

“Work-Life Balance – An Exploration”

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Authorship Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of Bachelor of Arts in Human Resource Management is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Abstract

For Ireland to continue to build on its competitive success, recruitment and retention of quality employees has become a major concern for employers. Work and parenthood can create conflicting pressures on employees, resulting in problems for both employers and employees, such as lost time and reduced productivity. Today, skilled people have more options than ever before about whom they work for. As the labour force becomes diverse, the issue of managing this diversity, including family-friendly, work/life balance issues, is both a challenge and an opportunity for organisations.

Innovative ways are increasingly required to both encourage existing staff to remain with an organisation and also to attract those considering a return to the paid workforce.

Family friendly work arrangements/work-life balance are an essential aspect of the process of allowing workers to combine labour market participation with their caring responsibilities and personal life outside the workplace.

Work-life balance arrangements are beneficial for both employers and employees. From an employers point of view, offering work-life balance can benefit the organisation in many ways, such as increased productivity and staff retention. From an employee's point of view, benefits such as combining work and family responsibilities can be facilitated by a company that offers these initiatives.

The focus of this dissertation is to research issues relating to a family-friendly workplace and work-life balance policies and practices, including the analysis of

concepts, exploration of usage and take-up in ANFIS Ireland and employee satisfaction rates.

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Chapter One

Background Information

Background Information

1.1 Company Background

The organisation that the author works for is Abbey National Financial Investment Services Ireland. (ANFIS Ireland). ANFIS Ireland is a subsidiary of the UK bank Abbey National. ANFIS Ireland administers the business of two companies, Scottish Provident Ireland (SPI) and Scottish Mutual International (SMI).

SMI have always been a part of the Abbey National Group since they were first set up in Ireland in 1997. The core nature of their business was to provide offshore investments to high net worth individuals.

SPI on the other hand was part of the Scottish Provident Group. The fundamental aim of SPI was to provide a range of Life and Pensions products to interested parties within the Irish domestic market. SPI was mutual company, therefore owned by its policyholders. In 2001, Scottish Provident demutualised by way of sale to Abbey National.

In February 2003, Abbey National UK decided to focus on its core retail banking areas within the UK market. Any offshore businesses that were not part of the core retail business were put up for sale. After three months on the market and with no acceptable buyer, Abbey National closed SPI to new business in April 2003 and SMI was subsequently closed to new business in January 2004.

It was announced that Abbey National were looking to outsource the book of business from SPI and SMI to a third-party administrator, again to reduce its costs and focus primarily on its UK core businesses. After 6 months of

discussions, Abbey National decided against a third party administrator to administer the SPI book of business because of administrative complications. It was decided in September 2003, that the SPI book of business would be transferred back to Scottish Provident in Glasgow in 2005 to be administered. This decision came as a huge shock to the employees of SPI and meant that all the employees of SPI will become redundant at some stage between September 2003 and the end of 2005.

The strategy of the company suddenly changed from being 'a leader in the Financial Services Industry' to 'managing the closure and execution of the business within an 18-month period'. Objectives that were initially set out for the company became irrelevant. One of the main concerns for management was to come up with a strategy that would allow the transfer of the book of business to Scotland in 2005, and retain the staff that would be needed to achieve this. Staff Associations were set up along with the union representatives who became much more involved in what direction the organisation would be taking. Since May 2003, there have been approximately 130 redundancies. These consisted of employees working in the areas of Sales, Marketing, Product Development, Sales Support and all employees working in our area offices in Cork, Limerick and Galway.

Given all of the above, morale and motivation are a major area of concern to the management. The management realised that in order for the company to be in a position to move the SPI book of business back to Scotland in 2005 they must be able to hold onto the experienced staff. The SPI Irish staff will be required to do a lot of training with the staff in Scotland, in order for them to feel confident to take over the book of business.

Whilst, very few of the staff have resigned of their own accord, performance levels, morale and motivation have been affected. The psychological contract

that was formed has been broken and staff feel angry and frustrated with all that is going on. However, the majority of staff do want to stay with the company until 2005 and receive a redundancy package that is well above the statutory entitlement of 2 weeks remuneration per year of service.

Objectives are now set for a six-month period. Due to the major changes the company is going through long term objectives are not considered relevant.

In order to achieve the objectives of the company, the management have identified 5 critical success factors. They are:

1. Motivation and Desire
2. Performance Management
3. Structure
4. Reward and Recognition
5. Training

The headcount as at the 30th June 2004 is 119 permanent staff and 20 temporary staff.

1.2 The Irish Labour Market

‘The results of the Census 2002, released earlier this year, confirmed the belief of many commentators that during the “Celtic tiger” years, the demographic make-up of Ireland, and Ireland’s workforce, changed dramatically.’
(www.ibec.ie)

The number of females in the workplace has also increased dramatically in recent years. This dramatic increase in the participation of women in the labour force has brought the issue of work-life balance, often for family reasons, to the forefront.

‘Just over a third of working age women were active in the labour market in 1983. By 1998, more than half of all Irish women of working age were in the labour force’ (IBEC:2000:3)

‘Research has also shown that the availability of work-life balance policies has been a contributing factor to the increases in Irish female labour force participation. We are currently at the EU average of 56% and we have a target to move to 60% by 2010 under the Lisbon Process’.
(www.worklifebalance.ie/ibecpage.shtml)

Many families will now have two working parents. This situation also places pressures on families to combine work life balance. No longer is it the case that that one parent stays at home, while the other is the sole breadwinner for the family. Nowadays both parents must cope with the pressures of work, and also with the stresses of caring for their families.

'Accommodating the needs of working parents will not be the only labour force issue facing businesses in the next ten years. An ageing population will also be an issue. Figures from the Central Statistics Office estimate that by 2011 the Irish population in the 45-69 year old category will have increased by 24%'. (www.worklifebalance.ie/ibecpage.shtml)

In an effort to protect families, a number of pieces of legislation have been implemented, either on foot of recommendations from the EU Commission, or from Government Review Groups. Legislation governing parental leave, increased maternity leave benefits, force majeure leave, adoptive leave and so forth were introduced to protect the family. Current legislation is being reviewed, amended and implemented, such as The Maternity Protection (Amendment) Bill 2003, and The Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act, 2003, was implemented. The main purpose of the Fixed term Work Act is to ensure non-discrimination against fixed-term workers. All this new and amended legislation comes as part of the Government's commitment to look at work-life balance programmes under the new three-year partnership agreement, Sustaining Progress.

The social partners, under the terms of Partnership, also introduced an initiative called "Family Friendly Workplace Day". This was designed to promote family friendly policies in the workplace, by creating an awareness of the need for such initiatives. A Family-Friendly Workplace Day took place in 2001, 2002 and 2003, however in 2004 the name was changed to Irish Work-Life Balance Day. The name of this day was changed as it is being increasingly recognised that all employees need to balance work and life, not only those with children.

The National Framework for the development of family-friendly policies was also introduced under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness in order to

support family friendly policies. The objective of this Agreement is to 'support and facilitate the development of family-friendly policies at the level of the enterprise' (IBEC:2000:Appendix one)

Although the economic climate has changed in Ireland, and the initial recruitment and retention drivers of work-life balance policies have shifted to restructuring and flexibility, work-life balance continues to have an essential role. Work-life balance policies can help to attract the best and the brightest, which will encourage continued growth and development of a business.

For Ireland to continue to build on its competitive success, it is clear that it needs to make the best use of talents and the education and training of as many people as possible. The larger the labour pool, the better it is for the business, however work and parenthood can create conflicting pressure on employees, resulting in problems for both employers and employees. Business leaders should be able to recognise that to have a successful company, they should be willing to embrace a broadening of accountability to include social and ethical value as well as shareholder value. Family friendly practices are an important way to enhance the organisation's reputation with customers and the community. Failure to address emerging work-life issues can have a long term negative impact on families and communities.

The author will have a look at the advantages and disadvantages of implementing family friendly policies later on in this report.

1.3 The Changing Workforce

‘The Irish social and economic context has changed considerably in recent years. Whilst the Irish economy suffered high unemployment rates in the 1980’s, there has since been a high economic growth. The growth of the economy has brought unemployment rates from 12% in 1996 to 4.3% in August 2000’. (www.eiro.eurofound.ie)

This change in the labour force reflects the increasing number of female workers and a more equal participation rate of men and women in the workplace.

‘Irish women’s participation in the labour market has advanced swiftly over the past 15 years. Just over a third of working age women were active in the labour market in 1983. By 1998, more than half of all Irish women of working age were in the labour force. Since 1991, women have filled three out of every five jobs added to the national workforce. Women are projected to contribute 58 per cent of the increase in the labour in the years to 2011’ (IBEC:2000:3)

This revolution also reflects fundamental changes occurring in our society. The traditional family scenario whereby the mother stays at home and cares for the children and the father goes out to work, has changed. In many families both parents are now working outside the home and attempting to balance both commitments, that is work and family. The composition of modern families is significantly different from the traditional family. Two or more people who are not related sharing a house or couples sharing a house are now considered a family in modern society.

Modern workers are experiencing greater prosperity which develops from a higher standard of education, the availability of more jobs and higher rates of pay which has ultimately resulted in a change in the expectations of all

employees. Regardless of their family status or responsibilities employees are now demanding the opportunity to balance work and life commitments, for example, to pursue education or to take care of a child or elderly relative.

Men and women can now afford to be more discerning in their choice of employer and are increasingly choosing positions that offer additional benefits designed to assist them in reconciling their work and life commitments.

The need for flexibility in the work place has come about for a number of reasons:

1. Demographic changes – travel time has increased dramatically as more and more people are forced out of the city to live and;
2. Societal – the changing role of men and women both in the workplace and the home.

‘Similar concerns are evident in other EU Member States and the issue has been addressed at the European Community level in recent years. Reconciling work and family life is one of the themes addressed in the guidelines for Member States’ employment policies which have been put in place under the new employment provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty. All member States, together with the social partners, have committed themselves ‘ to design, implement and promote family-friendly policies, including affordable, accessible and high quality care services for children and other dependants, as well as parental and other leave schemes’ (Fisher:2000:10)

Chapter Two

Work-Life Balance

2.1 What is a Family Friendly Initiative?

Benefits being offered by employers with the aim of balancing employees work and family life are collectively known as Family Friendly Initiatives and would be a pre-requisite for all employers wishing to attract and retain their best staff. Family-Friendly initiatives will help employees balance their work and home life.

Family friendly initiatives are any benefits, policies, or programmes that help create a better balance between the demands of the job and the healthy management of life outside work. Some examples of policies are part-time working, flexitime, job sharing, etc. The author will explore in full detail the full range of benefits, policies and programmes throughout the chapter.

Family Friendly initiatives can benefit an organisation's bottom line while at the same time, provide other indirect benefits both to employees and employers. While some of these benefits might be more tangible and quantifiable than others, they nonetheless can contribute to significant positive organisational gain.

2.2 The Business Case for family-friendly Initiatives

Benefits being offered by employers with the aim of balancing employees work and family life are collectively known as Family Friendly initiatives and would appear to be a pre-requisite for all employers wishing to attract the best available talent. In order to survive in an increasingly competitive global work environment employers need to recognise the need to be flexible and offer these types of initiatives.

Turlough O’Sullivan – Director General of IBEC stressed that ‘the challenge facing business today is to develop work-life balance policies that reflect the reality of the workplace and that these policies need to be formulated in the context of the overall business strategy. Mr. O’Sullivan cautioned that in order to be successful, work-life balance measures should contribute to the twin objectives of supporting the effective and efficient operation of the firm while helping employees to reconcile work and life outside of the workplace. ‘If such objectives are delivered, and are visible in an organisation, there will be a win-win situation for all’, he said’. (www.ibec.ie/ibec/presspublicationsdoclib3.nsf)

Mr. O’Sullivan also stated that ‘The development of appropriate work-life balance policies to assist employees in reconciling work and life are vital to underpinning economic, social and equality objective’ (www.ibec.ie/ibec/presspublicationsdoclib3.nsf)

Many employers fear the costs associated with the implementation of family friendly policies. ‘The common theme is that although the costs of being a family-friendly employer may make such an approach unattractive, the costs of not supporting employees with family responsibilities is far greater’ (Stredwick & Ellis:1998:230)

Generally there is a belief that if an employer introduces flexible working, such as job sharing or part-time working, then he/she will be inundated with requests by employee’s who no longer wish to work full-time. However, in reality, this is often not the case, as many employees simply cannot afford to work part-time, due to the consequential reduction in salary. The cost of providing family friendly / work-life balance arrangements is dependant on the types of arrangements introduced.

Financial costs can include:

- ◆ Administration costs
- ◆ Temporary cover, for example for term-time working and career breaks
- ◆ Management training costs for work-life balance
- ◆ Record keeping for monitoring purposes
- ◆ Other direct costs e.g. childcare support and Employee Assistant Programmes.

In implementing flexible working patterns, a partnership approach is often advocated. There are a number of categories of family friendly working arrangements. There are statutory arrangements, such as provision of maternity leave, the provision of annual leave, and the provisions of carer's leave. Other non-statutory leave arrangements would include paternity leave for fathers of newborn children, and special leave to provide for absences resulting from bereavement or illness of close relatives. There are numerous flexible working arrangements, including part-time working, job-sharing, term-time working and flexitime, where employees may choose their start time each day or week. There are also employment breaks, which allow employee's to take a longer period away from work, such as career breaks or sabbaticals. The author will explore all of these working arrangements throughout this chapter.

Many employers feel that by introducing family friendly initiatives, they may lose business due to reduced working hours and maybe not as many full time staff it would be used to. However 'A proactive approach to work-life balance will not normally affect productivity, competitiveness, the bottom-line or the return on equity in a direct manner. Rather it creates the environment where

intervening variables can line up behind the delivery of these basic measures of business performance'. (Clutterbuck:2003:20)

'A study of employees in companies employing over 500 staff, by BT Cellnet, found that four out of five employees working flexibly think that their productivity has improved; 70 per cent of them think the increase is at least 10 per cent'. (Clutterbuck:2003:20)

Failure to address emerging work-life issues may have an impact on the business itself by reducing employee productivity and customer satisfaction.

2.3 Employer Benefits:

There are many reasons why family-friendly policies can benefit employers, such as:

1. Recruitment

Employers can reach a wider range of candidates by offering family friendly work initiatives, for example, older workers or mothers wishing to return to work. These previously unattainable candidates may possess the necessary skills and qualifications required by employers and be attracted to an organisation due to the opportunities available such as job-sharing, teleworking and in some cases, childcare facilities. To ensure that these initiatives assist the organisations recruitment strategy and that a wider range of candidates can be reached, employers should outline their family friendly initiatives when advertising vacancies and, in essence, include them as a benefit being offered with the overall package.

2. Reduce Employee Turnover

In times of full employment, employees are less likely to remain with one employer if they are not receiving benefits, such as family friendly initiatives, that are readily available in other organisations. Organisations experiencing high levels of staff turnover incur additional costs, which are not just financial and include loss of skills, experience and customer knowledge. Employers should therefore be aware that employees would be less likely to leave an organisation that is providing them with benefits, such as family friendly initiatives, that cannot be found elsewhere and enables them to balance work and family commitments.

3. Improve Return on Employee Training & Development

By implementing family friendly initiatives one of the aims of employers is to reduce employee turnover which has the add-on effect of ensuring a return on all investments in employees, in terms of training and career development, fruition, and that the organisation benefits in the long term.

4. Reduce Employee Absenteeism/Sickness/Stress Levels

If an employee is experiencing difficulties in balancing work and family commitments it may become apparent due to repeated absences from work or poor time-keeping. Employees may take sick leave or be absent from work in order to deal with their responsibilities, for example, to care for a sick child/adult or to attend a parent/teacher meeting. Employers are now recognising that stress affects the productivity of employees and that there is a need to practice stress management. Providing stress management training or by correctly designing family friendly initiatives, employers can greatly reduce such absences.

'A 1987 article stated that those who work in unresponsive, inflexible organisations are more dissatisfied with their job and suffer higher levels of

stress than those in organisations that respond to their need for a healthy balance between work and family'. (Fisher:2000:49)

5. Increased Employee Morale & Productivity

Employees will be more likely to increase productivity and demonstrate loyalty to an employer who recognises their need for a work/life balance and provides the opportunity for it to be achieved.

'A 1992 report on family-friendly working found that staff working family-friendly hours appeared to be 'considerably more efficient, enthusiastic and committed than their full-time counterparts' (Fisher:2000:48)

By facilitating employee's needs, for example by allowing reduced, part-time or annualised hours working, an employer can be seen as valuing the quality of an employees work and trusting their ability to complete their duties within a certain period of time. In understanding the needs of its employees and by introducing initiatives at the workplace to meet them, employers will succeed in making employees feel valued and in turn reduce the possibility of losing them to another employer.

6. Improved Business Practice & Customer Satisfaction

Family friendly initiatives can be designed in order to improve an organisations business practice. Initiatives such as flexible and part-time working hours result in the presence of employees at times outside normal business hours and allow organisations to provide an improved service to customers. By improving customer satisfaction employers are gaining a competitive advantage and ensuring future loyalty. The use of secondments, whereby employees spend time working with a major customer or supplier, builds on relations with these parties and improves employees skills and knowledge which in turn impacts on customer satisfaction and improved business practice.

7. Enhance Image of Organisation

Family friendly initiatives are receiving more publicity and their importance is gaining recognition world-wide as employees recognise the need to balance work and life commitments. Because of this potential employees and customers are more aware of employers who offer such benefits. By promoting a family friendly workplace an organisation can be seen as enhancing their image which in turn allows them to compete for highly skilled employees.

Employees today are continuing to demand better work-life balance. For example:

- ◆ 'A recent survey carried out by Lloyds TSB in the UK revealed that 50% of managers would not hesitate to change jobs in exchange for better work-life balance'. (Clutterbuck:2003:91)
- ◆ 'Work-life balance was the second top career priority in a survey of 1,000 young professionals in Europe, Asia and North America. In addition, 41% said that they would value more choice over working hours and 20% said that they would like to work part-time (Career Innovation Research Group, 1999)'. (Clutterbuck:2003:91)
- ◆ 'In the UK, approximately 500,000 people are believed to be suffering from work related stress or depression and they take 6.5 million days off sick every year (Health and Safety Executive, June 2001)'. (Clutterbuck:2003:91)

2.4 Employee Benefits

Employees are continuing to look for more and more benefits before they will commit to an organisation. All employees are now working towards balancing the work and life balance and not just those with children. By introducing

family-friendly initiatives to an organisation, there is a range of benefits for employees. They include:

1. A better balance between work and life commitments
2. Equal opportunities in employment
3. Equal sharing of family responsibilities
4. Improved economic position
5. Improved quality of life and work
6. Men experience closer relationships with their family/children
7. Reduced stress
8. More flexibility
9. Increased productivity
10. Increased motivation and loyalty
11. Improved employer/employee relations
12. The availability of choices in combining work and family responsibilities
13. More focus on job during working hours

2.5 Flexible Working Initiatives

There are large ranges of flexible working initiatives that can be offered to employees. These include non-statutory working arrangements, such as part-time working, flexitime and job sharing, statutory working arrangements such as maternity leave, parental leave and adoptive leave amongst others and employment breaks such as sabbaticals and career breaks.

The author will look at this range of initiatives throughout this chapter and also identify which ones ANFIS Ireland have to offer and the take-up rates if applicable.

Statutory Leave Arrangements

1. Maternity Leave

Statutory maternity leave first came into force in 1981, and statutory adoptive leave in 1995. The Maternity Protection Act, 1994, (repealing the Maternity Protection Act, 1981) was brought into force on 30 January 1995. The Maternity Protection (Amendment) Bill 2003 was recently enacted with enhanced benefits such as paid antenatal classes, the right to work up to two weeks before the due date and breastfeeding mothers are also entitled to reasonable time off to breastfeed if no facilities are available within the work place.

Maternity Leave Maternity leave could be considered a family friendly initiative. It enables all pregnant employees, regardless of service, to a period of maternity leave. The periods of Irish maternity leave, previously of the lowest in Europe, have been extended. Employees taking maternity leave on or after March 8th 2001 are entitled to 18 weeks paid (state maternity allowance) leave and an additional 8 weeks unpaid leave. The above changes to the Maternity Protection Act arose from the Report of the Working Group on the review and improvement of the maternity protection legislation, which was published by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on 28th February 2001.

The Irish Maternity Protection Act 1994 does not discourage employers transgressing from the basic period of leave or payment and offering additional benefits to an employee taking maternity leave.

The employer is not under any obligation to pay an employee during maternity leave. An employee may claim social welfare maternity benefit for the duration of their maternity leave, provided that they have the necessary PRSI contributions.

As Maternity leave is a statutory entitlement, ANFIS Ireland offers it to all female staff. Staff with a minimum of one year's service receives full pay less social welfare, for the 18 weeks that they are on maternity leave.

2. Adoptive Leave

The Adoptive Leave Act, 1995 (Amended, 2001) covers all adopting mothers, sole male adopters and adopting fathers (only where the adopting mother dies during a period of adoptive leave).

The Government decided to increase the periods of adoptive leave in line with the increases in maternity leave. The Adoptive Leave Act, 1995 was amended by Order on 8th February 2001. The amendment entitles an adopting mother or a sole male adopter to 14 weeks adoptive leave (Increased from 10 weeks) and to additional unpaid adoptive leave of 8 weeks (Increased from 4 weeks) with effect from 8th March 2001. Employees are now entitled to have paid leave off work to attend assessments for adoption.

No staff in ANFIS Ireland has availed of adoptive leave since it's introduction.

3. Parental Leave

Parental Leave is the first piece of legislation made available to both men and women and is the first family friendly initiative that meets the aim of allowing all employees to reconcile work and family commitments. Parental Leave was enacted in Ireland in 1998 further to a European Directive. It provides parents with 14 weeks unpaid leave subject to certain qualifying criteria. Parental leave is available to parents in Ireland, however contrary to most other European countries it is unpaid.

As Parental leave is a statutory entitlement, ANFIS Ireland offers it to all staff. In the last twelve months, 11 staff have availed of Parental leave.

4. Force Majeure Leave

Force majeure leave which was introduced with the aim of allowing employees a limited time off from work in the event of an injury or illness of a specified family member. The availability of this type of leave is based on the condition that the reason is urgent, immediate and that the employees' presence is indispensable.

ANFIS Ireland offers staff force majeure leave and in the last twelve months, 5 staff have availed of this leave.

5. Annual Leave

The Organisation of working Time Act, 1997, provides for statutory annual leave and public holiday entitlement for all employees who work under a contract of employment or contract of apprenticeship but excludes members of the Garda Siochana or Defence Forces. There is no qualifying period for holidays. All time worked will entitle an employee to paid holiday leave. When determining the times at which the employee will be granted annual leave, the employer must consider the needs dictated by the business coupled with the employees need to reconcile work and family responsibilities.

ANFIS Ireland offer a minimum of 20 days annual leave per year to all staff. This increases to 22 days per year after two years service, 23 days per year after five years service, 24 days after ten years service and 25 days after fifteen years service.

Non-Statutory Working arrangements

1. Part-Time Working

A part-time worker is an employee whose hours of work (when calculated over a period of months or year) are less than those of a comparable full-time worker. Part-time jobs may be construed by other employees as unimportant and historically are paid badly and are only available in lower status jobs in an organisation.

‘According to a study by Institute for Educational Studies in the UK, employees commonly felt that jobs available to part-timers tended to be of lower status and lower quality, and this was a major reason for avoiding them.’ (Deloitte:2004:48)

Part-time working is also seen as very much a female phenomenon and unsuitable for the ‘male bread-winner’. Men who take part-time positions tend to be older or younger than the average woman in part-time work is. ‘According to the CSO, approximately 30% of women in the Irish Labour Force work for less than 30 hours per week compared with just 6.3% of men’. (Fisher:2000:52)

Sectors such as the hotel, or retail trade would have a high dependency on part-time workers in order to meet the needs of the business.

The European Community Household Panel (ECHP) survey, which surveyed 2,729 Irish households (6,324 individuals) in 1998, looked at the area of part-time working. The survey found that 6% of the Irish workforce work part-time. The ECHP results confirmed the notion that part-time working is predominately a female phenomenon involving 13% of the female labour force compared to 3% of the male labour force, as illustrated in figure 2.1 below:

Figure: 2.1 Part-time Working in Ireland

	Male	Female	Total
Work part-time	41	107	148
Labour Force Surveyed	1458	841	2299
% of Labour Force working part-time	3%	13%	6%

Source: (National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies: 2003:40)

In introducing part-time working as a family friendly initiative, employers should aim to ensure that employees choosing this type of working are not disadvantaged in terms of pay, promotions and other entitlements.

ANFIS Ireland offers part-time work to employees. Currently there are 6 staff working part-time in ANFIS Ireland. All 6 are female.

2. Job-Sharing

Job-sharing allows for one full-time job to be divided equally between two employees. The two employees would have joint responsibility for the same tasks. The job can be shared either by splitting the working day or week or by rotating a two-day week followed by a three-day week between the two employees. Job-sharing has historically appeared in the public sector jobs or in administration roles in private firms. Part-time working could be used as an alternative to job-sharing where a matching work partner is not available.

ANFIS Ireland offers job-sharing, however there is currently no staff job-sharing.

3. Flexitime

Flexitime involves an employer allowing flexible start and finish times for employees. Core working hours is established, for example between 10am and 4pm, during which employees are required to be present at work. Employees are then allowed to set their own start and finish times once they complete the total required company working hours, for example 39.5 hours. In order for flexi-time to operate smoothly, team co-ordination is necessary so that cover is provided during all working hours, this includes co-operation on breaks and holiday cover. Flexible working hours would mostly suit a company whereby staff can work independently.

ANFIS Ireland offer flexitime to all administration staff. Flexitime is seen as a huge benefit within the company as staff can take up to two flexi days off a month in addition to their annual leave entitlements, providing the hours have been worked up in advance. The working week in ANFIS Ireland is 35 hours. The flexible starting hours are 8am to 10am, core hours are 10am to 12.30pm. Between lunch there are flexible hours of 12.30pm to 2.30pm and the core hours for the afternoon are 2.30pm to 4pm. Flexitime works very well within ANFIS Ireland.

4. Compressed Working Hours

Compressed working hours enable an employee to complete their standard working hours in a shorter period of time. For example an employee could complete a standard 37.5-hour week by working three 12.5-hour days. This type of working is mostly used in the manufacturing sector whereby work is carried out on a continual shift basis and requires the presence of workers 24 hours per day. ‘

Several studies indicate that employees have more fulfilling and stable family lives, less stress and greater job satisfaction than when working on traditional shift schedules or standard weeks.’ (Clutterbuck:2003:90)

ANFIS Ireland do not offer compressed working weeks to staff.

5. Annualised Hours

‘Annualised hours originated in Germany and were first experimented with by a large retailer, Kaufhaus Beck in Munich.’ (Clutterbuck:2003:88)

Annualised hours entails setting an annual limit of hours to be worked by each employee, which would be based on the normal weekly hours worked averaged over a year, for example, 1870 hours to be worked which takes into account holiday leave and holds a reserve for sick leave. This type of flexibility in working is mostly suited to seasonal work, for example toy manufacturing, where employees would work longer hours in busier periods. It is an innovative method of utilising labour and eliminating slacking in quieter times.

ANFIS Ireland do not currently offer annualised hours to staff.

6. Term-Time Working

Term-time working allows employees who have children to work only during the school term and to take unpaid leave during school holidays, therefore a very attractive option for young parents. By offering this type of flexibility, employers can recruit from a wider pool of potential candidates not interested in standard year round working. Some employers provide an option for employees to average their salary over 12 months so that there is no break in payment during the time away from work.

ANFIS Ireland does not currently offer term-time working.

7. Tele-working/electronic-working

‘Tele-working is part of a general movement towards new types of flexible working arrangements that has been accelerated by increased commuting

times, rising office overheads and developments in information technology' (IBEC: Personnel Policies and Procedures: Guideline 19)

Tele working or electronic-working involves an employee carrying out work, irrespective of location, through the use of modern information and telecommunications technology. This form of work allows an employee to overcome restraints on place or time of working so that they can be flexible and work either in the office, from home or on the move. Tele working is most common with sales people, typesetters, software developers, financial professionals, administration workers, journalists, I.T. professionals and architects. Some employers reduce desk space in their buildings by having a shared desk for tele-workers in the event they need to work in the office. The use of tele-working has greatly increased and this can be attributed to the improvement in telephone, Internet and email service along with the new models of work that have appeared globally.

ANFIS Ireland offers tele-working to staff, however there are currently no staff availing of this type of working arrangement.

8. Carer's Leave

In the context of Budget 2000 the Government announced an intention to introduce the Carer's Leave Bill. Carer's Leave Carer's leave was legally introduced in Ireland in July 2001. It entitles eligible employees up to 65 weeks leave from employment for the purpose of providing full-time care and attention to a person deemed to require it.

A Deciding Officer of the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs assesses the person in need of care and deems whether he/she is a "relevant person". The employer is not obliged to provide the employee with a period of carer's leave without written proof of this decision.

No staff in ANFIS Ireland has availed of Carer's leave.

9. Paternity Leave

Paternity leave provides a father with time off from work for the birth of their child. It is a short period of leave, usually between 2 and 10 days. Employers are increasingly realising that childbirth is no longer seen as the sole responsibility of the mother, which should not infringe on the Fathers work. Most parents now like to take equal roles in childcare. Fathers place importance on supporting their partner around the time of childbirth and have traditionally used annual leave, in the absence of paternity leave, for this purpose. In Ireland, there is no legal statutory entitlement to paternity leave; rather it is at the employer's discretion. Paternity leave is statutory in most EU countries including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Finland.

ANFIS Ireland offers fathers one day's paid leave for the birth of a child. In the last twelve months, 2 men have availed of paternity leave.

10. Bereavement Leave

Bereavement leave is provided to employees in times of a death of an immediate relative. Periods of leave in these circumstances range from 1 to 5 days but may be extended in cases of close family deaths, at the discretion of the employer. Many employers have policies in place, which dictate the number of days leave allowed in specific circumstances, and this is often paid. Bereavement leave is different and distinctive from Force Majeure leave as the latter is entitlement due to employees in the event of an illness or injury of a specified relative. Employees who are preoccupied by concerns and responsibilities resulting from bereavement typically cannot perform to the best of their ability. Employers need to consider that the loss of loved ones needs to be managed in a sensitive and caring manner, in particular where it is a bereavement of a partner or child.

'The IBEC National Survey on Pay and Conditions of Employment in the Manufacturing & Wholesale Distribution Sector, 1999 revealed that 93% of companies provide paid leave in the event of the death of a member of an employee's immediate family. The survey showed that most companies provide leave of three days in these circumstances'. (IBEC:2000:37)

ANFIS Ireland offers staff up to three days bereavement leave for the death of an immediate family member. Any further days are at the discretion of management. In the last twelve months, 7 staff have availed of bereavement leave.

11. Special Leave

Special leave may be provided to employees in the event of an emergency situation. The period of leave would normally be dependent on the nature of the circumstances. Employers should outline the parameters of special leave in order to avoid confusion or abuse of it by employees. It should be noted that employers are legally required to provide employees leave for family emergencies, caused by illness or injury, through force majeure leave.

ANFIS Ireland does not offer staff special leave.

Employment Breaks

1. Sabbaticals

A sabbatical is an extended period of leave from work provided to an employee. It can range from 6 weeks to 1 year and may be paid or unpaid. Sabbaticals are usually associated with senior professionals or teaching staff in higher or further education institutes. The most common purpose for the sabbatical in these cases is for the employee to take a year out to research a particular area or subject of interest. Some US multi-nationals, such as IBM and Microsoft and larger European firms, such as Glanbia PLC offer sabbaticals as a reward for long periods of service and commitment. It is

important that throughout extended periods of sabbaticals employers keep in touch with employees in order to inform them of organisation news and developments.

ANFIS Ireland does not offer sabbaticals to its employees.

2. Secondments

A secondment facilitates the temporary arrangement of employees performing different duties from those they are normally employed to do, in another organisation or another part of the employers' organisation. The length of the secondment would vary according to its purpose. The purpose can be either by commercial which would assist the development of skills that benefit both the employer and employee, or voluntary which could help to fulfil the social responsibilities of both employees and employers.

ANFIS Ireland does not offer secondments to its employees.

3. Career Breaks

A career break is a period of unpaid leave whereby an employee can take from their employment. The duration can vary but would normally be between one year and five years. Employees service is regarded as continuous throughout the period of leave, however all remuneration is suspended for this period. A company would normally have a minimum service requirement, for example, one year, before staff can apply for a career break.

Given the current situation in ANFIS Ireland, career breaks are not offered to staff at the present time.

2.6 Demand for flexible working arrangements

There is little comprehensive evidence available as to the level of demand for family-friendly policies, which is one reason for organisations to get the views of their staff as to their needs in this area, prior to introducing policies. Generally, employees tend to think that by asking for new work arrangements, they may hinder their career prospects.

‘Evidence from the national statistics (CSO, Quarterly National Household Survey, November 2000) show that the vast majority of employees working part-time (98.8%) are not looking for full-time work. The OECD ‘Employment Outlook, Recent Labour Market Developments and Prospects’, 1999/European Commission (1995, Table 26a) report showed that in 1994, one in ten employees working full time in Ireland would have preferred part-time work’. (IBEC:2000:50)

‘In the Fynes *et al* study of job-sharing (1996) some 18% of employees stated that they would like to job share. This form of flexibility is favoured more by females (36 per cent) than by males (10 per cent)’. (IBEC:2000:50)

‘In the study carried out by Fynes *et al* (1996) respondents were asked to state their level of agreement or otherwise with two statements on different ways of implementing changes to working time arrangements’. (IBEC:2000:51) Their replies are illustrated in table 2.2a and 2.2b below:

Figure 2.2: Employees' Views on Ways of Taking More Time Off

(a)

<i>I would like to get more time off my current job even if this meant a reduction in pay</i>	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Males	19%	3%	77%
Females	26%	10%	64%
Total	22%	5%	73%

(b)

If I was due a pay rise I would prefer to take some or all of it in the form of time-off in lieu	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Males	17%	6%	77%
Females	24%	4%	72%
Total	19%	5%	75%

2.7 Implementing family-friendly policies

‘Any successful family-friendly work arrangement scheme must involve detailed and continuous communication and collaboration between employees and managers’ (Richardson:2001:21)

The successful implementation of family-friendly policies requires a high level of co-operation on the part of employers, employees and trade unions.

Introducing flexible working arrangements requires careful planning on the part of the employer.

‘The biggest obstacle to implementing good practice is in many cases the difficulty of persuading individual line managers to accept more flexible working arrangements. This resistance is often based on assumptions about the likely problems that flexibility will cause that turn out to be unfounded’.
(www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/wrkgtme)

The organisation should have the following structures to support culture change that supports work life balance:

- Strong support from top management
- A strong, well-connected and patient programme co-ordinator
- A steering group representing a diverse set of interests and circumstances
- Budgets that allow them to gather and analyse the data they need to understand and react to work-life conflict as it arises.

The senior management team must buy into the implementation of family friendly policies.

Some key indicators to prove the successful implementation of family friendly policies and work life balance are:

- Work-Life balance issues appear regularly at the board's agenda
- There is a buy-in to the business case for investments in supporting work-life balance.
- The management openly discuss these issues with their staff
- They are prepared to commit to a timetable for progressing to the next level of work-life balance evolution

Before introducing family friendly policies into an organisation, they should assess how the introduction of a flexible working arrangements may impact the needs of the business. For example, the introduction of a flexitime system might not suit all companies, depending very much on the trading hours and customer needs of such company. For flexible working arrangements to be successful, they must suit the business needs of the company as well as those of its workforce. 'Flexible working practices will not work if they are not keyed into, and integrated fully with, business requirements, resulting in the potential for a positive impact to bottom line performance measures'. (Stredwick and Ellis:1998:240)

Trade Unions and employees also have their part to play for the successful implementation of family-friendly work arrangements.

Trade Unions should:

- On behalf of its members, negotiate family-friendly work arrangements within the company
- Raise awareness about statutory entitlements amongst its members
- Work with the employer to allow for successful implementation of such policies

Employees should:

- Co-operate with unions and management in implementing these arrangements
- Do not abuse any of the arrangements that are introduced
- Provide support to colleagues that avail of these new work arrangements

2.8 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture can be a key core component of attracting and retaining highly skilled staff.

The culture of an organisation is also a key determinant in the success of family friendly initiatives and this is why the author examined the role of culture.

‘Organisation culture can have a major impact on the ability to manage work-life balance issues’ (People Management: Not Flexible Enough: 28th August 2003)

Many corporate cultures reflect the belief that work and family are segmented. The culture of long working hours may pose a threat to the stability of family life. Employees are under pressure to invest longer hours in order to be seen as highly committed and ambitious. Long working hours places a disproportionate burden on women in the combining of work and family responsibilities.

Employers should assess whether their culture implicitly or explicitly discourage the take-up of family friendly initiatives, that is, employees may feel there is some stigma or career penalty attached to these initiatives. Feelings on inequity among peers may arise when family friendly initiatives are introduced. This may be particular apparent among those who consider themselves as dedicated workers by signalling their unfettered dedication by

following regular established work hours. If more managers/employers “walked the talk”, that is lead by example, the implementation of family friendly initiatives would be enhanced for all employees. Co-workers can also have powerful influence on each other’s thoughts and actions by enacting group norms; these norms are likely to reflect an employer’s attitude regarding family friendly initiatives.

Individuals in groups, in particular where women are under-represented, feel increased co-worker pressure and competition to conform to group norms. If managers/employers positively enforce the use of family friendly initiatives these group norms can be adjusted.

HR strategies need to be developed which install the idea in employees that are all entitled to family friendly initiatives and also that long hours are not necessarily the only way to increase productivity and prove commitment. Employers should demonstrate that they do not see work and family life as unconnected and in conflict with each other.

‘An organisation’s entire family-friendly initiatives can be undermined if its culture puts all emphasis on the number of hours worked rather than on the quality of the work output’ (Fisher:1996:26)

It is therefore essential to ensure that the organisational culture is such that all employees are:

- Confident enough to make use of family-friendly initiatives
- Not held back in their career development through taking up family-friendly initiatives
- Not disadvantaged in terms of access to training and opportunities.

2.9 Implementing Family-Friendly Initiatives

What to consider before developing and implementing family friendly initiatives?

'The key challenge in developing family-friendly policies relevant to the level of the enterprise is to find ways of developing approaches that reflect the reality of the work-place'. (www.familyfriendly.ie/ibecpage.shtml)

Organisations may feel reluctant to implement work and family programs because they are concerned about equity and fairness. Addressing work-life issues not only benefits employees and their families, but will also give employers a competitive edge in providing high quality service to its customer's.

However, before developing and implementing family friendly initiatives, the following should be considered:

- Are any of the company's stakeholders (customers, suppliers, employees and their families) affected by problems relating to work-life conflict?
- Would work-life conflicts affect any of the company's business objectives or priorities?
- The costs associated with family friendly initiatives, i.e., replacement staff.
- Quite often the take up of family friendly initiatives is not as popular as employers think as a lot of families cannot afford a reduction in incomes.
- Company's that offer family friendly initiatives will enhance the overall image of the company.
- Employers should be aware that if they place rigid constraints on how family friendly initiatives are implemented, they are sending a message to employees that work demands should prevail over life commitments.

- The introduction of certain family friendly initiatives such as part time working can keep costs down for a company.

What a company should do before implementing family friendly initiatives?

1. Collect statistics on company wide performance in terms of output, turnover, sickness rates, absenteeism and recruitment costs in order that comparisons can be made post-implementation.
2. Examine the local labour market in order to assess the range of family friendly initiatives being practiced and choose the most appropriate ones for the organisation.
3. Conduct an organisation wide survey which can gather employee's views on:
 - Current working practices
 - Family friendly arrangements, and,
 - Suggestions for new policies
4. Assemble a project team to design the chosen initiatives and include senior managers, line managers and union representatives, if applicable. This will demonstrate the active support of management
5. The project team should then formulate family friendly policies and this should involve:
 - Consultation with staff and management
 - Agreeing strategies, in particular with senior management and HR
 - Formulating written policies
6. Communicate the introduction of these initiatives. This can include:

- Training and educating middle managers of the benefits of family friendly policies
 - Conduct training sessions for all staff
 - Have open communication and regular updates regarding family friendly initiatives
7. Implement the initiatives and create a family-friendly environment.
8. Follow up after the introduction of family friendly initiatives to include:
- Monitoring take-up rates
 - Amend policies if need arises
 - Listen to feedback from staff and encourage an open door policy for discussion
 - Compare company performance statistics before and after implementation of the initiatives
 - Be prepared to handle any abuse of policies, for example, flexitime
 - Continually evaluate the policies and procedures and make any amendments as appropriate

How to Encourage Take-up Rates of Family Friendly Initiatives

- Ensure work-life issues are included as one of the objectives of the company and addressed as a strategic issue.
- The organisations culture must reflect the recognition for work-life balance and be actively contributed by a diverse senior team.
- The policies implemented must reflect the actual requirements of all employees.

- There must be clear communication of the policies to all employees to re-enforce the cultural recognition and ensure awareness.
- Support for the initiatives must be apparent from senior management downwards

2.10 The Future of Work-Life Balance

Organisations are constantly under pressure to provide its customers with increased services outside of the traditional standard working hours. This pressure will continue to mean new ways of working and utilising the best use of staff and resources. Employers may find themselves in a situation whereby they have retention issues and skills shortages. In order to address these issues, employers may look at offering family-friendly packages in order to retain their existing staff and recruit new staff into the organisation.

'There is evidence from EU statistics that patterns and trends that demand for work-life balance will continue, if not accelerate'. (National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies:2003:9)

The reasons for this relate to a number of factors:

- Heterogeneity of Workforce
- Diversity of Working Time
- Economic Conditions
- Demographic Change
- Information/Communication Technology
- Public versus Private Sector Adoption

Finally, the author looked at two case studies of companies that have successfully implemented family-friendly work arrangements. The companies that were looked at were:

1. Electricity Supply Board (ESB)
2. Bank of Ireland

The above case studies are outlined in appendix one.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The main concept of this chapter is to explain how and where the information was gathered for this dissertation. This includes justifying the sample that was chosen and explaining how and why the sample group was selected.

The following research objectives will be explored throughout the course of this dissertation.

1. An exploration of take up rates of family-friendly initiatives in ANFIS Ireland.
2. What are the levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction of work-life balance initiatives offered to employees of ANFIS Ireland?

3.2 Stages of Research

Stage One

This is where the author initially became interested in the area of work-life balance. After doing a previous assignment on this topic in a previous academic year and realising how important this issue is becoming in today's changing work-force, she decided to explore the area further. After consultation with her Supervisor, Serge Basini, it was decided from which angle to approach this area. This followed by extensive reading on this subject.

Stage Two

This stage consisted of all the secondary research that was carried out in the course of this dissertation. The author decided to primarily concentrate on the family friendly policies that contribute to overall work-life balance. This consisted of reading all available literature on family friendly policies and work life balance, trying to understand the importance of each area. The literature that was used included books, magazines, journals, newspaper articles, leaflets and the Internet.

Stage Three

This stage of the research consisted of choosing the sample group. 20 employees from ANFIS Ireland were selected using non-probability sampling, also known as convenience sampling. As the name implies, the sample is selected because they are convenient. 'In the field of organization studies, it has been noted that convenience sampling is very common and indeed more prominent than samples based on probability sampling'. (Bryman:2001:113/114)

The disadvantage of convenience sampling is that 'it is impossible to generalize the findings, because we do not know of what population this sample is representative of'. (Bryman:2001:97)

The sample group the author chooses consisted of 10 females and 10 males. All 10 females replied to the questionnaire, however only 3 males responded to the same questionnaire. This is a 65% response rate.

The author first obtained the permission of the Head of Human Resources to send out the questionnaires to the sample group. The author then sent them an introductory letter requesting their participation in the survey with a brief outline of what the dissertation was about. A copy of this letter is in appendix 2.

The background information for the sample group is as follows:

Table: 3.1 Age profile of sample group **n=13**

Age	Male	Female
18 – 23	0	0
24 – 29	0	4 (31%)
30 – 35	0	4 (31%)
36 – 41	2 (15%)	2 (15%)
41 – 47	1 (8%)	0
48 – 53	0	0
54 – 59	0	0
60+	0	0
Total	3	10

The sample group consisted of a mix of management and clerical staff, broken down as follows:

Table 3.2 Section breakdown of sample group **n=13**

Section:	Management	Clerical
Male	2 (15%)	1 (8%)
Female	4 (31%)	6 (46%)

Stage Four:

Having selected the sample of employees who were based within the company that the author worked for, the author then set about deciding on what questions to ask the sample group for the purpose of the primary research. The author decided that a structured questionnaire would be used to include questions of a closed nature (Yes/No or scale 1 to 5) and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions were used to provide specific answer choices. Open-ended questions were used to allow for a wide variety of responses including the creative and unusual. By using open-ended questions, the questions forced the respondents to think and also allow the respondents to clarify and explain a response.

There were a total of 16 questions on the questionnaire derived from the literature review. See appendix 3 for this questionnaire. The survey objectives were to provide an analysis in relation to the introduction, awareness, operation and experience of family-friendly work-life balance policies and practices within ANFIS Ireland.

The questionnaire was pre-tested using two employees who were not included in the sample group. By pre-testing the questionnaire, the author was able to check people's understanding and ability to answer the questions, highlighting any areas of confusion. Both employees understood the questionnaire, therefore there were no changes made to the original questionnaire.

Stage Five

This was the final stage of the author's research and involved the gathering and analysing of all of the relevant data which the author had researched. The analysis was carried out on the basis of the responses to the questionnaire. The

author will analyse separately the quantitative responses to the questionnaires along with the qualitative comments captured by the open-ended questions.

Chapter four presents the results of the author's primary research. The results are presented in table and written format.

The results of the research are discussed in chapter four in connection with the literature review. This is where the research objectives will be explored further.

Chapter Four

Findings and Analysis

Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the results of all the research that the author carried out in the course of this dissertation. The main areas that will be covered in this chapter are that of the qualitative and quantitative results of the questionnaire that was given out to the sample group.

4.2 Research Objective One

An exploration of the take up rates of family-friendly work arrangements in ANFIS Ireland.

20 employees were asked to participate in this research questionnaire and interestingly the author discovered that all of the 10 females that were asked to participate in this research study responded to the questionnaire. This was in comparison to 3 out of 10 males that responded to the same questionnaire. Of the 3 males that did respond, one had availed of family friendly initiatives in the past and the other two never availed of them.

The author also discovered that all 10 females that had responded to the survey had availed of one or more of the family friendly initiatives that ANFIS Ireland had to offer. This is a 100% take-up rate from females.

According to Professor John Fitzgerald of the Economic and Social Research Institute, 'the demand for more flexibility in the workplace will arise because of the increasing proportion of female graduates and the fact that the biggest age coherent in the population at present is 20 to 25 year olds'.

Professor Fitzgerald told a conference on work/life balance in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, 'that in 10 years a large proportion of highly skilled workers would be women with young children. Employers would need to attract and retain such women, he said'. (The Irish Times – Health Supplement. Tuesday, February 10, 2004)

Out of the 13 responses that the author got from the questionnaire, the following was the qualitative and quantitative responses in relation to the question asking 'have your work life balance needs changed in recent years'?

Table: 4.1 Has your work life balance needs changed in recent years? (n=13)

Gender	Yes	No
Male	2 (15%)	1 (8%)
Female	7 (54%)	3 (23%)

It therefore appears that 54% of females work life balance needs have changed in recent years in comparison to that of 15% of males. This would seem to be quite a difference in males and females and would suggest that women are definitely changing the way they see their work/life balance.

'As in many other countries, Family Friendly Working Arrangements in Ireland are perceived of as chosen by women are usually associated with clerical grades'. (National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies:2003:112)

The reasons for changes in work-life balance needs are as follows:

Table 4.2 Reasons for change in work-life balance needs (n=13)

Reason for change	Male	Female
Marriage	0 (0%)	3 (23%)
Had Children	2 (15%)	3 (23%)
New Home	0 (0%)	2 (15%)

Marriage and having children are therefore the top two reasons as to why females work-life balance needs have changed in recent years. The author also discovered that there is a significant gender imbalance in the take up of family friendly working arrangements in ANFIS Ireland, as illustrated in table 4.3

Whilst it has been more common for women to make adjustments to their working patterns in response to caring and other responsibilities the onus is increasingly on men to seek and to achieve a more equitable balance between working and non-working life.

Table 4.3 Take up rates for work-life balance initiatives (n=13)

Gender	Yes	No
Male	1 (8%)	2 (15%)
Female	10 (77%)	0

This is a 100% (77% of total sample) take up rate for females in availing of family friendly work arrangements, with having children and marriage being the two main reasons for take up.

Traditional approaches to labour market analyses have been based on the assumption of 'rational man' who is unencumbered by family or other commitments and hence available for full time employment, on a continuous basis between entry to, and exit from, the labour force. In stark contrast

women's employment has reflected complementary and distinctly different working patterns marked by recourse to part-time employment and periodic absences due to childbearing.

Work-life balance should not be just an issue for mothers of young children. All employees regardless of their marital or family status or gender should be aiming to achieve a satisfactory work/life balance.

At a conference on work/life balance in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Professor Fitzgerald of the Economic and Social Research Institute, said 'it needed to become the norm for both women and men to take leave to look after children. While the differential in male and female earnings in general has fallen significantly, there was "a very high penalty for every year out of the labour market". Such leave is usually taken by women. (The Irish Times – Health Supplement. Tuesday, February 10, 2004)

'Increasing participation by women in the labour force has been a key factor in the promotion of flexible working arrangements. There are several reasons for the growing proportion of women in the workforce, including, later marriage and childbirth, a higher propensity to return to work and having children, structural changes in industry with the decline of the male dominated manual manufacturing jobs and growth of services sector employment and finally social pressures for greater equality of opportunity between men and women'. (National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies:2003:23)

'An increase in the number of women in the labour force has been one of the most dominant and persistent trends in European labour markets over recent decades. This increase has been particularly prevalent among women with dependants. This has resulted in a situation where the 'male breadwinner model' of household form is no longer the norm in Europe but rather it has

been superceded by 'dual participant' households where both partners are at work'. (National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies:2003:41)

With the increasingly female workforce emerging, there will be a growing demand for flexible working arrangements. This will need to be properly managed if the organisation is not to suffer. Such arrangements should increasingly be framed within the wider concept of work-life balance. Flexible working has to become more accessible to both men and women in today's demanding lifestyle.

Males tend not to avail of family friendly work arrangements for fear that their career prospects may be damaged and also that they are the main breadwinner of the household.

'The belief that availing of family friendly working arrangements would be seen as a lack of commitment to one's career were strongly reported in the research conducted by Kodz et al, Evans and Hogarth, with men in particular claiming that availing of family friendly working arrangements would not be regarded as acceptable'. (National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies:2003:27)

As in many other countries, Family Friendly Working Arrangements in Ireland are perceived, as chosen by women. 'The general pattern across Member States is that women are the focus of family-friendly work arrangements and that the proportion of men availing of such arrangements is low'. (Fisher:2000:61)

It would appear that women are continuing to avail of family-friendly initiatives more so than men, however perceptions and attitudes from men are

slowly changing. More and more men are starting to realise that work-life balance is important. Going forward the author would recommend that employers should be encouraging men to avail of more family friendly arrangements in order for them to achieve a better work life balance. This could be done by encouraging males to take up family-friendly initiatives such as part-time work, parental leave, job-sharing, amongst others. Given the situation that ANFIS Ireland finds itself in, this may be unrealistic however in another company, senior management should be encouraging men to avail of family-friendly initiatives. Men and women should have the freedom to choose their own balance between work and life – it should not just be for those who can afford it.

4.3 Research Objective Two

What are the levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction of work-life balance initiatives offered to employees of ANFIS Ireland?

The first question on the questionnaire that was sent out to the sample group asked employees how satisfied they are with the balance they have between their work and personal life. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very satisfied and 5 being very dissatisfied. The results are illustrated in table 4.4:

Table 4.4 How satisfied the sample group is with the balance they have between work and personal life (n=13)

Very Satisfied	0%
Satisfied	67%
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	8%
Dissatisfied	25%
Very Dissatisfied	0%

Interestingly, 67%, over half of the respondents are satisfied with the balance they have between their work and personal life.

Some of the comments that were made for reasons 67% of the group were satisfied are illustrated below:

Question	Quoted Reply	Identity	Author's comments
<p>How satisfied are you with the balance you have between your work and personal life? <i>(reasons for sample group saying they were satisfied)</i></p>	<p>1. Balance is achieved</p>	<p>Male – PB</p>	<p>Hold's senior position – has also availed of Parental Leave in the past.</p>
	<p>2. I feel I have almost the correct balance between work/personal life – although on rare occasions I will spend time at home thinking about work problems, but then again so would most.</p>	<p>Female – CL</p>	<p>No children, therefore easier to achieve work/life balance</p>
	<p>3. The fact that company provides flexi time means it is easier to strike a balance between work and life</p>	<p>Female – CMcG</p>	<p>Again, no children and would work in relatively stress free role.</p>

	<p>4. Given level of responsibility, can usually leave at 5pm, however would work in the evening at home to catch up if required.</p>	<p>Female - TF</p>	<p>Hold's very senior role within the company. Has not availed of any other family friendly initiatives apart from maternity leave.</p>
	<p>5. I feel that I have now realised what the balance is between work and personal life. It has taken me a long time to realise the balance but now that I have I feel very content</p>	<p>Female - DW</p>	<p>This person has progressed a lot in her career over the last number of year and therefore was working longer hours to achieve this.</p>

25% of the respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied with the balance between their work and personal life. Some of the comments in relation to this were:

Question	Quoted Reply	Identity	Author's Comments
<p>How satisfied are you with the balance you have between your work and personal life? <i>(Reasons for sample group saying they were dissatisfied)</i></p>	<p>1. Not enough time with my children and seem to be permanently exhausted</p>	<p>Female – RD</p>	<p>Holds supervisory position. Has 2 young children. Works part time and is availing of Parental Leave in the future</p>
	<p>2. In recent years there has been a shift to work longer hours, and more block out periods in which holidays cannot be taken.</p>	<p>Male – JF</p>	<p>Hold very senior position within the organisation. Would historically always work very long hours and take very little holidays.</p>
	<p>3. I Am working hours than I would like to.</p>	<p>Female – LH</p>	<p>Has just been promoted to managerial position, therefore the shift to longer hours is an effect of</p>

			this recent promotion and increased responsibility.
	4. Working long hours, taking very few holidays, not taking enough time off for important family/school occasions	Male – SH	Holds management position. Has high-pressure job.

It is noticeable that 3 (75%) out of the 4 respondents who said that they were dissatisfied with their work-life balance blamed long working hours as the reason.

Interestingly, the key finding of a recent major study on work-life balance in Ireland was “the prevalence and growth of a long hours culture”. (National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies: Off the Treadmill)

When asked what aspects of your personal life would you like to be able to manage better, while at the same time remain in employment, the most popular response was ‘time spent commuting to and from work’. The author discovered that those who gave this response were those that lived outside of Dublin so commuting was having an affect on their work-life balance.

Of the remaining respondents, other responses to the same question included:

- Getting more involved in projects at home (Female:KW)
- More time with children (Female:RD)
- More time for housework (Female:RD)

Out of the 10 females that responded, all ten had availed of one or more of the family friendly initiatives that ANFIS Ireland had to offer. The most common form of working arrangement was flexitime, with 7 females availing of this work arrangement. None of the three males that responded to the survey availed of flexitime. This, however, relates to the fact that the 3 males that responded were part of the management team, therefore flexitime was not an option as it only applies to the administration staff. Out of the range of family-friendly /work life balance initiatives that ANFIS have to offer, the following is a breakdown of the most popular initiatives that were avail of:

Table 4.5 Most popular family friendly initiatives availed of in ANFIS Ireland (n=13)

Working Arrangement	Male	Female
Parental Leave	1 (8%)	0
Carer's Leave	0	0
Maternity Leave	0	3 (23%)
Health & Safety Leave	0	0
Confidential Counselling Service	0	0
Force Majeure Leave	0	2 (15%)
Compassionate Leave	0	2 (15%)
Reduced Working Week	0	2 (15%)
Flexi-time	0	7 (54%)
Job Sharing	0	0

Career Breaks	0	0
Education/Personal Development	0	1 (8%)
Special Arrangements (Eg-Swopping cover)	0	0
Special Leave	0	0

Flexitime is therefore the most popular family-friendly initiative that is availed of in ANFIS Ireland.

When asked what day would be the preferred day off work, Monday and Friday were the two most common days with nobody choosing Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Friday was the most popular with 10 individuals choosing this day followed by 3 respondents choosing a Monday.

The successful implementation for Family Friendly Work Arrangements depends primarily on the commitment of the employer. Some of the main benefits of introducing family friendly work arrangement's from an employers perspective is the retention of skilled staff, reduced absenteeism, and improved motivation. In the current environment in ANFIS Ireland, low motivation and high absenteeism are high on the agenda. This is as a result of the current situation within the company. Unfortunately little can be done to improve the situation however the company should still actively promote the use of family-friendly work arrangements to all staff.

The author also asked the sample group the following question: 'Do you think that by offering work-life balance initiatives the company is gaining competitive advantage over competitors'? The response is illustrated in table 4.6

Table 4.6 Is ANFIS Ireland gaining competitive advantage by offering employees work-life balance initiatives? (n=13)

Yes	No
9 (69%)	4 (31%)

Some of the reasons for replying yes, were:

1. 'We can take flexi days, which is a great advantage' (Female:VC)
2. 'From a recruitment and retention point of view' (Female:CL)

Some of the reasons for replying no, were:

1. 'We are matching our competitors' (Male:PB)
2. Redundancy situation overshadowing the company (Female:KW)

The redundancy situation is over-shadowing the company, however staff retention is an issue and by offering work-life balance initiatives, the company may find itself at an advantage by offering such initiatives – none of which have been suspended as a result of the impending closure.

The author asked the sample group the question 'which work life balance initiatives would you like to avail of which are not currently on offer in ANFIS Ireland?'

The most popular response was 'career breaks'. Given the current circumstances that ANFIS Ireland is in, it is not practical to offer staff career breaks. This is because all staff will be made redundant before the end of 2005 and the company needs to hold onto all the experienced staff in order for the book of business to be transferred to Scotland in 2005.

The author asked the sample group ‘have you personally encountered any difficulties while availing of work life balance initiatives’?

12 out of the 13 respondents said they have never experienced any difficulties. The one person that had experienced difficulties said that ‘ Had to travel for family members wake and funeral. Had to take holidays as one days compassionate leave was not enough’ When asked what impact any difficulties they experienced had on their work this individual replied ‘Felt that I didn’t have enough time to grieve for a family member and was upset and de-motivated when I returned to work’ (Female: CMcG)

The author also asked the sample group ‘ Do you believe that everybody in your area has a fair chance in availing of work-life balance initiatives?’

The responses are illustrated in table 4.7:

Table: 4.7 – Do you believe that everybody in your area has a fair chance of availing of work-life balance initiatives? (n=13)

Yes	10 (77%)
No	3 (23%)

Some of the comments for replying yes, were:

‘ Individual circumstances are looked at and the company will do what they can to facilitate them’ (Female: DW)

‘ Policies are open to all staff’ (Male: PB)

‘As long as there is sufficient cover within the department, everyone has fair access to work life balance initiatives’ (Female: CL)

The author would agree that staff has got a fair chance of availing of work-life balance initiatives as each case is looked at individually.

Some of the comments for replying no, were:

'Only acceptable at certain levels in certain areas if an on-going requirement'
(Female: TF)

'Apart from flexi leave or compassionate leave, all other benefits are family-related' (Female: RD)

The author would disagree with the above statements, because as mentioned above each case is looked at individually and accommodated as best possible.

Overall, the author would feel that staff of ANFIS Ireland is satisfied with the range of work-life balance that is offered to employees. Regardless of the situation the company is in, ANFIS Ireland should continue to promote work-life balance. In the current climate, the company is under a lot of pressure and by ensuring that employees can balance their work and life may be the key to ensure that the book of business can be transferred back to Scotland in 2005. As discussed throughout the literature review, one of the benefits of offering work-life balance initiatives is increased productivity and increased morale and motivation – both that are crucial to ANFIS Ireland at the moment.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

Although it is difficult to give recommendations to ANFIS Ireland, given the current situation, there are a number of generic recommendations the author would recommend to organisations that adopt work/life balance policies.

They are as follows:

1. Family-friendly, work/life balance policies need to be promoted within an organisation to include the advantages of availing of such policies.
2. Organisations will need to adapt to the changing needs of its employees to take into account the demographic and social changes that are occurring in the Irish labour market.
3. The traditional workplace is also likely to change, with more and more organisations moving away from the typical 9 to 5 working day – as a result of this, flexible working policies should be implemented in all organisations regardless of their size.

Turlough O’Sullivan – Director General of IBEC said that ‘if you’re an employer in Ireland in 10 years time, work-life balance could be one of the most important issues in your agenda.’ (www.worklifebalance.ie/ibecpage.shtml)

5.2 Concluding Remarks

As discussed, throughout the course of this dissertation, in order for organisations to survive in an increasingly competitive market's, they need to recognise the need to be flexible.

'IBEC believes that if Ireland is to remain competitive in the future, there will need to be an increased business priority put on developing appropriate work-life balance policies'. (www.worklifebalance.ie/ibecpage.shtml)

Work-life balance debates have progressed rapidly and are changing people's lives gradually. It would appear that many people think that these policies are just for parents, undermining the wider relevance of work-life balance and misunderstanding what it is for. Work-life balance is about living a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work, having control over your time so you can achieve that.

Work-life balance policies currently benefit many organisations – but many have policies that are not helping their workforce or their organisation. Policies tagged onto the organisation will sit at the edges, not adding the value they could, not improving employee work-life balance and not touching equality issues. However, by putting work-life balance at the heart of an organisational strategy, and reflecting wider social shift towards a 24/7 society and employee needs, organisations can use work-life balance as a powerful lever for change on a range of levels.

Organisations that can catch up with the 21st century, with women being in paid work, and with the fact that a 24/7 life doesn't have to mean 24/7 working, can gain competitive advantage. But these policies are also about social equity, and future work-life balance debates in organisations needs to shift the focus away from proving the business case towards recognising importance of the social benefits.

Work-life balance is not only an issue for working parents but also an issue for all workers male and female. As the world of work will continue to change, men and women may wish to alter the way they work at different stages of their lives. If these new work arrangements can be matched to the business needs, there will be a win-win situation for all.

Work-life balance has always been about changing and challenging the way we work. Its future is in making work better for employers and employees.

Appendices

Appendix One (A)

Case Study One

COMPANY: ELECTRICITY SUPPLY BOARD (ESB)

For the ESB, flexible working arrangements are an integral part of its Equal Opportunities policy. It contends that flexibility in the workplace enables each individual to combine their working career with family life and other commitments and thus assist them in reaching their full potential as valued employees.

The following family-friendly policies are in place.

- Flexitime
- Additional Maternity Leave to statutory entitlement, five months without pay. ESB continues to pay both its own employee's superannuation contributions for the period of the additional maternity leave, thus ensuring no break in service occurs.
- Adoptive Leave – as with maternity leave, up to six months additional unpaid leave is available immediately following the end of adoptive leave. In the case of foreign adoption some or all of additional adoptive leave can be taken before the day of placement.
- Paternity Leave – three days paid leave
- Domestic Leave – with and without pay at discretion of management.
- Work/job sharing.
- Reduced Working Hours.
- Career Breaks.

- Crèche.
- Education Support – in the form of study/exam/conferring leave, refunds and advances of fees.
- Learning Centres i.e. walk in facilities that enable staff to do their own training. It is a room set aside for staff for self-instruction using the latest technology. The courses are available in five training areas – awareness, business, general, information and technical.

The ESB carried out a survey of staff needs to assist it in developing its programmes. All of the programmes have been drawn up in conjunction with the trade unions. The company is currently considering the issue of term-time working.

Appendix One (B)

Case Study Two

COMPANY: BANK OF IRELAND

The Bank of Ireland provides a full range of flexibility options. These options have been in place for some time and include:

- Part-time Work – with pro-rata pay, benefits and loans and the option to return to full-time work anytime after two years;
- Job Sharing – again with pro-rata pay, benefits and loans and the option to return to full-time work anytime after two years;
- Career Breaks – these are open to all permanent employees with a minimum of two years service. The minimum duration is six months. The maximum duration is 36 months. Employees return on existing rank and the time spent on a career break will not count for service, benefits, pension or salary purposes;
- Enhanced Parental Leave – up to a maximum of 12 months unpaid leave for each child under eight years of age. For children under five, the 12 months included the statutory entitlement of 14 weeks;
- Enhanced Maternity/Adoption Leave – of three months unpaid leave in addition to existing legislative entitlements for maternity and adoptive leave;
- Paternity Leave – one weeks paid leave for permanent male employees, to be taken within four weeks of the birth or homecoming of the child;
- Emergency Annual Leave – an option to take, without notice and in an emergency, up to five days per annum out of normal leave entitlement, for urgent family reasons.

Appendix Two

To Whom It May Concern:

I am studying for my final year for my BA in Human Resource Management and as part of the course I am required to do a thesis on a chosen topic.

The topic I have decided to research is work-life balance. I will be looking at the pro's and con's of work-life balance, the exploration of take up rates of Family-Friendly initiatives in ANFIS Ireland and also whether or not employees are satisfied with the range of initiatives we offer.

Can you please complete the attached questionnaire and return to me by this Friday 25th June 2004.

All questionnaires will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Hyland

Appendix 3

SURVEY ON WORK LIFE BALANCE (WLB) IN ANFIS IRELAND

• How satisfied are you with the balance you have between your work and your personal life? Please rate on a scale of 1-5 where 1 = very satisfied, 2= satisfied, 3= neither satisfied/dissatisfied, 4=dissatisfied and 5= very dissatisfied

• Please give a reason for your chosen rating _____

• What aspects of your personal life would you like to be able to manage better, while at the same time remaining in employment? _____

• Have your WLB needs changed in recent years? Yes No
 If yes, in what way? _____

• In your opinion does ANFIS Ireland offer the following

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Parental leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flexi-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carer's leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Job sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maternity leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Career breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health and safety leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education/personal development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confidential counselling service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Special arrangements (e.g. swapping cover or other informal arrangements)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Force Majeure leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Special leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compassionate leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Reduced working week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

• Do you currently or have you availed of these in the past? Yes No
 If yes, which ones and explain why you avail of these? _____

• Do you avail of any other WLB initiatives not mentioned above? Yes No
 If yes what are these? _____

• Which WLB initiatives would you like to avail of which are not currently on offer?

- For what reasons would you like to avail of these WLB initiatives? _____

- What is preventing you from doing so? _____

- Which particular day (s) would you prefer to be off work?

- Have you personally encountered any difficulties while availing of WLB initiatives? Yes No
If yes describe these difficulties _____

- How have difficulties/problems you have encountered in availing of WLB initiatives, be they formal or informal, impacted on your work? (prompts, have you ever taken a sick day instead, been demotivated etc.) _____

- Do you believe that everybody in your area has a fair chance in availing of WLB initiatives? Yes No
Please explain your answer _____

- What in your opinion could be done to ensure the fair allocation of WLB initiatives? _____

- Do you think that by offering WLB initiatives we are gaining competitive advantage over our competitors?
Yes No

Background information

Gender: Male Female

Age in years: 18-23 24-29 30-35 36-41 42-47 48-53 54-59 60 +

Section: Administration Management

Length of service: _____

Management/supervisory responsibility: Yes No

Any additional comments: _____

Please note that this questionnaire will be used for research purposes only and any information received will be kept strictly confidential between Rachel Hyland and the individual

Signature: (Optional) _____

Date: _____

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