Impact of flexible working arrangements on employee's engagement and satisfaction: An exploratory study of employee age and gender

Aline Botrel Vilela

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the Master of Arts in Human Resources Management

National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2021

Abstract

Impact of flexible working arrangements on employee's engagement and satisfaction: An exploratory study of employee age and gender

Author: Aline Botrel Vilela

Flexible working arrangements, such as freedom to choose working hours and preference for uniform wear, can be determinants on employee engagement. These practices may also positively affect employees' performance, which consequently contributes to organizations' success. Considering the importance of this topic, especially in the context of the working changes during the Covid-19 pandemic, this study explores flexible working practices and their influence on employee's engagement and satisfaction within the workplace, considering workers from different age groups and genders. The three main themes explored were flexible working hours, remote working, and flexibility on uniform wear. The data collection was based on a survey answered by 97 employees from a household appliance business in Brazil, and the analysis included descriptive statistics, data visualization and Chi-square tests or Fisher Exact tests (p≤0,05). The results of this study indicated that if effectively applied, flexible working practices can be highly beneficial to employee engagement and satisfaction and improve organizations' outcomes. There were also insightful contributions regarding individuals from different age groups and gender expectations, and preferences regarding flexible working practices. Therefore, the findings of this study contribute to the research on flexible working arrangements, offering insights and recommendations to organizations.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Aline Botrel Vilela

Student Number: 20131178

Degree for which thesis is submitted: Master of Arts in Human Resources Management

Title of Thesis: Impact of flexible working arrangements on employee's engagement and satisfaction: An exploratory study of employee age and gender

Date: 18th August 2021

Material submitted for award

A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself. ☒

B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged. ☒

C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access repository NORMA. ☒

D. I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award. ☒

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland

Student Name: Aline Botrel Vilela   **Student Number**: 20131178

School: National College of Ireland, School of business

Course: MAHRM

Degree to be awarded: Master of Arts in Human Resources Management (CIPD)

Title of Thesis: Impact of flexible working arrangements on employee's engagement and satisfaction: An exploratory study of employee age and gender

I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of candidate: Aline Botrel Vilela

For completion by the school:

The aforementioned thesis was received by: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures

1. **Introduction**

There has been a considerable increase in flexible working arrangements in the last two decades, and organizations have confidence that flexibility will grow employees' productivity and satisfaction (Wheatley 2017). Flexibility is the opportunity to customize work in different manners, being attractive for most employees. The most common flexible working practices are flexible working location and hours (Weideman and Hofmeyr 2020).

Flexible working hour is the employee's discernment to choose the time to work in a range of possibilities, such as having "core" hours and flexible hours or having total flexibility to decide when to work. Flexible working location is the adaptability to conduct work from home or other locations of employee's discretion (Thompson, Payne and Taylor 2015; Ciarniene and Vienazindiene 2018).

The use of uniforms in organizations is a representative tool for the origination's image and the individual's identification with colleagues and the workplace (Brandewie, Kim and Kim 2021). However, Bazin and Aubert-Tarby (2013) outline that organizational dress is related to the individual's identity, and the use of a uniform may influence their authenticity. Therefore, the use of uniforms can be a form of flexibility offered in organizations, in which employees may have discretion to wearing a uniform or not.

Furthermore, work-life balance is becoming fundamental to individuals, and consequently, many organizations are seeking to implement and manage flexibility, attending to employee's needs, and improving business performance (Ciarniene and Vienazindiene 2018; Wheatley 2017). Employers' gains with flexible working practices are the increase of employees retention and productivity, reducing costs, and having a workforce more engaged and satisfied (Meroño-Cerdán 2017; Wheatley 2017). In addition, there are also advantages for employees, such as reducing work-family conflict and stress, improvement of well-being, work engagement, and autonomy (Wheatley 2017; Zafari, Hartner-Tiefenthaler and Koeszegi 2019; Piszczek and Pimputkar 2020).

Although the desire to adapt to flexible working arrangements can change across age/generations and gender, it might not positively affect employees' productivity and engagement (Piszczek and Pimputkar 2020). While younger employees seek

flexible working arrangements to achieve their career goals, older workers value flexible working for a better work-life balance (Piszczek and Pimputkar 2020). From the gender perspective, Kim, Henly, Golden and Lambert (2020) outline that female and male employees appreciate flexible working practices differently. Hill, Jacob, Shannon, Brennan, Blanchard, and Martinengo (2008) extend that female and male employees might have different preferences regarding flexible working practices offered by organizations, but this will depend on the life stage, for example, if they are single, married, or caregiver.

Carlier, Llorente and Grau (2012) outlined that in Latin American organizations is not very common to offer flexible working arrangements. However, Neto (2020) addresses that flexible working practices are growing in organizations in Brazil. However, there is no official law regarding remote working or flexible working hours in Brazil, which may generate uncertainty for organizations implementing those practices. (Coelho, Faiad, Rego and Ramos 2020).

This situation shifted dramatically in 2020 with the Covid-19 pandemic and boosted these changes worldwide (Boshkoska and Jankulovski 2020; White 2021). Before, many employees worked remotely, although, after the pandemic, a choice turned out to be an obligation. These sudden changes may have brought challenges, such as distractions at home, lack of communication with colleagues, keep levels of engagement and productivity, and social distancing/isolation. (Kim et al. 2020; Prodanova and Kocarev 2021; Hofäcker and König 2013).

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to investigate the influence of flexible working practices on employees' engagement and satisfaction, analysing the differences within employee's age and gender on a household appliance business in Brazil. The themes assessed in this research were flexible working hours, flexibility on uniform wear, and remote working.

2. <u>Literature Review</u>

2.1 Employee's engagement at the workplace

Employee engagement combines employees' cognitive, physical, and emotional commitment in their job roles, which can increase when they find their work significant. Within it comes the aspiration to invest in their careers (Kahn 1990; Weideman and Hofmeyr 2020). CIPD (2021a) extends that employee engagement correlates to "work engagement," which is the employees' energy, dedication, and interest in the job.

Kruse (2012) highlights that employee engagement is also associated with better decision-making and high commitment, besides employees' emotional dedication towards the organization and its achievements. As a result, employees who have a high level of engagement are mostly fond of their jobs and the company they work in (Kruse 2012). Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) outline that employee engagement is a combination of an individual's performance towards work considering that:

- Cognitive engagement is related to the employee's attention to the work;
- Emotional engagement is how meaningful the job is for the employee, and;
- Behavioural engagement is the level of commitment an employee will give to the job.

Employers are more concerned about employees' performance, and for this reason, employee engagement has been a growing topic in the past years. Therefore, being an essential element and concern for any Human Resources Management (HRM) (Anderson and Kelliher 2009). By improving employee engagement and performance, organizations get a competitive advantage of retaining highly skilled employees and, consequently, reducing absenteeism and turnover (Idowu 2020).

Employee engagement is especially relevant for companies that hire a more significant number of young employees, such as Millennials and Generation Z, once they look for meaningful jobs, higher satisfaction, and the opportunity to stand out at the workplace (Bloomfield and Proffitt 2017). Furthermore, considering that these younger workers tend to switch jobs several times in their work-life, companies and organisations must create motivation and attraction to engage and

retain them (Kilber, Barclay and Ohmer 2014; Maxwell, Ogden and Broadbridge 2010).

Employee engagement and performance can be affected for various reasons, such as employee's interest in the job, opportunities given by the organization, benefits, and rewards (Zafari et al. 2019). In addition, flexible working practices are among the many variables that implicate employee engagement at the workplace, affecting an organization's outcome positively, especially to get high levels of employee engagement (Anderson and Kelliher 2009; Weideman and Hofmeyr 2020).

Companies that implement flexible working arrangements can create a competitive advantage in the labour market, having higher chances of attracting and retaining well-qualified professionals (Idowu 2020). Moreover, these companies also benefit from flexibility by increasing employees' satisfaction and commitment to the job by offering employees the flexibility they need. As a result, they feel more motivated and happier within their jobs and the organization (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard 2014).

Flexible working arrangements are often related to positive outcomes and are seen as an opportunity given to employees. However, Zafari et al. (2019) outline that still not clear if the implementation of flexible work arrangements necessarily positively affects employee engagement. Moreover, flexible working arrangements can also mean intensification of work and employee's insecurity (Zafari et al. 2019).

2.2 The definition of Flexibility

Flexibility includes a range of possibilities related to an employee's choice to do work and its related tasks in the time and location that better fits their arrangements (Weideman and Hofmeyr 2020). According to Taylor (2019), flexibility in a working environment can differ into two main topics:

- Structural flexibility involves the type of contract an organization offers to its employees and its structure within departments and hierarchies. Structural flexible organizations offer employees a diverse contractual arrangements basis, and a flexible working location and hours, while

inflexible organizations have a traditional culture of hierarchy and an equal set of terms and conditions for all employees.

- Cultural flexibility is related to an organization's beliefs, attitudes, and values, being a strategic engagement tool. Culturally flexible organizations provide plenty of flexible working arrangements to their employees, such as flexible working hours, flexible working locations, and flexible options to annual leave, aiming to increase their performance and engagement (de Sivatte, Gordon, Rojo, and Olmos 2015). Even though employees can be resistant to work-related changes, including their opinions and views towards greater flexibility can be essential to their trust and commitment. From then on, the more flexible an organization becomes, the more employees will accept and appreciate changes (Taylor 2019). Another view on this topic comes from Gordon (2014), who distinguishes flexibility in organisations into three categories:

- Flexible or favourable organisations have a culture of flexibility, offering many flexible working arrangements to their employees in a favourable way. Besides, employers share the same values and beliefs with employees, whose opinions are heard and considered.

- Flexible or contradictory organisations implement flexible working practices, but not as effective as flexible or favourable ones. In these organisations, flexibility is not within the company's culture and values, implicating the outcome of flexible working practices, such as working overtime, difficulty in managing work-life balance, and reduction of employee productivity and satisfaction.

- In rigid or inflexible organisations, there are fewer or nonflexible practices in the company. Rigid companies can try to implement flexible working practices, but frequently without assessing if they benefit the company and its employees. Consequently, flexibility is not as adequate as it should be and often frustrate employees from expecting better work-life balance and not having it properly.

According to CIPD (2021b), flexible work is the flexibility given to work how long, when and where suits employees, implying a range of possibilities and arrangements. Flexible working practices comprise the type of contracts (part-time,

full-time, and term-time); flexible working hours; remotely work (work all or part of the work from anywhere but the employer's workplace); commissioned outcomes (work related to production and not fixed hours), and; zero-hours contract (employees can be called to work when needed and paid for the hours they work) (CIPD 2021b).

Another type of flexibility is the definition of a dress code in the workplace once it has a representative meaning of the culture and service of the organization. However, the strict requirement for employees to wear a specific dress code or a uniform may influence their identity and personal expression. Therefore, giving flexibility and aligning them with employees might benefit both employers and employees (Forbs 2020).

According to Armstrong and Taylor (2017), the objective of managing flexibility is to fulfil operational needs and consequently enhance employees' engagement and satisfaction. Therefore, there must be an awareness of what drives an organisation to implement a culture of flexibility. Many factors can influence an organisation to implement a flexible structure or a culture of flexibility, such as increase employees` productivity, retain and attract talents and create a competitive advantage in the market.

2.3 Flexibility effectiveness

Considering the importance of good flexible working practices is necessary to analyse the effectiveness of flexibility in organizations, and employers should often communicate with employees and evaluate these practices. Attwood (2018) argues that organisations and employees may face many obstacles such as operational difficulties, additional pressure or overworking, work arrangements difficulties, and sometimes, extra costs while implementing flexible working. Therefore, before introducing flexible working, employers should certify that the flexible working arrangements are worthwhile (Bloomfield and Proffitt 2017).

One of the main issues related to flexible working for employees is managing work-life balance; once some employees do not have an appropriate place to work from home, dealing with family-related issues and distractions. Consequently, some employees may also be resistant to work from home (Morgan 2004). On the other

hand, employees might also abuse the flexible policy and work fewer hours than expected, while others might take advantage to do personal actives while working (Weideman and Hofmeyr 2020).

Alternatively, Hall and Parker (1993) argue that work-life balance is a benefit granted by flexible working practices that enable people to give an equal commitment to both personal and professional life. The same authors affirm that employers could also benefit from flexible working as it facilitates and improves recruitment, retention, absenteeism, and employer branding (Hall and Parker 1993).

However, Pitt-Catsouphe and Matz-Costa (2008) suggest that some companies offer various flexible working possibilities. However, they do not investigate the needs of the business and its employees, implicating lower effectiveness of these practices. According to Clake (2007), the key factors that can influence an effective flexible working policy are:

- The business and employees' flexibility needs;
- An efficient communication, where employees are informed about the flexible working opportunities (inside and outside of the company);
- The identification of roles and duties, allowing that employees recognize their role on flexible work to the achievement of the company's goals;
- The assessment of flexible work with a small group to enable analysis and needs of amendments;
- An acceptable change to flexible working, convincing managers and employees that this change can bring benefits for them and the company, and ;
- Measurement and evaluation of flexible working effectiveness in the organisation.

Flexible working can be highly beneficial to an organization if applied correctly. Among the benefits are attracting new talents, increasing employee engagement, and employee retention (Attwood 2018). However, it is essential to highlight that although working flexibility might affect employees' productivity, it does not necessarily improve job satisfaction (Weideman and Hofmeyr 2020).

2.4 Impact of flexibility on employees' engagement and satisfaction

According to Armstrong and Taylor (2017), employee engagement occurs when people have identification with organizations' values and, consequently, are committed to their work and organisation. As a result, employee engagement correlates to commitment, motivation, wellbeing, job satisfaction, passion, and vitality (Armstrong and Taylor 2017).

Flexible working might positively influence employee engagement, job satisfaction and increase productivity. For example, remote working and flexible working hours can increase autonomy and lower work-family conflict, enhancing the relations between family members (Hill et al. 2008; Kim and Gong 2017). Flexible working arrangements are not only beneficial to employees, but also for employers, as there is or it should be a strategy behind all practices of flexible working to boost the business outcomes and have a workforce more motivated, productive and satisfied (Kelliher and Anderson 2010).

Controversially, Eversole, Crowder, and Venneberg (2012) argue that flexible working arrangements can be excellent for some employees but not necessarily for all the organization's workforce. Therefore, if flexible working practices are not well evaluated and employees cannot choose their working preferences, it might negatively affect employees' work-life balance and levels of engagement and productivity (Bourne and Forman 2014).

In summary, organisations that aim to enhance employees' engagement and productivity through flexibility must understand employees' needs and adapt flexible working practices to fit in the business strategy (Prodanova and Kocarev 2021). Work engagement reveals individuals' involvement and performance in their jobs and positively affects them when working in a flexible environment (Zafari et al. 2019). Some critical aspects of employees' engagement are their age/generation and gender, which relates to a set of attitudes and behaviours that affect work-life experiences (Ciarniene and Vienazindiene 2018; DelCampo, Haggerty, and Knippel 2011).

2.5 Age and Generations characteristic in the workplace

Generations are people who share the same cultural and economic events, which influence them to have a similar set of attitudes that extend to the workplace (Andrade and Westover 2018). The increase of life expectancies has allowed a greater mix of generations in the workplace, such as Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), and Millenials (1981- 1996) (DelCampo et al. 2011).

Generation differences in the workplace can influence various aspects such as communication, technology, professional preferences, expectations, and more (Kapoor and Solomon 2011). Every generation has specifications and styles that differ from each other:

- Baby Boomers (1946-1964) are optimist; look for opportunities to work as a team, get jobs that give gratifications, and like questioning (Andrade and Westover 2018). Their personal goals are usually towards personal success, and they do whatever it takes to achieve it. Baby Boomers tend to respect hierarchy, are very determined at work, and count on their professional and personal networking (Kapoor and Solomon 2011). Baby boomers experience more social and work-related loss than Generation X and Millennials. Therefore, compensation and health might motivate the experienced and older workers to stay in the organization (Kooij, De Lange, Jansen, Kanfer, and Dikkers 2011).

- Generation X (1965-1980) is characterized as independent, fun, informal, extremely educated, and are not loyal to organizations (Andrade and Westover 2018). Generation X often chooses to work alone instead of working in teams; they are good at working on a variety of tasks or projects at the same time and are distrustful of authority (Kapoor and Solomon 2011).

- Millennials (1980-1999) are competitive, confident, sociable, and like personal attention, being very into technology and comfortable with change (Andrade and Westover 2018). They usually ask for directions at the workplace because they are not as independent as other generations. However, they want the flexibility to get the work done in their manner (Andrade and Westover 2018). Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) also suggest

16

that millennials tend to search for immediate gratification for better remuneration, career progression, work challenge, and a work-life balance.

- Generation Z (2000-2012) is the youngest generation to enter the workplace. They have similar interests to Millennials in regards to digital technology and flexible working. Young workers from Generation Z also aimed to achieve outstanding performance at work. They learned the importance of financial stability with their parents from Generation X, which are the ones that most value it. (Mahmoud, Fuxman, Mohr, Reisel and Grigoriou 2021).

Piszczek and Pimputkar (2020) outline that it is a challenge for organizations with employees of different ages/generations working together to attend to all different interests and values. However, DelCampo et al. (2011) suggest that most generations value flexibility at work; however, each generation has expectations and goals that differ within them.

2.6 Flexible working across age groups/generations

Distinct age groups/generations have different motivations associated with flexible working that shift from work-related goals and personal family-related goals (Piszczek and Pimputkar 2020). For example, older workers are more likely to interest in flexible working for personal reasons such as family and health. In contrast, young workers benefit from flexible working toward work-related goals and work-life balance (Piszczek and Pimputkar 2020).

Loretto and Vickerstaff (2015) extend that flexible working hours, such as part-time jobs, reduced hours, or the flexibility to choose the time to work, may have engaged some older workers to prolong their working lives after average retiring age. Alternatively, Douglas and Roberts (2020) suggest that older employees may be less engaged in the workplace than younger ones, as they gradually decrease their efforts towards work when retirement age approaches.

Thompson et al. (2015) suggest that different generations may have distinct preferences related to types of flexibility. For younger workers, it is commonly preferable to a blended perspective between work and non-work activities, being

able to dictate their schedule and its flexibility. Flexible work seems to be crucial to young generations when deciding to apply for a job.

On the other hand, older workers usually favour defining days, hours of work, and non-work (Thompson et al. 2015). Likewise, Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) outline that the range of flexible work forms that interest older workers might differ from what motivates flexibility for young workers.

Considering the different values, preferences, circumstances, and expectative of an individual need for flexible work can vary significantly:

- Baby boomers (1946-1964) are getting to the retiring age, but most of them are willing to continue working beyond that, and possibly, they will need some flexibility to do so. They may decide to reduce their hours, use flexible working arrangements to adapt to their family-work needs, and even prefer to work from home because of mobility. Baby Boomers see flexible working as an option to stay in instead of retiring. Employers can also benefit from it by keeping more employees that are experienced in the workforce and not getting many workers retiring simultaneously (Eversole, et al. 2012).

- Generation X (1965-1980) is the generation that values most work-life balance, stability, and happiness. For that reason, they are more likely to have a conflict on the management of family-work arrangements and give importance to flexible working arrangements in an organisation (Bennett, Beehr and Ivanitskaya 2017). Generation X is very committed, sometimes can be resistant to change, but they are not very loyal to organizations. As a result, organisations should consider their needs and desire for a work-life balance by implementing flexible working arrangements to retain them (Hansen and Leuty 2012).

- Millennials (1980-1999) are very keen on technology, requiring higher investment in devices and new technology, as well as adapting the workplace arrangements to supply the employee's needs. Video conferencing is very popular within them, and face-to-face meetings will be less common in the coming years. Flexibility is also a practice that most

Millennials look for in an organisation, and 75 per cent of them consider that flexible policies are fundamental (Economy 2019).

- Generation Z (2000-2012) are technology experts and prefer to communicate through text messages instead of traditional emails. For them, flexible working arrangements and diversity are fundamental in the workplace. They are the generation that is most concerned about being in a diverse and inclusive workplace. Besides, they make an effort to improve their performance, but they also expect rewards and a good work environment to engage them within their jobs and the organization. (Mahmoud et al. 2021).

The type of flexibility offered to employees has to fit their needs to impact positively in their lives. However, some situations as the pandemic Covid-19, force changes in the work arrangements, independent of the employees' preferences.

2.7 Influence of the pandemic Covid-19 on flexibility at work

Boshkoska and Jankulovski (2020) outline that Covid-19 has been affecting the lives of both workers and employers worldwide. The global economy deals with a massive challenge since the global financial crisis from 2008 and faces constant changes and impacts worldwide. Moreover, the pandemic forced changes in employees' work arrangements such as flexible location and hours, financial consequences, and shortage of hours.

Forcibly, people are now working from home and with flexible working arrangements, resulting in increased daily working hours and distractions due to family obligations (Boshkoska and Jankulovski 2020). This situation is especially relevant considering working mothers, which were negatively affected on their career goals due to the intensification of childcare during lockdown (Baska 2020).

The immediate and temporary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are changing employees' level of motivations and commitment, job satisfaction, interest, and challenging the management of work-life balance (Spurk and Straub 2020). Recent research of the Gallup institute (2020) shows that employees feel differently about flexible working before and during the pandemic. Before, many workers had the

autonomy to work from home a few days of the week, but now they no longer have this choice. Employees are feeling trapped, with implications to their mental and physical health.

Alternatively, Owen (2020) outlines that flexible working improves work-life balance and increases employees' productivity and focus towards the job. Besides, employee satisfaction now aligns with flexibility and work-family arrangements as these practices turned to be a requirement to most workers. Furthermore, some employees are managing to keep or increase their productivity levels and engagement towards the job (Spurk and Straub 2020).

Lemos, Barbosa, and Monzato (2020) suggest that some people are pleased with the situation as there is more flexibility related to breaking times, more time to spend with their children and family, to do exercises and study. The sudden changes to flexible working arrangements also enabled employees to know how they best perform their jobs and how they like to do it. Acknowledging that now they can change and choose their working lives to fit what is better for them (Greenhalgh 2019)

Johnson (2020) suggests that even with the challenges, many organisations recognize that a post-pandemic reality will have more acceptance of working from home and working schedules. Companies as Google and Facebook declared that they presume that most workers will remain working from home and have offered training and allowances to equip home working spaces (Johnson 2020; Sandler 2020). Eyre (2020) also suggests that the workplace will not be the same after Covid-19 as the number of people who have adapted well to remote working has increased significantly during the pandemic. There is a revolution happening at the workplace, and the future of work will incorporate flexibility, agility, and a range of adaptable skills.

2.8 Rationale

The rationale of this research is to comprehend the impacts of flexible working practices on employees' engagement and satisfaction in a household appliance business in Brazil. Based on the literature, the themes of flexible working hours, uniform wear, and remote working were assessed between employees of different

ages and genders. The choice for assessing these groups was that flexible working practices could influence employee engagement and satisfaction at different levels, affecting several aspects, including country and cultural factors, age, and gender (Ciarniene and Vienazindiene 2018; Neto 2020).

Latin American companies are traditionally less adapted to flexible working practices than European ones (Carlier et al. 2012), but the COVID-19 pandemic forced this adaptation. In 2017, Brazil had a labour legislation change that presented greater flexibility (Labour's Act 2017), but many organizations did not implement flexible policies and were mainly resistant to remote working (Neto 2020). However, this circumstance switched after the beginning of the pandemic, as companies were forced to adapt to home working and flexible working hours (Neto 2020). This situation was a big challenge, especially to small and medium organizations that are usually more resistant to change and innovation.

One of these companies is the Edmil group, a small-medium business that began in 1980 and expanded with external investors' support. Nowadays, this company is considered a traditional family business, including typical characteristics, such as hierarchical structure, the same set of contracts and terms of employment to all workers, and resistance to change (Taylor 2019). However, 2020 was highly challenging for the company, with sudden changes related to the Covid-19 pandemic, especially adapting to working from home.

The Human Resources Management presented an interest in comprehending better this situation, offering support to this research the data collection through an internal announcement to employees. Moreover, this company has a range of employees from different ages/generations that complements the objectives, being an ideal sphere for data collection and the outcomes of this research.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter explored the literature about employee engagement and flexibility, including several key definitions that can be used to interpret the findings of this research. In summary, flexibility is the employees' autonomy to choose how to manage work tasks in various ways, including adaptable working hours, location,

contract basis, and work in different tasks and roles. Flexible working policies can put both employers and employees in favourable conditions once employers get the advantage of having an engaged, highly productive, and satisfied workforce, consequently bringing better outcomes for the business. Employees benefit from flexible working tasks, improvement of work-life balance, lower levels of stress, and increase of satisfaction.

Flexible working arrangements across ages and generations are considered for many researchers as a shared value. However, the interest of different types of flexible working can differ from younger workers to older ones. Besides, female and male employees might also have some divergences in the choice of flexible working practices and their significance in their lives. Therefore, while remote working can surge some positive effects, it might not be the right fit for all jobs and people.

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced worldwide organizations to adopt flexible work, promoting a fastened change and allowing employees to work from home for their safety. This pandemic situation had employers and employees forcibly adapt their arrangements and lives suddenly, but remote and flexible working does not always mean positive outcomes.

3. <u>Research Methodology and Methods</u>

3.1 Introduction

Research is a systematic way to obtain information by investigating and reviewing theories, and therefore, gaining knowledge (Adams, Khan and Raeside 2014; Quinlan 2019). A research process is an analytical approach that includes critical evaluation of previous studies, rational and empirical evidence, and clarification of methods applied to comprehend a topic (Quinlan 2019). This chapter covers crucial aspects to gather the necessary information to analyse employees' engagement and satisfaction regarding flexible working practices in a household appliance business in Brazil. It includes the reasons for this research, methodology choice, sample selection, data collection methods, relevant investigation to answer the research questions, ethical considerations, and research limitations to give substantial information about the research methodology selected for the study.

3.2 Research problem definition

A research problem is the initial point of a systematic research, indicating its main aim (Mildeová 2013; Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker 2014). Its definition and clarifications are essential to a thriving research, as it allows the identification of the appropriate methods, as well as proper interpretation of the research outcomes (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2019).

This research focuses on the impact of flexibility on employee performance and satisfaction across generations. It is an important topic considering the increase of flexible working practices in organizations, especially after the COVID-19 pandemics. Although several companies argue that these practices support the work-life balance of their employees, it is necessary to evaluate if flexible working influences employees' performance and satisfaction. Moreover, it is crucial to consider that individuals are subjectively different, and people from different ages/generations and gender can comprehend the same topic in opposite views. Therefore, the research question of this research is: "What is the impact of flexible working arrangements on engagement and satisfaction of employees from a household appliance business in Brazil?".

3.3 Research objectives

This research considered several aspects within the complexity of assessing employee's personal information about engagement and satisfaction that are presented below:

1) To assess employee engagement at the workplace

This research presents an evaluation of the history and definition of engagement in the workplace, identifying the aspects that positively and negatively employee's engagement; exploring the benefits to invest in employee engagement, and investigating how flexible working arrangements might influence employee engagement.

2) To investigate flexible working arrangements

Another aspect assessed is the definition of flexibility, evaluating the management and effectiveness of flexibility in organizations and, the influence of flexible working arrangements in employee's experience in the workplace,

3) To evaluate the influence of flexibility on employees' engagement and satisfaction

More specifically, this research aims to identify the importance of flexible working arrangements and their influence on employees' engagement and satisfaction. Moreover, it also aims to evaluate whether employers can benefit by implementing flexible working practices in a household appliance business in Brazil.

4) To Identify the different interests and values in the workplace by age groups and genders

This research also researches the characteristics of different age groups and genders in the workplace, identifying their interests and values and evaluating their preferences and thoughts about flexible working arrangements. It also shows how the different groups were affected by flexibility in their engagement, productivity, and satisfaction at work.

5) To analyse the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on flexibility at work

Finally, this research also investigates how the pandemic has been influencing the economy, employers and employees, identifying the positive and negative effects

of the sudden changes in the workplace and how employers and employees are managing it. Moreover, it presents a reflection on aspects that have been already changing to the future of work.

3.4 Research Methodology and its structure

The research methodology chosen for this research is based on The Research Onion model (Saunders et al. 2019), acting as a guide to achieving the research objectives and findings in an organized way. This model is founded on layers related to each phase of the research, reflecting the different ways to develop research (Figure 1).
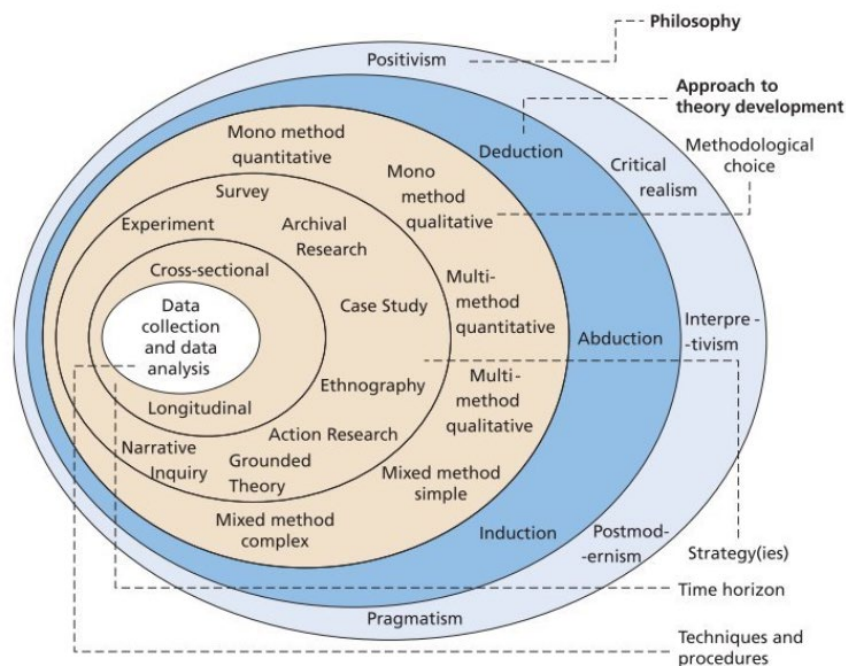

Figure 1. The Research 'Onion' (Saunders et al. 2019, p.130).

3.5 Research philosophy

Saunders et al. (2019) outline that research philosophy is a process to acquire new knowledge based on speculation and interest in a specific subject, permitting interconnection of all elements of the research. According to the same authors, these assumptions are defined as:

- Epistemological assumptions, which are the facts that appear in the research;
- Ontological assumptions, which is how the author's perceptions and values influence the research, and;
- Axiological assumptions, which are the processes that fulfil the research, such as research question, methods, and the interpretation of the research outcomes.

The definition of research philosophy is essential to define investigation methods and approaches to a specific research. Some of the main research philosophies are:

- Pragmatism, which is a theoretical philosophy that embraces both subjectivism, being more abstract and complex, and objectivism, which is a practical and logical investigation of different contexts and experiences. In pragmatism, facts are essential to influence ideas, and knowledge is relevant to implement changes (BPP Learning Media 2013; Saunders et al. 2019). A pragmatic study tends to have empirical findings with different perspectives and knowledge to provide further solutions (Saunders et al. 2019).
- Critical realism, which assumes that people's knowledge about the world is different from the actual world. The reality is external and is only accessible through sensation, but not by observation. This means that the external will manifest through an individual's perception and experience, but not what is real (Kringelum and Brix 2020; Saunders et al. 2019).
- Interpretivism, which premise is that people's experience is relative and subjective, implying a reality created by social and individual experiences but not by one shared true reality. The philosophy is complex as it evaluates people's personal aspects such as culture, experiences, interpretations, and social backgrounds. The main aim of an interpretivist study is to develop a deep analysis and comprehension of different social circumstances (Ryan 2018; Saunders et al. 2019).
- Postmodernism, which beliefs in a transitional reality, where what is considered true, is determinate collectively. A postmodernist study aims to question and deconstructing defined realities by creating new ways of thinking. Therefore, the postmodernism approach challenges existing

theories and concepts to find gaps within them and develop new knowledge (Saunders et al. 2019).

- Positivism, which creates new hypotheses of existing theories, testing them in the research or developing new theories to be tested in further research. Therefore, the positivism approach indicates that facts and theories can be confirmed or disconfirmed through investigation. The outcome of those observations defines the actual reality, and consequently, there are no multiple realities as the interpretivist approach suggests. A positivist approach is usually evaluated by objective method, and the researcher is detached and impartial of what is being observed (BPP Learning Media (Firm) 2013; Ryan 2018; Saunders et al. 2019).

The research philosophy that best complements this study is Positivism. By adopting a positivist philosophy, the research tends to be measurable with statistical outcomes. Therefore, outfit the research as the main aim is to investigate and confirm or not the hypothesis developed for this research (Saunders et al. 2019).

3.6 Research Approach

A research approach is crucial to the research as it pre-establish how to analyse the research findings. Saunders et al. (2019) address three leading research approaches:

- The deductive approach introduces a theory and then creates deduced hypothesis to test the theory;
- The inductive approach is quite the opposite; once it starts by collecting data, then focusing on the research question, demonstrating that the research can go further in a theory or method that already exists (Woiceshyn and Daellenbach 2018);
- The abductive approach is often used to investigate an event to create a new theory or change an existing one (Saunders et al. 2019).

The approach adopted for the present research is deductive. It was developed hypotheses to the theory of flexible working arrangements and its influence on employee engagement and satisfaction at the workplace. The hypotheses created to confirm or falsify the theory are that:

- The implementation of flexible working arrangements has increased the studied company workers' productivity and satisfaction.
- Younger generations have adapted quicker and have shown more effectiveness and satisfaction than older generations.

3.7 Research methods

Adams et al. (2014) highlight that research methods are how the researcher executes and carry out the research, while research methodology is the approach and science that determines the study. There exist three prevalent designs within methods that complement the research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The difference between them is that quantitative research uses measurable data, while qualitative research investigates unmeasurable information. Alternatively, mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative data collection (Carrie 2007; Saunders et al. 2019). The three methods are described in more detail below.

- **Quantitative methods**

What defines quantitative research is the use of numerical data to investigate the research question, being detached from the researcher as the outcomes are objective and cannot be modified. In addition, quantitative research usually has a positivist philosophy, using surveys and experimentations as a strategy (Carrie 2007).

- **Qualitative methods**

A qualitative research method is often used for social science studies to investigate people's subjectivity and experiences. Accordingly, it usually adopts an interpretivism philosophy and an inductive approach to develop a theory or provide different theories. The data collection and its evaluation are more complex in qualitative methods than in quantitative methods as it is obtained by personal information and diverse perspectives (Adams et al. 2014; Saunders et al. 2019).

- **Mixed methods**

A mixed methods research is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research designs. Mixed methods research can provide a richer investigation as it expands to numerical and non-numerical data collection analysis. The philosophical

assumptions that best complements a mixed methods research are pragmatism and critical realism, as both aim to produce further theoretic or practical change (Kajamaa, Mattick, and Croix 2020; Saunders et al. 2019).

This research purposes a quantitative approach as the data collected was through a survey questionnaire including several aspects related to the new practices of flexibility applied by the company and other practices that could be implemented. With the company's support, all the employees were invited to join the research voluntarily and anonymously by answering a Google Forms questionnaire survey. All the participants answered measurable 14 questions, including multiple-choice and open answers (Appendix 1).

3.8 Sample

A sample is a fundamental step for data collection and for the research outcomes as it is the subject where the information needed for the research is captured. Therefore, it is crucial to highlight the difference between a probability sample, which is a random selection of the population; and a non-probability sample, which is more subjective as it enables to find the population and to participate if they wish to (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler 2014; Saunders et al. 2019).

Within the non-probabilistic sample, one of the main methods is convenience sampling, which allows the researcher to choose and find the specific population to test a hypothesis or create new knowledge in the research subject. Convenience sampling was selected for this research to enable employees' freedom to answer the survey questions presented in the company (Blumberg et al. 2014).

It is also essential to highlight the concept of the sample population, which is the overall collection of components to produce outcomes in the subject/theory of the research (Blumberg et al. 2014). In this research, all the professionals working at this Brazilian company were the population of interest. Therefore, the whole workforce, including employees from different strategic positions in the company, such as strategic, tactical, and production, were invited to answer the survey questionnaire about flexible working practices within the company. Moreover,

internally there are employees from different gender, ages/generations, and positions, giving an overall of 97 participants for the research.

3.9 Data analyses

Data analysis is the process that assists the research findings (Blumberg et al. 2014). Quantitative data fluctuates in a range of information that requires interpretation and analysis. First, the data collected needs to be quantified and then turn into quantitative data (Quinlan 2019; Saunders et al. 2019).

For this research, the answers in the survey questionnaire were organized in a spreadsheet on Microsoft Excel. That enabled the interpretation of the findings and the creation of graphs to demonstrate and clarify the outcomes. The graphs interpretation was based on descriptive statistics, combining employees on age groups or gender.

Moreover, all the collected data were assessed by Chi-square tests or Fisher Exact tests (when the numbers were smaller than five), considering a p-value ≤ 0.05. Only females and males were considered when assessing the gender information once the sample size of people self-identified as "other" was too small. All the statistical analyses were conducted using the software R 4.0.3 (R Core Team 2020).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is the moral and proper behaviour to carry out the research. It means that the researcher was systematically involved with the whole research process, providing special attention to the integrity of the study to avoid any ethical issues (Blumberg et al. 2014; Quinlan 2019). Furthermore, ethics is an essential element for this research as the data collection involves a specific organization and its employees.

As mentioned before, employees were invited to participate in the research voluntarily and anonymously. Therefore, in the survey questionnaire, they had all the information about the study and the guarantee of privacy to the data collection. Consequently, the identity of the participants is kept confidential, and the data collected in the survey was only used for this dissertation and for further practices in the organization studied.

3.11 Limitations of the Research

Although this research is based on scientific theories and analysed through statistical procedures, it has some limitations. Initially, this research was focused on the differences between generations concerning flexible working practices. However, the company studied asked for a change to age groups and genders once they consider it more valuable to their needs. Therefore, considering the company's openness to this research and the value of these insights, the study suffered a slight change.

Moreover, although a qualitative analysis was applied, it was not possible to have deeper reflections from the participants. Considering that the research question is subjective, the insights could differ from the investigation to qualitative or mixed-method research.

4. Research Findings

The new configuration of the world and the future of work post-pandemic can directly influence employer and employees' experience in the workplace. Employers are already facing challenges with new ways of working and implementing new policies and practices within the organizations, while employees may have their levels of job satisfaction and productivity affected (Silva and Sachuk 2011). To increase the comprehension of the topic, this chapter aims to demonstrate the results and findings of this research divided into three mains sub-headings: Flexible working hours, Flexibility on uniform wear, and Remote working.

At the data collection, 97 volunteers from the company studied answered the survey questionnaire. The participants identified their gender as female (41%, n= 40), male (56%, n=54), and others (3%, n=3) (Figure 2).
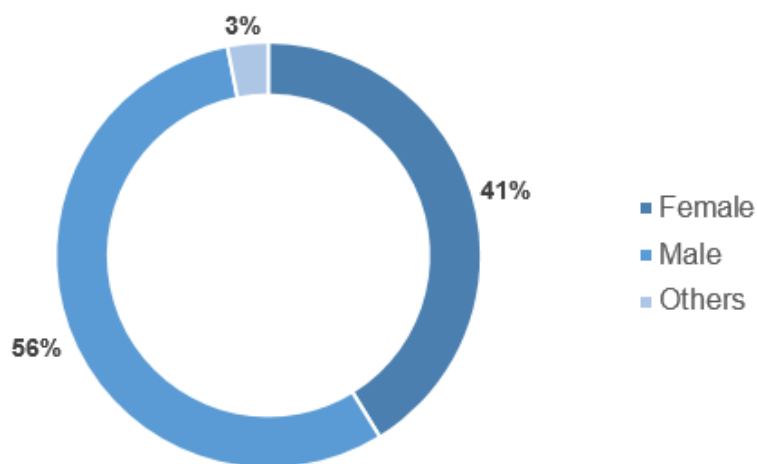

Figure 2. Gender of participants of the survey questionnaire.

The participants were from a range of different age groups, including 18-25 (22,68%, n=22), 25-35 (40,21%, n=39), 35-45 (21,65%, n=21), and 45 or more years old (15,46%, n=15) (Figure 3).
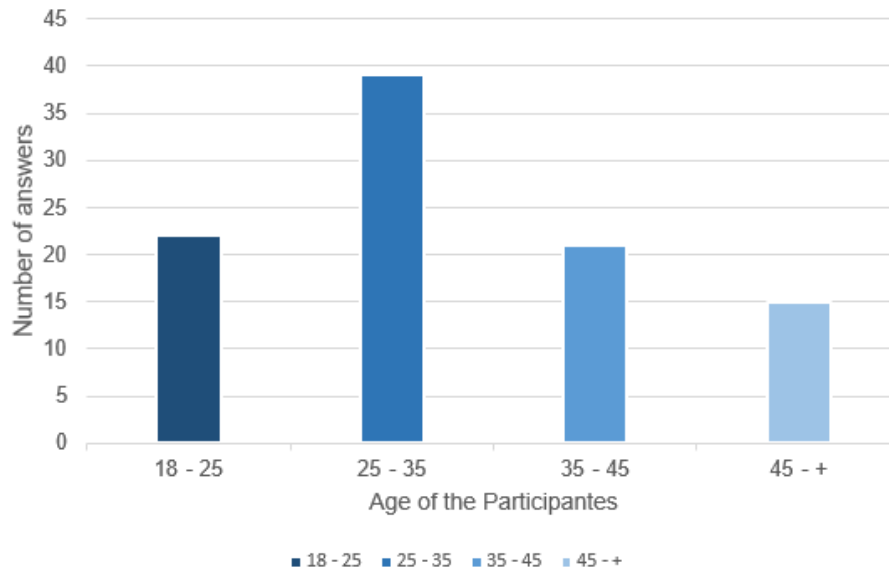
Figure 3. Age range of participants who answered the questionnaire.

The participants were also from different positions within the organization, defined as Strategic (higher positions in the company such as directors, coordinators, and managers), Tactical (junior to senior roles within the administrative), and Operational (assistants, operators, and dressmakers). The information collected indicated that most participants were from tactical positions (n=57) and 25-35 years old. Moreover, it was possible to verify that women occupy most strategical positions, except for the age group 18-25 years old (Figure 4). However, the statistical tests indicated that positions were not significantly different between age groups (Fisher test; p-value=0,32) or gender (Chi-square test; $\chi 2$=2.282, p-value=0.32).
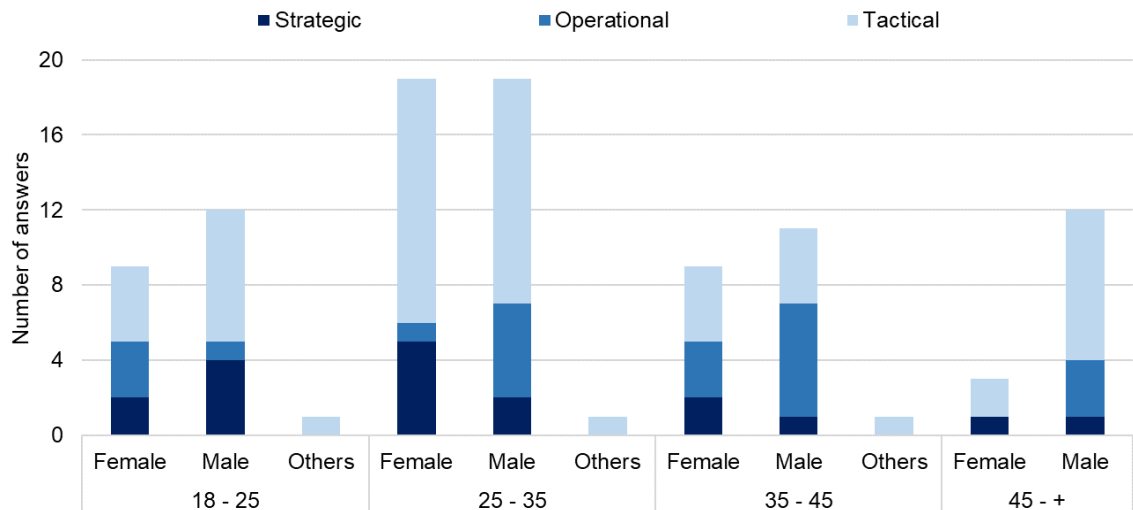
Figure 4. Strategical positions and age range of participants.

4.1 Flexible Working Hours

Flexible working hours can be a factor that increases employee's engagement and productivity. The following findings are relevant to a deeper comprehension of a possible implementation of flexible working hours in the company and its influence on employees' engagement and productivity.

Although was not found a significant association between flexible working hours and age groups (Fisher test, p-value=0,39), or gender (Chi-square test; $\chi 2$=1.5275, p-value=0,46), most of the participants (63,92%, n=62) indicated a strong preference for flexible working hours, relating it to their engagement and satisfaction. On the other hand, 21,65% (n=21) answered that it moderately impacts them, and only 14,43% (n=14) affirmed that flexible working hours do not affect their engagement and satisfaction at work (Figure 5).

14,43%   21,65%

■ More or less
■ A Lot
■ It would not change

63,92%
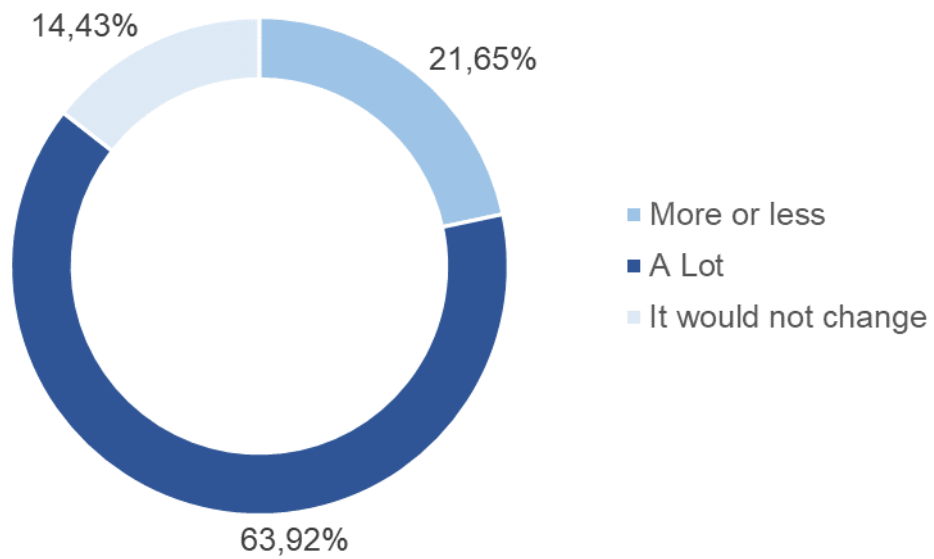
Figure 5. Flexible working hours influence positively on employee's engagement and satisfaction.

Another critical finding was related to the time of the day employees feel they are more productive to work. Most participants (46,6%, n=45) indicated having no preference to work in a specific part of the day. However, 41,2% (n=40) of the participants affirmed to be more productive in the mornings, while 9,3% (n=9) indicated the afternoon and 3,1% (n=3) the night. There was no significant difference in these preferences by age (Fisher test, p-value=0,40) or gender (Fisher test, p-value=0,89) (Figure 6).
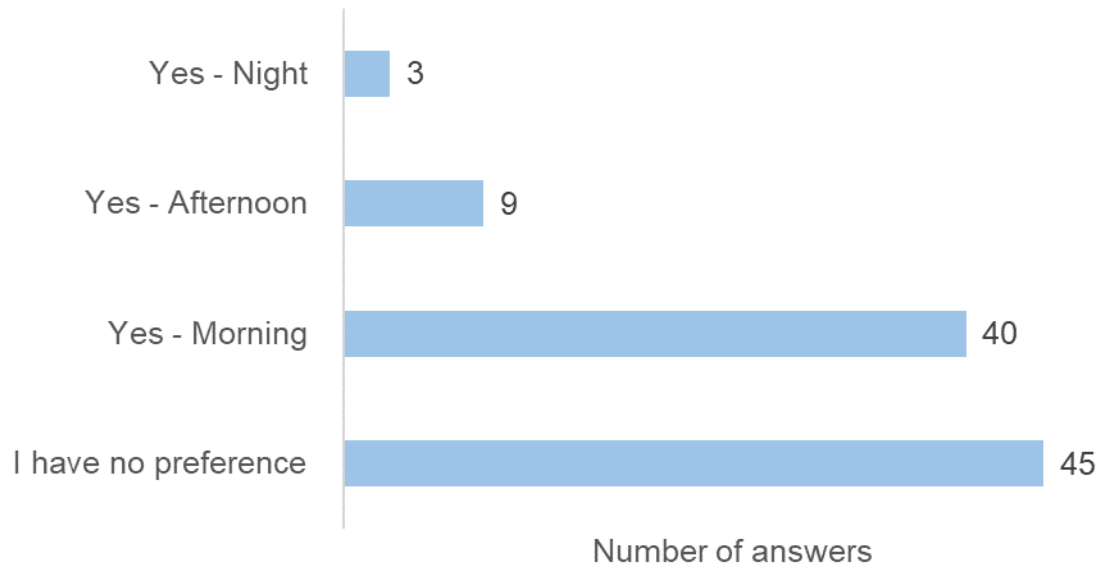
Figure 6. Level of productivity throughout the day.

The participants also indicated if their tasks and activities are compatible with their work hours in the company. Most of the participants agree that it is compatible (n=42, 43,30%) or totally compatible (n=11, 11,34%), while 19,59% (n=19) disagree and 4,12% (n=4) totally disagree with this compatibility. Around 21,65% (n=21) neither agree or disagree with this equivalence.

The compatibility between the participants' tasks and activities with their work hours was not related to the age groups (Fisher test, p-value=0,81), but with gender (Fisher test, p-value=0,03). Figure 7 shows the difference between genders, which indicates that male participants disagree more with the compatibility between their activities with hours of work than women and others do.
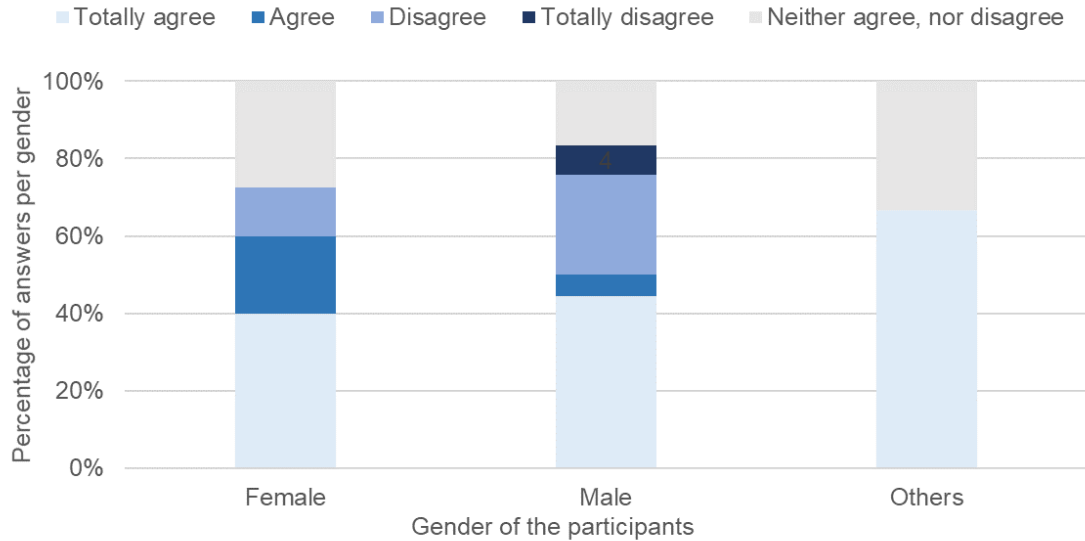
Figure 7. The amount of tasks/activities employees have are compatible with the amount of hours they work.

Although the overall result of flexible working hours shows that most employees demonstrate that it can influence positively their engagement and satisfaction, there was a significant number of answers indicating that it would influence moderately, and a fewer amount stated that would not change. Furthermore, most employees indicated that they do not feel more productive in any specific part of the day, following the preference to work in the morning. Finally, there was a slight difference within gender in the compatibility of their tasks with hours worked. Male participants indicated to disagree more with this compatibility than women and others do.

4.2 Flexibility on Uniform Wear

Flexibility to wear a uniform or not in the workplace is an interesting element to be investigated as it can have divergent answers among different groups. However, most participants indicated that they like wearing a uniform at the workplace, being 87,6% (n=85) of the answers to "Yes" and 12,4% (n=12) to "No".

The preference for the use of the uniform is considered relevant to the gender of the participants (Fisher test, p-value=0,09), with a higher proportion of male

participants preferring to wear it (Figure 8). Nevertheless, there is no significant difference in the preference of wearing a uniform by age group (Fisher test, p-value=0,29).
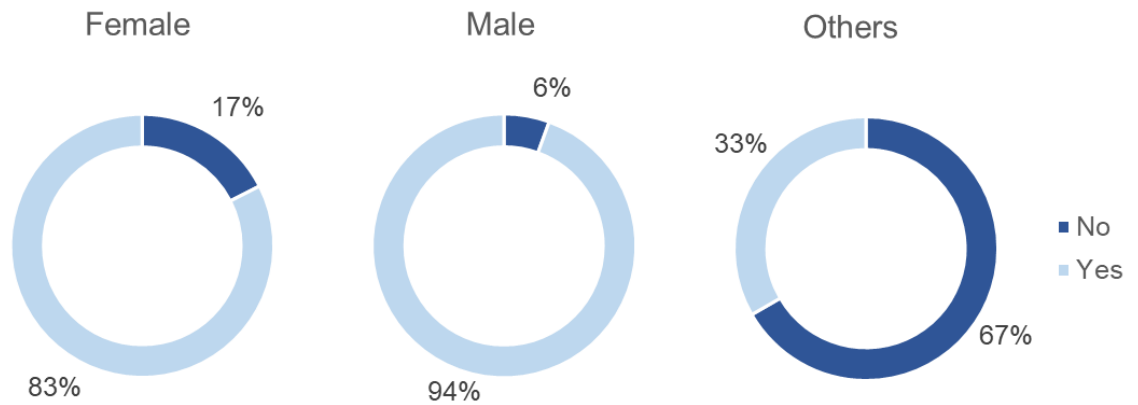
Figure 8. Employees preference on wearing a uniform in the workplace.

The participants also indicated their opinion on "Casual Day," which is the flexibility given to employees not to wear the uniform on Fridays. The overall participants showed that they mainly like this practice (49,5%, n=48) or neither like, nor dislike it (45,4%, n=44), while only a few do not like this flexibility (5,2%, n=5).

Despite that, it is crucial to mention a slight difference between age groups (Fisher test, p-value=0,07). The age groups 25-35 and 35-45 were the only ones who demonstrated to dislike the practice, while the age group 18-25 had the same number of answers liking or being indifferent to this flexibility. The age group 45 or more years old were the ones who proportionally mostly demonstrated to like the practice (Figure 9). There was no significant difference between the opinion on casual days between different genders (Fisher test, p-value=0,31).
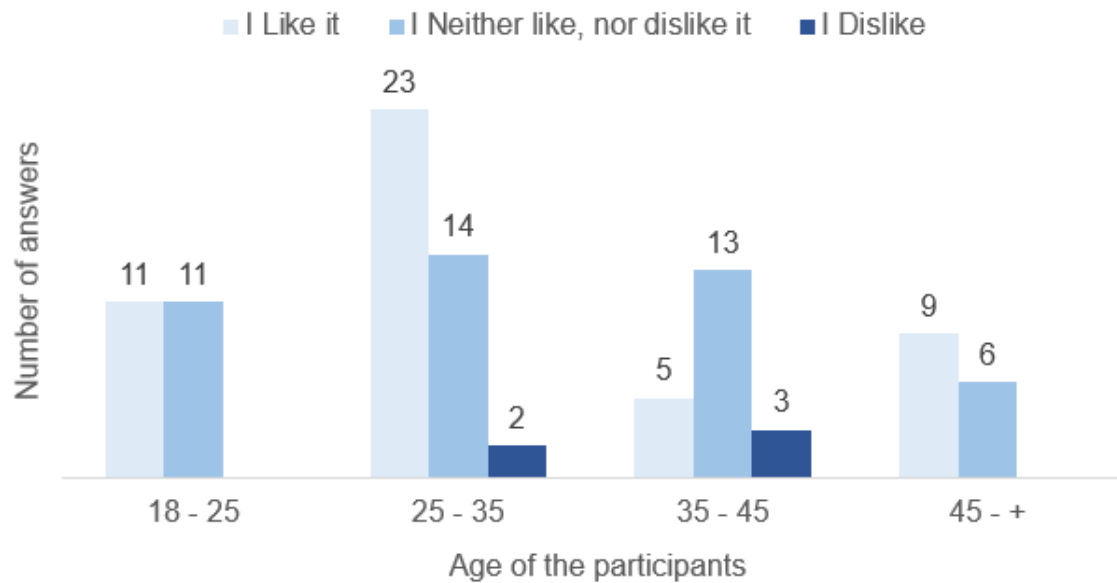
Figure 9. Employees preference on the "Casual Day".

Altogether, most employees demonstrated to like using a uniform in the workplace, but with some flexibility, even if it is only one day in the week. Comparing age groups, it is surprising that younger employees like using the uniform than older employees do. The age range 35-45 were less satisfied with this practice, while the others demonstrated to be more pleased, having minor differences between them. There was also a considerable difference in preference to wearing a uniform within gender; male participants demonstrated to like wearing the uniform more than women and others do.

4.3 Remote Working

Of the 97 participants in the research, 73 worked from home in some moments before answering the survey. Therefore, only those employees answered the questions related to effectiveness, challenges, gains, and satisfaction of remote working. An important finding was the levels of employees' satisfaction with remote working. Although not statistically significant (Fisher test; p-value=0.43), the answers collected showed that younger employees tended to be more satisfied with the flexibility to work from home than older ones. Another interesting result is that the oldest age group (45 or more years old) presented the highest number of

answers, "Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" (Figure 10). The gender was also not related to satisfaction with the flexibility to work from home (Fisher test; p-value=0.2817).
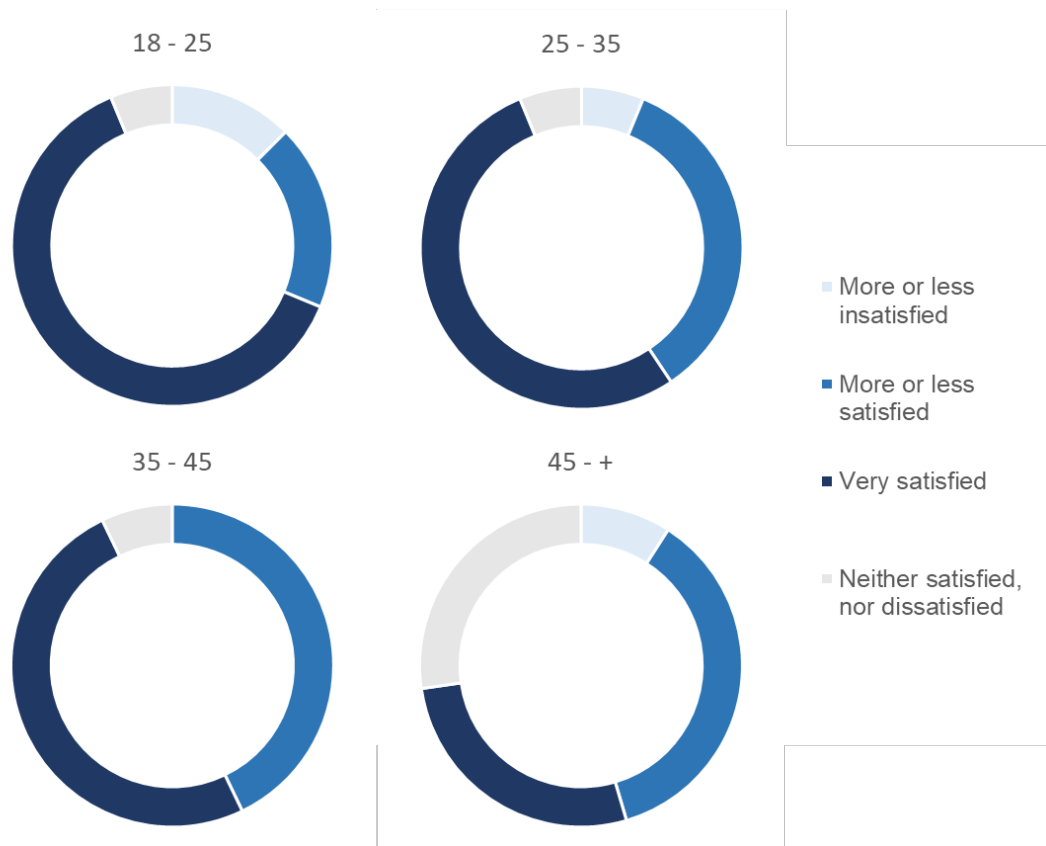
Figure 10. Level of employees' satisfaction by age range

As much as the satisfaction with the flexibility to work from home is essential investigating, it is crucial to comprehend the impact of remote working on employees' productivity. In addition to participants' evaluation of their satisfaction with their productivity while working remotely. Figure 6 shows that most employees from all age groups were satisfied with their productivity levels while working from home (64,38%, n=47), and no participants were totally dissatisfied.

The level of satisfaction with their productivity was significantly related to age groups (Fisher test; p-value=0.05). The participants between 25 and 35 years old were the most "Very satisfied" with their productive working remotely; however, one person from this group declared to feel "More or less dissatisfied." Only one other participant (1,37%) from the youngest group (18-25 years old) expressed

feeling the same dissatisfaction. Finally, the oldest group (45 or more years) presented again the highest number of answers, "Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied" (n=4; 5,48%) (Figure 11).
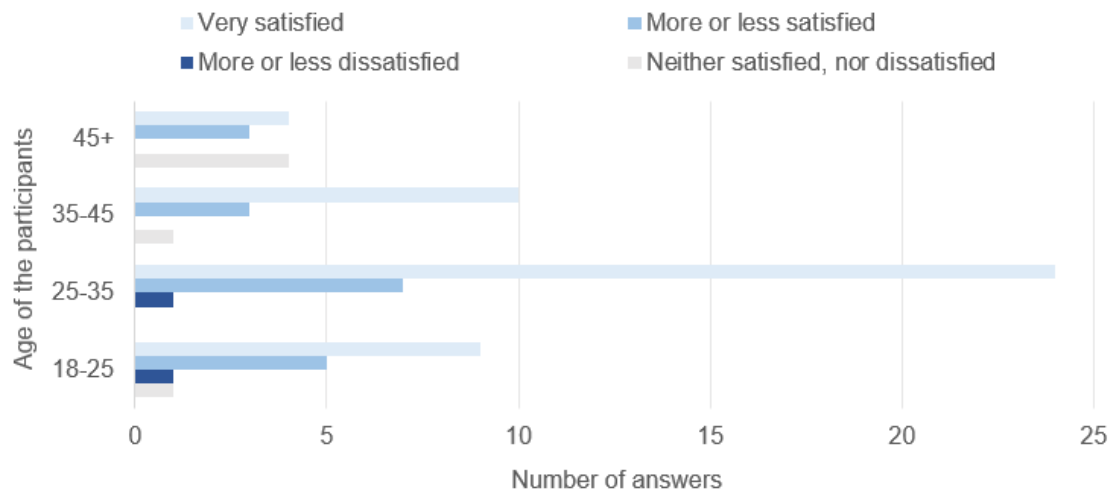
Figure 11. Employees' satisfaction with their level of productivity while working from home by age group.

The gender of the participants was also significantly related to the level of satisfaction with the productivity working remotely (Fisher test; p-value=0.018). This difference is probably related to a higher number of "Very satisfied" (n=26; 35,62%) and "Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied" (n=6; 8,22%) answers from the male participants (Figure 7). Female and male participants presented the same number of answers indicating some level of dissatisfaction (n=1; 1,37% to each gender). All participants that identified their gender as others indicated satisfaction with their productivity while working remotely (n=2; 2,74%) (Figure 12).
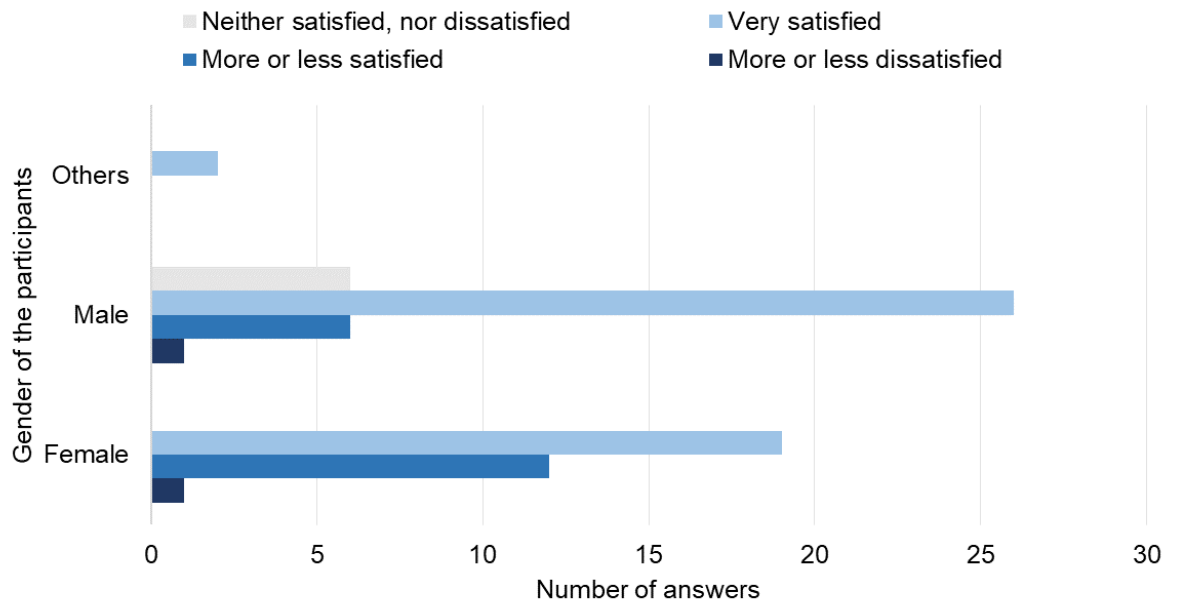
Figure 12. Employees' satisfaction with their level of productivity while working from home by gender.

When assessing the challenges that employees encountered by executing activities from home, most participants indicated an easy adaptation and no challenges due to this situation (n=24; 32,88%). Although there is no significant difference between the challenges in the different age groups (Fisher test; p-value=0.9463), it is possible to identify some variations among the groups. Within the participants that indicated some challenge working remotely, the main issue was the lack of communication with colleagues (exceptionally to 18-25 and 45 or more years old groups, with 6 and 5 answers, respectively) and appropriate space to work (to 35-45 years old group, with 10 responses). The group between 35 and 45 years old indicated social distancing/isolation and lack of communication as their main challenges (n=3, 4,11% to each challenge) (Figure 13). The gender of the participants was also not significantly related to the challenges enhanced by the participants working from home (Fisher test; p-value=0,63).
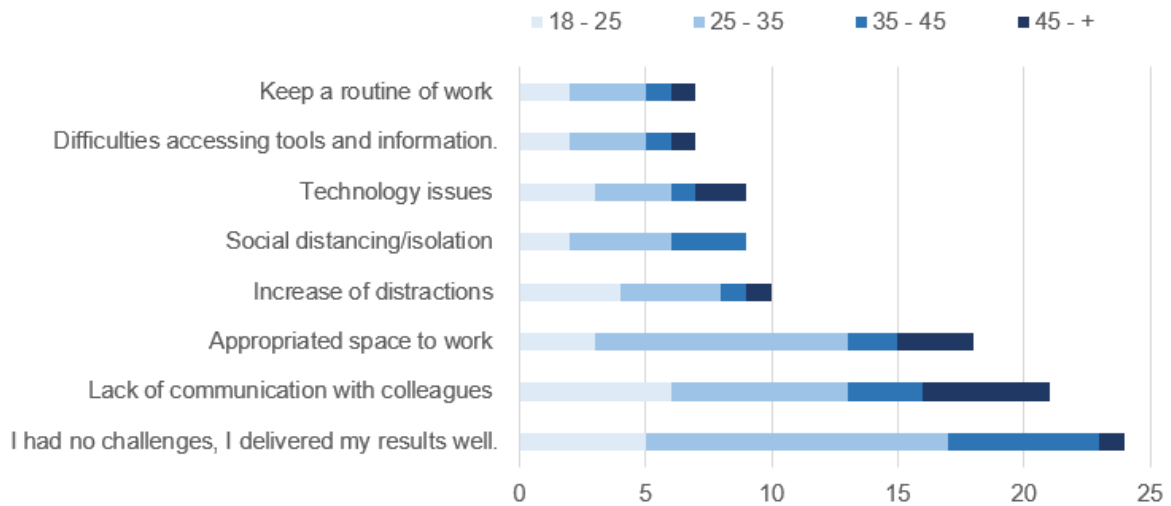
Figure 13. Employees' challenges with remote working.

The participants also indicated their main difficulties while working from home. The results show similarity between all age groups (Fisher test, p-value=0,52), with most participants implying no difficulty working remotely (n=45, 61,64% of total answers). Within the participants that indicated some difficulty, the ages range 18-25, 25-35 and 45 or more years old demonstrated as main issues the communication (n=3, n=4, and n=2, respectively) and the lack of an appropriate space for home working (n=3, n=9, and n=2, respectively). Alternatively, the age range between 35 and 45 years old identified the technology as their primary difficult with remote working (n=4) (Figure 14). The gender of the participants was also not significantly related to the difficulties of remote working (Fisher test, p-value=0,76).
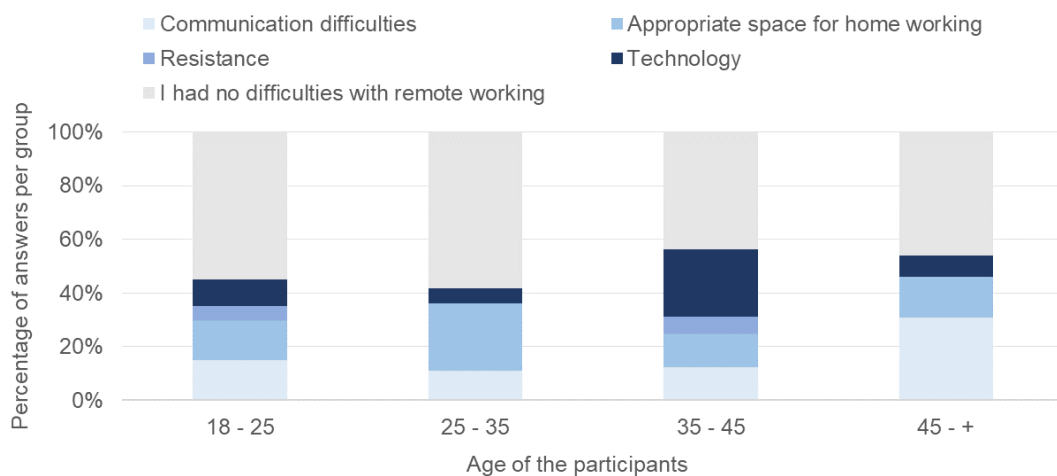
Figure 14. Participants' difficulties with remote working.

On the other hand, the participants also indicated gains from remote working. Although these gains were not related to age (Fisher test; p-value=0,89) or gender (Chi-square test; χ2=0,42; p-value=0,81), around 85% of the participants related some gains with remote working. The main gains were related to an increase in productivity (n=38) and the facility to execute the tasks (n=32) (Figure 15).
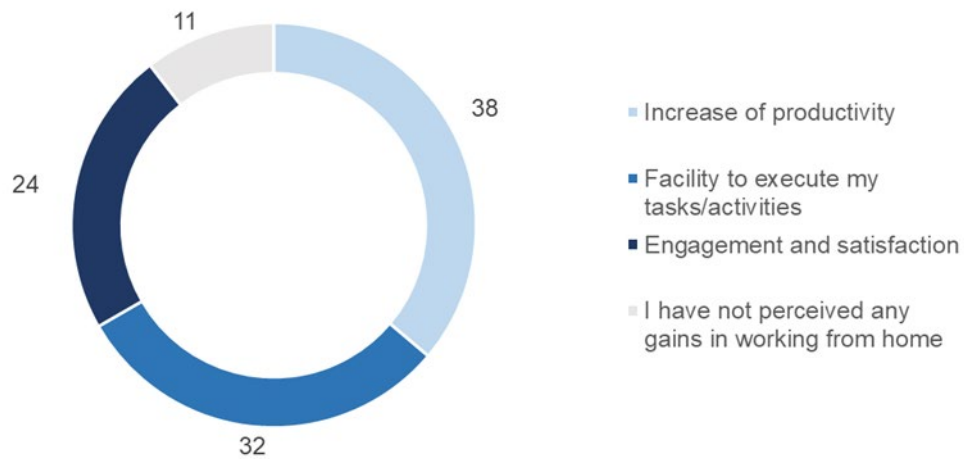
Figure 15. Employees' gains with remote working.

The next finding is especially relevant once it refers to the future of work. Employees were asked which method of work they suppose would increase their productivity. Of the 73 participants, 50 (68,49%) indicated a preference for hybrid working, while 13 (17,81%) prefers working only at the office, and 10 (13,70) prefers only remote working. Surprisingly, the youngest group (18-25 years old) were the only one who did not indicate any answers to 100% remote working (Figure 16). Neither age group (Fisher test; p-value=0,44) or gender (Fisher test; p =0,15) were significantly related to these preferences.
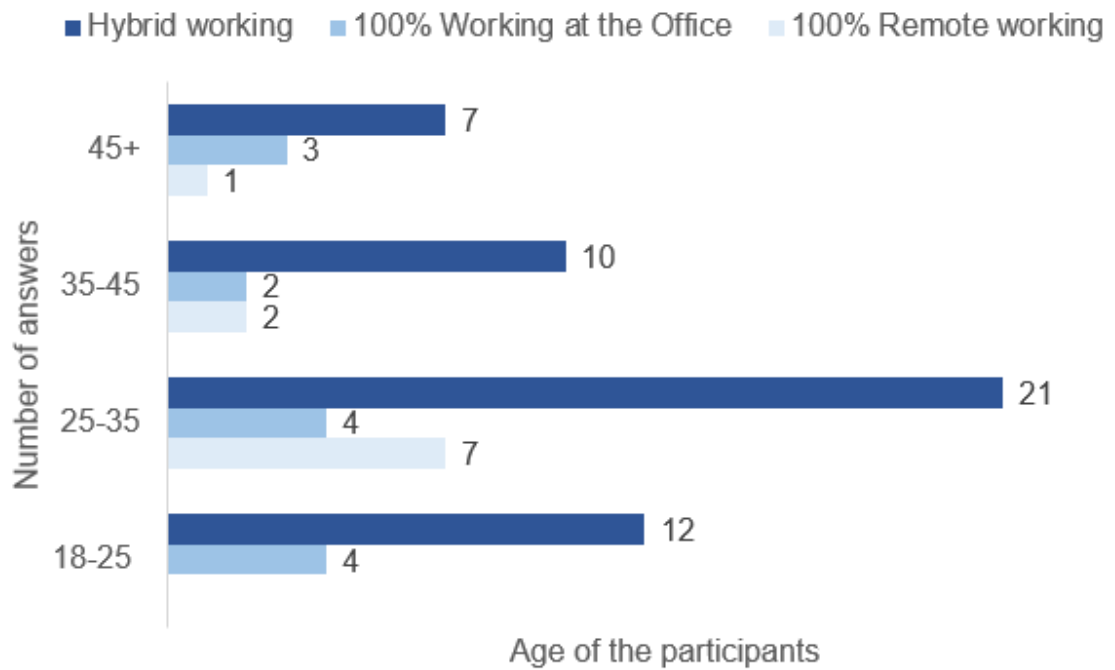
Figure 16. Employee's choice of method of work that would increase their productivity.

Overall, the results indicate a good experience with remote working by the participants of this research. Most participants demonstrated to be satisfied with remote working and their productivity levels, although younger employees were more satisfied than older employees. There was also a slight difference in the level of satisfaction within gender, once male participants demonstrated to be more satisfied than women with their productivity levels, and participants that identify themselves as others indicated to be very satisfied with it.

In general, participants demonstrated easy adaptation with remote working with fewer difficulties and challenges, mainly related to lack of communication, appropriate space to work, and social distancing and isolation. Alternatively, they also demonstrated some gains while working from home, such as increasing their productivity and facility to execute tasks. Besides, an interesting finding was that most participants would prefer a hybrid method of working instead of 100% remote working or 100% working at the office.

5. <u>Discussion</u>

5.1 Introduction

In the present chapter, the author connecting the findings of this research with the relevant literature in the area, offering critical and meaningful insights into the research question and objectives. This research aimed to investigate how flexible working practices can influence employees' engagement and satisfaction from different ages and gender in a household appliance business in Brazil. The insights are presented around the three main themes explored: flexible working hours, flexibility on uniform wear, and remote working.

5.2 Flexible working hours

Flexible working hours are the flexibility given to employees to choose when to conduct work in various possibilities. Within those options, are the flexibility to select the time to start working, reduced working hours, having "core" working hours and flexible time, and total flexibility to choose the time to carry out work-related tasks. The degree to which this flexibility is given depends on the organization and employee's needs (Piszczek and Pimputkar 2020; Thompson et al. 2015). Although some authors address flexible working arrangements as a benefit for both employees and employers, Roberts (2008) argues that flexibility offers more advantages to employers than employees. Moreover, flexible working hours may affect workers from different groups, such as gender and age.

From the gender perspective, the results of this research agree with Hill et al. (2008), which shows that flexible working hours had benefits for both female and male employees. In addition, the interviewed participants indicated that, independently of gender, most of them believe that flexible working hours positively influence their engagement and satisfaction at work.

Hill et al. (2008) outline that both female and male workers utilize flexible working arrangements more often; however, they differ within their preference and perception of flexibility throughout their stage in life. For example, female employees tend to appreciate more the benefits of flexibility, such as an increase in work-life balance and growth of productivity, while male employees are more

concerned with administrative costs and to be viewed as less committed and capable of the job (Hill et al. 2008; Giannikis and Mihail 2011).

The findings encountered in this research show that flexible working schedules for most participants would improve their levels of engagement and satisfaction regardless of age. However, this result does not agree with Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) and Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, and Besen (2009), who found different levels of engagement and satisfaction by age groups.

Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) address that flexible working arrangements needs can differ between different age groups, showing that older employees (aged 45-55 or above) were substantially more engaged with the flexible working arrangement than younger employees. Pitt-Catsouphes et al. (2009) found that most employees from all ages/generations define that flexible working arrangement positively impacts their work-life balance. However, employees aged 35-52 considered flexible working as a crucial factor in their commitment and achievements. This differs from what was found on this research, possibly due to company sector and cultural differences.

This research also investigated the time of the day employees might feel more productive. Independent of gender and age, most employees indicated to have no preference, but a significant amount of them showed to feel more effective in the morning. This finding suggests that the freedom to choose working hours could be an effective practice for these employees, reflecting in more satisfaction and engagement.

Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) found a strong connection between flexible working arrangements and employee engagement, showing that employees who had flexible working arrangements were significantly more engaged than employees who did not have flexible working arrangements. Zafari et al. (2019) also extent that flexible working arrangements are crucial to employee engagement and job performance improvement. As a result, employers who understand employees' needs and offer them the opportunity to choose the time to work that best fits their arrangements can positively influence their engagement and, consequently, improve the business performance and commitment (Anderson and Kelliher 2009; Zafari et al. 2019).

Furthermore, it was also examined the compatibility between working hours and the designated tasks of employees from the company studied, which indicate that most employees are satisfied with it. Although a significant amount was uncertain about it, male employees disagreed more with this compatibility than women. Bourne and Forman (2014) suggest that flexible working arrangements may implicate employee's intensification of work and hours, influencing negatively in other aspects such as work-family balance. Male employees tend to correlate flexibility with high commitment, which sometimes implies being involved in more work-related tasks (Feng and Savani 2020). Furthermore, Hofäcker and König (2013) outline that as women usually carry more household responsibilities, they are better at adapting to work-family demands than men are.

These insights show that most employees on the company assessed enjoys and are satisfied with the flexibility on working hours, which agrees with Galea, Houkes and De Rijk (2014), which found that flexible working hours increase employees' performance and commitment in the workplace. However, it is crucial to highlight that flexible working practices can differ within countries and in the size of organizations, which may also influence the results investigated in this research (Neto 2020).

5.3 Flexibility on Uniform wear

One of the ways organizations use to extend their image is through uniforms. Employees wearing uniforms may increase their teamwork experience; individuals self-steam and contribute to customers' opinion of the company's service (Daniel, Johnson and Miller 1996). However, Allner (2017) outlines that employers must be careful not to discriminate against employees when implementing a uniform or a specific dress code within the company.

For this reason, it was important to investigate employees' perspectives on the use of uniforms. The finding of this research showed that 87,6% of employees appreciate wearing a uniform at the company. These results present a higher preference for wearing a uniform in the workplace instead of casual clothing than Calnan (2017), who assessed that around 40% of employees have this preference. Bazin and Aubert-Tarby (2013) outline that a dress code of any form can have a

representative meaning for organizations' communications with customers and stakeholders and employees' identity.

Although, the findings identified that male participants in this research appreciate more wearing a uniform than females and others. This difference may be related to that women are usually more concerned with appearance than men are (Kang , Sklar and Johnson 2011). Brandewie et al. (2021) extend that dressing has a representative significance in an individual's identity and the use of uniforms may make people feel that they are less authentic. However, the use of uniforms might influence the identification and interaction with others.

This research also assessed the preference of employees to have some flexibility on uniform wear, showing that most participants enjoy the company's current practice of "Casual Day", which is the flexibility to not wear a uniform on Fridays. Even though dressing has a different representative meaning for each individual regardless of age and gender, the findings of this research indicated some differences within employee's age, showing that older employees appreciate this practice more than younger ones. This result may be related to that younger people are usually more into fashion and concerned about showing their personal expression; however, the reason for these preferences was not assessed in this research.

5.4 Remote working

Flexible working location is the flexibility given to employees to conduct work from home, offering a range of benefits such as time management and work-life balance (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman 2001; Wheatley 2017). Although, Kim et al. (2020) extend that remote working may positively or negatively affect employees' personal and professional lives. This depends on the resources, adequate space to work, distractions, and other challenges and difficulties that may appear while working from home.

An essential factor to be considered is that even though many employees have experienced working from home previously, a substantial amount had to shift to remote working from March 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic (White 2021).

Therefore, employee's perception of this shifting from the office to home working turns to be a relevant field of study.

The company studied was one of these cases that suddenly changed to home working because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, one of the critical factors investigated was employees' satisfaction with remote working. Most participants demonstrated to be very satisfied, which is an equivalent finding reported by Kim et al. (2020) in which the participants who worked from home were more satisfied with the job than the ones who did not.

The finding of this research has not presented significant differences in satisfaction of home working between employee's gender. Alternatively, Feng and Savani (2020) found that from the gender perspective, women and men had similar levels of job productivity and satisfaction before the pandemic; however, women presented to be less productive and satisfied than men after the beginning of the pandemic.

Ugargol and Patrick (2018) found that flexible working practices significantly influence employees' engagement and, as a result, their productivity. These findings are similar to the encountered in this study, which indicates that most participants considered satisfied with their productivity while working from home. In addition, the employees in the age group 25-35 were the most satisfied with their levels of productivity, having a slight difference from the other age groups.

Employees can face many challenges and difficulties while working from home (Morgan 2004; Klopotek 2017). This study shows that employees identified lack of communication, appropriate space to work, and social distancing/isolation as their principal challenges working remotely. These results partially agree with Klopotek (2017), who identified that employees consider the main challenges on remote working: work-life balance, social distancing and isolation, and difficulty executing tasks. It shows the need for practices to reduce the effects of social distancing and isolation within workers that were used to presential work. Sellers (2021) suggests that organizations have to provide ways to minimise the drawbacks of remote working, such as social isolation and lack of communication with colleagues by implementing more social events to improve the interaction between co-workers. Within those practices could be video hangouts, outdoor activities, mental health

resources, etc. Employers must keep employees' well-being within the organization, even more after the pandemic outbreak (Sellers 2021).

Even though employees may face challenges with remote working, they also might identify some gains and benefits with the flexibility to work from home. For example, the participants of this study indicated an increase in productivity and facility to execute tasks as main gains with remote working. However, Klopotek (2017) encountered different perspectives, as employees identified flexible working hours, not travelling to work, and influencing the workplace as the main benefits of working from home.

The Covid-19 pandemic changed work arrangements and boosted the transformation of the work (Spurk and Straub 2020). Paulise (2021) identified that 52% of US employees prefer a flexible hybrid working model, while companies would like to have their employees back to the office. More importantly, 33% of workers indicate that they might change jobs if they come back to working full-time onsite. These perceptions agree with the findings of this research, which found that most employees on the company studied believe that a flexible hybrid-working model would increase their levels of productivity and satisfaction.

Prodanova and Kocarev (2021) outline that employee's willingness to work remotely might differ depending on the sector, working area, and organizational culture. Those factors may also influence employee's job satisfaction and productivity. Giannikis and Mihail (2011) extend that individuals from different cultures may have a distinct view of flexible working arrangements. Besides that, the Covid-19 pandemic possibly also influenced the findings of this study.

5.5 Practical implications

This chapter presented some relevant insights about the impact of flexibility on employees' satisfaction and engagement in remote work, especially to the company studied. As seen in previous studies, employee engagement is a crucial element to organizations' performance. As a result, employers are more concerned with getting a workforce more motivated and committed to their jobs. Therefore, flexible working arrangements can be a primary factor in improving employees'

engagement and productivity, even though it might differ within employees' age and gender (Anderson and Kelliher 2009; DelCampo et al. 2011).

Through critical evaluation of previous literature, this chapter presented constructive insights involving employee engagement, flexibility effectiveness, the impact of flexible working practices on employee engagement and satisfaction, employees from different age groups and gender perspectives of flexible working arrangements, and the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on flexibility in organizations. The data analysis produced intriguing findings of employee's perception in a range of flexible working practices, such as flexible working hours, flexibility on uniform wear, and remote working.

6. <u>Conclusion of Thesis</u>

6.1 Introduction

This section aims to provide an overview of the study and reflect on the principal research objectives, giving an overall conclusion and its limitations. It will also be outlined recommendations and possible costs for further research and a fragment of the researcher's personal reflective learning along with the experiences and educational learning throughout the completion of the study. The most prominent objective was regarding the level of employees' engagement and satisfaction with flexible working arrangements, which significantly influenced the findings.

6.2 Research Question

The research title "Impact of flexible working arrangements on employee engagement and satisfaction: An exploratory study of employee age and gender" influenced the research path, giving substantial emphasis on employee engagement and the impact of flexible working practices on employees' engagement and satisfaction. In addition, it was also assessed the levels of employees' productivity with flexible working practices, employees from different ages/generations, and gender perspective of flexible working arrangements, and the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on flexibility in organizations.

The overall result of the research was that the participants were generally very satisfied with their levels of engagement and satisfaction with flexible working arrangements. The critical evaluation of previous literature confirmed the importance of flexibility in organizations for both employers and employees. Even though the research highlighted both advantages and disadvantages of flexibility in the workplace and its impact on employee engagement and satisfaction.

6.3 Limitations of the Research

A limitation is any aspect that influenced the outcomes of research, showing its weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher's control. The main limitation of this study was probably that the survey questionnaire was sent through internal

email in the company. Even though employees were aware of the confidentiality, this may have influenced participants' honest answers.

Another limitation is that the research had the data collected in a specific organization located in Brazil, which narrowed down the outcomes of findings related to employees from other companies and the cultural aspect of investigating in a particular country. Neto (2020) evaluates that flexible working practices differ within countries and in the size of organizations, which may also influence the results investigated in this research. Employee's willingness to work remotely might differ depending on the sector, working area, and organizational culture (Giannikis and Mihail 2011; Prodanova and Kocarev 2021). Therefore, this research could have been different if the company studied was in another sector or a different culture.

Regarding the research methodology, the research could have given a different perspective with a broader view of individual's perception of flexible working arrangements if a qualitative method was chosen. Moreover, the study presented some limitations about individuals' characteristics and subjectivity, working area, organization's sector and size, cultural environment and beliefs, and employees from other organizations' perspectives and preferences in the workplace.

Therefore, a recommendation to further researchers is to access qualitative information on the participants and include employees from different organizations. Although the author acknowledges the receptivity and participation of the company during the process, future studies may gain knowledge if the organization is not connected to the research in any way.

6.4 Recommendations and Costs

The most important actionable recommendation is that employers, before implementing any flexible working practice, first align these possible practices with the company's strategic goals. Secondly, companies should investigate which practices employees would appreciate and suppose that would improve their performance and, lastly, create flexible working policies. However, if an organization already has flexible working practices, the recommendation is to

investigate the effectiveness of these practices and consider the employee's opinions about them. If necessary, companies should be open to changes and adaptions to boost employee's engagement and satisfaction through flexibility. Finally, an important aspect is that organizations must periodically review their policies to improve and innovate continuously.

Within costs, it may involve providing employees' tools to work from home and support their wellbeing. However, by doing this, employers can make employees feel recognized and consequently increase their engagement. Another recommendation is that organizations have a space for employee's voices within the organization. They are the most crucial element for the organization's success, and their opinions must be considered. Besides, finding ways to reward and recognize employees can improve their performance and commitment to the job.

6.5 Timelines for implementation and recommendations

The timeframe stipulated for implementing flexible working practices or for changes of current practices will depend on the organization's resources and budget to support employees who will conduct work from home. However, if the organization investigates the effectiveness of flexible working arrangements with employees and creates policies, it should take a few months to implement them. Nevertheless, it is essential to mention that companies should often review their policies and practices to make them effective and have employees engaged and committed to their jobs and organization.

6.6 Personal Learning and Reflection

From completing this study and reflecting on its research findings, I have acquired substantial knowledge of flexible working practices and how they impact not only employee engagement and satisfaction but also the business performance itself. Besides, I have gained a new understanding of employees from different ages/generations and gender perceptions and preferences in the workplace.

The study from previous literature also gave me new insights into the future of work and its implications, confirming the importance of employers and employees being

aligned to achieve the organization's goals. Furthermore, I have acquired extensive knowledge on how to conduct quantitative research and comprehend the importance of every step taken throughout the research methodology, including data collection and critical evaluation of the findings and results of the study. It was crucial to find out the limitations of this study to include recommendations for further research and to consider that even with the challenges I had throughout the research, it was possible to complete it. Therefore, this research project was fundamental to my personal and professional development, giving me confidence and preparation to continue my career in Human Resources Management.

6.7 Final Conclusion

Through the research, there was a critical evaluation of previous theories and literature and quantitative exploration of how flexible working practices influence employee's engagement and satisfaction in the workplace. The quantitative method was selected to get quantifying data in which the research would become more objective and straightforward into the topic.

Flexible working arrangements are a practice that is becoming fundamental to improving organizations and workers' performance, even more after the Covid-19 pandemic that has forced organizations to adapt and implement those practices within the companies. Furthermore, employee engagement and satisfaction within their jobs and organizations are becoming more popular over the past years as employers realised that employees are the primary tool for business success.

Therefore, getting employees' views on the challenges and gains with these sudden adaptations was an intriguing subject to be investigated and their perception of their levels of engagement and productivity with flexible working practices such as flexible working hours and remote working. Besides, it is very insightful to evaluate the differences within employee's age groups and gender, showing that individuals are unique and have different needs when related to work experiences.

The current research project had identified significant limitations that must be considered for further research into the topic. Although the data collected was in a specific sector and organization, the study has provided an insightful understanding

of how flexible working arrangements influence employee engagement and satisfaction. Besides, it confirmed the importance of employers to hear employees' needs and make their experience within their job and organization meaningful. Therefore, this study contributes to the research on flexible working arrangements, offering insights and recommendations to organizations and human resources managers.

Reference List

Allner, L. (2017) Dress codes: what businesses need to know. People Management. CIPD Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/legal/dress-codes

Anderson, D. and Kelliher, C. (2009) 'Flexible working and engagement: the importance of choice,' Strategic HR Review, 8(2), pp. 13–18. doi: 10.1108/14754390910937530.

Armstrong M., and Taylor S., (2017) 'Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management practice, 14th Edition, Kogan Page, London.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L., Sorensen, C., and Walker, D. (2014) Introduction to Research in Education. 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Baska M. (2020) Half of working mums say childcare during Covid-19 has damaged their career, poll finds. CIPD. United Kingdom. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/half-of-working-mums-say-childcare-during-covid-19-has-damaged-their-careerGreenhalgh D. (2019) The future of flexible working. CIPD. United Kingdom. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/legal/the-future-of-flexible-working

Bazin, Y. and Aubert-Tarby, C. (2013) 'Dressing professional, an aesthetic experience of professions,' Society & Business Review, 8(3), pp. 251–268. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=edb&AN=90609374&site=eds-live&scope=site

Bloomfield L.and Proffitt S. (2017) Flexible working: an employer's perspective. CIPD. People Management. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/legal/flexible-working-employer-perspective#gref

Blumberg, B., Cooper, D. R., and Schindler, P. S. (2014). Business research methods. Berkshire; London: McGraw-Hill Education. 4th edition.

Boshkoska, M. and Jankulovski, N. (2020) 'Coronavirus Impact on Global Economy,' Annals of 'Constantin Brancusi' University of Targu-Jiu. Economy Series, (4), pp. 18–24. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=146695781&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 25 January 2021).

Bourne, K. A., and Forman, P. J. (2014) 'Living in a Culture of Overwork: An Ethnographic Study of Flexibility,' Journal of Management Inquiry, 23(1), pp. 68–79. doi: 10.1177/1056492613481245.

BPP Learning Media (Firm) (2013) Research Project : Course Book. London: BPP Learning Media (Business Essentials).

Brandewie, B., Kim, I. and Kim, M.-O. (2021), "Assessing university police officers' uniforms and wearing experiences," Research Journal of Textile and Apparel. doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/RJTA-12-2020-0135

Calnan, M. (2017) One third of workers would prefer a uniform to a casual dress code. People Management. CIPD. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/workers-prefer-uniform-to-casual-dress

Carlier, S. I., Llorente, C. L. and Grau, M. G. (2012) 'Comparing Work-Life Balance in Spanish and Latin-American Countries,' European Journal of Training and Development, 36(2–3), pp. 286–307. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=eric&AN=EJ978765&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 26 July 2021).

Carrie, W. (2007) 'Research Methods', Grand Canyon University. Journal of Business & Economic Research. v. 5, nº 3. Available at: https://clutejournals.com/index.php/JBER/article/view/2532/2578

Ciarniene, R. and Vienazindiene, M. (2018) 'Flexible Work Arrangements from Generation and Gender Perspectives: Evidence from Lithuania', Engineering Economics, 29(1), pp. 84–92. doi: 10.5755/j01.ee.29.1.19247.

CIPD (2021a) 'Employee engagement and motivation' Available at: https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/engagement/factsheet

CIPD (2021b) 'Flexible Working Practices.' Available at: https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/factsheet

Coelho, F. A., Faiad, C., Rego, M. C. B., and Ramos, W. M. (2020). 'What Brazilian workers think about flexible work and telework?', International Journal of Business Excellence, 20(1), p. 16. doi: 10.1504/IJBEX.2020.104842.

Daniel, K., Johnson, L. W. and Miller, K. E. (1996) 'Dimensions of uniform perceptions among service providers,' Journal of Services Marketing, 10(2), p. 42. doi: 10.1108/08876049610114258.

Douglas S. and Roberts R. (2020) 'Employee age and the impact on work engagement,' Strategic HR Review, 19(5), pp. 209–213. doi: 10.1108/SHR-05-2020-0049.

Economy P. (2019) The (millennial) workplace of the future is almost here—these 3 things are about to change big time. Available at: https:// www.inc.com/peter-economy/the-millennial-workplace-of-future-is-almost-here-these-3-things-are-about-to-change-big-time.html

Eversole, B. A. W., Venneberg, D. L. and Crowder, C. L. (2012) 'Creating a Flexible Organizational Culture to Attract and Retain Talented Workers Across Generations', Advances in Developing Human Resources, 14(4), pp. 607–625. doi: 10.1177/1523422312455612.

Eyre N. (2020) Remote and flexible working will be the new normal. CIPD. People Management. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/voices/comment/remote-and-flexible-working-will-be-the-new-normal

Forbes (2020) How To Implement An Office Dress Code Without Harming Employees' Self-Expression. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2020/02/05/how-to-implement-an-office-dress-code-without-harming-employees-self-expression/?sh=5d68ac451811

Sellers, T. (2021) Prioritizing Employee Well-Being As We Emerge From The Pandemic. Forbs. Available at:

https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2021/07/22/prioritizing-employee-well-being-as-we-emerge-from-the-pandemic/?sh=128c56e71e50

Paulise, L. (2021) Some 52% Of Employees Prefer Hybrid Work Models: How To Overcome The Challenge. Forbs. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/lucianapaulise/2021/06/29/some-52-of-employees-prefer-hybrid-work-models-how-to-overcome-the-challenge/?sh=89f732648604

Galea, C., Houkes, I., and De Rijk, A. (2014) 'An insider's point of view: how a system of flexible working hours helps employees to strike a proper balance between work and personal life,' International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25(8), pp. 1090–1111. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2013.816862.

Gallup institute (2020) Remote Workers acing High Burnout: How to Turn It Around. Available at: https://www.gallup.com/workplace/323228/remote-workers-facing-high-burnout-turn-around.aspx

Giannikis, S. K. and Mihail, D. M. (2011) 'Flexible work arrangements in Greece: a study of employee perceptions,' International Journal of Human Resource Management, 22(2), pp. 417–432. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2011.540163.

Gordon, C. E. (2014) 'Flexible Workplace Practices: Employees' Experiences in Small IT Firms', Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations, 69(4), pp. 766–784. doi: 10.7202/1028111ar.

Hall, D. T., and Parker, V. A. (1993) 'The Role of Workplace Flexibility in Managing Diversity,' Organizational Dynamics, 22(1), pp. 4–18. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=9403152111&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Hansen, J.-I. C., and Leuty, M. E. (2012) 'Work Values across Generations', Journal of Career Assessment, 20(1), pp. 34–52. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=eric&AN=EJ954086&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 5 July 2021).

Hill, E. J., Hawkins, A. J., Ferris, M., and Weitzman, M. (2001). Finding an extra day a week: The positive influence of perceived job flexibility on work and family life balance. Human Relations, 50, 49-58.

Hill, J. E, Jacob, J, Shannon, L, Brennan, R, Blanchard, V. and Martinengo, G. (2008) 'Exploring the relationship of workplace flexibility, gender, and life stage to family-to-work conflict, and stress and burnout,' Community, Work & Family, 11(2), pp. 165–181. doi: 10.1080/13668800802027564.

John Adams, Hafiz T. A. Khan and Robert Raeside (2014) Research Methods for Business and Social Science Students. New Delhi: Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=784882&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 20 July 2021).

Johnson, S. S. (2020) 'The Future of Work,' American Journal of Health Promotion, 34(7), pp. 809–812. doi: 10.1177/0890117120943748a.

Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work. Academy of Management Journal, 33(4), 692–724. https://doi.org/10.2307/256287

Kajamaa, A., Mattick, K. and Croix, A. (2020). How to.... do mixed methods research. The Clinical Teacher. 17. 10.1111/tct.13145.

Kang, M., Sklar, M. and Johnson, K. K. P. (2011) 'Men at work: using dress to communicate identities,' Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management, 15(4), pp. 412–427. doi: 10.1108/13612021111169924.

Kapoor C. and Solomon N. (2011) 'Understanding and managing generational differences in the workplace,' Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, 3(4), pp. 308–318. doi: 10.1108/17554211111162435.

Kelliher, C. and Anderson, D. (2010) 'Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work', Human Relations, 63(1), pp. 83–106. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=47693588&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 7 July 2021).

Kim, H. and Gong, Y. (2017) 'Effects of work–family and family–work conflicts on flexible work arrangements demand: a gender role perspective,' International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28(20), pp. 2936–2956. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2016.1164217

Kim, J., Henly, J. R., Golden, L. M., and Lambert, S. J. (2020) 'Workplace Flexibility and Worker Well-Being by Gender,' Journal of Marriage & Family, 82(3), pp. 892–910. doi: 10.1111/jomf.12633.

Klopotek, M. (2017) 'The Advantages and Disadvantages of Remote Working from the Perspective of Young Employees,' Organization & Management Quarterly, 40(4), pp. 39–49. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=133706845&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 15 August 2021).

Kooij D., De Lange A., Jansen P., Kanfer R., and Dikkers J. (2011) 'Age and work-related motives: Results of a meta-analysis,' Journal of Organizational Behavior, 32(2), pp. 197–225. doi: 10.1002/job.665.

Kringelum B. L. and Brix J. (2020) 'Critical realism and organizational learning,' The Learning Organization, 28(1), pp. 32–45. doi: 10.1108/TLO-03-2020-0035.

Kruse, K. (2012) What Is Employee Engagement. Forbs. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2012/06/22/employee-engagement-what-and-why/?sh=7d8ded487f37

Lemos, A., Barbosa A, and, Monzato, P. (2020) Women in home office during the covid-a9 pandemic and the work family conflict configurations. University of Rio de Janeiro. Magazine of Business Administration [online]. v. 60, n. 6, pp. 388-399. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0034-759020200603>. Epub 11 Jan 2021. ISSN 2178-938X. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0034-759020200603.

Loretto, W., and Vickerstaff, S. (2015) 'Gender, age and flexible working in later life,' Work, Employment & Society, 29(2), pp. 233–249. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=edb&AN=102106141&site=eds-live&scope=site

Meroño-Cerdán, A. L. (2017) 'Perceived benefits of and barriers to the adoption of teleworking: peculiarities of Spanish family firms,' Behaviour & Information Technology, 36(1), pp. 63–74. doi: 10.1080/0144929X.2016.1192684.

Mildeová, S. (2013) 'Research Problem Description and Definition: From Mental Map to Connection Circle,' Journal of Efficiency & Responsibility in Education & Science, 6(4), pp. 328–335. doi: 10.7160/eriesj.2013.060409.

Misty M. Bennett, Terry A. Beehr and Lana V. Ivanitskaya (2017) 'Work-family conflict: differences across generations and life cycles,' Journal of Managerial Psychology, 32(4), pp. 314–332. doi: 10.1108/JMP-06-2016-0192.

Morgan, R.E. (2004), "Teleworking: an assessment of the benefits and challenges," European Business Review, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 344-357, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/09555340410699613

Neto, A.C. (2020), "Arranjos Flexíveis da jornada de trabalho no Brazil", Revista Pensamento Contemporâneo em Administração, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 1-17. Available at: https://www.proquest.com/docview/2487170702?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true

Owen, J. (2020) Home working boosts work-life balance, collaboration, and focus, report finds. CIPD. People Management. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/home-working-boosts-work-life-balance-collaboration-focus-report-finds

Piszczek, M. M., and Pimputkar, A. S. (2020) 'Flexible schedules across working lives: Age-specific effects on well-being and work,' Journal of Applied Psychology. doi: 10.1037/apl0000844.supp (Supplemental).

Pitt-Catsouphes, M. and Matz-Costa, C. (2008) 'The multi-generational workforce: Workplace flexibility and engagement,' Community, Work & Family, 11(2), pp. 215–229. doi: 10.1080/13668800802021906.

Pitt-Catsouphes, M., Matz-Costa, Ch., & Besen, E. (2009). Workplace Flexibility: Findings from the Age & Generations. Study. The Sloan Centre on Aging & Work. Issue brief, 19, 1–21.

Prodanova, J. and Kocarev, L. (2021), "Employees' dedication to working from home in times of COVID-19 crisis", Management Decision, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-09-2020-1256

Quinlan, C. (2019) Business research methods. 2nd. Cengage. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=cat05743a&AN=nci.32914&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 24 July 2021).

Robert G. DelCampo, Lauren A. Haggerty and Lauren Ashley Knippel (2011) Managing the Multi-Generational Workforce : From the GI Generation to the Millennials. Farnham, Surrey: Routledge. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=nlebk&AN=389996&site=eds-live&scope=site

Roberts, E. (2008) 'Time and Work–Life Balance: The Roles of "Temporal Customization" and "Life Temporality"', Gender, Work & Organization, 15(5), pp. 430–453. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0432.2008.00412.x.

Ryan, G. (2018) 'Introduction to positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory,' Nurse researcher, 25(4), pp. 14–20. doi: 10.7748/nr.2018.e1466.

Sandler R. (2020) Half of Facebook's employees may permanently work from home by 2030, Zuckerberg says. Forbes. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/rachelsandler/2020/05/21/half-of-facebooks-employeesmay-permanently-work-from-home-by-2030-zuckerberg-says/#3 91d4b9d4c4a

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A. (2019) Research methods for business students. [electronic book]. Eighth edition. Pearson. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=cat05743a&AN=nci.33365&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 30 July 2021).

Silva, P.R. and Sachuk, M.H. (2011) 'Transformação do trabalho: implicações para o futuro das pessoas e das organizações', Revista de Administração em Diálogo, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp.25–46.

Spurk, D. and Straub, C. (2020) 'Flexible employment relationships and careers in times of the COVID-19 pandemic', Journal of Vocational Behavior. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103435.

Taylor S. (2019) 'Resourcing and Talent Management 7th Edition, CIPD, Kogan Page, UK.

Thompson, R. J., Payne, S. C. and Taylor, A. B. (2015) 'Applicant attraction to flexible work arrangements: Separating the influence of flextime and flexplace,' Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology, 88(4), pp. 726–749. doi: 10.1111/joop.12095.

Ugargol, J. D. and Patrick, H. A. (2018) 'The Relationship of Workplace Flexibility to Employee Engagement among Information Technology Employees in India,' South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management, 5(1), pp. 40–55. Available at:

https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=edo&AN=ejs45752737&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 15 August 2021).

Weideman, M. and Hofmeyr, K. B. (2020) 'The influence of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement: An exploratory study,' South African Journal of Human Resource Management, 18(1), pp. 1–18. doi: 10.4102/sajhrm.v18i0.1209.

Wheatley D.(2017) 'Employee satisfaction and use of flexible working arrangements,' Work, Employment & Society, 31(4), pp. 567–585. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.26500124&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 20 January 2021).

White, P. (2021), "Exploring remote and onsite employees' preferred appreciation languages prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19", Strategic HR Review. doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/SHR-04-2021-0017

Woiceshyn J. and Daellenbach U. (2018) 'Evaluating inductive vs. deductive research in management studies : Implications for authors, editors, and reviewers,' Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal, 13(2), pp. 183–195. doi: 10.1108/QROM-06-2017-1538.

Zafari, S., Hartner-Tiefenthaler, M. and Koeszegi, S. T. (2019) 'Flexible Work and Work-related Outcomes: The Role of Perceived Organizational Alignment,' Management Revue, 30(1), pp. 63–92. doi: 10.5771/0935-9915-2019-1-63.

Hofäcker, D. and König, S. (2013), "Flexibility and work-life conflict in times of crisis: a gender perspective," International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 33 No. 9/10, pp. 613-635. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-04-2013-0042

Idowu, S. A. (2020) 'Role of Flexible Working Hours' Arrangement on Employee Job Performance and Retention in Manufacturing Industries in Agbara, Nigeria', Economic Insights - Trends & Challenges, (3), pp. 23–37. Available at:

https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=147376240&site=eds-live&scope=site.

de Sivatte, I., Gordon, J.R., Rojo, P. and Olmos, R. (2015), "The impact of work-life culture on organizational productivity," Personnel Review, Vol. 44 No. 6, pp. 883-905. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-12-2013-0226

Mahmoud, A.B., Fuxman, L., Mohr, I., Reisel, W.D. and Grigoriou, N. (2021), "We aren't your reincarnation!" workplace motivation across X, Y and Z generations," International Journal of Manpower, Vol. 42 No. 1, pp. 193-209. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-09-2019-0448

Feng, Z. and Savani, K. (2020), "Covid-19 created a gender gap in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction: implications for dual-career parents working from home", Gender in Management, Vol. 35 No. 7/8, pp. 719-736. https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-07-2020-0202

R Core Team (2020). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL https://www.R-project.org/.

Kilber, J., Barclay, A. and Ohmer, D. (2014). 'Seven tips for managing Generation Y,' Journal of Management Policy and Practice, 15(4), pp. 80-91.

Maxwell, G.A., Ogden, S.M. and Broadbridge, A. (2010). 'Generation Y's career expectations and aspirations: Engagement in the hospitality industry,' Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 17(1), pp. 53-61.

Shagvaliyeva S., Yazdanifard R. (2014) Impact of Flexible Working Hours on Work-Life Balance. American Journal of Industrial and Business Management, 2014, 4, 20-23 Published Online January 2014 (http://www.scirp.org/journal/ajibm) doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2014.4100

Attwood, S. (2018) How to successfully offer flexible working. CIPD. People Management. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/voices/comment/how-to-successfully-offer-flexible-working#gref

Clake, R. (2007) How to... make work flexible. CIPD. People Management. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/advice/making-work-flexible

Andrade, M.S., and Westover, J.H. (2018), "Generational differences in work quality characteristics and job satisfaction," Evidence-based HRM, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 287-304. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBHRM-03-2018-0020

Greenhalgh, D. (2019) The future of flexible working. CIPD. People Management. Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/legal/the-future-of-flexible-working

Appendix 1 - Survey Questions

1. What is your gender?
( ) Female
( ) Male
( ) Others

2. What is your age?
( ) 18-25
( ) 25-35
( ) 35-45
( ) 45+

3. Is your position at the company Strategic, Tactical or Operational?
( ) Strategic
( ) Tactical
( ) Operational

4. If the company decides to implement flexible hours, how much would this change contribute to your engagement and satisfaction?
( ) A Lot
( ) More or Less
( ) It would not change

5. Do you feel more productive at any specific time of the day?
( ) I have no preference
( ) Yes - Morning
( ) Yes - Afternoon
( ) Yes - Night

6. The amount of work I have and my results are compatible with my current range of working hours. How much do you agree with that sentence?
( ) I totally disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) I do not agree, nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) I totally agree

7. Do you like wearing the uniform in the workplace?
( ) Yes
( ) No

8. How to you evaluate the freedom of not to wear the uniform on Fridays (Casual Day)?
( ) I like it

( ) I dislike

( ) I neither like, nor dislike

9. What is your level of satisfaction with working from home conditions?

( ) Very satisfied

( ) More or less satisfied

( ) Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied

( ) More or less dissatisfied

( ) Very dissatisfied

10. How do you evaluate your productivity working from home?

( ) Very satisfied

( ) More or less satisfied

( ) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

( ) More or less dissatisfied

( ) Very dissatisfied

11. Select the challenges you have faced in working from home and that have hindered you from achieving some results. You can select more than one option

( ) I had no challenges, I delivered my results well

( ) Social distancing/isolation

( ) Increase of distractions

( ) Appropriate space to work

( ) Lack of communication with colleagues

( ) Keep a routine of work

( ) Difficulties accessing tools and information

( ) Technology issues

12. Among the options below, which were the ones that brought you most difficulties in this process? You can select more than one option

( ) Technology

( ) Infrastructure

( ) Resistance

( ) Lack of communication with managers and staff

( ) I have not encountered difficulties while working from home

13. For you, what were the main gains from working from activities?

( ) Satisfaction and engagement

( ) Easier to performing activities

( ) Increase of productivity

( ) I did not experienced any gain with remote working activities

14. If you could choose, which of those working options do you think would increase your productivity?

( ) 100% Working from home

( ) Hybrid (Working from home and at the Office)

( ) 100% Working at the Office