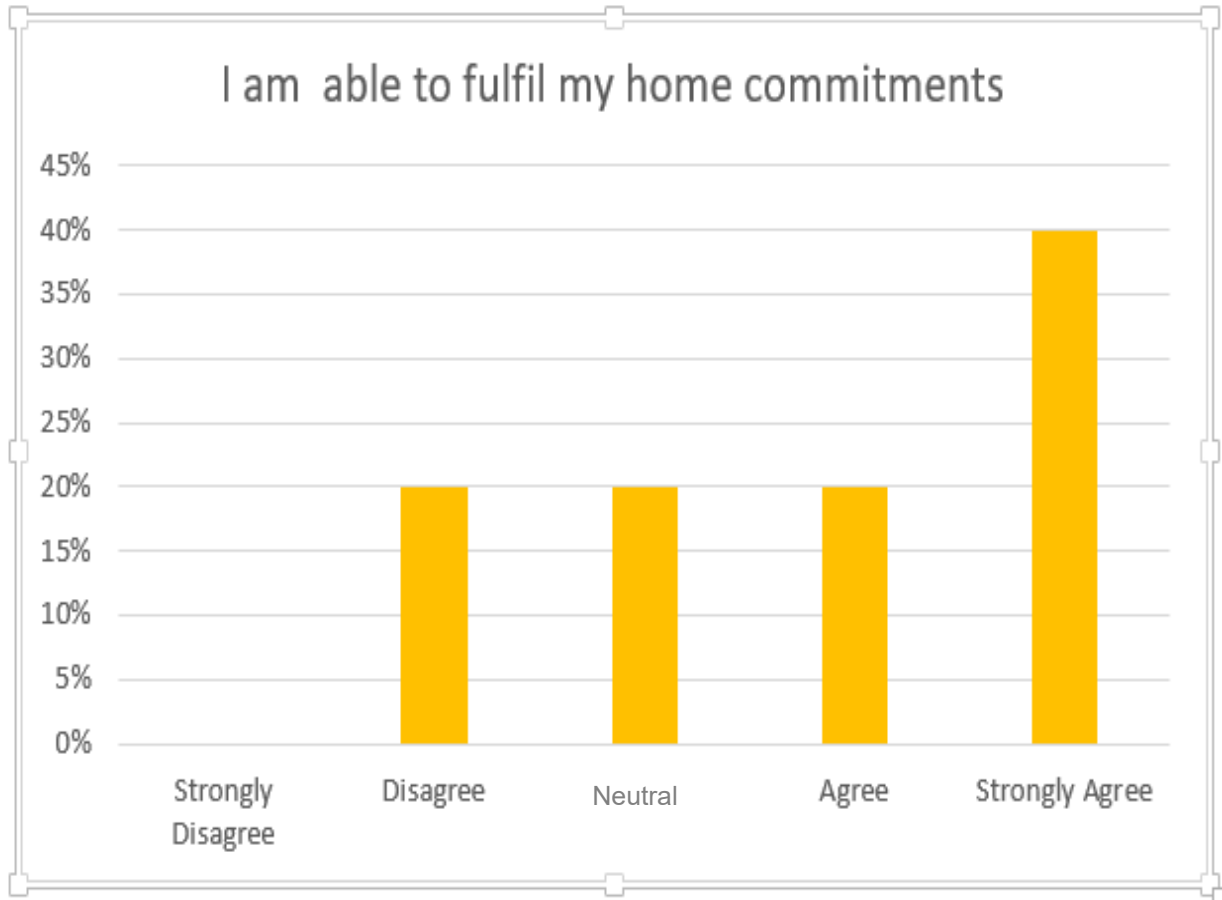


Figure 4.5 Ability to fulfil home commitments.

The graph above shows the results of the question whether the respondents can fulfil their family commitments. From the graph, an overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that their current working hours and patterns suit their personal circumstances. This is evidenced by 80% of the respondents overall agreeing to the statement and the remaining 20% not agreeing. Therefore, it is evident that a large majority of the respondents were able to carry out their home chores, attend to their family duties and their families, and spend more time at home by using the FWA available to them.

4.4.5 Personal Wellbeing

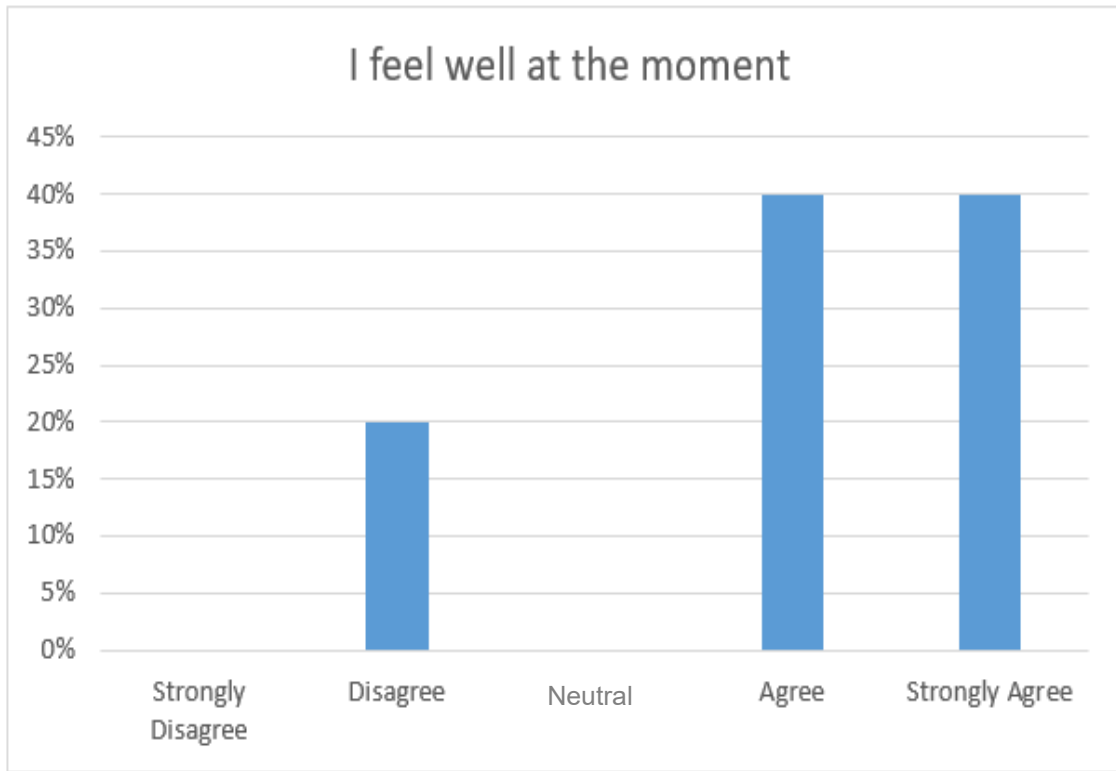


Figure 4.6 Personal Wellbeing

The graph above shows the results of the question whether the respondents felt well now. From the graph, an overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that their current working hours and patterns suit their personal circumstances. This is evidenced by 80% of the respondents overall agreeing to the statement and the remaining 20% not agreeing. Therefore, it is evident that a large majority of the respondents were able to carry out their own personal wellbeing activities like sports and leisure by using the FWA available to them.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the presentation of the results of the semi-structured interviews and questionnaire data. The results were summarised and presented in table format, as well as graphs. The next chapter presents the discussion of the data results and the literature.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is an analysis and discussion of the research data and literature, in relation to the research objectives and goals. The analysis is conducted using thematic analysis to explore the relationship that possibly exists between flexible working and work-life balance. The various themes identified from the data set of the semi-structured interviews are discussed first, followed by a discussion of the questionnaire data, as a data triangulation exercise to confirm the validity of the interview data.

5.1.1 Mind Map of Themes identified from Literature and the Results.

Fig 5.1 below is a visual representation of the thematic analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews. A web-based application called Mind Map Maker was used to generate the mind map, identified in Fig 5. 1 below using the interview data. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2017), a mind map is 'a diagram in which information is represented visually, usually with a central idea placed in the middle and associated ideas arranged around it'. Therefore, the mind map was used in this research study to visually arrange and present the key themes to help with the data analysis and ensuing discussion. The central idea, work-life balance is shown in the middle, with other key themes as shown below, colour coded as orange, blue, pink and brown - the with sub themes branching out from each of the main themes.

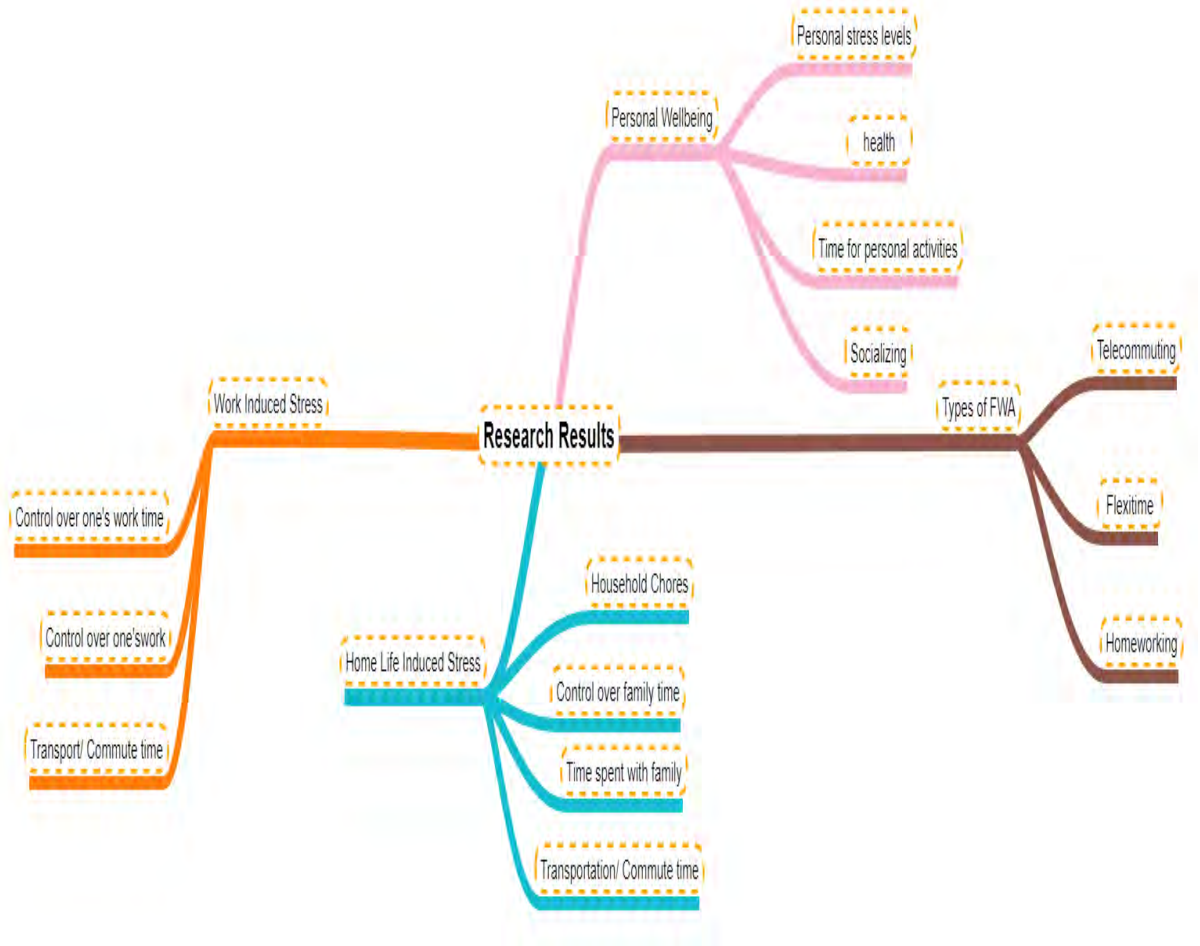


Fig 5.1. Mind Map of themes identified from Semi- Structured Interviews

From Figure 5.1 above, the key main ideas as extracted from the semi-structured interviews are as follows:

- 1) The different types of types of FWA used by the respondents (brown);
- 2) Factors contributing to the respondents' home-related stress (blue);
- 3) Factors influencing the respondents' work-related stress (orange); and
- 4) Factors influencing the respondents' personal wellbeing (pink).

The mind map shows how the various themes emanating from the interview data are all interlinked together. These are discussed below in more detail.

5.2 Aspects of Flexible Working that can reduce work induced stress and how?

The discussion below focuses on the factors causing work-related stress; the symptoms of work-related stress; and the effects of work-related stress on both employees and their organisations. The National Health Service (NHS) (2017) defines work-related stress as the feeling that one has when they believe that they cannot cope with the demands of their work responsibilities. However, Haydock (2017) believes that the UK business sector on average loses 12 million working days annually, because of an employee experiencing some form of work-related stress. He further elaborates on how almost half a million people in the UK have experienced work-related stress, 'at a level that's making them ill' (Haydock, 2017). It is therefore important to understand the causes, symptoms, effects of work-related stress and how it can potentially be combated using FWA.

As deduced from the interviews and shown in the mind map above, there are a variety of factors that contribute to work-related stress. From the research data, these can best be described as those that contribute to the pressure of trying to balance work commitments. Chiefly amongst those identified from the research data and extrapolated using thematic analysis, were control over one's time; control over one's work; and the time taken to commute between work and home. The NHS (2017) identifies a variety of factors contributing to work-related stress. Some of the most prevalent ones that have been identified in previous NHS (2017) studies include the pressure of working long hours; having an unmanageable workload; demanding deadlines; changes to work duties; and responsibilities and a lack of autonomy. This mirrors the sentiments raised by Badar (2011, p.3) in which he attempts to identify factors causing work-related stress in case study of Bank workers in Pakistan. Badar (2011, p.3) identifies the nature and size of a worker's workload as the biggest contributing factor to work-related stress. Badar (2011, p.11) observed that most of the study respondents agreed to the statement that 'banking workload is too much heavy, and worker cannot finish it on an ordinary workday'.

However, it is equally important to identify the symptoms of work-related stress. NHS (2017) studies suggest that some of the more common and noticeable symptoms of work-related stress include, but are not limited to, the ability to finish work assignments; missing lunch breaks; poor quality of work; absenteeism; and working longer hours. In a separate study, Collins and Gibbs (2003, p.4) noted that the symptoms of work-related stress are noticeable and are usually typified by a drop in work performance, irritability, fatigue, sleep disorders and in some cases depression. Collins and Gibbs (2003, p.4) believe that recognising these symptoms and taking corrective measures is vital, because if left unresolved, there can be consequences for both the worker and the organisation.

More importantly, Petreanu, Iordache and Seracin (2013, p.1) believe the effects of chronic work-related stress can be severely damaging. Petreanu *et al.* (2013, p.1) argue in their study that some of the obvious adverse effects of work-related stress on an individual include low worker morale; absenteeism; and poor quality of work. Haydock (2017) shares similar views in his study, which noted that some of the highly visible effects of work-related stress include increased mood swings; frustration and impatience with work colleagues; and diminished creativity in carrying out work duties. Haydock (2017) and Petreanu *et al.* (2013, p.1) argue that organisations must have necessary measures in place to ensure their workers experience as little stress as possible.

5.2.1 Higher Levels of Commitment

From the respondent's own opinions, it is evident that FWA, in their various forms have a direct impact on the factors influencing work-related stress. Firstly, there is evidence to suggest that FWA help employees to be more committed to their work. As highlighted by one of the respondents, 'I can spend as much time as necessary to complete a task and I am free to prioritise what needs to be done' (RESPONDENT 4). This view is echoed by RESPONDENT 5 who says FWA, 'allows me to be able to come in early to work and be more productive'. Significantly, the net result is that employees have higher levels of commitment as they have less work-related stress. This is consistent with Halpern (2005, p.2), who argues that one of the advantages of flexible working is a reduction in work-related stress. Halpern (2005, p.2) also

argues that organisations with employee-friendly policies, like flexible working, reported a higher number of employees with higher levels of commitment.

5.2.2 Significance of control over owns work

Secondly, from the respondents' own perceptions, the provision of flexible working arrangements has a significant bearing on one's control of their work time. One of the respondents, RESPONDENT 5, noted that FWA, 'provides me with an opportunity to have a bit of control, over when I start and finish work'. This is echoed by RESPONDENT 2 who says, FWA helps them to 'dedicate more time to finish work.' The overall effect is that the employee has more control over their time at work and by extension have less work-related stress. This reduction in work-related stress is one of the benefits identified by Tomažević *et al.* (2014, p.5). Heathfield (2019) complements this by arguing that flexible working allows workers to be their 'own bosses and gives employees an opportunity to oversee how they manage their work time'. Therefore, by having FWA, employees can effectively manage their time at work. This is like sentiments by Tomažević *et al.* (2014, p.5), who argue that once workers have control of their work time, they will be more satisfied and consequently productive.

5.2.3 Positive effects regarding commute-time

Thirdly, from the respondent's own perceptions, the provision of flexible working arrangements has a significant bearing on one's control of their commute time to work. As RESPONDENT 3 states, 'Without it I would be losing 20 hours per week in travel. Working from home means I only lose 12'. This is quite significant as it means the respondent has eight more hours dedicated to work or home commitments. This is also like RESPONDENT 2, who states that, 'I can avoid rush hours and can work efficiently' and that they 'can save travelling time when WFH and can dedicate more time to finish work.' Significantly, the net result is that the employee has more control over the time they commute to work and by extension, has less work-related stress. This is consistent with what has been identified and described in the literature, where one of the advantages of flexible working is a reduction in work-related stress. Lozeau (2016) noted that flexible working employees have the advantage of eliminating the stress of commuting by, among

others, avoiding rush hour times, or working from home certain days and avowing rush hour completely.

5.3 What Aspects of Flexible Working can reduce home related stress and how?

The discussion below focuses on the factors causing home-related stress; the symptoms of home related stress and the effects of home-related stress on employees, their families and their organisations. Bailey (2017, p.1), defines home-related stress as the negative pressure and feelings associated with a failure to cope with the demands and responsibilities of family life. Kim, Cho, Lee, Marion and Kim (2005, p.2) argue that once a single family member is stressed out, there is a significantly high probability that this stress can extend to other family members. Most concerning, Bailey (2017, p.1) believes that this also has the potential to have a negative influence on their work life. As such, it is important to understand the causes of home-related stress, its symptoms, effects and how it can be combated using FWA.

An equally important theme deduced from the interviews data and highlighted in the mind map in Fig 5.1 above, are the factors causing home-related stress. From the interviews, these factors were described as those that contribute to the pressure of trying to balance home commitments. Chiefly amongst those identified was the pressure of trying to balance home commitments, as highlighted by one RESPONDENT 5, who said that, 'I can spend more time with the family and be able to attend to household chores.' Similar sentiments are echoed by other respondents, who note that having FWA at their disposal helped them to spend time with their kids and attend to their needs (RESPONDENT 2). This is confirmed in an NHS (2017) study, which observed that home-related stress is usually caused by, amongst others, sorting childcare arrangements; death or bereavement in the family; taking care of elderly family and relatives; the pressure of long-distance relationships; and relationship or marital challenges. This view is also supported by Kim *et al.* (2005, p.1), who observed in a separate study that causes of home-related stress especially in women are a result of, amongst others, helping children with their academic commitments; trying to attend all their children's extracurricular

activities; and taking care of household chores and caring for elderly parents and relatives.

An NHS (2017) study identified some of the common symptoms of home-related stress as including feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to cope; breakdown in family relations and communications; inability to carry out family chores and responsibilities; and avoiding family gatherings. This view is supplemented by Fan, Blumenthal, Watkins and Sherwood (2015, p.4) who noted in their study that the symptoms of home-related stress can also affect one's physical state. Fan *et al.* (2015, p.4) observed that the physical symptoms of stress can include insomnia; headaches; chest pains; aches and rapid heartbeat; amongst others. Fan *et al.* (2015, p.5) argue that if the root causes of the symptoms are not treated, this can have detrimental effects to the physical-individual wellbeing.

More importantly, chronic home stress can have serious long-term effects on an individual. Fan *et al.* (2015, p.5) observed in their study that chronic home-related stress can lead to long-term effects like breakdown in family relations; divorce; and neglect of children and family. Hill (1958, p.4) concurs and argues that chronic home-related stress has severe negative effects on the family, especially children, and suggests these children are most likely to have troubled lives going forward.

5.3.1 Control over the home commitments

From the respondent's own opinions, it is evident that FWA in their various forms, have a direct impact over one's control of their home commitments. As put by RESPONDENT 2, 'I can drop the kid to school and socialise a bit with teachers and other parents,' and 'attend to some personal work as well (fixing lighting issue, water issue, boiler issue) when WFH.' This view is supplemented by RESPONDENT 4 who says, 'I can spend more time with the family and be able to attend to household chores.' This positive view is consistent with the responses from the other respondents, who also note that FWA enables them to have better control over their home commitments. RESPONDENT 5, confirms this by saying, 'Being home earlier in the evening means I can balance family commitments more easily.' Significantly, the net result is that the employee has more control over their home responsibilities

and by extension, has less home related stress. This is consistent with what has been identified in the literature, where one of the advantages of flexible working is a reduction in home-related stress (O'Mahony, 2017). O'Mahony (2017) argues flexible working for parents especially, gives them the ability to 'conduct the school run' and attend to their children's extracurricular activities.

5.3.2 Better control over time spent at home

Secondly, from the respondent's own perceptions, there is evidence to suggest the provision of FWA have a significant bearing on one's control of their time at home. Directly put by RESPONDENT 2, who notes that by having FWA it means "being home earlier in the evening," and that "I can balance family commitments more easily." This is corroborated by RESPONDENT 6, who says that, FWA enables them to be "home earlier in the evening," and that helps them "balance family commitments more easily." This view is repeated across all the respondents, with RESPONDENT 4 confirming this by saying, FWA helps them "spend more time with the family" and "be able to attend to household chores." Significantly, the net result is that the employee has more control over their time at home, to carry out their family responsibilities, and by extension have less home-related stress. This is consistent with what has been identified and described by Gifford (2007, p.3), who argues that one of the advantages of flexible working is a reduction in home-related stress. Gifford (2007, p.3) believes flexible working allows an employee to spend more time with their families and friends. Therefore, by having FWA, employees will be able to effectively manage their time at home. Gifford (2007, p.4) argues that once workers have control of their time at home, they will be more satisfied.

5.3.3 Having control over one's commute time

Thirdly, from the respondent's own perceptions, the provision of flexible working arrangements has a significant bearing on one's control of their commute time. As put by RESPONDENT 1, with FWA, "transportation time is eliminated when I WFH, hence creating more time with family." This is like sentiments by RESPONDENT 3, who says by having FWA, "the extra time I would be travelling, I can now spend with my family. It also means I am available earlier in the evenings on the days I am working from home." Importantly, the overall effect is that the employee has more

control over the time they commute and by extension have less home related stress. This is consistent with what has been identified and described by Gifford (2007, p.4), who argues that one of the advantages of flexible working is a reduction in home-related stress. Gifford (2007, p.4) believes flexible working employees have the advantage of eliminating the stress of commuting, by amongst others, avoiding rush hour times or working from home certain days and avoiding rush hour completely.

5.4 What aspects of Flexible Working can improve overall personal wellbeing and how?

Fan *et al.* (2015, p.6) define personal wellbeing as “how a person feels and functions both on a personal and social level and how they evaluate their lives”. This chapter will discuss personal wellbeing and factors influencing it; symptoms of being unwell; effects of being unwell; and lastly how FWA can be used to help achieve personal wellbeing. From the interviews the factors affecting personal wellbeing were identified as a state of good health; time for personal activities; and the ability to socialise. Some of the other factors that are identified in the literature and that are consistent with the research data are the state of personal finances and debt or money worries; lack of friends or support; health and weight issues; personal injury or illness; daily hassles; traffic jams; public transport; time pressures; and car troubles (NHS, 2017). More importantly Fan *et al.* (2015, p.7) identify some of the adverse effects of being unwell, not only just on the individual but also on the family unit. An NHS (2017) study showed that some of the effects include depression; anxiety; discouragement; and feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to cope.

5.4.1 Control over one’s personal commitments and obligations

From the respondent’s own opinions, it is evident that FWA, be it in their various forms, have a direct impact on their personal wellbeing. As put by RESPONDENT 1, FWA enables them to, “Sleep better, wake up refreshed and less stressed.” This view is shared by RESPONDENT 2, who says FWA helps them “have enough time to spend on my sporting and personal activities like going to the gym and socializing with friends.” The other respondents also share similar sentiments, with RESPONDENT 5 saying, “I am able to do things like sports and having some down time to myself. I am also able to socialize more with my friends and family”.

Importantly, the overall result is that the employee has more control over their personal responsibilities and by extension have less personal related stress. This is consistent with what has been identified by O'Mahony (2017), who argues that one of the advantages of flexible working is a reduction in personal stress. O'Mahony (2017) believes that flexible working can provide one with the time and opportunity to spend more time with their friends and to socialise. This is echoed by Fan *et al.* (2015, p.5) who believe that once workers are in a state of good health, they will be more satisfied and be in a good state of mind both physically and mentally.

5.5 Determine the pitfalls of Flexible Working on Work-Life Balance and recommend a mitigating action plan

The last question from the interviews that the respondents were asked centred on them describing the pitfalls of flexible working and how they could mitigate those pitfalls. From the research data, the respondents were able to point out the disadvantages of flexible working arrangements and provided potential solutions. RESPONDENT 1 noted that, one of the disadvantages of FWA was the “pressure to prove to colleagues that you are actually working.” This is consistent with Heathfield (2019), who argues that one of the disadvantages of flexible working, is the added pressure on employees working remotely trying to prove that they are indeed working as hard as their office-based colleagues. Another pitfall identified from the interviews was RESPONDENT 3 who said, “I don't get to see my colleges as much”, and that “this can make you feel isolated.” This is like sentiments by RESPONDENT 2, who says, “sometimes I miss meeting people or socializing in office.” A potential solution to this problem is proposed by RESPONDENT 3, who suggests, “more team building events and nights out.” RESPONDENT 5 weighs in also and suggests, “synchronizing my schedule with my colleagues' flexible working schedules.” Heathfield (2019) also argues that the pitfalls of flexible working can also be extended to employers, who will not be able to effectively supervise their employees who are working remotely.

The UK Government (2014) suggests that flexible working can be improved by educating workers. This is vital as it helps employees know what flexible working

options are available to them and how they can utilise them (UK Government, 2014). Heathfield (2019) also weighs in and argues that firms looking to improve their flexible working policies need to revise their flexible working policy in consultation with workers. This will help the organisation to come up with a policy which is informed by what workers need, feel and their own experiences with flexible working (Heathfield, 2019).

5.6 Discussion of Questionnaire Data

This chapter discusses the questionnaire data. This is a triangulation exercise to confirm and substantiate the findings from the interview data.

The first question posed to the respondents asked if they had adequate facilities and flexibility for them to fit their work around their family life. From the questionnaire data, 100 % of the respondents agreed that they had adequate facilities and flexibility to fit their work around their family responsibilities. This data is consistent with the interview data where all the respondents noted that they had all used homeworking as a FWA in addition to other FWA types like flexitime, teleworking and remote working.

The second question posed to the respondents asked if their current working hours/patterns suit their personal circumstances. From the questionnaire data, most of the respondents (80%) agreed to the question. This is consistent with the interview data, where 100% of the respondents noted that they had all used homeworking as a FWA in addition to other FWA types like flexitime, teleworking and remote working in order to better manage their home and family commitments. This can be used to explain why many respondents felt their current working hours/patterns suit their personal circumstances.

The third question posed to the respondents asked if they were able to fulfil their work commitments. 100% of the respondents agreed that they were able to fulfil their work commitments. This can be attributed to them all having utilised homeworking as a FWA in addition to other FWA types like flexitime, teleworking and remote working, as shown in the interview data. It is evident that use of FWA helped them have better control over their work commitments; better control over their work time; and a positive outlook on their commute time. Consequently, this

can be used to explain why most of the respondents felt they were able to balance their work commitments.

The fourth question posed to the respondents asked if they were able to fulfil their home commitments. 80% of the respondents agreed that they were able to fulfil their home commitments. This can be attributed to them all having utilised homeworking as a FWA in addition to other FWA types like flexitime, teleworking and remote working, as shown in the interview data. This use of these FWA was evidenced to have helped them have better control over their home commitments; better control over their home time; and a positive outlook on their commute time. Consequently, this can be used to explain why many of the respondents felt they were able to balance their home commitments.

The fifth question posed to the respondents asked if they were in state of personal wellbeing. 80% of the respondents felt they were in a state of personal wellbeing. This can be attributed to them all having utilised homeworking as a FWA in addition to other FWA types like flexitime, teleworking and remote working, as shown in the interview data. It is evident the use of these FWA helped them have better control over their personal commitments and obligations. Consequently, this can be used to explain why most of the respondents felt they were in a state of personal wellbeing.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed and analysed the interview and questionnaire results. Literature was used to complement and analyse the research data results. The results were grouped and discussed in relation to the individual research objectives. The next chapter is a presentation of the study conclusions.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of this study, whilst making significant recommendations to key role players and recommendations for future studies. The limitations of this study and the concluding remarks on the entirety of the research study are made.

6.2. Research objectives

The first objective sought to determine what aspects of flexible working can reduce work related stress. From the research data, there was evidence to suggest that homeworking, flexitime and teleworking are aspects of flexible working that can be used to reduce work-related stress. All six respondents in the study noted that they used at least one of the following aspects of flexible working: homeworking, flexitime and teleworking, to help them manage their work and ultimately to reduce work-related stress. Most of the respondents noted that these aspects of flexible working help them to reduce their work-related stress by helping them to manage their travel times; having control over their work time; and having control over their work. Based on the research data, there is evidence to suggest that homeworking, teleworking and flexitime are aspects of flexible working that can reduce work-related stress by helping workers have control over their commute schedule; having control over their work commitments; and having control over their work time.

The second objective sought to determine what aspects of flexible working can reduce home-related stress. From the research data, there was evidence to suggest that homeworking, flexitime and teleworking are aspects of flexible working that can be used to reduce home-related stress. All six respondents in the study noted that they used at least one of following aspects of flexible working: homeworking, flexitime and teleworking, to help them manage their home commitments, and ultimately to reduce home-related stress. Most of the respondents noted that these aspects of flexible working help them to reduce their home-related stress by helping them to manage their travel times; spending time with their family; and having the ability to do household chores. Based on the research data, there is evidence to

suggest that homeworking, teleworking and flexitime are aspects of flexible working that can reduce work-related stress by helping workers have control over their commute schedule; having control over their home commitments; and having control over their home time.

The third objective sought to determine what aspects of flexible working can improve personal wellbeing. From the research data, there was evidence to suggest that homeworking, flexitime and teleworking are aspects of flexible working that can be used to improve personal wellbeing. All six respondents in the study noted that they used at least one of the following aspects of flexible working: homeworking, flexitime and teleworking, to help them improve their personal wellbeing. Most of the respondents noted that these aspects of flexible working help them to improve their personal wellbeing by allowing them to have time for personal activities and having time to socialise. Based on the research data, there is evidence to suggest that homeworking, teleworking and flexitime are aspects of flexible working that improve personal wellbeing, as workers have time for personal and social activities.

The last objective sought to identify the pitfalls of flexible working and recommend mitigating actions. Based on the evidence from the research data, the main pitfalls of flexible working were identified as: not having enough time to spend with work colleagues; and the pressure of having to prove to colleagues that one is indeed being productive when they are working flexibly. Potential solutions identified include synchronising the work schedules of colleagues working flexibly so that they can spend more time together; and having proper support structures in place to help employees working flexibly.

6.3 Contribution of the Study

The study was able to determine the following four key aspects namely; flexible working can reduce work-related stress; flexible working can reduce home-related stress; flexible working can improve personal wellbeing and lastly the pitfalls of flexible working and potential solutions. These are discussed below.

Firstly, the study was able to determine that aspects of flexible working, like homeworking, flexitime, and teleworking can improve an employee's work-life balance by helping to reduce work-related stress. This was evidenced by all the survey respondents, who noted that having flexible work arrangements helped them to reduce work-related stress by increasing one's control over their work; giving one better time management to carry out work activities; and control over their commute time. Consequently, this has an overall effect of also improving their work-life balance through a reduction in work-related stress.

Secondly, the study was able to determine that aspects of flexible working, like homeworking, flexitime, and teleworking, can improve an employee's work-life balance by helping to reduce home-related stress. This was evidenced by all the survey respondents who noted that having flexible work arrangements helped them to reduce home-related stress by increasing one's control over their home activities; having more control over time to carry out domestic activities; and having more control on their commuting schedule. Consequently, this has an overall effect of also improving their work-life balance through a reduction in home-related stress.

Thirdly, the study was able to determine that homeworking; flexitime and teleworking, as aspects of flexible working, can improve personal wellbeing. Specifically, these aspects have the potential to improve personal wellbeing by increasing one's control over their personal activities; devoting more time spent socialising with friends; and time tending to their personal needs.

Finally, the study was able to identify two possible of pitfalls of FWA. Firstly, one respondent noted that colleagues who previously worked together did not have enough time to see each other. A potential solution identified was to synchronise the work schedules and for more team building exercises for colleagues. This will enable work colleagues to still schedule contact time and have time to socialise. The second pitfall identified from the study was the pressure on employees to prove that they were 'working' whenever they opted to use teleworking or homeworking. The study proposed that employers help to make sure that employees working offsite have proper environments and technological support to carry out their work wherever they are.

6.4 Recommendations

From the research study findings and coupled with the literature, there are a variety of recommendations that have been put forward. These recommendations are directed at both IT workers, their employers and any other workspaces that utilise FWA. There is also a discussion on generally accepted good principles for the implementation of FWA. These are discussed below in more detail.

6.4.1 Recommendations for employers & employees implementing FWA

FWA reduce work-related stress and improve work–life balance. Work-related stress, as observed in the data findings and literature, is a result of not having control over one’s work; not having control over one’s work time; and not having control over the time taken to commute. Therefore, a recommendation to IT workers or employers who feel that their employees are exhibiting any of these factors, is to consider adopting flexible working practises like teleworking, homeworking and flexitime. As shown in the study findings and literature, these aspects of FWA have shown to be able to reduce work-related stress and importantly improve work-life balance.

6.4.2 Recommendations to employers mitigating work-home stress related symptoms

It has been observed in the study that FWA can reduce home-related stress and improve work–life balance. Home-related stress, as observed in the data findings and literature, is a result of not having control of one’s family time; not having control over one’s household responsibilities; and not having control over the time taken to commute. Therefore, a recommendation to IT workers or employers who feel that their employees are exhibiting any of these factors, is to consider adopting flexible working practises like teleworking; homeworking and flexitime. FWA have shown to be able to reduce home-related stress and importantly improve work-life balance.

6.4.3 Recommendation for effective FWA approach (teleworking; homeworking and flexitime)

The study was able to show that FWA can be used to improve overall personal wellbeing. Personal wellbeing was noted in the study and literature to be determined

by personal commitments and obligations. Therefore, if an employee feels that they are not able to fully focus on their personal wellbeing, a recommendation to both the employee and the employer would be to consider adopting flexible working practises like teleworking; homeworking and flexitime. As shown in the study findings and literature, these aspects of FWA have shown to be able to improve personal wellbeing and importantly improve work-life balance.

6.4.4 Recommendation on synchronised system as a monitoring tool for FWA

The study was able to identify pitfalls of flexible working. These were identified as employees not seeing and spending as much time with their work colleagues post adopting FWA; and the other one being the pressure of prove to colleagues that you are working when utilising teleworking and homeworking. The study and literature recommend that FWA schedules for employees be synchronised with those of their colleagues to ensure they can all spend time with each other and socialise. The last recommendation involves organisations providing employees with the right conditions, like team building exercises and technological tools, to enable them to effectively work remotely.

6.4.5 Recommended guiding tool for effective FWA in the workplace

Literature also provides a variety of guiding principles for implementing FWA in any organisation. This research study recommends five key principles which are informed by the literature. Unison (2014, p.13) argues that the first principle involves gathering as much information on current flexible working policies that are in place. This is important to build a foundation for any new or alterations to current FWA policies. Secondly, Unison (2014, p.14) believes the next principle involves creating a business case for FWA. This step is crucial to fully understand both the potential benefits and costs of FWA to the organisation. Thirdly, Unison (2014, p.14) believes that another equally important principle is communication. This step involves a series of workshops and conversations within the organisation to fully appreciate the view of both employees and the employers. The fourth principle identified by Unison (2014, p.14) is managing new ways of implementing FWA. This involves setting up a pilot FWA scheme and setting up the necessary support facilities for those taking

up FWA and those managing employees who take up FWA. Lastly, Unison (2014, p.14) identified the monitoring of FWA take up and making an evaluation. This step is crucial to identify how FWA is being utilised across the organisation, noting problems and successes for future improvement.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

Price and Murnan (2004, p.23) define the limitations of a research study as those that have a bearing and influence on the quality of the research results. There are a variety of limitations of this study. The first limitation of the study is the sample size. The sample size used for the research was only 6. This is because some of the potential respondents were not willing to be involved in the study for personal reasons. Therefore, the sample size had to be reduced from an initial targeted 10 respondents to only six. To mitigate this relatively small sample size, saturation sampling was used and, therefore, the impact on the research results was reduced. In future studies, the number of respondents could be increased in to get a wide range of opinions and responses.

The second limitation on the part of researcher was that not having full access to a large section of potential respondents. Some of the potential respondents were involved in critical work projects and, therefore, were not able to devote time to the study. This influenced sample size, as the initially desired number of 10 respondents had to be reduced to six. To avert a potentially undesirable effect, saturation sampling was used to identify six respondents that would form the sample. Future studies must try to ensure they are not scheduled to coincide busy periods for organisations, so that they can have full access to the respondents, without having a negative impact on their work responsibilities.

The third and final limitation of the study on the part of the researcher is longitudinal effects. The researcher is not a fulltime student and holds a fulltime job, therefore the researcher had limited time to fully devote himself to understanding the research, the problem and to carry out the study. To mitigate this, the researcher had to take a considerable amount of leave days from work to focus on the study. Future studies of this nature could potentially look at having someone who is devoted fulltime for

the duration of the study, to fully research the problem and identify other relationships not fully touched upon in this research.

6.6 Future Research

Further research can specifically focus on remedying the limitations previously identified for this study. Firstly, the study sample size can be made bigger in future research to enhance the depth and quality of findings. Lastly, future research might do well with a fulltime researcher who is able to devote themselves more to the study. This will again help to increase the depth and quality of the research data.

6.7 Conclusion

The research problem of this study was to focus on examining the role of flexible working in achieving a work-life balance. The focus of analysis was IT workers in the UK and how the pressure of trying to balance work and family commitments was leading to an unhealthy work–life balance.

This ensuing relationship between flexible working and work-life balance was fully explored by identifying the consequences of a positive and a negative work-life balance. The study discussed in detail the wellness theory, balanced theory, resource-based theory and the spill over theory. The research used a qualitative methodology approach. Specifically, this involved the use of a case study. This research also adopted an interpretivist approach.

The data for this research was collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Thematic data analysis induction was used to analyse the data and identify themes. The study was able to determine that homeworking, flexitime, teleworking are aspects of FWA that can help reduce work–related stress, home-related stress and improve personal wellbeing. Specifically, these aspects have the potential to reduce stress by increasing one’s control over their work and home commitments; providing more control over their time spent on work and home activities; providing more control over their commute; and lastly providing more control over time spent on personal activities.

The study was able to identify possible of pitfalls of FWA, such as the fact that colleagues who previously worked together were not having enough time to see

each other; and pressure on employees working remotely to prove they are working. Potential solutions identified were to synchronise the work schedules for arrangements of people in the same department, and for organisations to have in place proper support structures to those utilising FWA.

This study had a variety of limitations. These limitations included the small sample size; not having access to a larger sample size; and not having a fulltime researcher working on the study. These limitations form the basis of the recommendations for future study. These includes having a larger sample size and having a fulltime researcher working on the project. In conclusion, the study was able to contribute to the field of work-life balance by identifying aspects of flexible working that can reduce stress and how.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Flexible Working & Work–Life Balance Interview Questions:

1) What Flexible Working Arrangements below are available to you that you have utilised? (Please tick as many as applicable by just clicking on the tick box)

Homeworking (i.e. working from home)

Teleworking (i.e. conducting work offsite and being in communication via telecoms);

Flexitime (variations in work schedules that do not follow the traditional working hours. For example starting work an hour early and finishing an hour earlier)

Job Sharing (i.e. sharing the work responsibilities of a fulltime job to two or more individuals who work part time)

Compressed Work Weeks (i.e. working extra hours on certain days and getting days off in lieu of extra days worked)

a. Why have you chosen the above Flexible Working Arrangements?

.....
.....

2) Has utilizing Flexible Work Arrangements helped you to reduce the pressure induced by trying to balance work commitments?

Yes No

a. How?

.....
.....

3) Has utilizing Flexible Work Arrangements helped to reduce the pressure induced by trying to balance family commitments?

Yes No

a. How?

.....

.....

.....

4) Has utilizing Flexible Work Arrangements helped to improve your Personal wellbeing?

Yes No

a. How?

.....

.....

.....

5) What have been the negatives of utilizing the Flexible Working Arrangements available to you?

.....

.....

.....

a. In your opinion what can be improved and how?

.....

.....

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Flexible Working & Work–Life Balance Questionnaire:

Please tick the appropriate box by clicking on it.

- 1) I have adequate facilities and flexibility for me to fit work in around my family life

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree

- 2) My current working hours / patterns suit my personal circumstances

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree

- 3) I am able to fulfil my work commitments

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree

- 4) I am able to fulfil my home commitments

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree

- 5) I feel well at the moment

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree

Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C: GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION LETTER



APPENDIX D: REQUEST FOR INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION LETTER



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

Rhodes Business School]

Tel: [+27] 046 [603-8617]

Fax: [+27] 046 [603-8613]

E-mail: [g11n2702@campus] @ru.ac.za

[23 September 2018]

[The Director]
[Kestrel Business Solutions
2 Ensign Close
Purley
Surrey
CR8 2JQ
United Kingdom]

Dear [Carol Cuthbert]

Re: Invitation to conduct research at your institution

[My name is Tinashe Nyamujara] (under the supervision of [Dr Tshidi Mohapeloa]) am a [Rhodes Business School] postgraduate student [Masters level] at Rhodes University carrying out research on [The Role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work - Life Balance]. The aim of this research is to determine [the role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work – Life Balance. Specifically, this will be achieved through the following objectives:

- 1) Determine what aspects of Flexible Working can reduce work induced stress and how
- 2) Determine what aspects of Flexible Working can reduce family induced stress and how
- 3) Determine what aspects of Flexible Working can improve overall personal wellbeing and how
- 4) Identify the pitfalls of Flexible Working on Work - Life Balance and

recommend a mitigating action plan].

The participation and cooperation of your institution is important so that the results of the research are accurately portrayed.

The research will be undertaken [through semi structured interviews and questionnaires] with [someone in the institution]. The data to be collected from this research will be [employee's perceptions of what and how aspects of Flexible Working can be used to reduce work and home related stress; improve overall personal and also how the negative aspects of Flexible Working can be improved.]. The identity of your institution and the employees who voluntarily consent to participate will be treated with complete confidentiality. The collection of this data will require from each participant about [15] minutes to complete.

We look to you for guidance in identifying [someone] at your institute that would be suitable to interview (at a time and date that suites them).

Attached for your information is a copy of the participant's Informed Consent Form. If you have questions or wish to verify the research, please feel free to contact us.

If you would like your institution to participate in this research, please complete and return the attached form.

Thank you for your time and I hope that you will find our request favourable.

Yours sincerely,

[Tinashe Nyamujara]
Research Student

[Dr Tshidi Mohapeloa]
Supervisor

Notes to researcher:

- Any involvement of students in general, if this is not part of their subject, requires the approval of the Dean of Students
- If the research is carried out in the public areas of the university, the permission of the Registrar is required, and if staff is involved the approval of the Registrar or the Director: Human Resources is required.

[The Role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work - Life Balance:
A Case Study of IT Workers in the UK

Institution Consent Form

]

Participation Consent

I consent for you to approach employees [in the IT Department] to participate in the [The Role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work - Life Balance: A Case Study of IT Consultants of Kestrel Business Solutions, London – UK]

I acknowledge and understand:

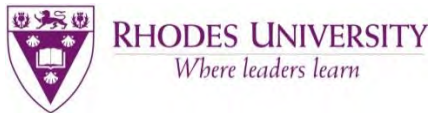
- The role of the institution is voluntary.
- I may decide to withdraw the institution's participation at any time without penalty.
- Employees [from the IT department"] will be invited to participate and that permission will be sought from them too.
- Only employees who consent will participate in the project.
- All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.
- The employees' names will not be used, and individual employees will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- The institution will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- A report of the findings will be made available to the institution.
- I may seek further information on the project from [Tinashe Nyamujara] on [+447378796574].

Full Name:	
Position:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Please return to:	[return address]
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APPENDIX E: RU ETHICS PERMISSION



ETHICAL STANDARDS: RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Departmental Research Ethics Committee Review (Official Use Only)	
Track Number: YEAR DEPARTMENT NUMBER
Date Received:	
Resolution:	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to Ethical Standards Committee
Resolution Date:	
Authorized by:	

Instructions
<p>Any project in which humans are the subject of research requires completion of this form and submission, for approval, to the appropriate Departmental Research Ethics Committee or where such committee does not exist or cannot unanimously approve the research protocol, to the University's Ethical Standards Committee</p> <p>Note: Ethical clearance is required before any research participants are involved or consulted!</p> <p>Please read the following documents:</p> <p>1) Ethical Guidelines: Human Subjects</p>

- 2) Ethical Standards Policy: Human Subjects
 3) Ethical Standards Procedures: Human Subjects
 Available from <http://www.ru.ac.za/research/research/ethics/>

How to fill in this form:

- 1) Complete all sections in typescript. Handwritten forms will **NOT** be accepted.
- 2) Append all necessary documentation.
- 3) Hand the signed copy and all attachments to the Departmental Research Committee representative.

General Particulars	
Title of project:	The Role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work - Life Balance: A Case Study of IT Consultants of Kestrel Business Solutions, London - UK
Name of principal investigator(s):	Tinashe Nyamujara
Contact details:	Institution: Rhodes University Department: Rhodes Business School Address: Rhodes University Email: g11n2702@campus.ru.ac.za Telephone: +447378796574
Name of supervisor(s):	Dr Tshidi Mohapelo
Contact details:	Department: Rhodes University Address: Rhodes University Email: t.mohapelo@ru.ac.za Telephone: +27-046-603-8617
Research type:	Multinational, Student Research, Masters
Funding:	No Funding
Purpose of research:	The overall goal of this research is to explore the role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work – Life Balance by determining flexible working aspects that ; - reduce work induced stress and indicating how - reduce family induced stress and indicating how - improve overall personal wellbeing and indicating how and - the pitfalls so as to recommend mitigating action plan

Methodology

Briefly state the methodology and the procedures in which participants will be asked to participate:

This research will use a qualitative methodology approach for an IT company based in the United Kingdom (UK). Data will be collected through semi structured interviews and questionnaires for the IT workers in the UK. The interview data collection will be informed by the Critical Incident Technique. Open ended questions around the participants' own perceptions and understanding of Flexible Working and Work –Life Balance will be posed to allow the participants to provide their own perspective thoughts. Thus , an Interpretivist Paradigm approach will be adopted. Both the Interview and Questionnaire Data will be interrogated using Thematic Analysis. Thematic Analysis will allow the researcher to identify recurring patterns in the data that help to answer the research question.

State the minimum and maximum number of Participants needed:

Min: **5**

Max: **10**

Justify the numbers in terms of the methodology chosen and proposed data analysis requirements:

This research will use utilize purposeful sampling. For the purposes of this research, UK based IT workers are specifically chosen based on their Flexible Working arrangement. The small population size of IT workers from this case (which is the unit of analysis) will be used as the sample size until a point of saturation has been achieved. Once saturation is achieved no more new information or patterns can be extracted by collecting more data.

Information to Subject

What information will be afforded to participants **before** they consent to participate?

The purpose of the research will be explained including the benefits and risks. Consent of the participants will be asked before the research is conducted.

Who will provide this information?

The Researcher – Tinashe Nyamujara

Will the information provided be complete and accurate? **Yes**

If NO, describe the nature and extent to which it will not be complete:

Click here to enter text.

Participant Groups (Sample)

Are particular characteristics of any kind required in the participant group (e.g. age, cultural derivation, background, physical characteristics, disease states, etc.)? **Yes**

<p>If YES, specify the characteristics: Purposeful selection will be used to select the participants.</p> <p>Participants should be Information Technology (IT) workers in the UK. The research participants will also include people of both genders (male and female). The research participants will also have people of different marital statuses and races.</p>
<p>Are participants drawn from Rhodes student body at large? No</p>
<p>Are Participants drawn from specific groups of Rhodes students? No</p> <p>If YES, specify the groups: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Are Participants drawn from a school population? No</p> <p>If YES, identify school: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Are Participants drawn from an institutional population (e.g. Hospital, Prison, Mental Institution)?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>If YES, identify institution: Kestrel Business Solutions</p>
<p>Will any records be consulted for information? No</p> <p>If YES, specify source of records: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Will participants know their records are being consulted? Not applicable</p> <p>State how these records will be obtained and whose permission is required: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Are all participants over 18 years of age? Yes</p> <p>If NO, justify the inclusion of minors: Click here to enter text.</p>

<p>Risks and Benefits of Project</p>
<p>Is there any risk of harm, embarrassment or offence, however slight or temporary, to the participant, to third parties, or to the community at large? Yes</p> <p>If YES, specify:</p> <p>Yes. There is a slightly small potential risk of embarrassment to the company that is being researched if the results are not favourable to them. There is also the risk , although minimal of some embarrassment to the interviewee in discussing their home/work lives with the interviewer.</p> <p>However, there is potential for improved working conditions for the interviewees. Post research, there is a potential benefit to the organization of improved worker morale and ultimately productivity.</p>

<p>Are all risks reversible? Yes If NO, specify: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Are remedial measures available, if risks are not reversible? Not applicable If YES, specify: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Has the person administering the project previous experience with the particular risk factors involved? Not applicable</p>
<p>Are any benefits expected to accrue to the participant personally (e.g. improved health, mental state, financial, etc.)? Yes If NO, specify: The potential for improved working conditions for the participants</p>
<p>Will you be using equipment of any sort? Yes If YES, specify: A voice recorder is used to record the interviews Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Will any article of property, personal or cultural, be collected in the course of this project? No If YES, specify: Click here to enter text.</p>

<p>Consent of Participants</p>
<p>Is consent to be given in writing? Yes If NO, state reason why not: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Do any participants suffer from a legal disability preventing them from giving effective informed consent (e.g. under 18 years, declared insane by a court of law, unconscious, etc.)? No If YES, indicate what measures will be taken to obtain informed consent: Click here to enter text.</p>
<p>Do any participants operate in an institutional environment which may cast doubt on the voluntary aspect of consent? No If YES, specify: Yes. The interviews are conducted at the respondent's place of work/ employment</p>
<p>Will participants receive remuneration for their participation? No</p>

If YES, state the basis on which remuneration is calculated, and indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that it cannot be considered a persuasive incentive:
Click here to enter text.

Do you require consent of an institutional authority for this project? **Yes**
If YES, specify:
Yes. The organization where the research participants are drawn from will be asked for consent and permission to carry out this research.

Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality of Data

Are provisions made to protect participant's rights to privacy and anonymity and to preserve confidentiality with respect to data? **Yes**

If YES, specify:

The Participants names or any other and identifying features will not be mentioned in the research. The data will be stored safely and securely to ensure that it is not lost, stolen or damaged and that it is ultimately free from any form of risk that might lead to privacy concerns.

Will mechanical methods of observation be used (e.g. one-way mirrors, recordings, videos, etc.)? **Yes**

If YES, specify:

Recording Device

Will participants' consent to such mechanical methods of observation be obtained? **Yes**

If NO, give reasons:

Click here to enter text.

Will data collected be stored in any way? **Yes**

If YES, specify: 1) by whom, 2) how many copies, 3) for how long, 4) for what reasons, and 5) how will subject's anonymity be protected:

The Researcher will keep two copies – with one stored as backup on Google Drive. The data will be stored for the duration of the study and one copy for a further maximum of 5 years after the study by the research supervisor

Will stored data be made available for re-use? **No**

If YES, how will participants consent be obtained for such re-usage:

Click here to enter text.

Will any part of the project be conducted on private property (includes shopping centres)? **No**

If YES, state how consent of property owner is to be obtained:

Click here to enter text.

Feedback

Will feedback be given to participants? **Yes**

If YES, state whether this is to be given to each individual immediately after participation; to each participant after the entire project is complete; to all participants in a group setting; or other manner and specify whether feedback will be written, oral or by other means:

The results of the research will be emailed to the participants once the entire study is completed.

If you are working in a school or other institutional setting will you be providing teachers, parents, school authorities or equivalent a copy of your results and/or report? **Not applicable**

If YES, specify:

Click here to enter text.

Declaration

If any changes are made to the above arrangements or procedures, we will bring these to the attention of the chairperson of the ethical standards committee or appropriate Departmental Human Ethics Committee.

The undersigned declare themselves accountable to the ethical standards committee for conducting this research project in the manner herein described and in accordance with the spirit of the ethical guidelines of this university. We undertake to assume responsibility to advise the ethical standards committee promptly of any deviations, waivers, irregularities or harm occurring during the conduct of this research project.

Principal investigator	Supervisor
Signature: Name: Tinashe Nyamujara Date: 23 September 2018	Signature: Name: Dr Tshidi Mohapelo Date: 23 September 2018

Appendices

In order to avoid delays in the processing of this application, please ensure that all the appropriate information (if applicable) is attached to your application:

- 1) Research instruments (e.g. questionnaires, interview questions, etc.)
- 2) Informed consent form
- 3) Written information given to participants prior to participation (e.g. invitation to participate)

Where applicable, institutional permissions to use data should only be obtained after ethical clearance has been granted.

APPENDIX F: INDIVIDUAL CONSENT FORM



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown ● 6140 ● South Africa

Rhodes Business School
Tel: [+27] +27-046-603-8617
Fax: [+27] 046-603-8613
E-mail: g11n2702@campus.ru.ac.za

[Date]

Dear [Name]

Re: Invitation to participate in research study

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled [The Role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work - Life Balance: A Case Study of IT Consultants of Kestrel Business Solutions, London - UK]. The aim of this research is to determine [the role of Flexible Working in achieving a Work – Life Balance. Specifically, this will be achieved through the following objectives:

- 1) Determine what aspects of Flexible Working can reduce work induced stress and how
- 2) Determine what aspects of Flexible Working can reduce family induced stress and how
- 3) Determine what aspects of Flexible Working can improve overall personal wellbeing and how
- 4) Identify the pitfalls of Flexible Working on Work –Life Balance and recommend a mitigating action plan

]. Your participation and cooperation are important so that the results of the research are accurately portrayed.

The research will be undertaken [using a qualitative methodology approach. Specifically, this will involve the use of a case study approach] and the data to be collected from this research will be [through interviews and questionnaires]. Your identity and that of your institution will be treated with complete confidentiality. The collection of this data will require about [45] minutes of your time to complete.

We will provide you with all the necessary information to assist you to understand the study and explain what would be expected of you (the participant). These guidelines would include the risks, benefits, and your rights as a study subject. Furthermore, it is important that you are aware that this study has been approved by a Research Ethics Committee of the university.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and this letter of invitation does not obligate you to take part in this research study. To participate, you will be required to provide written consent that will include your signature, date and initials to verify that you understand and agree to the conditions. Please note that you have the right to withdraw at any given time during the study without penalty.

Thank you for your time and I hope that you will find our request favourable.

Yours sincerely,

[Tinashe Nyamujara]
Research Student

[Dr Tshidi Mohapeloa]
Supervisor