

**The Influence of Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Engagement:
An Explorative Study**

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ABSTRACT

Flexible working arrangements (FWAs) have become increasingly popular management practices within the business landscape. Significant research has been conducted in order to understand the influence of FWAs on various employee engagement constructs, however, these findings still vary considerably and are highly inconsistent. The research was conducted to explore the influence that flexible work arrangements have on employee engagement, to gain a richer understanding than what is offered in pre-existing literature, and to provide practical recommendations to practitioners through a proposed framework.

The study used qualitative methods to explore the influence flexible work arrangements have on employee engagement. Qualitative, exploratory data also allowed the researcher to gain new insights. A total of 23 semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted. Respondents consisted of eight subject matter experts and 15 employees within six different organisations, across six different industries. Interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

The study found a positive relationship between FWAs and employee engagement. The study also found that FWAs were positively associated to various employee engagement constructs found in literature, with the most prominent finding showing the positive influence FWAs have on employee well-being. The study further developed a proposed framework for the successful implementation of FWAs to improve employee engagement. The study offers theoretical, methodological and practical implications for employee engagement and human resource development scholars and practitioners motivated to find ways to better manage FWAs and improve employee engagement.

The study was limited to large corporations, within six industries operating in the South African context.

KEYWORDS

Flexible Work Arrangements, Employee Engagement, Employee Well-being, Self-Management, Organisational Culture

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Marcel Weideman

7 November 2018

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CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore the influence of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement through a qualitative analysis. This was an explorative study within the field of Personnel Psychology and Human Resource Management.

1.2 Background to the Research Problem

Employee engagement as a broad construct is defined as an employee's cognitive, behavioural and affective energy in their work performance (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). Employee engagement has gained global interest from researchers and practitioners, as organisations recognise the positive impact and competitive advantage that engaged employees bring to an organisation's performance (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014).

Employee engagement results in the enhancement of various performance outcomes for organisations. These include financial considerations, productivity, customer satisfaction, a decrease in employee absenteeism and an increase in overall product/service quality (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

A study done by Towers Watson (2017) that was completed over twelve months, across fifty organisations globally, reported a 19.2% increase in operational income among organisations who showed high employee engagement. The study also noted a 3.74% higher operating margin in organisations with a high employee engagement score.

A similar Meta-analysis study titled, "The Relationship Between Engagement at Work and Organizational Outcomes" (Gallup, 2016), reported positive correlations between employee engagement and profitability, customer satisfaction, safety, decreased absenteeism and a decrease in defective products (improved quality). Employee engagement is, therefore, a concept which organisations cannot afford to ignore.

As work becomes more dynamic and decentralised, organisations are starting to incorporate various self-management policies to adapt to ongoing competition and uncertainty (Zeijen, Peeters & Hakanen, 2018).

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) are practices implemented by organisations to allow workers flexibility in how they perform their tasks. The most common forms of flexible work arrangements include flexible working hours and working from home (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013). Flexible work arrangements have gained significant attention by both researchers and practitioners, with heavily debated opinions on the perceived benefits of implementing the various human resource practices within organisations (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). The attention around flexible work arrangements has been fuelled by research which suggests positive correlations with employee engagement and job performance (Bal & De Lange, 2014). A recent study found a positive correlation between employee engagement, self-goal setting and self-observation (Zeijen et al., 2018) which are constructs linked to flexible work arrangements.

The organisational costs associated with ignoring employees' personal commitments include high absenteeism and employee turnover (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart & Cory, 2017). Ignoring employees' work-life conflict challenges and their well-being is, therefore, detrimental to an organisation's performance. Employee well-being is closely associated with work-life balance policies which are implemented to assist with the avoidance of employee burnout (Zheng, Kashi, Fan, Molineux & Ee, 2015). Flexible work arrangements have been highlighted as policies that are implemented to assist with work-life balance, employee well-being and productivity (Caesens, Marique, Hanin & Stinghamber, 2016).

Understanding the importance for organisations to invest in human resource practices, which drive employee engagement, is imperative. For an organisation to improve their performance, further research into the influence that flexible work arrangements have on employee engagement is, therefore, necessary (Saks, 2006 & Zhong, Wayne & Liden, 2015).

Empirical research has stated varying and inconsistent results when analysing the relationship between flexible work arrangements and constructs of employee engagement (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013) and, although the benefits of

engaged employees are widely documented, the drivers of employee engagement are still considered indefinable and vague (Chen & Fulmer, 2017).

1.3 The Research Problem

Organisations are finding it difficult to compete in a globally competitive environment which is becoming increasingly more competitive with time (Chabowski & Mena, 2017). For businesses to remain competitive recognising employees as a key resource has become an important determinant in, not only an organisation's performance, but as a long-term survival contributor (Chabowski & Mena, 2017). Based on the notion that employees are recognised as a key resource, it is essential for organisation to focus on improving employee engagement (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014).

Literature has suggested a relationship between flexible work arrangements and various constructs of employee engagement (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). However, the amount of variables that drive employee engagement is theoretically infinite. For organisations to improve their employee engagement and promote organisational performance and competitiveness, a better understanding of the contributing factors that influence employee engagement is needed (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014).

By understanding the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement, businesses will be better informed when making decisions related to their human resource practices, regarding the flexibility granted to employees. The research will also be contributing to, what seems to be, relatively inconclusive literature.

1.4 The Aim and Scope of the Research

The aim of the research was to explore the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement. In doing so, the researcher will aim to do the following:

- Establish why organisations in South Africa implement flexible work arrangements.
- Investigate the employee engagement benefits that organisations recognise from implementing flexible work arrangements.
- Understand the experiences of employees who make use of flexible work arrangements, investigated through an employee engagement lens.

- Determine the drawbacks of FWAs and understand how FWAs can be improved to promote employee engagement.

Given the scope of human resource management practices and various other work-life balance initiatives aimed at improving employee engagement, the researcher has chosen to narrow the study down to focus on the influence of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement. The scope of the research was restricted to South African organisations offering regular flexibility, namely; (i) flextime, flexibility in terms of time, and (ii) flexplace, flexibility in terms of location, (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013).

The various constructs of employee engagement are wide in scope, for the purpose of this research, the researcher will use the most common definitions and constructs of employee engagement found in the work of Khan (1990) and then later built on by various researchers published in peer reviewed journals (Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017).

1.5 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to understand whether flexible work arrangements can impact employee engagement within an organisation. The benefits associated with high employee engagement is evident in literature (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014; Gallup, 2016). Flexible work arrangements have been found to provide employees with mechanisms to better balance work-life conflict and their well-being (Caesens et al., 2016), which are both favourable conditions for employee engagement.

The purpose of the research will address the gap between the overarching constructs and evaluate the direct relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement.

The findings from the research may assist business manager's uncertainty regarding flexible work arrangements by demonstrating the potential benefits of flexible work arrangements as a driver of employee engagement, and therefore business performance. Based on the various components which literature has highlighted in understanding what contributes to employee engagement, it is important to research possible relationships that exist to help organisations become more competitive when implementing these practices.

The next section of the research will look at an in-depth literature review, to better understand the various constructs of flexible work arrangements and employee engagement. The literature review will be proceeded with research questions, which the researcher looks to answer, as well as the methodology used to carry out the research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Employee engagement has gained increased attention, as organisations recognise employees as a key resource to their financial and competitive performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The benefits associated with employee engagement seem evident in literature and have become an important topic in the business world (Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005). Although the benefits of engaged employees are widely recognised, the drivers of employee engagement are still considered elusive and are continuously expanding (Chen & Fulmer, 2017).

As talent acquisition and retention become increasingly more difficult, organisations have recognised the importance of supportive human resource practices to improve employee well-being (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Research has suggested that employee well-being is closely associated with work-life balance policies which are policies implemented to assist with work-life balance and the avoidance of employee burnout (Zheng et al., 2015).

Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) have gained considerable interest from both researchers and practitioners, however, the benefits of implementing flexible work arrangements in organisations are still heavily debated (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013). FWAs have been described as self-management practices which organisations implement to allow employees control of how they manage and allocate their resources in terms of time, attention and energy (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013). The two most common examples of FWAs include flextime, which allows employees to determine their work start and finish times (Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark & Baltes, 2011) and flexplace, which allows employees to work remotely (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013).

The attraction of flexible work arrangements has been promoted by popular press and policy advocates, motivated by the notion that flexible work arrangements can alleviate work-family conflict (Wood & de Menezes, 2010).

Previous research has suggested that flexible work arrangements can impact various constructs which have been associated with employee engagement, such as organisational commitment (Bal & De Lange, 2014). The organisational costs of ignoring

personal commitments and responsibilities of employees included high absenteeism and turnover. This is a measure used to determine the level of employee engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Gajendran & Harrison (2007) suggest that providing employees with flexible work arrangements will result in better talent retention as well as happier and more productive employees.

To better understand the constructs and benefits associated with employee engagement, the notion of flexible work arrangements and their relationships, an extensive literature review has been conducted.

2.2 Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) defines employee engagement as a work situation whereby employees are engaged cognitively, physically and emotionally in their job roles. Kahn (1990) further describes employee engagement as a state whereby employees find their work to be meaningful, to the extent where they choose to invest in their work with the objective of achieving personal and career growth. Engaged employees execute their work with passion and energy (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014).

Building on Khan's personal engagement framework, researchers (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011) have attempted to operationalise employee engagement as a three-dimensional construct. The three-dimensional constructs, which are said to be drivers of an individual's performance and motivation, are noted as a simultaneous investment into an individual's cognitive, behavioural and affective energy in their work performance. Employee engagement is, therefore, defined as having an active, work related, positive psychological state (Parker & Griffin, 2011). Harter, Schmidt & Hayes (2002) emphasise that engaged employees have the desire to do the work and are driven towards achieving organisational goals and success, rather than performing purely what is required of them. Employee engagement relates to an employee's positive state of mind and has been characterised as having multidimensional constructs of vigour, absorption and dedication (González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006).

There are several other engagement-like constructs which emerge from literature when defining employee engagement. It is important to differentiate these constructs as employee engagement is not an umbrella term and it has its own framework and definitional content. The constructs include job engagement, organisational engagement and social engagement (Shuck, Nimon, & Zigarmi, 2016).

Where employee engagement is a construct focusing on the overall experience of an employee, job engagement is focused with the degree to which an employee is engaged with their job specifically (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010). Organisational engagement describes how attractive and exciting an organisation is perceived to be by an employee, while employee engagement is not limited to feelings purely related to how captivating the experience of the organisation is to an employee (Saks, 2006). Social engagement refers to an employee's connectedness to their work environment and the extent to which they share common values with their colleagues (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014).

Employee engagement is broad in definition and theory (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). There are three different constructs of employee engagements which seem consistent in literature namely; cognitive engagement (an employee's focus on their work), emotional engagement (an employee's sense of purpose and belonging) and behavioural engagement (the amount of effort an employee is willing to put into their work). Towers Watson, a well-known research organisation, categorise employee engagement into similar constructs; (i) Think (belief in the organisations goals and direction), (ii) Feel (sense of purpose, happiness, pride and belonging) and (iii) Effort (how much work an employee is willing to do) (Towers Watson, 2017).

According to Shuck, Adelson & Reio (2017), the two most recognised engagement scales found in literature are; the Utrecht work engagement nine scale measurement and the intellectual, social, and affective engagement scale. The common conceptualisation of employee engagement, of which the above scales aim at quantifying, strives to understand how much investment an employee makes in their tasks performed and is based on their feelings, cognitions and behaviours (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013 & Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011)

To understand the influence of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement, it was imperative to conduct an in-depth literature review and summarise the promoters of employee engagement which are most supported in the literature. To effectively interpret qualitative responses through an employee engagement lens, it was important to identify the most common antecedents of employee engagement. The antecedents that were most pronounced in literature, in no particular order, were as follows: (i) Discretionary effort, (ii) Job satisfaction, (iii) Employee well-being, (iv) Trust in the organisation, (v) Organisational commitment, (vi) Intention to turnover and (vii) Organisational support (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018; Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015; Brunetto, Teo,

Shacklock & Wharton, 2012; Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010; Saks, 2006; Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017; Zhong, Wayne & Liden, 2015).

Rich, Lepine & Crawford (2010) argue that apart from individual task performance and organisation citizenship behaviours (also referred to as organisational commitment), no other benefits were found. The authors suggest that it is important to further explore mechanisms which can be implemented that foster relative perceptions and behavioural propensities, which influence employee engagement.

2.2.1 Performance Outcomes associated with Employee Engagement

There are various performance outcomes that support employee engagement and the positive effects it has on an organisation's performance. The constructs of employee engagements have been shown to have a positive impact on the employee's work-related experience and state of mind which leads to increased commitment, productivity and extra role behaviours within the work place (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel & LeBreton (2012) conducted a study through univariate and multivariate relative weight analysis to measure the comparative importance of employee engagement. The results found that the main predictors of employee performance were employee engagement, job satisfaction and trait negative affect. The study concluded that job satisfaction and employee engagement are of imperative value when determining overall employee contributions to the organisation (Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel & LeBreton, 2012).

A study by Saks (2006) found the following relationships to employee engagement; a positive relationship between job satisfaction, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour and a negative relationship between employee engagement and intention to quit. The study further concludes that there is a positive, significant, relationship between employee engagement and an organisation's performance (Saks, 2006).

Harter, Schmidt & Hayes (2002), in their study "Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: a meta-analysis", found significant relationships between employee engagement and various organisational outcomes. Their study found the following relationships, listed in order of most significant to least significant findings; customer satisfaction, employee turnover,

safety, productivity and profitability. The relationships found were all positive except for employee turnover, where a converse relationship was found with employee engagement (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002).

A study which looked at the effects of job engagement, used a structural model to test the various relationships associated to employee engagement (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010). The study found a significant relationship between three employee engagement constructs, namely; job satisfaction, organisational commitment/ organisational citizenship and organisational support, and task performance. The study further found that employees with higher levels of engagement received better performance reviews by their managers and displayed higher levels of organisational citizenship behaviour (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010). As stated earlier, there is a distinctive difference in definition when referring to job engagement and employee engagement (Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017). However, it can be noted that both refer to an employee's cognitive, emotional and behavioural energy, with job engagement being primarily focused on work performance and employee engagement incorporating overall behaviour and performance (Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017).

Another study used social exchange theory and a cross-level model to test for predictors of job engagement. The study found a significant relationship between high performance human resource practices, employee engagement and work performance (Zhong, Wayne & Liden, 2015). Building on human resource practices and employee engagement, Bal & De Lange (2014) found that flexible human resource management resulted in higher employee engagement. The results showed that having the option of flexible work arrangements improved employee engagement, however, the actual use of flexible work arrangements showed no correlation and was deemed as unrelated (Bal & De Lange, 2014). Further research is required to understand the lived experiences of employees who have flexible work arrangements.

To bring coherence to literature and test the effects of employee engagement through a systematic review, Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher (2015), conducted a systematic synthesis of narrative evidence present in literature. Their findings were twofold. They first reported five antecedents to employee engagement, namely; job design, leadership, organisational factors, employees state of mind and organisational interventions. The second result advocated the benefits associated to employee engagement, where they found positive associations to individual morale, employee task performance and overall organisational performance. The results also showed employees willing to do more than

what is required of them, also referred to as extra role performance or organisational citizenship (Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015). The authors state that further research is required, suggesting that there is a limited understanding of the various antecedents of employee engagement and that by looking at more practical factors which drive employee engagement, greater value can be added for practitioners (Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015). This serves as justification to attempt to operationalise factors which could influence employee engagement, such as flexible work arrangement practices.

Zeijen, Peeters & Hakanen (2018) categorised work engagement as employees being dedicated, absorbed and vigorous in the execution of their work, stating that engaged employees demonstrate greater work performance because they enjoy what they do. The study focuses on the concept of self-management and job crafting to increase employee engagement. Self-management is defined as a practice which allows employees to control their own behaviour without supervision and has shown to increase job engagement (Breevaart, Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). The researchers suggest that future research is required to understand the effects on organisational outcomes by analysing different self-management strategies, of which strategic human resource practices forms a part of (Zeijen, Peeters & Hakanen, 2018). Further research around flexible work arrangements as a self-management policy is, therefore, necessary.

Following the construct of self-management, engaged employees are more willing to exhibit extra role performance (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). Engagement has also been seen to increase with perceived autonomy (Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2007). A reason for this may be that they are able to use various resources to complete tasks more effectively and efficiently, considering all aspects of work as a part of their sphere. The authors suggest that more research is required to understand whether engaged employees are more inclined to prioritise their work, which leads to better task performance.

The positive effects of engaged employees are well researched and recognised in literature and business (Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017). There is consensus regarding the importance of engaged employees and the benefits related to engaged employees, however, there are no definitive findings around the factors which stimulate employee engagement (Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015). Various antecedents of employee engagement have been identified; job satisfaction, employee wellbeing, employer trust, organisational commitment, intention to turnover and organisational support (Shuck,

Adelson & Reio, 2017) However, further research is required to understand whether an organisation's policy around their flexibility can influence the above listed antecedents of employee engagement.

2.2.2 Organisational commitment as an antecedent to employee engagement

Organisational commitment consists of three constructs, namely; affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to the organisation. Coffman and Gonzalez-Molina (2002) argue that high levels of affective commitment result in high employee engagement. Continuance commitment refers to the decision of whether to leave the organisation or not. Normative commitment is defined as an employee's feeling of obligation to remain with the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

A study by Luchak & Gellatly (2007) found an inverse relationship between high affective commitment and intention to turnover within organisations, a key measure of employee engagement. Affective commitment is an important construct, as it refers to how much an employee feels the employer cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001). Affective commitment is, therefore, not only an antecedent to employee engagement, but closely related to perceived organisational support and well-being, which are crucial concepts when researching the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement.

2.2.3 Perceived Organisational Support, Burnout and Employee Well-being

The organisational support theory has become widely researched as it tends to explain employees' relationships with their employers. The organisational support theory is made up of three antecedents; fairness, human resource practices and supervisor support (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Research has found a positive association between organisational support and employee behaviour and engagement (Caesens et al., 2016). A further study by Kurtessis et al. (2017) also found a relationship between organisational support and high levels of employee engagement, adding that high perceived organisational support will result in greater job-related efforts. The benefits of organisational support include an increase in trust, job satisfaction and psychological well-being. The negative effects of poor organisational support include job stress, burnout and withdrawal (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

To better understand the relationship between organisational support, employee well-being and burnout, it is essential to define the two latter terms.

Employee well-being, as defined by Wright & Cropanzano (2000), consists of three categories; (i) Psychological well-being (employees' level of satisfaction regarding the organisation's processes and practices, (ii) Physical well-being (employees' health and stress levels), (iii) Social well-being (employees' social networks, fairness and equity). It can be noted that a positive relationship exists between employee well-being and job satisfaction (Judge & Watanabe, 1993).

Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach & Jackson (1996), through their Maslach Burnout Inventory general survey, found three sources of employee burnout; (i) high levels of exhaustion (fatigue and tiredness), (ii) high levels of cynicism (poor attitude towards work) and (iii) low levels of professional efficacy (social aspects).

Job resources and organisational support help to reduce stress and burnout, and therefore improve employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Organisational support is evidently a crucial concept, as it incorporates key themes that will be used in the study, namely; human resource practices, burnout and employee well-being. Based on the above research, higher levels of employee engagement should occur in organisations, focusing on human resource practices which aim to support employee well-being.

2.3 Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexibility, as a broad concept, is defined as the opportunities organisations provide their employees regarding choice of where and when to work (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013). Literature makes mention of two types of flexibility within organisations. The first is referred to as irregular flexibility which is a practice that allows employees to cope with an irregular amount of work over a given period and is generally in the form of unpaid leave, commonly referred to as a sabbatical (Casper & Harris, 2008). The second is regular flexibility, which refers to daily flexibility whereby employees can choose their work schedules, start and finish times and job-sharing arrangements (Bal, Kooij & De Jong, 2008). For the purpose of this study, regular flexibility will be used when referring to flexible work arrangements.

To further clarify regular flexibility, it is important to differentiate between flextime (flexibility in terms of time) and flexplace (flexibility in terms of location). It is important to distinguish between the two mentioned terms, as they are not interchangeable. Employees may have flextime but are required to perform all work activities on site. Conversely, employees may have flexplace arrangements but may be required to adhere to a rigid schedule (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013). Examples of flexible work arrangements include flextime (employees are able to choose their start and end time), compressed work weeks (working longer days and fewer days per week) and telecommuting (use of technology to stay connected) (Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark & Baltes, 2011).

Flexible work arrangements are strategies that organisations use to allow employees to better balance their demands from multiple domains (work-life conflict). This is based on resource theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Employees are finding it difficult to balance their work and family commitments, especially with the trend of dual earning families (Williams, 2000).

Work-life conflict occurs when an employee cannot balance their resources (time, energy and attention) to meet the demands of both work and family demands, this in turn causes conflict within their personal lives (Masterson & Hoobler, 2014). Work-life conflict is caused as an absence of work-life balance and often caused by long hours, exhaustion and stress (Masterson & Hoobler, 2014). Gajendran & Harrison (2007) found that flexible work arrangements are positively associated with increased productivity and employee attitudes. Researchers have tested the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement and have found a positive relationship between the two (Parkes & Langford, 2008; Richman, Civian, Shannon, Jeffrey Hill & Brennan, 2008). Pienaar (2008) however, argues that employees have very little control over their work load, and therefore flexibility in their work arrangements is not the solution to balance work-life conflict. Pienaar (2008) suggests that emotional coping mechanisms are more important to deal with the underlying issues of work stress as opposed to flexibility within the work place. A further study also noted that flexibility related to place (working from home) can lead to a decrease in productivity as there are many distractions at home which can lead to procrastination, ultimately increasing work-stress (Schmidt & Neubach, 2007).

2.3.1 Implementing Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements have gained significant interest among organisations globally. The World at Work Report (2015) reported that 80% of organisations globally offer employees a form of flexible work arrangements (World at Work, 2015). A business report describes South African organisations and managers as still being conservative in terms of offering their employees flexible work arrangements (Business Report, 2017). A study by Chandra (2012) aimed to understand which countries are leading the way in terms of work-life-balance and family friendly policies. The study found a vast difference in family friendly policies between Eastern and Western countries, with North America and Europe showing higher scores in terms of policies to support work-life balance and family friendly policies. The study also notes which multinational organisations have scored the highest in a work-life balance study which gives each company a rating. Companies mentioned in the 2012 study included Nokia, Agilent Technologies, Microsoft and Procter and Gamble. Most of the companies recognised are head quartered in the United States of America. The countries with least hours worked include Norway, France, Sweden, Italy and the United Kingdom (Chandra, 2012).

An online business review titled '5 reasons Google is the best place to work in America' used online employee feedback from the popular website 'Glassdoor' which shows Google as having some of the happiest employees globally. The review emphasises employees' positive perception of having FWA available to them as being a major contributor to employee satisfaction at Google (Gillett, 2016).

A common motive for organisations to implement a flexible work arrangement policy is to assist employees to better balance their time, where commuting times were found to be a major consumer of employees' time (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). A global traffic survey, conducted by Tom Tom (2016), found that travel time in South Africa, the city of Johannesburg being the highest, is greatly affected by peak travel time congestion. An average of an additional thirty-seven minutes per day's travel time, during peak traffic, was added to the commute (TomTom Traffic Index, 2016). A study by van Ommeren & Gutierrez-i-Puigarnau (2011) found a direct correlation between commute times and absenteeism. A further study found a significant relationship between commuting and stress (Zhou, Wang, Chang, Liu, Zhan & Shi, 2017). Both absenteeism and stress related to work-life conflict are constructs used to determine employees' level of engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

A conflicting study found that employees working from home were not necessarily better able to balance their work-life conflict. Employees were unable to mentally differentiate work from their personal lives, thus having a negative effect on work-life balance (Hill, Ferris & Martinson, 2003).

Given the suggested literature, that flexible work arrangements can help employees reduce commute times, the researcher expected to find a positive influence of flexible work arrangements, on work-life conflict and reduced stress, which further enables employee engagement (Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015). However, the conflicting view by Hill, Ferris & Martinson (2003) that working from home may have the opposite effect on work-life balance, suggests that further exploration is needed to better understand whether flexible work arrangements do in fact help employees balance their work-life conflict.

Practitioners raise the point that flexible work arrangements are believed to attract potential employees and, as a result of this, can be used as a tool to attract and retain talent (Kossek, Hammer, Thompson & Burke, 2014). Flexible work arrangements have been advocated as a competitive tool which organisations adopt as a strategic human resource practice aimed at maximising talent attraction and gaining a competitive edge. Furthermore, flexible work arrangements have been said to be mutually beneficial to employers and employees, and therefore retain talent within an organisation (Matos & Galinsky, 2014).

A conflicting study which looked at the effects of flexible time and flexible place work arrangements on organisational support and organisational attractiveness found no significant relationship (Thompson, Payne & Taylor, 2015). The researchers state that the influence of flexible work arrangements on recruitment outcomes is still unknown and their results support the notion that there is no influence on employees' attraction to organisations that offer these arrangements. There is a gap in literature as to whether talent retention is a motivator for organisations to offer flexible work arrangements or not.

It has been found that some employees who have access to flexible work arrangements do not make use of them. These employees tend to have higher job satisfaction, organisational commitment and a better attitude towards the organisation than those who make physical use of the flexible work arrangements (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). Furthermore, it was seen that those employees who would likely receive the most benefit from using flexible work arrangements tend not to use them (Sweet, Pitt-Catsoupes &

Boone James, 2016). This would suggest that employees are more attracted to autonomy and choice, as opposed to the actual use of flexible work arrangements. Further research is necessary to understand what aspects of flexible work arrangements employees like and dislike and the influence it has on employee engagement.

Flexible work arrangements have also been found to have various disadvantages associated to the practice. Some of the negative elements, which have resulted from flexible work arrangements, includes an overlap of work and hobbies, which means employees struggle to differentiate between work and personal time as a result of either working during non-conventional hours or working away from the office (Rafnsdottir & Heijstra, 2013). Studies have also suggested that flexible work arrangements lead to an increase in work-family conflict due to late night, weekend and holiday working. The knock-on effects of the above resulted in a lack of sleep and many employees reported a feeling of guilt and obligation towards the organisation because they were using the flexible work arrangements, thus making them work longer hours (Rafnsdottir & Heijstra, 2013). Furthermore, some research has suggested that employees making use of flexible work arrangements showed mental absence when at home (Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart, 2018). As a result, the implications of flexible work arrangements are still heavily debated by researchers and unconfirmed by practitioners, suggesting that flexible work arrangements alone are not a sufficient practice to help employees better balance their work-life conflict (Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart, 2018). Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo (2015) support this view, stating that flexible work arrangements within an organisation is not enough to improve employee engagement and that an organisation needs to foster a certain culture.

Younger generations entering the workplace generally favour more choice over their work and non-work activities, being more inclined to blend the two at their own discretion, while the older generations prefer defined boundaries of work and non-work (Thompson, Payne & Taylor, 2015). Flexible work arrangements have become an expectation by the younger generations within the work place (Generation Y or Millennials). Younger generations have observed how hard their parents worked and have thus taken the stance that there should be better balance between work and leisure, being more demanding of practices which allow for a more balanced life (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Sweet, Pitt-Catsoupes & Boone James (2016) discovered that older managers were less likely to implement flexible work arrangements and that women were more inclined to use and implement the arrangements. Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley (2013) suggest that flexible work arrangements were primarily intended for middle-aged

employees. Bal & De Lange (2014) argue that it is necessary to investigate the influence that flexible work arrangements have on younger and older generations.

Fleetwood (2007) makes the argument the FWA can reduce a company's operational costs. Fleetwood (2007) further suggests that FWA has no cost to the organisation yet the benefits of providing employees with FWA is evident. The research highlights that some organisations tend to prioritise the potential benefits for employees over the cost saving realised while other organisations implement FWA primarily as a profit driver, with employee benefits being secondary.

Hill, Ferris & Martinson (2003) suggest that many organisations now view FWA as an imperative needed to not only achieve strategic priorities and gain a competitive advantage but also as a strategy to reduce costs within the organisation.

2.3.2 Flexible Work Arrangements and Organisational Commitment

Previous research has found positive associations with flexible work arrangements and organisational commitment. The studies note several benefits of implementing flexible work arrangements, such as an increase in productivity, improved job satisfaction, improved work-life conflicts and commitment to the organisation (Hammer et al., 2005; Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015).

Chen & Fulmer (2017) found a positive relationship between flexible work arrangements and organisational commitment. Flexible scheduling and location, as opposed to working fewer hours, were found to be more positively associated with organisational commitment (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). However, the study noted that there was no significant difference between organisational commitment levels in those employees who make use of flexible work arrangements and those who simply have the option of flexible work arrangements but make no use of them. The study concluded that an increase in organisational commitment is not purely as a result of making use of flexible work arrangements, but signalling and social exchange effects play a significant role in the increased organisational commitment outcome.

There are, however, conflicting studies which portray flexible work arrangements in a negative light. These studies argue that flexible work arrangements may have unintended effects such as an increase in work-life conflict and potential career penalties (Leslie, Manchester, Park, & Mehng, 2012; Hammer et al., 2005).

Flexible work arrangements positively influences organisational commitment which has in turn been recognised as an antecedent for employee engagement (Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015; Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017; Shuck, Nimon & Zigarri, 2016). Therefore, the researcher expects that flexible work arrangements will have an influence on employee engagement.

2.3.3 Flexible Work Arrangements and Employee Well-being

Employee well-being, related to the work environment, refers to an employee's feelings of positivity or negativity towards their job and their general mental state (Hosie & Sevastos, 2010). Studies have found an increase in employees with mental disorders linked to work stress and work-life conflict (Daley, Morin, LeBlanc, Gregoire, Savard & Baillargeon, 2009).

Research has found a positive relationship between organisations who offer flexible work arrangements and employee well-being (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Wood & de Menezes, 2010). A more recent study done by Zheng et al. (2015) found no significant relationship between the two constructs. However, the author noted that a major limitation of the study was that it was done in Australia, where employee well-being is already high on average, when compared to the global standard. The above serves as justification for further research outside of Australia where employee well-being is more of a concern to organisations and where it is expected to have a greater impact on employee engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

2.3.4 Flexible Work Arrangements and Work-life Balance

Non-monetary policies such as flexible work arrangements have been found to be effective life coping strategies versus monetary funded initiatives such as health and well-being programmes, children facilities and supportive services (Zheng et al., 2015). Researchers argue that flexible work arrangements as well as managerial support and understanding enable employees to balance work with lifestyle and family commitments (Skinner & Chapman, 2013). Flexible arrangements have been positively related to affective commitment and perceived organisational support and negatively related to turnover intentions (Casper & Harris, 2008). The effects on employee engagement, through human resource policies, may be largely dependent on other supportive human resource policies offered by the organisation (Casper & Harris, 2008).

Adkins & Premeaux (2012) found that the number of hours worked by employees and the support of their managers had an impact on employees' ability to manage work-family conflict. The researchers further suggest that these boundary conditions should be built upon to better understand the phenomenon that exists between hours worked, managerial support and work-family conflict.

Using a meta-analysis research approach, Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley (2013) found a smaller than expected relationship between flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict. The researchers suggest that the low level of significance results from inconsistent definitions around flexibility and how organisations decide to operationalise the concept. The researchers conclude by suggesting future research into human resource practices which can effectively help employees balance their work-family conflict as needed.

A qualitative meta-synthesis by Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart (2018) found five meta-analyses reports which varied between medium to non-significant correlations between flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict. The researchers suggest that flexible work arrangements be analysed on a case by case basis, based on the nature of work and individuals' needs (Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart, 2018).

2.3.5 Flexible Work Arrangements and Organisational Support and Trust

Through resource theory, Cooper-Thomas, Xu & Saks (2018) propose that employee engagement is linked to emotions of warmth and caring and that development, vision and purpose are the most predictive antecedents of engagement. Resources which promote warmth and caring are, therefore, more inclined to improve engagement. Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart (2018) stated that flexible work arrangements are portrayed as being supportive in nature. It would be logical that employees who recognise flexible work arrangements as 'care' by the organisation would portray higher levels of engagement.

Flexible work arrangements have also been found to have a minimal relationship with intention to turnover and were found to reduce work engagement over time (Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo, 2015). It was also found that negative career implication over a cross-sectional analysis may occur. The basis of the study portrays flexible work arrangements as working longer hours and thus having negative

implications. The study concludes that having a supportive organisational culture is imperative to engagement.

Engagement is an essential requirement for organisations to retain talent, and organisations should therefore look at supportive practices which promote job clarity and autonomy, resulting in employees conducting their work with more energy and passion (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018).

Through the implementation of alternative working arrangements, such as working from home and flexible times, this may be representative of an organisation's trust within their employees which improves employee morale and motivation (Hill, Ferris & Martinson, 2003). This notion is supported by Chen & Fulmer (2017) who state that working from flexible locations may not necessarily improve job satisfaction but the element of trust motivates employees to work harder in appreciation for the trust instilled in them.

Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo (2015) note that employees view flexible working as showing respect and empowerment which results in higher employee engagement. However, the authors go on to say that a flexible work arrangements policy may be a contradiction to the notion that organisations implement them as coping mechanisms for employees' personal obligations, as they may send a message to employees that more is expected from them, resulting in negative outcomes. Therefore, it is important to understand whether employees view flexible work arrangements as a promoter or inhibitor of work-life balance, which is closely associated to employee engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Hill, Ferris & Martinson (2003) found that employees working from virtual and home offices showed higher discretionary effort than those working from traditional work spaces. Flexibility in working provides employees with more control, through which higher levels of engagement are reached, consequentially putting in more effort and improving performance (Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees & Gatenby, 2013)

Literature has also recognised various drawbacks associated to FWAs (Johnson, Lowe & Reckers, 2008). Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman (1999) found that employees were not able to perform job tasks sufficiently as a result of poor time management. Research also found that employees had trouble scheduling their time effectively as a result of having too much flexibility (Nord, Fox, Phoenix & Viano, 2002). Clark (2001) argues that FWAs are often implemented as a practice which is considered to be out of

the norm within an organisation. This tends to result in poor adoption of the policy and resistance to the change. As a result of some of the biases which management has about FWAs, a study found that there was a reduction in career advancement and status of employees using FWAs (Butler, Gasser & Smart, 2004).

Hegtvædt, Clay-Warner & Ferrigno (2002) support the conception that a perceived lack of fairness around FWAs results in resentment by employees. The study found that employees who did not receive FWAs were resentful to those who had FWAs and as a result were less engaged.

A study by Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo (2015) found that the success of FWAs is highly dependent on having the necessary organisational culture which enables flexible and innovative ways of working. A key construct of employee well-being relates to employees' social well-being which is defined by an employee's sense of fairness and equity (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). Organisational support theory promotes fairness as an enabler of employee behaviour and engagement (Caesens et al., 2016).

Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo (2015) suggest that organisations implementing flexible working strategies need to ensure effective two-way communication. The researchers further stress the importance of educating management about the influences FWAs may have and managing employee outcomes accordingly.

2.4 Conclusion

Having extensively reviewed the literature, it is evident that there are many overarching constructs between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement. The literature guided the researcher to believe that there is a relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement (Bal & De Lange, 2014). A study found in the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (Zheng et al., 2015) attempted to understand the role of flexible work arrangements on employee well-being. The study found no significant relationship, although literature found it to be an enabler of employee engagement (Brunetto, Teo, Shacklock & Wharton, 2012), thus, justifying further research.

The below diagram was drawn up by the researcher as a summary of all the overarching constructs identified in the literature review.

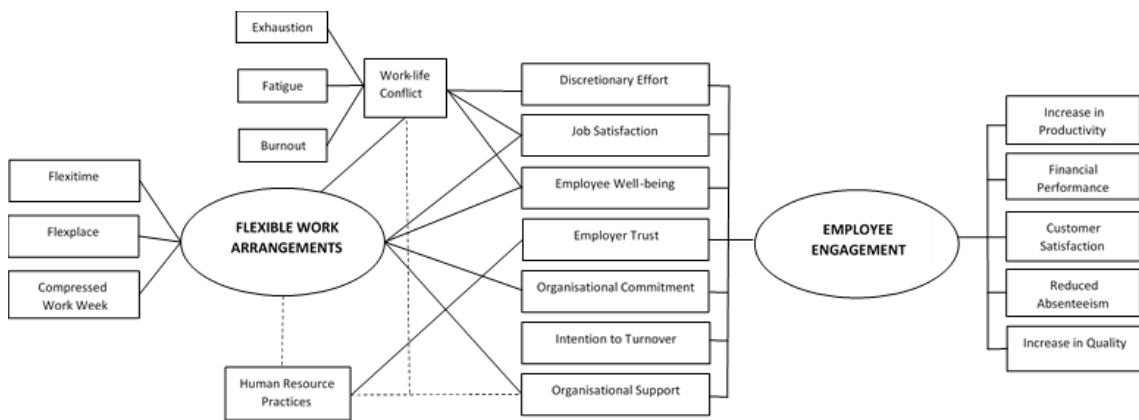


Figure 1: Literature review summary

Based on the literature findings summarised above (diagram 1), the researcher aims to better understand the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter presents the research questions which formed the foundation of this study. The research questions have been formed based on the literature review conducted in chapter two. The questions were formulated to better understand the influence that FWAs have on employee engagement. Furthermore, this study aimed to uncover some of the drawbacks associated to FWAs and gain an understanding of how FWAs can be improved to promote employee engagement.

Research Question 1: Why do companies in South Africa choose to implement flexible work arrangements?

The aim of this question is to get a broad understanding of the organisations' reasons for implementing flexible work arrangements. As this is an explorative study, the researcher may find themes in addition to the existing literature which have resulted from organisations implementing FWAs.

This research question will aid the researcher in understanding what motivation organisations are using to adopt flexible working practices. The research question will further allow the researcher to gain insight into the benefits associated with the implementation of FWAs.

Research Question 2: What perceived employee engagement benefits do organisations recognise from implementing FWAs?

Research Question 2 will determine the relationship organisations observe between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement.

Furthermore, the aim of Research Question 2 is to understand the perceived benefits of FWAs, associated to employee engagement, from the company's perspective. The researcher will also use the data gained from Research Question 2 to understand why the implementation of FWAs is more successful in certain organisations. This may present suggestions for future research to be carried out.

Research Question 3: What are employees' lived experiences of flexible work arrangements (asked through an employee engagement lens)?

Research Question 3 seeks to understand how employees feel about flexible work arrangements and if it correlates with the organisation's perceptions (as explored in Research Question 2).

Research Question 3 allows the researcher to understand whether the employees share the same views as the organisation (subject matter experts) or whether they had conflicting views. The researcher further aims to understand which aspects of FWAs employees like and which they dislike, determining the potential positive and negative relationships with employee engagement.

Research Question 4: What are some of the drawback of FWAs arrangements and how can FWAs be improved to promote employee engagement?

By better understanding the drawbacks and possible improvements of flexible work arrangements the researcher aims to operationalise FWAs and provide practical recommendations to practitioners in an effort to improve employee engagement.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Proposed Methodology

Pragmatism is defined as a research philosophy which argues that the most important determinants of the research philosophy adopted are the research questions and objectives (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Collis & Hussey (2014) describe pragmatism as undertaking research in which no single point of view can ever give the entire picture and in which there may be multiple realities. Given that the research recognises the various influences which affect employee engagement, a pragmatic approach which involved being realistic and only focusing on the research questions and objectives was best suited for the study. The research was guided by what was possible and practical.

An inductive research approach is defined as the development of a theory as a result of analysing data that has already been collected (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The research undertaken is broad and there are no models designed specifically to test Flexible Work Arrangement's (FWAs) impact on employee engagement. Given that the research is explorative in nature, the study looked at assessing current theory and developing the theory with new research.

Monomethod Qualitative is defined as having a singular method of data collection (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The research made use of a singular qualitative research method, namely; semi structured interviews with field experts and employees who work within an organisation offering flexible work arrangements. The monomethod approach was chosen to provide consistency and richness of data. Although the data collection used a monomethod, it is important to note that there were two aspects to the data collection; first from the organisation's perspective through the interviewing of field experts (Group A), and secondly from the employees working for the organisation offering FWAs (Group B).

The research conducted was explorative in nature. Saunders & Lewis (2012) stated that explorative research aids the researcher in seeking new insights, asking new questions and re-examining topics. This method was chosen as there is currently inconclusive and limited research available on the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee engagement. In-depth interviews using a mono-method as the research

strategy involved the collection of data from a sample group in a semi-structured format (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Cross-sectional research is defined as the study of a particular topic at a particular time (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Given the researchers time and resource constraints, a longitudinal study was not practical. There was also no need to follow up or monitor results over a period and a cross-sectional approach was, therefore, best suited.

Semi-structured interviews contain the components of both structured and unstructured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer prepares a set of questions and at the same time additional questions might be asked during interviews to clarify or further expand on certain constructs (Collis & Hussey, 2014). To avoid guiding answers and encouraging the development of potential themes questions to participants were left open ended and unaided. At the same time, structure was incorporated to ensure all sections have been sufficiently covered and to guide the interviewing process.

4.2 Population

Saunders & Lewis (2012) describe the population of the study as participants who would be available to the researcher and able to provide insight. The participants in the study should have similar characteristics (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013).

The population for this study consisted of field experts who have been involved in implementing FWAs or involved in accessing the successes and/or failures of the implemented practice (Population A). Population A, also referred to as industry or field experts were typically from the human resource department or within human capital and organisational development. The field experts represented their experiences from the organisation's perspective. Given that the research used a multimethod approach, the second population (Population B) was classified as employees working within an organisation that offers FWAs. The employees represented those who use FWAs and employees who have FWAs at their disposal but do not make use of them. The employees were selected based on personal network, referrals and snowballing. The researcher ensured that the employees were from various management levels and departments within the organisation in order to reduce bias. Two population groups were used to align with the research questions, which distinguished between the views of the organisations and the views of employees working for the organisations.

To broaden the study, the population was selected from various industries, namely:

- Fast Foods
- Financial Services
- Medical Insurance
- Biotechnology
- Supply Chain
- Manufacturing

Past research has indicated that a region's culture and perception of value may differ between regions (Hofstede, 1998). To limit the external influences of the perceived value of FWAs, the research was limited to companies operating within the Gauteng province in South Africa.

4.3 Unit of analysis

When trying to analyse who will provide the data and what content they will provide, a unit of analysis is used as a level of measurement (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). Studies are generally performed at two levels; one of measurement or one of analysis (Rouseau, 1985). The level of measurement refers to the actual source of data and typically follows qualitative research which seeks to understand the meaning of phenomena from the perspectives of the participants (Merriam, 2009).

For the purpose of this research, the unit of analysis was:

1. The perceptions of the field experts within the organisations offering FWAs
2. The lived experiences of employees within the organisations offering FWAs

The analysis attempted to understand the influence that flexible work arrangements have on employee engagement.

4.4 Sampling method and size

Qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning of perceptions from the various participants. It was imperative to select a sample from which the most will be learned (Merriam, 2009). Denscombe (2007) recommends careful consideration to the selected sampling method as poor sampling methods can reduce confidence that the findings from the sample are similar to the rest of the population being explored.

Purposive or judgement sampling is a non-probability sample selection technique where the researcher's judgement is used to select the sample participants (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). This deliberate selection is advantageous as it allows the researcher to deliberately select the sample that is likely to produce focussed and valuable data to answer the research questions more informatively and economically than probability sampling (Denscombe, 2007). Convenience sampling refers to a sampling method where the researcher uses participants who are easy to obtain (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). Owing to the limited resources of the researcher, a convenience sampling method based on the researcher's personal network was used to obtain interviews with field experts and employees from the selected organisations.

A total of 23 participants were interviewed by the researcher. A summary of the 23 respondents can be found in Table 1 below with a further breakdown of the respondent details found in Chapter Five.

Table 1: Industry, function and level of chosen sample

INDUSTRY	FUNCTION	LEVEL
Manufacturing	Organisational Effectiveness (FE)	Director
	Human Resources (FE)	Senior Management
	Supply chain [E]	Senior Management
	Project Management [E]	Middle Management
	Research and Development [E]	Junior
Financial Services	General Management (FE)	Vice President
	Product Control [E]	Senior Management
	Finance [E]	Junior
Medical Insurance	Organisational Development (FE)	Director
	Change Management-HR (FE)	Senior Management
	Marketing [E]	Middle Management
	Data Science [E]	Senior Management
	Project Management [E]	Middle Management
	Project Management [E]	Junior
Fast Foods	Human Resources (FE)	Director
	Business Development [E]	Director
	Finance [E]	Middle Management
	Analytics [E]	Junior
Biotechnology	Human Resources (FE)	Director
	Marketing [E]	Middle Management
	Finance [E]	Senior Management
	Finance [E]	Junior
Supply Chain	Human Resources (FE)	Director

* FE: Field Expert (representing the organisation)

* E: Employees

Eight field experts were interviewed (Group A) across the six different industries. In some organisations, where the initial respondent felt that one of their colleagues may be able to provide additional insight to the subject, more than one field expert was interviewed. In Table 2 below, the researcher identified the qualifying criteria for evaluation of the field experts which were used to identify the suitability and credibility of the respondents. Group A of the sample group represented the views of the organisation and the respondent's expert opinion, and therefore it was important to be pragmatic and consistent in the selection criteria.

Table 2: Sample method selection criteria (judgemental selection)

Industry, size and type of organisation	Falls within the six industries mentioned The Organisation should be structured to qualify i.e. not home based A minimum of 50 employees
Experience of the industry expert and their managerial level	A minimum of 5 years in the profession of Human Resources (HR) or Organisational Development At a minimum management level, preferably a director
High level of Involvement in the initiating or monitoring of FWAs & employee engagement	Must have either implemented FWAs or be in the process of monitoring the effects of FWAs within the organisation

In addition to the field expert interviews, employees from the same organisations were interviewed (Group B). A sample of two to four employees was interviewed per organisation which resulted in a total of fifteen employees. The number of employees interviewed per organisation was dependent on the availability of employees and thus varied between organisations. In order to answer the research questions stated in Chapter Three, it was necessary to gain insight from both the organisation's perspective as well as the lived experiences and views of the employees working within the organisations. As a result, two separate sets of questions were developed in order to interview respondents from the two different population groups (Group A and B).

The researcher noted data saturation from the fifth field expert and from the thirteenth employee (Figure 2 and Figure 3 below). However, the researcher stuck to the original proposed quantity to ensure that no additional insight was lost. The researcher also recognised that respondent's opinions would vary between organisation and level of seniority and it was, therefore, important not to claim data saturation early on in the study.

Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006) suggested that the researcher manually identified when a new code had been created and then plotted the results in a graph to illustrate data saturation. The researcher noted each time a new code was created in Atlas. ti.

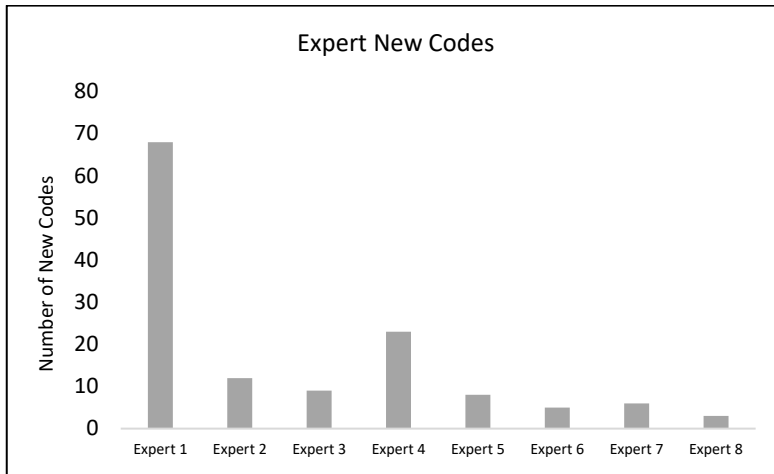


Figure 2: Number of New Codes for Experts

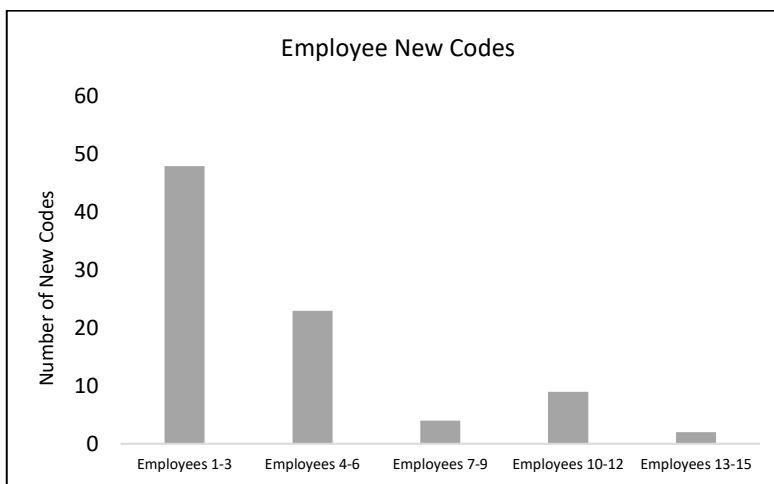


Figure 3: Number of New Codes for Employees

4.5 Measurement instrument

Part A: Interview with field experts

Given the exploratory nature of the research study, a semi-structured interview with field experts with open-ended questions was used as the research instrument. This essentially allowed the researcher the benefit of asking specific questions while simultaneously allowing the interviews to be flexible and to explore common relationships and themes that may emerge in more depth, without influencing the answers participants

may give (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). The questions asked to the field experts were unaided in most cases. In cases where respondents did not understand the question of the definition of a construct, such as employee engagement, the researcher broke the construct down based on the definitions found in literature.

Part B: Interview with employees

As in Part A, the employees were interviewed using a semi-structured interview process. As noted above, this was a separate set of questions than that of Group A. The semi-structured interviews were all unaided and open-ended. Respondents were encouraged to elaborate on their responses to increase the depth of their response.

Research questions and interview mapping for population groups

The below tables (Table 3, 4 and 5) depict the interview mapping process. The mapping process illustrates which interview questions were used to answer each research question. The researcher did, however, recognise that because the interviews were of a semi-structured and open-ended nature, respondents would tend to comment on questions which would still follow later on. Saunders and Lewis (2012) suggest that semi-structured, open-ended interviews encourage more natural responses which provide extensive and developmental answers. The researcher therefore used the questionnaire as a guide but still encouraged a conversational approach with minimal interruption.

Table 3: Research questions and interview mapping (population Group A)

Research question	Interview questions
Research Question 1: Why do companies in South Africa choose to implement flexible work arrangements?	1. Why did your organisation decide to implement Flexible Work Arrangements?
	2. What Flexible Work Arrangement practices has your organisation implemented and who can use the arrangements? Why those policies? Why those people?
Research Question 2: What perceived employee engagement benefits do organisations recognise from implementing FWAs?	3. What employee benefits have you observed?
	4. What benefits have you observed for the organisation?

Table 4: Research questions and interview mapping (population Group B)

Research question	Interview questions
Research Question 3: What are employees' lived experiences of flexible work arrangements (asked through an employee engagement lens)?	1. What is your understanding of Flexible Work Arrangements? Which FWAs do you use and why do you use them?
	2. What are your feelings and thoughts about flexible work arrangements? What do you like and dislike about them?
	3. Why do you think your organisation offers you flexible work arrangements?
	4. How important is FWAs to you? Would you work for an organisation that doesn't offer you FWAs? WHY?

Table 5: Research questions and interview mapping (population Group A & B)

Research question	Interview questions
Research Question 4: What are some of the drawback of FWAs arrangements and how can FWAs be improved to promote employee engagement?	5. What are some of the drawbacks of flexible work arrangements within your organisation? How can FWAs be improved to promote employee engagement?

Pilot Interviews

Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009), emphasise the importance of a pilot test stating that, "the pilot test is to refine the questionnaire so that respondents will have no problems in answering the questions and there will be no problems in recording the data. In addition, it will enable you to obtain some assessment of the questions' validity and the likely reliability of the data that will be collected" (p. 394).

Prior to commencing the formal sessions with the participants, a pilot testing phase was implemented to assess the duration of each section of the interview and to tweak and refine questions where necessary. The pilot test was conducted with colleagues and business school associates who are in the same field as the participants the researcher planned on interviewing. The purpose of the pilot interviews was to assess the quality of the questions, the time duration per question and section, the ease of answering, the relevance of each question to the topic and to assist with changing the structure of the

questions. Once the pilot phase was completed, the researcher started the first two interviews with participants who were more likely to be more sympathetic to mistakes and willing to assist with refining the questions. The researcher continued to improve the technique in which questions were asked as more interviews were conducted, which encouraged richer responses from participants.

4.6 Data Validity

With reference to the research strategy, semi-structured interviews were used. The researcher was guided on structure by literature and allowed for open-ended questions. Due to the nature of this, the data collected will have validity, which is described as the extent to which the questions and measures accurately represent the concept (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). The literature review aspect of the research was also expected to identify whether there are any missed themes or gaps which should have emerged in literature, where previous researchers have suggested further research be carried out. The guidance the literature review provided further demonstrated content validity (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013).

A recent study titled, "The employee engagement scale: initial evidence for construct validity and implications for theory and practice" (Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017), found the three sub-factors of employee engagement (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural) as higher order factors to employee engagement. The study conferred the employee engagement scale as valid and reliable. The researcher used these constructs found in literature to ensure the semi-structured interviews were asked through an employee engagement lens and was used to probe respondents where necessary.

4.7 Data Reliability

Reliability refers to the data collection and analysis being consistently accurate regardless of source (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). The researcher aimed to interview five field experts and 15 employees across five different organisations but, owing to sufficient resources, managed to interview six organisations, eight experts and 15 employees.

Part A: Interview with field experts

Given the qualitative nature of the study and the anticipated diversity of opinion, it was difficult to ensure a consistent outcome. Field experts were selected over a spectrum of industries in order to increase validity, broaden the study and prevent the research from being industry specific and therefore lacking reliability. The judgemental sampling method allowed the researcher to broaden the study across various industries, organisational size and cultural dimensions.

Part B: Employees

Torrington (1991) describes the benefits of informal face-to-face interviews as being a more sharing and conducive forum, which allows the conversation with the respondent to be open and flowing, often resulting in various unexpected themes emerging. The employees were chosen using convenience sampling, however, to improve validity, the researcher requested that employees be of varying demographics, levels within the organisation and also consist of employees who make use of FWAs and those who have FWAs but do not make much use of them.

4.8 Data gathering process

Part A: Interview with field experts

Data was collected using an in-depth interview approach through face-to-face interviews with eight identified field experts. The interviews were semi-structured in nature. The field expert interviews lasted between 25 minutes to one hour per participant and were guided with timeframes per question. The purpose of semi-structured, open-ended questions was to allow participants to be more intimate in engaging and to acquire more data (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001).

The semi-structured approach also allowed the researcher to accommodate different data sharing styles, for example: some participants preferred a more casual way of talking as opposed to data collection sheets. Prior to all interviews, a letter of consent was signed before commencing. The researcher provided anonymity to all respondents interviewed.

The use of a guided, semi-structured approach ensured data was collected in accordance with the various research questions and ensured no topics were missed. Data was noted by the researcher on the data collection sheets as well as using a cell phone recording device to ensure data could easily be accessed for transcribing at a later stage (Refer to Appendix 3).

Part B: Employees

Part B of the data collection made use of 15 employees working for the organisations offering FWAs. The data collection process was executed in a similar fashion to that of Part A. The employee interviews lasted between fifteen and forty minutes. It was noted that the interviews with employees seemed to be shorter than those of the field experts representing the organisation.

The field experts were contacted telephonically, with a follow-up email to further explain what will be discussed and to confirm their willingness to take part in the research (see appendix 1). In cases where the researcher did not have access to employees working for the respective organisation, the researcher requested assistance from the field expert to arrange interviews with the employees in question. The researcher requested that the field experts provide employees from various departments working at different levels.

The voice recordings were transcribed into word documents and this, together with hand written notes taken during the interviews, constituted as the source of data which was then analysed (Saunders and Lewis, 2012).

4.9 Analysis approach

Part A: Interview with field experts

Interviews were subject to an inductive qualitative analysis process. Saunders & Lewis (2012) state that inductive analysis allows for changes and flexibility to the research approach and uses a method which moves from observations and notions thereof, towards qualifying answers from the emerged outlines and themes.

Data from the recordings were transcribed and analysed to determine common patterns and trends across all the conducted interviews. Key themes were identified using Atlas.ti Version 8, and data was transformed into a workable format in the form of relationship

diagrams. The researcher avoided using a ranking system so that no theme was viewed as more significant than another (Clarke & Braun, 2016).

A qualitative data analysis approach was used and, although certain themes were mentioned more frequently in the data set, these themes were not necessarily more important than those less frequently mentioned. Qualitative analysis has no definitive answer to what proportion of the data set is necessary to justify a theme (Clarke & Braun, 2016). Clarke & Braun (2016) further suggest that a theme cannot be quantified but rather the researcher should use their discretion to decide whether the responses captured are central, relative to the research question which is trying to be answered.

Part B: Employees

The data from the employees was analysed following the same process as Part A above.

Phases of thematic analysis

The researcher used a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is defined as the clustering or categorising of method with the objective of finding patterns in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The purpose of the thematic analysis is to use the patterns which emerged to answer the research questions. A thematic analysis approach is ideally suited to questions which can be answered through experiences, expert opinions and views of respondents (Saunders and Lewis, 2012).

There are six steps to follow in thematic data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The six steps identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used as a guideline to aid the researcher in analysing the data. The phases of data analysis were identified as follows:

1. Getting familiar with the data through reading and transcribing
2. Generating codes in a systematic and pragmatic manner
3. Creating themes and categories from the codes
4. Reviewing the themes identified in the third phase
5. Defining the themes identified
6. Interpreting and reporting on the identified themes

The recording from the interviews conducted were transcribed into a readable word format by using the services of a transcriber. For ease of editing and uploading of the

transcriptions into Atlas. ti, Microsoft Word was used. The word documents were then uploaded into a qualitative data analysis software, Atlas. ti version 8.3.16.0.

The word documents were then coded using Atlas. ti. The coding process involved generating and assigning codes to each sentence found in the transcribed document. A total of 193 codes were generated in Atlas. ti by the researcher (Appendix 7). Codes with similar meaning were then merged into single codes. Using a code to theory model (Saldana, 2012, p. 12), codes were allocated into logical categories. A total of 39 categories were created in Atlas. ti for further analysis into themes.

The coding process also allowed the researcher to confirm that data saturation was in fact reached, based on the declining number of new codes generated in the latter transcription documents.

4.10 Limitations

There was a number of limitations to the study conducted. Personal bias from participants was likely to emerge, whether conscious or unconscious. Organisations which offer FWAs, were expected to focus more on the positive aspects and likely to avoid the negative aspects of FWAs. Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin (2013) describe response bias as occurring when participants display a level of bias (conscious or unconscious) which may lead to skewed conclusions being drawn by the researcher. The researcher assumed that the field experts interviewed would provide subject matter expertise from an objective perspective. Literature suggests many factors which impact employee engagement. FWAs may be seen to reflect higher employee engagement at face value but there could have been a variety of other factors which impacted the results. The convenience sampling may have skewed the results as these organisations may have had other factors in common attributing to employee engagement.

The researcher identified the following additional limitations:

- The researcher was not professionally trained to conduct interviews with respondents. Flaws in the researcher's technique may have influenced responses from the various respondents (Agee, 2009).
- The study made use of large corporations in South Africa and failed to incorporate small to medium organisations. The dynamics in small organisations may differ to large corporations.

- The number of sectors in the study was limited to six. Inferences can therefore not be made in respect of all large organisations.
- Companies in the study were all located in the Johannesburg region of South Africa and the sample may, therefore, have geographic bias.
- The study made use of companies who have FWAs and respondents may have been bias to the benefits recognised from implementing FWAs

4.11 Ethical Considerations

To ensure research was carried out in an ethical way, the researcher was obliged to first obtain ethical clearance from the University's Ethics Committee (Appendix 6). The researcher also ensured that written consent was received from all interviewed respondents, that is, respondents were required to read and sign a consent form (Appendix 2 and 3). This also assured them that they would be given anonymity and that information shared would be kept confidential. The researcher used generic terms to refer to the companies used as well as all respondents. With regards to certain organisations used in the study, the researcher had to first apply to the company asking for permission to interview employees.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the 23 interviews conducted, across six different organisations, in six different industries. The findings in this chapter are presented in a sequence and format which follows the research questions stated in chapter three. The data presented was collected using face-to-face in-depth interviews conducted with expert interviews as well as regular employees working for the respective organisations. To ensure consistency throughout the research process, the interview questions were charted out against the research questions stated in chapter three. The charted questions were used in general, however given the semi-structured and informal nature of the interviews, discussions differed in terms of flow between the different respondents, and in many cases, respondents answered questions before the interviewer reached that specific topic. The researcher therefore coded data which was relevant to each research question. A consistency matrix was also used to ensure consistency was maintained in answering the research questions, use of appropriate methodology, data collection and the alignment to the literature review.

The results are presented based on the themes which emerged from the qualitative analysis. The themes provide insight into why companies in South Africa decide to implement FWAs, the employee engagement benefit organisations recognise from implementing FWAs, employees' lived experiences of FWA and finally drawbacks and improvements of FWAs to promote employee engagement.

The chapter will firstly outline the description of the companies and participants used in the study, followed by the presentation of the results from the qualitative interviews.

5.2 Description of the Sample

The sample consisted of a total of 23 interviewees from six different companies. The sample included 15 employees and eight experts. The total sample consisted of 17 females and six males. The below tables present the description of each company used in the data gathering process (Table 6), the experts interviewed, their credentials and reason for being selected (Table 7) and the employees from the respective companies (Table 8). Given that anonymity was granted to all interviewees (appendix 2 & 3), the

tables below also depict the anonymised names of the respondents who were interviewed. The experts interviewed were selected using judgemental sampling, based on their current position and experience within the field of human resources and organisational development. The experts all held senior positions, with four out of the eight being directors. The six different companies were selected using the researcher's personal network and discretion, related to their suitability for the study. Employees within the respective companies were selected using snowball sampling, ensuring they were from different departments and levels within the company.

All interviews were conducted at the premises of the respective companies. All the companies were located in the area of Johannesburg, South Africa. One interviewee (Employee 15) relocated to Cape Town and was therefore interviewed and recorded over the telephone.

Table 6: Description of Companies Interviewed

Company name	Industry	Market Cap	no. of Employees	Company Age
ORG 1	Manufacturing	R300-320bn	30 000 – 40 000	+ 50 years
ORG 2	Financial Services	R120-150bn	40 000 – 50 000	+ 20 Years
ORG 3	Medical Insurance	R80-100bn	10 000 – 20 000	+ 20 years
ORG 4	Fast Foods	R20-30bn	1 000 – 2 000	+ 50 years
ORG 5	Biotechnology	R80-100bn	10 000 – 20 000	+ 10 years
ORG 6	Supply Chain	R30-40bn	30 000 – 40 000	+ 50 years

Table 7: Description of Industry Experts Interviewed

Expert Name	Company name	Field	Level	no. of years in field
Expert 1	ORG 1	Organisational Effectiveness	Senior	+ 30 years
Expert 2	ORG 1	Human Resources	Senior	+10 years
Expert 3	ORG 2	General Management	Vice President	+ 10 years
Expert 4	ORG 3	Organisational Development	Director	+ 20 years

Expert 5	ORG 3	Change Management	Senior	+ 10 years
Expert 6	ORG 4	Human Resources	Director	+ 10 years
Expert 7	ORG 5	Human Resources	Director	+ 20 years
Expert 8	ORG 6	Human Resources	Director	+ 20 years

Table 8: Description of Employees Interviewed

Employee Name	Company name	Department	Level	Tenure
Employee 1	ORG 1	Supply chain	Senior	15 years
Employee 2	ORG 1	Project Management	Middle	7 years
Employee 3	ORG 1	Research and Development	Junior	10 years
Employee 4	ORG 2	Product Control	Senior	5 years
Employee 5	ORG 2	Finance	Junior	2 years
Employee 6	ORG 3	Marketing	Middle	7 years
Employee 7	ORG 3	Data Science	Senior	4 years
Employee 8	ORG 3	Project Management	Middle	5 years
Employee 9	ORG 3	Project Management	Junior	7 years
Employee 10	ORG 4	Sales	Senior	13 years
Employee 11	ORG 4	Finance	Middle	1 year
Employee 12	ORG 4	Analytics	Junior	2 years
Employee 13	ORG 5	Marketing	Middle	2 years
Employee 14	ORG 5	Finance	Senior	3 years
Employee 15	ORG 5	Finance	Junior	9 years

5.3 Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1- Why do companies in South Africa choose to implement FWAs

The aim of Research Question 1 was to understand why companies in South Africa choose to implement flexible work arrangements. By understanding the reasons for implementing FWA, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the motivation companies use to adopt flexible working practices. This research question also allowed the researcher to gain insight into the benefits associated with the implementation of FWAs. Two interview questions were used to gain the necessary insight to understand why organisations implement FWAs (refer to Table 3 in Chapter 4).

Five constructs emerged from analysing the expert interview responses. The below figure (Figure 3) highlights the constructs and a discussion of each construct follows.

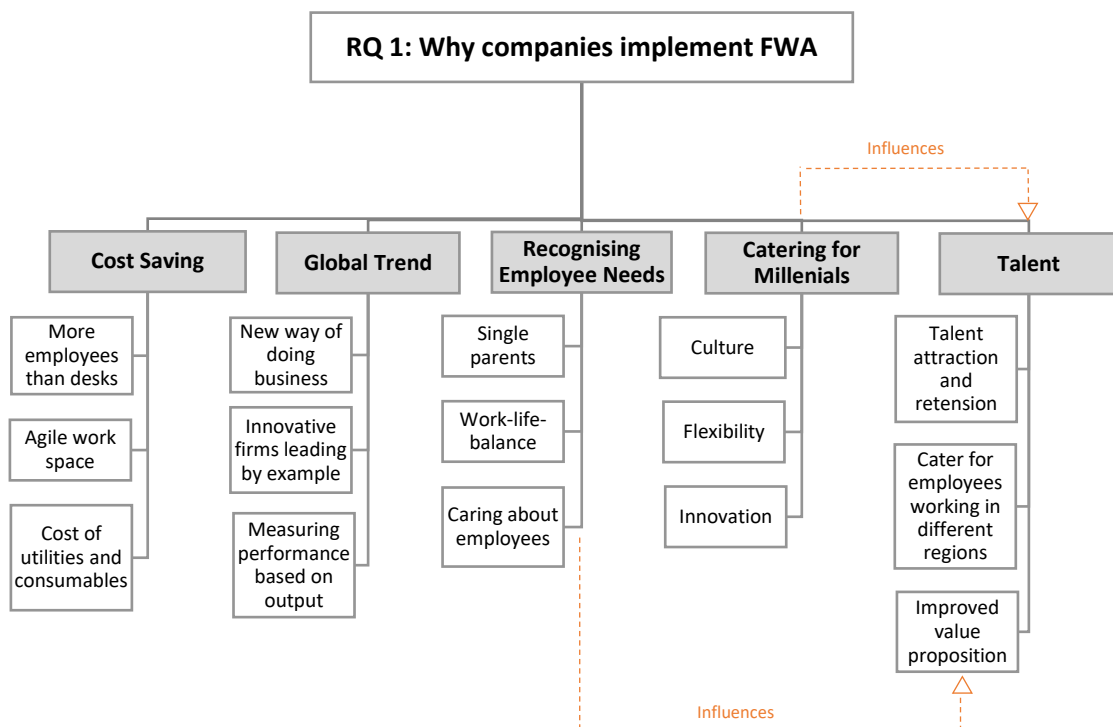


Figure 4: Overview of Results for RQ 1

5.3.1 Cost Saving Associated with the Implementation of FWAs

All eight experts interviewed mentioned that there was an element of practicality around their decision to implement FWAs. The practicality of what FWAs allows was mentioned throughout the interview process even though this was not the primary motivation for all six organisations.

Expert 8: “Office space is now obviously a huge premium in terms of how much you spend etc. We were finding that space was a massive issue in terms of desk space, etc. What we did here is that we then said okay, if we had three teams and they had five people in the team we will get office space for basically five people and rotate those three teams to come in once a week or twice a week. We have hot desks.”

The six companies interviewed in the study were all situated in prime real estate areas. Four of the six companies were situated in the area of Sandton, Johannesburg, and mentioned that the cost of real estate has encouraged companies within the area to implement FWAs to combat the need to expand their office space. All eight experts interviewed also mention traffic as a factor which they considered when implementing FWAs, allowing employees to avoid peak traffic times.

Expert 8: “While we wanted to save on office space, all the peripherals, in terms of expenses that you think are really small amounts, were also a massive saving so it was like bathroom utilisation and things like teas and coffees and stuff you ss think about that.”

Two experts recognised an additional cost saving, such as utility usage, from having employees work remotely.

Expert 5: “Agile working provides us an opportunity to flex our numbers, getting project teams in or out, without having to constantly redesign work spaces which is a very costly exercise.”

Five out of the six organisations had implemented a form of agile working spaces and used ‘hot desks’ as a means to accommodate more employees than available desks. The implementation of ‘hot desks’, where employees do not have a permanent workspace, allowed the respective organisations to save on costs associated with office space and, as a result, be able to employ more human capital than what the office can

physically accommodate. The mechanism in which the companies were able to implement these 'hot desks' was by allowing employees FWAs.

Expert 4: *"We've got probably about an 80% ratio in terms of desks to full time employees to fulltime head count. The other one, though, is that we've got an agile policy which means that individuals coming in will never sit at the same desk."*

The researcher found that three of the companies had more employees than what their offices could accommodate and the remaining three were moving in that same direction. The results suggest that organisations are moving in the direction of having more employees than available desks.

5.3.2 FWAs Perceived as a Global Trend and New Way of Doing Business

The majority of the subject matter experts recognised that implementing FWAs was the direction in which businesses were moving, globally, and that it was somewhat the future approach of doing business. Five of the experts described the trend as an imperative to remain relevant as an organisation and believed that FWAs are perceived as a necessary adoption to remain attractive to employees. Four of the experts mentioned how technology has enabled organisations to shift from traditional ways of communication towards modern forms of mobile communication such as cell phones, laptops, online communication platforms and access to teleconference resources.

Expert 4: *"Recognising that the future world of work offers a whole host of technologies, and just a different paradigm of thinking, which isn't enabled if you are force feeding an old paradigm."*

Expert 6: *"But in terms of high level why it's the environment that we are in now and understanding where the future of the business goes and in terms of our employee value proposition we need to be relevant, we need to be distinctive, and we need to be easy right and to do that, research shows from a human capital point of view, that people want to be flexible right, again the workforce is changing completely."*

Expert 7: *"So, it had been in place in the US already, and the UK, they are a bit more used to the practice of flexible working. Not just in terms of hours but in terms of, you know, in terms of working times, part time, job share that kind of thing."*

Many of the experts interviewed referred to more advanced countries, in terms of innovation and business practices, already adopting FWAs. As with Expert 7 above, the majority of experts interviewed referred to either the United States or Europe as being leaders in advancing their employee work arrangements and used them as a point of reference for what they believe the future world of work will look like.

Expert 4: *“More specifically, I think from a strategic and a cultural perspective, when we look at the future world of work in terms of how people, how we want people to engage, how we want people to network, how we want people to think about work as not being a physical manifestation but more, you know, knowledge workers that are conceptually focused on output as opposed to the input.”*

The notion of employees being measured on output as opposed to the number of hours worked was a recurring theme shared by all of the experts interviewed. The experts interviewed noted that time spent in the office has become an outdated method in which to measure productivity. The experts shared the view that employees’ performance should be measured on their output and performance, further suggesting that hours worked and time in the office is both an intangible and irrelevant measure.

Expert 5: *“The reason for the whole move was the idea of future proofing the business and becoming more world class.”*

Expert 3: *“You hear about things that Google are doing and Microsoft etc. and I know it hasn't, it's not been as big here in SA, but we decided we've got to start somewhere.”*

The majority of the experts recognised that FWAs are indeed the future for organisations. The experts often referred to companies who had the reputation for being highly innovative and disruptive as good examples of how organisations are progressing. Companies mentioned during interviews included Google, Facebook and Microsoft. Silicon Valley, as an innovation hub, was also referred to as an example of what leading companies are doing. The Experts interviewed recognised FWAs as a starting point in keeping up with the times and portraying innovation.

5.3.3 Companies Recognising Employee Needs and How FWAs Accommodates these Needs

The overall consensus from the eight experts was that employee needs have become increasingly more important as the concept of employee engagement has gained traction. Experts also commented that in order to have happier and more engaged employees, companies need to take steps in looking after their employees from a physical and psychological health perspective. It also became apparent that there was an overlap between responses referring to the catering of employee needs and the attraction and retention of talent.

Expert 6: "FWAs was anchored from our culture, right, and our cultural values. We've got seven cultural values and one of them is believing in our people right, and if you kind of hone into believing in all people it means you understand that everyone comes to work with the best intentions which makes it easy for us to kind of motivate in terms of embarking on a flexible working environment journey."

Expert 6: "We accommodated everyone, we looked at our work face, we looked at their phases in life, so we had to do all that analysis, who do we have, how many are Millennials, how many matured people, how many are mothers, so we had to kind of understand who we are talking to, because that flexible policy talks to people, not the organisation right so hence I am saying we made it as a value proposition, employee value proposition."

An evident theme was how organisations have recognised that employees differ in their approach to work and that one method of management cannot accommodate all individuals. Recognising that employees are all individuals with different approaches and needs, the experts suggested that providing flexibility is essential to meet the needs of each employee. The shared view was that the mix of employees within an organisation is vast. As Expert 4 commented below, it is essential for companies to find ways which cater for individuals by recognising that employees have different needs and ways in which they work. There was a shared view that FWAs are necessary to cater for the needs of individuals working within the organisation and, by doing so, employees would be happier and more productive.

Expert 7: *“The overall global rollout was as a result of the employment involvement survey, which was showing that staff members were finding it difficult to balance work and personal and that their stress levels were quite high.”*

Organisation 5 implemented FWAs based on the results from an employee engagement survey in which employees commented about their challenges in balancing their work with their personal life. As with the other organisations, they recognised that employees required support from the organisation.

Expert 4: *“I think we are also quite keen just to tap into people's deeper energy, and the potential that the full humanistic approach to employees brings to the table. Let me unpack that. So, we recognise that there's an opportunity for people to, in a more mature way, decide what their working circumstances look like, and immediately what that does is it allows them to balance their family responsibilities, their personal interests and do it in such a way that they are able to maximise their energy, maximise their contribution. I think this brings us the best possible person or brings the best possible person into the business on a daily basis.”*

As with Expert 4, respondents recognised that, in order to get the best out of their employees, it was essential to recognise their individual circumstances and implement practices which support them.

5.3.4 Companies Using FWAs to Cater for Millennials

One of the evident reasons for implementing FWAs was that organisations have recognised that different generations have different preferences and views when it comes to work. Four of the eight experts mentioned that part of their decision to implement FWAs within their organisation was due to the working demands of millennials. As seen below, Expert 6 and 8 mention their observations of how millennials perceive work. This view was shared by several of the other experts.

Expert 6: *“We are now moving from your old people, very structured, have experience, and kind of on a different, same stage in life versus how now we are getting into Millennials, we are getting into younger people who are in different phases of their lives. So now you have your Millennial's, you have your middle age can I say and then you've got your older people. Now you need to understand that it works differently right. You have the same goals and the same strategy to achieve*

but you are working with different people, and we, when you look at flexible hours, then it means that it accommodates everyone, Millennial's want to work whenever they want to, they want to go to gym, they work whenever, I mean we are different in terms of when are we are our most effective."

Expert 8: *"So obviously if you look at the different generations that are coming into the business, they all have a different flare and a preference for working. While you have the generation X's and the Baby Boomers that felt they had to be at work to get work done, that's not necessarily where the generations Z and Millennials are."*

Expert 5: *"We are such a large organisation, but are in a highly disruptive, we are a disruptive organisation and we want disruptive innovation into the marketplace, we want speed you know, to structure everything in meetings and then you wait until next week when you have a meeting room to have a conversation, it's just not the way we do things, we want things to happen quickly and the space needs to be facilitated."*

With regard to catering for younger generations, Expert 5 placed particular emphasis on fostering a culture which encourages agility and innovation. Expert 4 and 7 echoed these views by stating that organisations, that wish to be disruptive and innovative, need to promote a work environment and create a culture around flexibility.

5.3.5 Companies Recognising FWAs as a Necessity to Attract and Retain Talent

The importance of having FWAs to attract and retain talent was highlighted as significant. Experts felt that FWAs are something employees have started to place significant value on. Therefore, it is important to offer FWAs as a part of an organisation's value proposition as the employees place an increasing value on work-life-balance. An important factor stressed by three of the experts was the necessity to remain relevant as an employee and that FWAs allow employees to see the organisation as remaining relevant.

Expert 6: *"More than anything else we wanted to make it a value proposition, so we make noise about it."*

Expert 6: *"The development of the policy is a great way of retaining people, we had to ensure that we are relevant, we always knew that we develop our people and we*

are very good at that, there is a career path here for everyone and you can do whatever you want to do.”

Expert 7: “Going forward, if you are not a company that embraces flexible working hours, I think you will lose a competitive edge especially on attraction of candidates and with Millennials you know, they don't want to work 9am to 5pm, they want that flexibility and you get more from them.”

Expert 7 touched on the concept of relevance and further ventured that FWAs allow an organisation a competitive edge by being an appealing place to work.

Expert 2: “In terms of enhancing the employee value proposition as well so that employees can see that we do value the work life balance, you know, it's not just that we are saying it, we really want to ensure that we can get talent here, despite also having a life you know.”

Expert 8: “In order for us to attract good talent, one of the reasons was we needed to make sure that we offered, or that our employee value proposition basically entailed stuff that was relevant to the individual, and this new work force coming in basically wanted flexible work arrangements.”

Expert 8: “Employees that got the flexibility, you would find there were instances where they would leave and they would come back, and I would ask why, and they would say it's because I never had the flexibility that I have, and it's a big thing for people having that flexibility on how I plan my day, without compromising my work, and contribution to the team at large.”

Expert 2 and 8 mention how they have incorporated FWAs as part of their value proposition to current and prospective employees. Expert 8 further demonstrates the importance of FWAs through an example of employees who left and returned to Organisation 6, showing the value in which employees place on FWAs.

Expert 2: “And that's also the type of people that we want to attract, so the talented people, so we don't want to put people off because we are rigid in terms of our rules, in terms of time.”

Expert 2 recognised the importance of FWAs to attract talent and goes further to suggest that by not offering FWAs, organisations are perceived as rigid and unattractive to employees.

5.4 Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 - What perceived employee engagement benefits do organisations recognise from implementing FWAs?

The aim of Research Question 2 was to understand the company's perspective on the perceived benefits of FWAs associated to employee engagement. The views of the eight experts from the six organisations were used to develop the four constructs discussed below. Two interview questions (refer to Table 3 in Chapter 4) were used to establish the employee engagement benefits associated with FWAs, as well as the performance outcomes which companies recognise from implementing FWAs.

Three constructs emerged from analysing the expert interview responses. The below figure (Figure 4) highlights the various constructs and a discussion of each construct follows.

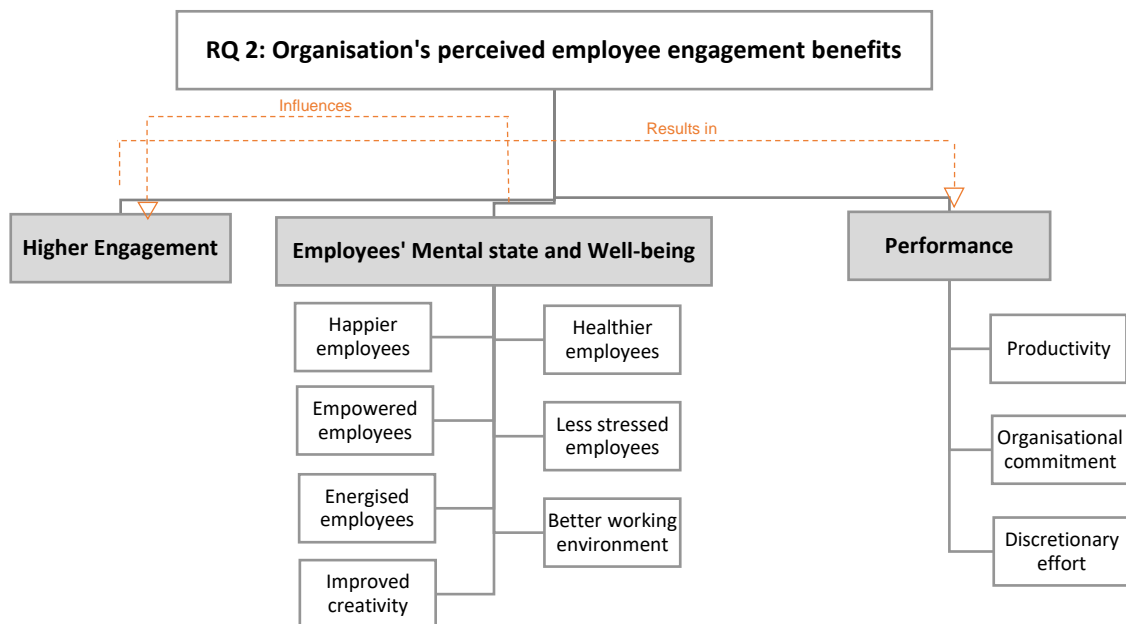


Figure 5: Overview of Results for RQ 2

5.4.1 Higher Engagement Recognised from Implementing FWAs

Three of the experts found that FWAs have a direct impact on employee's engagement. The experts also had a level of involvement in the rollout of employee engagement surveys and, although results cannot be directly attributed, they found a relationship between offering FWAs and employee engagement results, thus were somewhat able to quantify the relationship. Within Organisation 4, employee engagement surveys were done pre and post FWAs, and Expert 6 noted an improvement.

Expert 6: *"If you want them to be productive and engaged we need to talk to who they are."*

Expert 6: *"100% that the engagement has changed, around employee well-being, the organisation cares for me and my wellbeing. To get engaged and productive people you have to have a relationship, policies like this help us to connect."*

Expert 6 emphasised the relationship between employee well-being and employee engagement and productivity. Suggesting the two constructs are linked is in accordance with literature and further discussed in Chapter 6. Expert 8 explained the association between employee happiness and their engagement levels, as well as their output. The view shared by most of the experts expressed a close relationship between employee happiness, well-being and their level of engagement and output. The overarching constructs will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Expert 8: *"So there were some that got the flexible arrangement in a leadership role, that were happier, and you could see it in terms of their outputs and their engagements."*

Expert 8: *"In terms of performance and divisional teams, engagement and performance scores have improved."*

Expert 5: *"Where they have implemented work from home, there has been a great improvement in engagement and health, especially those who work from home. So, there is research that shows that. So, we have done a pre-engagement study and a post-engagement study, where the question was: 'my workspace enables me to do my best work possible' and we had an improvement there in engagement."*

Expert 5 also noted an improvement in employee engagement, specifically around an employee's workspace and feeling of enablement.

Contrary to Expert 5, Expert 4, from the same organisation, felt that there was no real way to quantify the employee engagement results based on the influence of FWAs. The expert further notes that the organisation already displays high engagement results and an improvement from offering FWAs is, therefore, immeasurable.

5.4.2 Improvement in Employees' Mental state and Well-being

When experts were asked what they felt the benefits of implementing FWAs were, one of the major themes which emerged was the improved mental state which employees demonstrated. All of the experts mentioned that they have observed benefits that FWAs have provided employees.

Expert 3: "We did a post implementation employee engagement survey, we called it the happiness meter, 'How are you feeling?' 'How engaged are you?'. So flexible working and dynamic working, we have also partnered with sustainable engagement. So, feeling sustainably engaged, being mindful of where you are, and having to manage personal and your work life, holistically. We now call it sustainable engagement, which includes dynamic working right. We've done health checks so to speak about whether initiatives are working, and do you feel that you can manage your work and your personal workload. The results have been very positive."

Expert 3: "I think overall it results in an increase in employee morale and employee wellbeing, and that has a direct effect and a direct impact on the work and the quality of the work."

Employee morale was a common theme which emerged. The experts observed an increase in employee satisfaction when employees felt empowered to manage their own time. The concept of autonomy often presented itself where experts noted that empowered employees tended to be more engaged and a lot happier.

Happiness was a construct supported by the majority of experts. Experts felt that FWAs allow employees the autonomy to balance their own lives which in turn makes them happier.

Expert 3: *“So you have a workforce that's come from feeling very demotivated, very stressed and unable to basically balance and manage their work requirements with their personal requirements. You now introduce a whole lot of initiatives that allow them to manage their lives through work and through personal initiatives and work in a dynamic way. That's obviously resulted in an increase in staff morale and as I mentioned, we are going to exclude the population of individuals who feel like it is still not working. We are always going to have that scenario. This has now resulted in an increase in staff morale because they have freedom and the flexibility.”*

Expert 3 reiterated that employees need freedom and flexibility in order to thrive in what they are doing.

Expert 6: *“And again, it's about trust, believing in our people, it's also kind of living our culture and values right so that's compressed hours. Being output based.”*

Expert 7: *“I can tell you from my previous company where we had fairly established flexible working hours, that it's qualitative, it's, you do tend to have a more empowered employee population. They don't feel as if they are being managed by rules, yeah because it becomes a conversation, it becomes a discussion and a partnership with the manager.”*

Expert 7: *“I think you are showing them that you trust them, you are trusting them to do their job and we are not managing every single minute of their day. It makes a nicer place to work, but I mean for me it's more empowering because you are giving the employee more control over what it is that they do. And I am thinking back to my last company, you know, people talked about those benefits as being really good, it was really beneficial.”*

Trust was identified as an important driver of employee morale. The experts interviewed believe that, by offering employees FWAs, the organisation portrays a message of trust to the employees. This was identified as a key attributor to their morale.

Expert 1: *“I think in terms of that, ‘the company cares’ so that I've picked up. They understand my personal circumstances so that I can actually flex it a little bit according to my needs, applying this in my own team, I also have that openness between me and there is an open relationship, while if it is really strict then its people*

sneaking around and excuses, so that openness is not there. So, for me that is a real benefit, that you are not checking up on people.”

Expert 1 mentioned that employees recognise FWAs as the organisation caring about them. Four of the other experts mentioned how employees are willing to give back to the organisation if they feel as though the relationship is mutual.

The most spoken about construct from all experts was around employee well-being. Experts felt that there was a clear improvement in the well-being of employees when they were allowed to better balance their work and personal life.

Expert 4: “If I had to think about whether we have seen so what I have observed is a greater level of contentment and satisfaction around work life balance. So, I hear people express greater levels of again satisfaction in terms of being able to plan activities from a family perspective, or personal things that they need to take care of because they've got that work flexibility”.

Expert 5: “So definitely from a health perspective there has been an improvement”.

Expert 6: “We have definitely seen an improvement in surveys around employee wellbeing, ‘the organisation cares for me and my wellbeing’.”

As expressed by Expert 4, it was observed that employees felt greater levels contentment and satisfaction around work life balance. Four of the experts mentioned that mothers in particular found it a lot easier to balance their work with their family responsibilities.

Expert 7: “The overall global rollout was as a result of the employment involvement survey, which was showing that staff members were finding it difficult to balance work and personal and that their stress levels were quite high.”

Expert 7: “I think in terms of the stress levels of having to get into the office by 8.30am and then being panicked if it's 8.32am has taken away some of that stress, and I think it increases productivity because they are not sitting in a car for four hours.”

Expert 7 found that FWAs have a significant impact on employees' stress levels and that, by offering FWAs, employees were more relaxed and less tense in the office environment. Experts found that avoiding traffic had a significant impact on employee

stress levels and overall well-being. Expert 8 below mentions that traffic causes stress and also has a direct impact on productivity due to time wasted in peak hour traffic.

Expert 8: Travel time is stressful in itself and moody in itself. People were tending to give better output, so for example, in a normal day I am driving for an hour and a half in the morning, we in Bedfordview, people were coming from Centurion and you know, far out, etc, and then you find that they get so frustrated and then they come to the office and they work 6 hours, and then they are driving home 2 hours, so the 10 hour day, you are only getting 60% of effort, now in a 10 hour day, we are getting 100% of effort.”

Expert 2: “Traffic here is a nightmare, and it really helped alleviate that anxiety and the resistance that people had to the change of moving buildings when they heard that the flexible time work arrangement is available to employees.”

Expert 8: “Therefore it's not about managing the time, it's managing the output, so I can then take a break from 2pm - 5pm and basically do all of my chores and responsibilities as a mum and then from 6pm, I am working 6pm - 10pm, or 7pm - 10pm and I am getting the output done.”

Many of the experts also found that FWAs offered employees the option to live healthier and more active lifestyles. They noted that employees would complain that they are unable to exercise because they did not have enough flexibility in the mornings and evenings.

Expert 3 further noted significant improvements within the office environment. FWAs allowed greater agility within the office and, together with other practices such as casual days, the office mood was lightened.

Another element mentioned by most of the experts was that FWAs were not seen as sufficient to promote employee well-being and that other, complementary initiatives and practices have to be in place in order to foster a desired company culture.

5.4.3 Improved Employee Performance

The Experts were asked what they feel the benefits of FWAs are to the organisation. The experts felt that the impact of FWAs reflected in overall employee performance. Experts recognised an increase in productivity related to the autonomy granted to employees.

Expert 3: *“Employees are less stressed. They are able to manage requirements and tasks be it work deliverables, personal deliverables because of the opportunities afforded and by doing that, you are in more of a position to balance what you need to deliver here in the organisation.”*

Expert 3: *“The ability for employees to work their lives according to their personal requirements and their work requirements has had a direct impact on their output. By employees feeling a bit more comfortable and flexible to balance their requirements and their responsibilities, it has had a direct improvement on the quality of work in the deliverables that we have been seeing.”*

In four of the cases, as Expert 3 suggests, employees tend to deliver more results when being measured on outputs as opposed to time worked in the office. There was also agreement that the quality of work which employees were producing was of a higher standard. This was attributed to employees not feeling rushed to finish at a certain time but rather being able to balance their working hours and focus on tasks.

Expert 6: *“The bottom line is happy employees, happy customers more money, we are a QSR company, and we always say your customer’s expectations will never exceed your internal customers, never.”*

Expert 6: *“When people work at the own time, they understand when they are at their best. And we have seen actually to tell you the honest truth, if you really look at this thing, people work longer than they think because you have given them the permission to.”*

The notion of recognising that employees are also productive under different circumstances was taken into account and experts felt that providing the flexibility allowed employees to maximise their productivity based on self-management practices.

Expert 6: *“The big thing you need to get out of this is that we really believe that to influence and to get people to be productive there needs to be a genuine connection. And for that genuine connection to happen I need to understand you as a person and we believe that the flexible hours allow us to have those conversations because then it allows us to kind of see how I can get the best out of you.”*

Expert 6 mentioned that employees need to be better understood as individuals so that their managers can provide them with the support which they require. This will allow employees to produce maximum results.

Expert 7: *“It's about output more than it is about hours of working.”*

There was consensus from all the experts interviewed that having FWAs promotes the culture of being output focused. Employees were held more accountable for their work when they were measured based on their output. It was an element of “we don't care how and when you work, as long as the work gets done.”

Expert 7: *“Well I think that the benefits are you get better outputs from the employees because they are delivering exactly what they deliver without watching the clock. I have seen managers before that have said to people you cannot go home because it's not 5pm and that employee sat there for an hour, doing nothing, waiting for the clock to strike 5pm, and for me that's just a waste, then you've got a resentful employee and an upset Manager.”*

Expert 8: *“You find that the more mature employees sometimes feel an obligation to work harder because now they are getting this flexibility, because they don't want to lose it, so they work harder.”*

Apart from improved productivity from being more output focused, experts also felt that the traditional way of managing employees resulted in a lot of unproductive time because employees were measured on intangible outcomes, such as arrival and departure time.

Another key concept which emerged was that employees were willing to give more to the organisation if they felt that the organisation was giving them something. Experts noted that, by providing FWAs, employees did not work any less but actually worked longer hours because there was no stipulated start and finish time in their day. Experts also noted that there was a form of a psychological contract where employees would

give discretionary effort back to the organisation as a means of appreciation. It was also noted that employees tended to be more committed to the organisation based on the organisation showing care and understanding for them.

Expert 8: "Where you basically have flexi time, where the internal clients that they supported are happy, so we found that you know, projects and stuff were delivered faster, on time and under budget."

Three of the experts also found that there was an improvement in internal customer satisfaction due to employees being more satisfied with their working arrangements and being more willing to engage as a result.

5.5 Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What are employees' lived experiences of flexible work arrangements (through an employee engagement lens)

The aim of Research Question 3 was to understand employees' lived experiences of FWAs associated with employee engagement. The views of the 15 employees were used to develop the three constructs discussed below. Four interview questions (refer to Table 3 in Chapter 4) were used to understand the lived experiences employees identify from having FWAs. Research Question 3 also allowed the researcher to understand whether the employees shared the same views as the employers (subject matter experts) or whether they had conflicting views.

Three constructs emerged from analysing the employee interview responses. The below figure (Figure 5) highlights the various constructs and a discussion of each construct follows.

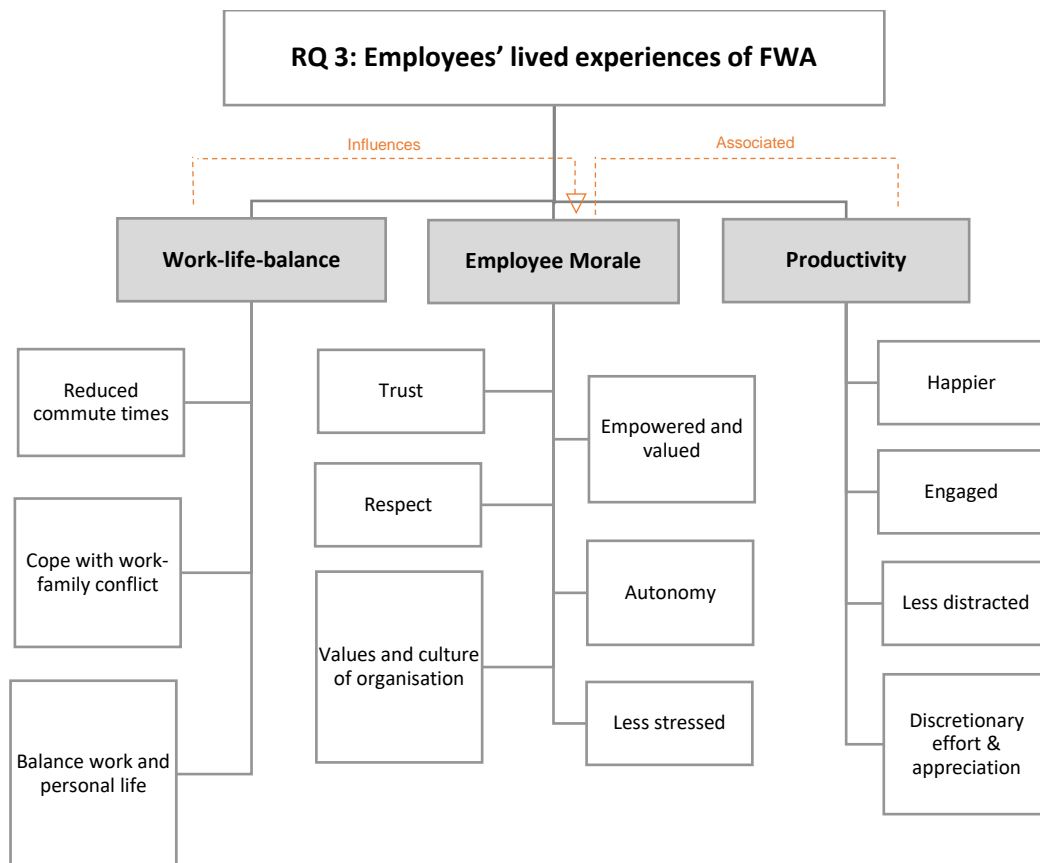


Figure 6: Overview of Results for RQ 3

5.5.1 Work-Life-Balance

When employees were asked what their feelings and thoughts were about FWAs, the most prevalent theme which emerged was that they were able to balance their work with their personal life.

Employee 2: *“It works for me because I've got children at school, so sometimes my husband works away, then I need to drop off kids, I need to fetch kids, so it works for me. In between I will catch up the hours, so that's why, and I work long hours, so it's not that I am taking the time, I am working a lot of time in.”*

Employee 3: *“Now I fit in Pilates three afternoons a week, in the afternoon, so that, it's basically just been a lifestyle I've adapted to and because I live on the West Rand the traffic, if I work flexi time, it's half an hour here, half an hour back. If I don't, it's an hour and a half here and an hour and a half back. So, I actually lose two hours of my day.”*

Employee 3: *“Well I love that I can avoid traffic because I hate it. I love that I can have a lifestyle that works for my body clock. So, I am definitely better in the mornings and I am worse in the afternoons, almost everything about it works for.”*

All 15 employees agreed that FWAs allowed them the flexibility to balance their personal lives with their working arrangements. Some of the examples which employees gave are provided above.

Some popular examples employees gave was the ability to balance work and family conflict, such as fetching their children from school and spending time with them in the evening before they go to sleep. A common arrangement among parents was that they would get home earlier to spend time with their children and then work in the evenings after their children have gone to sleep. Another example was related to reduced commute times. This was especially common among the employees who worked in high density areas such as Sandton. Employees felt that avoiding traffic really affected their day in terms of their mood and productivity. There were also many employees who mentioned how they manage to become more active with the use of FWAs and many mentioned how they are now able to go to gym in the morning or, in cases where FWAs were more intensified (Organisation 3), employees would go to the gymnasium during the day and then return to work. These employees felt that exercise during the day stimulated their thinking and increased their productivity.

Employee 15: *“Having a child for me it's also important that if I need to you know, do my mom duties that I can do it without feeling bad, or you know, or having to apply for annual leave.”*

Employee 15: *“I'm a runner, so I would like to run while it's bright and warm, and sunny, and that definitely allows me to have that type of balance that I need in my life. It's not just all work, we are not expected to stay in any of the companies I have worked in, I wasn't expected to stay in the office till 6pm, nobody is watching the time looking at it as an indicator of hard work or you know, people work remotely, if you are on a project that's behind, people put in the extra hours, but similarly if you are on a quiet period, you know, it's acceptable that you finish early and you can get your personal stuff sorted out.”*

An important element mentioned by the employees was that, in order for them to make use of the FWAs to balance their work, the policy had to be implemented and truly

embraced by the organisation. Employees felt that, by not having the guilt associated with leaving early or fetching their children, the transparency of the policy allows them to fully embrace their work-life-balance.

Contrary to the majority of respondents, a few employees felt that working from home actually decreased their work-life-balance because they struggled to differentiate work from personal time. Employee 15 recognised the benefits of working remotely but felt that one of the downsides was that they started working ridiculous hours because they didn't know when to stop working. They further stated that, although remote working had no definite start and finish time, the benefits outweighed the negatives, but it was something to become more cognisant about and that self-management strategies needed to be put in place to ensure there was a balance.

Employee 15: "If I use the example of flexible working hours, definitely because it gives me the flexibility to be able to do things that I need to do for myself like run or go to the gym or do shopping before the stores close, and just spend time with my kid before he has to go to bed."

Many employees also spoke about the frustration of having to put in leave to run errands during the day. Employees felt that running errands, such as going to the post office, home affairs or the shops during the day, relieved a lot of stress and pressure from having to do these tedious tasks on the weekend.

An important factor which was raised by numerous employees was that making use of FWAs did not mean that they worked any less and employees were often quoted saying that with FWAs they tend to work more. The reasons for working longer hours with FWAs was both unconscious and conscious; Unconscious because employees were not aware of when their start and finish time was, and conscious because employees were willing to go the extra mile for the organisation.

5.5.2 Employee Morale

Numerous constructs were presented by the employees, which the researcher categorised into 'employee morale'.

Employee 1: "I just found that the maturity of the work environment was much higher because people were accountable, and they felt respected in that people trust if the

output is there that they can manage their time accordingly, so you didn't feel as much of the micromanagement portion of it."

Employee 2: *"I know that I have got a trust relationship with my Manager, so that's the agreement. I've got the agreement, say I am coming in early and then I can leave early or because they know I've got global meetings, then I've got the option then to leave and to work that flexi hours, so for me it's convenient."*

Employee 11: *"So, I enjoy that they company treats you like they trust you, so there's an element of as long as you are doing your work, they are happy to enable you to do it in a way that suits you, or in a way that is most productive for you. So, I enjoy that element."*

A constant theme, as expressed by the majority of employees, was the trust component associated with the organisation offering FWAs. Employees felt that the organisation trusted them enough to give them autonomy. Many of the employees felt that the trust the organisation showed them portrayed a relationship of mutual respect.

Employee 11: *"It makes working at the company a lot more pleasant."*

Employees also felt that having FWAs made them enjoy working at the company. The main reason for this was that employees felt less stressed and happier and they also saw this with their colleagues, which made for a more pleasant office environment.

Employee 11: *"I think they have also seen that if you trust your employees and you give them room to be flexible that the employers won't abuse it, so I think they have seen that it does work, and it is helpful to productivity."*

Employee 11 suggests that by empowering employees and trusting them enough to use FWAs responsibly, employees are less likely to take advantage of the arrangement. This view was shared by many other employees.

Employee 13: *I Love FWAs, I think it's the way for the future. So, we are very, we are output driven, not input. So, for me it works around my schedule, I feel I've got control of my, control of my work life balance, man what doesn't work. And I think another advantage is that it actually empowers my team, so you kind of get to figure out a lot of things on your own, you learn quicker, you also learn to communicate."*

Employee 13, a senior manager in their organisation, found that FWAs empowered her team and also forced better communication as a result of remote working. The view that FWAs was the way of the future was also common among employees.

Employee 3: FWAs have actually become incredibly important to me to the extent that if my manager is doing what he has been, threatening to cancel all flexible work arrangements, I would look for another job, either within Sasol or outside and I would not work for an organisation that didn't offer it. I am sick to death of traffic jams."

Employee 11: "For me the flexibility is not as important as the message that it sends. So, I would quite happily go and work for a company that didn't allow compressed weeks, this is not now going to become a deal breaker going forward but I would think twice about working for a company that didn't show a level of trust and flexibility towards its employees. It's an understanding that life happens and day to day things happen. You might need to take a two-hour lunchbreak today to get something done and then work that time in tomorrow. It's just understanding that in the real world it's not always easy to work 8am to 5pm, so recently I have been to home affairs to get a new passport and those, it just took an hour and a half out of my working day, but if I was in a company that was very strict about being at the office from 8am to 5pm I would have had to take a day's leave for that. So, I think it's just understanding that days will change, days are fluid."

Employee 15: "It tells me a lot, like if you when you, in those interviews, I know people feel like they are being questioned, but I ask just as much questions because I want to try and find out what is your culture and I don't want to work in a company where they have got this rigid culture because it means other parts of your culture and your managers, it's all, you know, it all fits in together, you've got rigid people also, and that doesn't work for me."

The researcher asked employees how important FWAs were to them and whether they would work for an organisation which doesn't offer FWAs.

All of the employees interviewed said that FWAs have become very important in their lives and only a couple mentioned that they would consider working for an organisation that does not offer FWAs.

Over and above the importance of FWAs to the employees, many of them mentioned that a company offering FWAs says a lot about that company. Although FWAs were not always noted as a deal breaker by all employees, most employees mentioned that they would be sceptical about a company who doesn't offer FWAs as it sends a message that they are rigid in their thinking and lacked trust in their employees. Employees mentioned that they would not like to work for an organisation which didn't portray flexibility or trust and they felt companies who do not offer FWAs are not forward looking.

5.5.3 Productivity

Employees found that having FWAs allowed them to be a lot more productive for numerous reasons. Employees who reported into regional offices also found that having FWAs seemed sensible, as their reporting lines were not in the same geographic regions and in some cases even in different time zones. There was, therefore, a practical aspect associated with FWAs.

Employee productivity was closely associated to employee morale and employee well-being with overarching feedback from employees. Employees felt that they were less distracted and managed to be more productive because they had less stress due to work-family conflict.

Employee 2: "Well look because of the global meetings and stuff that I've got on a daily basis, because it's like every second day, so then I have to leave and then I have to go, so it's working for me because it's safe, and also my work performance is good because I don't have to stress out, because to get to home and sometimes I get more done at home, than in the office, so that is also working. So, no distractions, not people phoning and those type of things, so it's definitely working."

Employee 11: "So, I am not a great morning person. That extra half hour in the morning changes my day completely and I am quite happy to work later into the evenings, it's not necessarily for traffic or anything like that. It is just for my way of working."

Employee 15: "So for me personally I work more when I am based at home, and because there isn't this traffic and if I wanted to work in my pyjamas, I would work in my pyjamas, you know not getting my hair done, not getting my makeup done, and when I needed to Skype I would put on my business coat you know."

Employee 8: *"I for one know, tried and tested, I have work better from home. I get very distracted by noise I mean like I am genuinely sensory, very sensitive so like I can hear the escalators from my desk, and some days the escalators irritate me. I find more often than not the office environment quite like distracting, so I am a huge advocate for working from home".*

Employees felt that all individuals were different and that they were able to use their preferences of working to be most productive. This is because FWAs helped to cater for different individual preferences. Some employees felt that they were more productive at different times of the day, as well as being more productive in different places. One employee mentioned that their job required a lot of creative thinking and that they are most creative when they are in a comfortable environment, such as their holiday house or working from a coffee shop. The idea of individualism was common among the employees interviewed and there was consensus that everybody works differently.

Employee 6: *"The biggest thing is from a focus perspective. The open plan office environment seems to eliminate the etiquette of kind of people respecting your space and your time, so people find it acceptable to walk up to you if you are at your desk and literally like have a stand-up meeting with you. So, in general it's to really kind of maintain focus on a certain project and dedicate the thought process without being distracted by calls, emails, people walking up to you in an office space you know."*

The majority of employees who had the option of working from home felt that they were a lot more productive when they worked remotely. A common theme among employees was that the office can be very distracting. All of the companies used in the study had a form of agile work spaces and the office setup was mostly open plan. Employees complained that open plan offices have far too many distractions and can be very noisy, prohibiting productivity.

Employee 6 mentioned that there is no courtesy in open plan offices, in the sense that colleagues would simply approach you if they needed to talk about something regardless of whether they were busy or not.

A shared view of open offices was that it was difficult to focus on single tasks for long periods of time due to distractions and informal meetings taking place. There was also a temptation to socialise in the office. Socialising in the office had perceived advantages

such as interdepartmental communication but the disadvantage is that employees struggled to buckle down and get work done when deadlines were close.

Employee 11: *“So, with my previous job where they were less flexible, I was then also less flexible, so when it came to working late to get something done, I felt less inclined to put in extra hours if the relationship didn't go both ways.”*

Employee 11 had recently joined Organisation 4 and compared the flexibility they now had to their previous company that was extremely rigid and a traditional '9-5' environment. The employee mentioned that in their old company they were less inclined to 'go the extra mile' because the company seemed to show no form of care or flexibility to accommodate their needs. This view was supported by several other employees and the concept of discretionary effort is evident. Employees showed that they felt a level of reciprocity towards their organisation and they were willing to perform above expectations in return for the autonomy and trust which the organisation showed them.

5.6 Results for Research Question 4

Research Question 4: What are some of the drawbacks of FWAs arrangements and how can FWAs be improved to promote employee engagement?

Research Question 4 provides practical feedback and recommendations for academia and industry. The aim was to understand the drawbacks associated with implementing FWAs and recommendations to improve FWAs and better promote employee engagement. This research question used the views of both the experts and the employees within the six chosen companies. The research question was differentiated into two parts. The first part of the question refers to the drawbacks of FWAs and the second refers to practical recommendations on how FWAs can be improved to promote employee engagement.

Part A: Drawbacks of FWAs

Four constructs were identified as potential drawbacks of FWAs. The constructs are summarised in the figure below (Figure 6), with a discussion of each construct following suit.

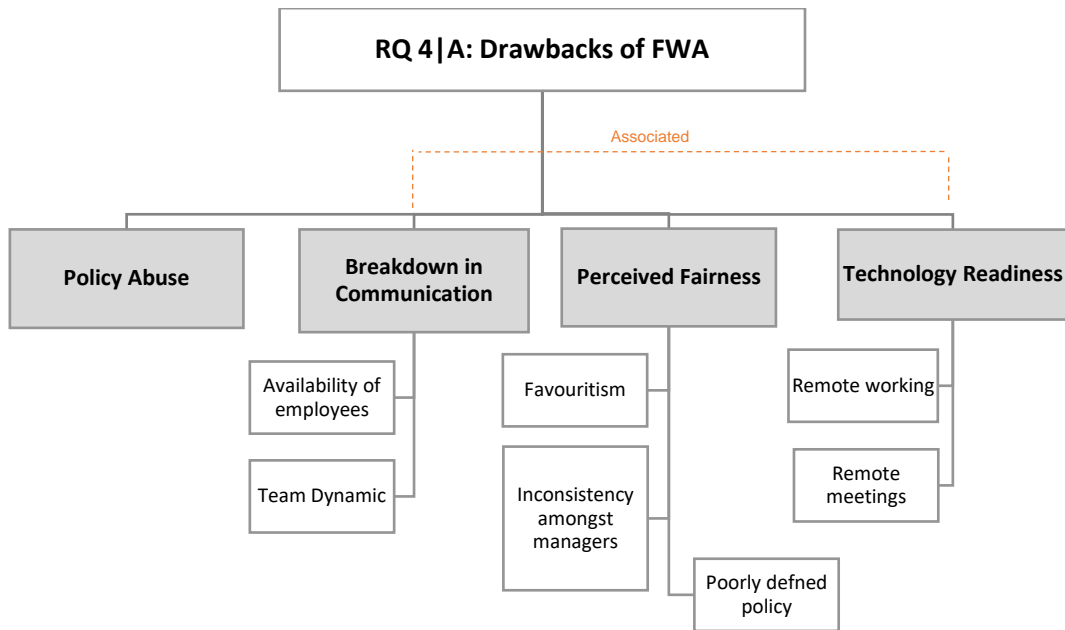


Figure 7: Overview of Results for RQ 4 Part A

5.6.1 Abuse of the FWA policy

Employees and Experts were asked what some of the drawbacks were of FWAs and the majority observed some form of abuse of the policy from their colleagues. Most of the employees mentioned examples of where they have seen people take advantage of the policy and the effects that had on everybody within the organisation.

A concern for the experts was how they went about managing employees that were abusing the policy. Experts felt that it was unfair to take the whole arrangement away because certain individuals were abusing the policy. Both experts and employees said that the abuse of the policy was, however, the exception rather than the norm. The impact of the abuse was that managers started to question the policy and there was resistance towards the policy by certain managers because of their observations.

Employee 2: *“I see some colleagues are taking chances, I am not going to mention names. I can see some people taking chances, coming in at 9am, and leaving at 2pm/3pm.”*

Employee 15: *“Because people will take advantage of it, and it's at that recruitment phase. If you are hiring the wrong type of person, they will take advantage of that*

and I did see that here, there were people that when it came to the quarterly sales meeting, you could see I mean they weren't achieving their targets, but these are the same people if you phone them, they are not contactable. In sales specifically, that's quite a big thing, it's called ghosting, so that is a negative thing."

Employee 7: "I think what you need to like be careful of is obviously that there might be people who are like taking advantage of it a little bit. I think more than anything it's keeping it fair between the people, so some people are not going to take advantage of the flexible working hours as much as others."

Employees indicated that the FWAs policy resulted in the comparison of who was working more and who was merely taking advantage of the policy. This created internal conflict, especially when work performance was decreasing and colleagues were 'dropping the ball'.

Expert 8: "There were those that had the flexible work arrangement and abused it. And then you have to take on the policy and the governance and the framework around how we manage this abuse and then you take it away, and then they don't like it, then their engagement goes down."

Employees felt animosity towards their colleagues who abused the policy because they felt that they gave the policy a bad name and attached an unwanted stigma to it. A concern for the experts was that if they revoked the policy from those abusing it, they would become more disengaged.

5.6.2 FWAs Resulting in a Breakdown of Communication within the Organisation

A major drawback which was prevalent in the interviews was that FWAs tended to restrict prompt communication within the organisation.

Employee 11: "So perhaps some disadvantages is as a team where you rely on other people for work it can make work difficult if some people are away or they are not working at the office. So, your communication as a team has to be a lot better, and your systems to be able to still get work done are a lot more important, else someone else on my team is taking a day off on a compressed week and so now I can't get something done."

Employees noted that they often had difficulty getting work done when they were reliant on other employees who were using the FWAs. Team members working times and working spaces were misaligned and this caused challenges when projects required the input of various employees. As Employee 11 mentioned, when having FWAs, it is essential to implement effective communication practices. Many of the other employees agreed that it was imperative that everyone made a conscious effort to communicate with their team members at all times in order for FWAs to be effective and not disruptive.,.

Employee 15: *“The problem comes in when you need to work as a collaborative team but somebody's start time is 6.30am in the morning and they are gone at 3pm and somebody else is coming into work and starting at 11am, and in their mind they feel like it's fine, because they are working until 6.30pm or 7pm, but for me, that's not our customers operating hours. If there isn't anybody available or one or two people available, if somebody can't get an answer that they need at 4pm, there's a problem right, so for me the major problems is if it affects our customers and business as usual can't run because people are coming and going as they please.”*

When it came to team communication, there were two aspects of FWAs which were noted as problematic. The first was the notion of internal agile working, which means employees sit in different places each day. The challenge found by employees with agile working meant that they spent a lot of time trying to find out where their colleagues were sitting, only to find they were not at the office. The second challenge was how the team went about respecting everybody's unique working arrangements. This meant that, at any given point, team members were on different schedules.

Employee 10, working as a director in organisation 4, felt that FWAs started changing the culture of the organisation in a negative way. The employee felt that the breakdown in communication came from the belief that the organisation was becoming too informal and that professionalism was lost because of this mind shift in the organisation. Given the employee's position and working experience, the researcher considered this as a valid concern.

Employee 10: *“I think what lands up happening is remember when you make big policy changes, you start changing people's behaviour so that then has broader impact on culture.”*

“But it's just you know, there's because we've got all this flexibility, it's made people not care. It's like ag whatever man, you know, check this is like this cool college campus you know, we can come to lectures, we don't have to come to lectures, we can dress how we want. And maybe that's what our guys saw at Facebook and Google, you know, all these tech companies, and that's what they are trying to emulate. But I also know in those tech companies, people flipping sleep in their offices and work 24 hours a day, and you know, they are hiring very different type of people, and it's the US right, if you don't perform there, you are out.”

Employee 10 also raised the point that organisations are looking at leading technology companies as best practices, but these companies attract different employees and have different measurables for employees.

5.6.3 Perceived Fairness of the FWAs Policy

A major drawback, expressed by the subject matter experts and the employees of the organisations, was the fairness of the policy. Inconsistency in the use and execution of the policy resulted in employees feeling demotivated and, in some cases, resentment towards other employees and the organisation.

Expert 8: “Having flexible work arrangements only applicable to certain employees causes issues because on the other hand, you've got people saying why not me?”

Expert 1: “So, there was a bit of resistance because it was not applied equally or the same across all the different entities that sits in these buildings, so it's not Organisation 1 and Organisation 1 on its own, you've got, I think there's about six or seven business units that sits in this building and the application of things gets difficult, it's applied differently.”

The experts felt that the FWAs policy was difficult to manage because a lot of it was informal arrangements made between managers and employees. The result of this was that there was no coherency throughout the organisation. Experts who implemented FWAs also mentioned a challenge being that they could not force the managers to adopt the practice and that it depended on their style of working. By having an incoherent policy, experts found that employees would compare their working arrangements with their peers in other departments and feel hard done by when they came to learn that they had less flexibility in their respective departments.

Employee 1: *“If you are managing a big team like that, there was always a lot of unhappiness within the inventory management team because they felt like why are they being managed on hours that they are in the building, you know, why can't they get the same flexibility as some of the people in the other time, but it's role specific, so if you need to be here because you have to monitor if EDI's are going through or not, you can't get the same type of flexibility as someone that is working in a different environment.”*

One of the notable themes which emerged was that FWAs cannot be applicable to the whole organisation due to the impracticality of the policy in certain functions of the business. An example of customer facing roles, such as the customer services or sales teams, were noted as functions which needed to be available during certain hours for practical purposes. It was found that employees who did not receive these FWAs, did not understand why they were excluded from the policy because the policy was not well defined and did not detail who can or cannot access or use the policy.

Employee 1: *“Now it causes some dividedness because this one team feels like they are being, you know, their manager is almost checking the clock because it's more of an accounting environment and then this other portion can be given that flexibility.”*

Employee 15: *“It's almost like that psychological contract that you know, everyone talks about, but you almost formalising it in a sort of way, so that people are, you know, there are expectations and managed properly and that you don't have people that are in legit office-based roles thinking or feeling hard done by because they are looking at sales people who are working from home. And I completely saw that in my previous companies as well. Both previous companies, that you had this like, why do they get this special treatment.”*

Employee 1 and 15 mentioned that, by having inconsistency in the policy, many employees started feeling as though the policy was not fair. Some of the managers interviewed mentioned that employees would ask to be transferred into teams where they heard FWAs were embraced by the managers in that specific department.

Employee 3: *“But when you leave at 3pm, people think oh but then it's acceptable to leave at 3pm, so then they also leave at 3pm, meanwhile they only arrived at 8.30am or 9am.”*

Employees felt that the policy was also not monitored very well. Employee 3 mentioned that employees' finish time was addressed more than their start time and this resulted in many employees leaving early when in fact they started late.

Employee 3: "I hate that sense of implied distrust that I get. Like you know, you are trying to I don't know get away with something by working flexi time because my Manager starts work at 8.30am/9am and then he leaves at 5pm/6pm in the afternoon."

Many of the employees interviewed felt as though the policy was poorly embraced by the organisation. The policy existed in theory but it was lacking in practice. Employee 3 mentioned that there was an element of guilt when using the FWAs policy because it was not fully supported within their department. Some employees felt as though there was a stigma attached to using FWAs and that it had a negative perception from managers and colleagues.

5.6.4 Technology Readiness

A drawback noted by the experts and employees was that technology was a prohibiting factor to the successful implementation of FWAs.

Employee 8: "I do think you obviously need that face time and contact time for meetings, in which case they are best done when you are in the office, it doesn't work when you do telecoms, or dial in's, I don't know if that's that technology in our building currently or just like not being able to sort of gauge facial reactions, echo on the phone."

Employee 9: There's always Skype calls, and the technology here, like they have tried to make it amazing but it's, it often fails us, so that you know, issues like that can be quite annoying."

Many of the employees complained that remote meetings were not very effective. Employees felt that physical presence in meetings was a lot more effective than employees trying to dial in remotely. The majority of employees felt that the standard of technology did not enable fruitful meetings due to poor sound quality.

Expert 6: “You never know what you’ve missed or whatever, we got a lot of push back around technology and how would this work and how would that work. 3G for example, not everybody had 3G.”

Employee 8: “The only time it really impacts is if we do have a team meeting as and when I am working from home or any of us are working from home and we try to dial in and the dial in technology is so shocking, people tend to not bother dialling in, which becomes a bit, you have to like catch up the next day, but some people are now coming in if there is a team meeting on the day that they are working from home, which I also think is a bit stupid and pointless.”

A shared view of Employee 8 is that often people won’t bother to attend meetings because they believe that coming to the office for one meeting is a waste of time. Further, they also tend to not dial in remotely due to technology constraints.

Part B: Improving FWAs to Promote Employee Engagement

Part B of Research Question 4 aims to provide practical solutions for the improvement of FWAs, to promote employee engagement. Three constructs were identified as elements which can assist in improving FWAs to promote employee engagement. The three constructs are highlighted in the below figure (Figure 7) and then individually discussed.

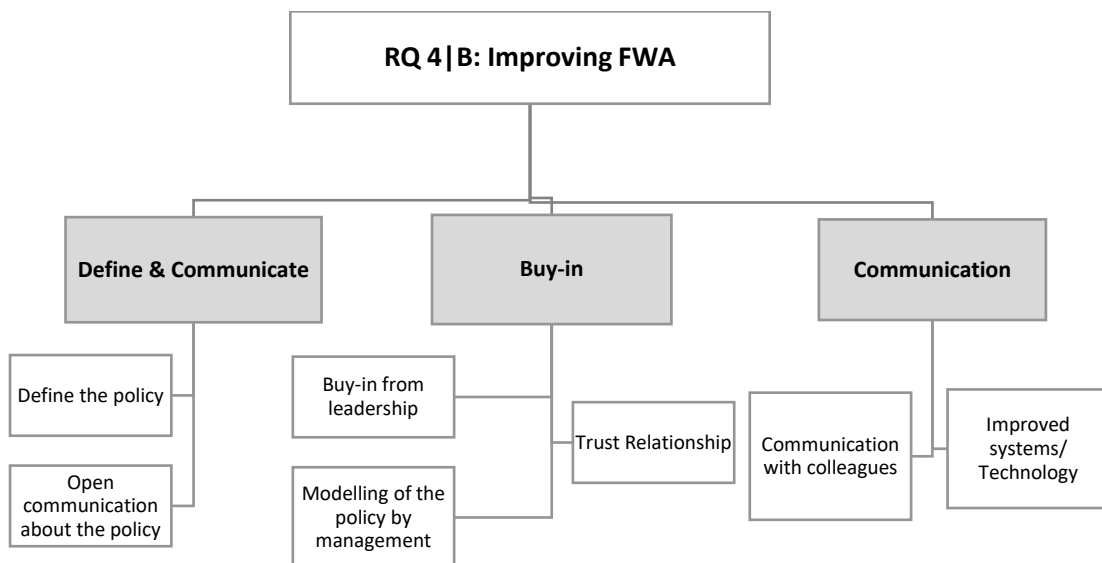


Figure 8: Overview of Results for RQ 4 Part B

5.6.5 Defining and Communicating the FWAs Policy

One of the major challenges, which were mentioned in Part A of Research Question 4, was that employees felt that the FWAs policy was poorly defined. As a result, there was the perception that the policy is unfair and biased. Experts and employees suggested that the policy would be implemented and perceived better by adopting transparency. .

Expert 4: “The frustration that I hear when I look at the engagement survey results because it was amongst our four to five lowest feedback areas, and I think you are hitting it spot on. It’s that frustration that ‘my manager doesn’t get it’. There may even be individuals who aren’t aware you know, that we do have the policy that talks to that”.

Employee 15: “Defining the policy and having managers that are open and transparent so that they can talk about these types of things. I think too many times, because then you leave yourself open to these corridor discussions and people making their own assumptions and harbouring this negativity and then spreading it, and whatever.”

The views expressed by Expert 4 and Employee 15 were common amongst most of the participants in the study. The consensus was that if the policy was better defined there would be no room for interpretation and it would address the concerns around fairness. In five out of the six organisations, the policy had a large element to it which was informal and left to the discretion of line managers who implement the policy. The researcher found that participants were also not sure what the policy was and who they could approach about using the policy.

Overall, it was felt that if the FWAs were better communicated, to both managers and employees, there would be a lot less debate and misinterpretation of the policy. Two major constructs about the communication aspect of the policy were apparent. The first construct was having a formalised policy which defines what the organisation offers in terms of flexible working and who can use it. The second construct concerned being more open about the policy. Employees felt that this would reduce the biases and perceptions about the policy.

5.6.6 Receiving the Buy-in from Leadership and Management

The majority of experts and employees felt that FWAs had failed in certain departments because the policy was not embraced by the organisation's leadership team.

Expert 4: *"Having a policy is one thing but ensuring or finding that managers absolutely embrace that policy is another one".*

Expert 4 noted that the policy as a document is just one part of having FWAs in an organisation. This was a common view of both the experts and employees. FWAs policies rely on line managers encouraging the use of the policies. Many of the other experts also felt that there needed to be a culture shift to adopt this practice and the only way that was attainable was by having the leadership of the company fully support and model the policy.

Expert 4: *"It's going to take a while for managers to embrace, it's going to take a while for people to start trusting you know, their teams, that if I let you work from home that you are not sleeping the whole day, that you are actually getting up, sitting at your desk and working in that freedom".*

Resistance to change was a construct which continuously repeated itself when interviewing the experts. Most of the experts were responsible for the implementation of the policy and they noted their biggest challenge as being the resistance to adopt the policy by the management team.

Expert 3: *"So, we started off with getting our senior manager's including vice presidents and presidents to work out of the office once a week, every two weeks. We realised that the junior guys needed to see this in practice and in play and that encouraged them".*

The researcher noted that Organisation 3 and 4 seemed to have had the most success in implementing the FWAs policy. The experts from these two organisations attributed the success of the implementation to good adoption by the leaders within the respective organisations.

Expert 4: *"The other impact that it had is I saw leaders who started questioning whether individuals were actually being as productive as they could be. And I think*

the reason for that is psychologically we are programmed to think of work as a fulltime activity. You are programmed to think or to make the correlation between the expectation you have of the persons delivery, and the moment something doesn't live up to expectation, the immediate assumption that you make is that that person is lazy or they are not as productive as they could be and when you don't see them every day then that accentuates that conclusion”.

Expert 4 mentioned that many of the managers in the organisation were not convinced about the effectiveness of the policy and that made it very difficult for the employees within their teams to comfortably make use of the policy. The expert attributes the lack of buy-in to biases which managers have about the policy. In order to successfully implement FWAs, a trust relationship had to be instilled between managers and their employees.

Employee 3: “They haven't made it easy for people to work from home, for example it's still seen as someone is trying to bunk. So, if it was more of a, there was a culture of acceptance around it, and some more role models of people who actually work from home three days a week.”

Employee 11: “Something that I do like is that with it being companywide there is an understanding and a good buy in from management, so it's not frowned upon and it's not something that is seen as an irritation if you want to take a compressed week or you want to work from home, the Management is very open to it.”

During the interviews with employees from the different organisations, it was apparent that some of the organisation did a better job at implementing the policy than others. There is a clear distinction between how Employee 3 and 11 feels about the embracement of the policy by management. Buy-in from the organisation's leadership was, therefore, noted as an imperative to successfully implement a flexible working policy.

5.6.7 Improved Communication within the Organisation

The majority of experts and employees said that there needs to be improved communication within the organisation so that FWAs do not compromise work being completed and avoid negative effects related to team dynamics and a delay in execution of work. Most of the companies used in the study also noted that they have implemented

'core hours' to promote physical meetings within the office. Core hours are defined times, generally between 10am and 3pm, whereby employees need to be in the office so that they are available for meetings.

Employee 11: *"I think in when you are working in a team environment where you are relying on other people for information. In my job I often need to gather information from other people, I can't complete the task myself. Then it can be difficult if people are uncontactable. So, what can be done to improve it and what generally happens here is that even if you are working a compressed week and you are not at work one day, you will generally be contactable so it's not as stringent as being on leave when no one would call you with a question because you are on leave, there's still an element of being on standby if they need you."*

Employee 11: *"So when we work compressed weeks, we don't log it anywhere on any systems, it's a fairly informal process where we will check with our direct manager whether they are happy for us to work a compressed week and then we will let our team members know that we are but perhaps over time, that system lacks some transparency where you can perhaps not be sure on how many compressed weeks people are taking, whether this is an every week occurrence, or whether this is a once in a year occurrence, there is no guidelines on what is expected."*

Many of the employees had similar suggestions to Employee 11. It was noted that there could many tools for employees to use to better communicate their FWAs practices. Most of the participants also felt that employees were not communicating their working arrangement with their manager or colleagues and this resulted in confusion for that employee's team.

Employee 15: *"Obviously in agreement with your Manager, if there's certain you know, if there's certain critical projects and things that you needed to do which needs you in the office or needs you to work in a group you know, but it's a discussion, but it's having that openness in that discussion to know that when things, you know, there is negotiation room, and there is flexibility."*

Employee 13: *"Our communication is hectic, I mean I just need to know what you are doing the day and where you are on that, and then you basically are responsible for your output and deliverables, and if you are stuck, give me a call, if you need to*

come in, we will both come in, but otherwise we are all doing our own thing and we just touch base once in a while.”

Communication between manager and employee was noted as essential for FWAs to be successful. Employees should inform their managers and their colleagues on where they are and when they are available. Respondents expressed the importance of an open path of communication between a manager and an employee so that the employee's personal circumstances can be understood and catered for by the manager and so that the organisation can get the most out of that employee.

5.7 Conclusion

The results from the ten interview questions are presented under each research question in this chapter. There were 19 main themes which emerged from the in-depth interviews conducted with subject matter experts and employees working for the organisation. The themes which were identified by the researcher are supported by literature, with some new insights associated to FWAs and the impact it has on employee engagement. The next chapter (Chapter 6) will further discuss the results found above.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 discusses the results from Chapter 5 in detail. The discussion incorporates the data received from the 23 interviewed respondents as well as the literature review presented in Chapter 2. Through comparing the results to literature, a rich discussion will proceed to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 3. The research findings contribute to an improved understanding of the influence FWAs have on employee engagement.

6.2 Discussion of Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1- Why do companies in South Africa choose to implement FWAs

The aim of Research Question 1 was to understand why companies in South Africa choose to implement flexible work arrangements. It was necessary to understand why organisations decided to implement FWAs prior to understanding what the benefits and drawbacks related to employee engagement were. The researcher explored the reasons for implementing FWAs and was able to understand some of the benefits before introducing the next research question. This provided unaided responses. The results found five prevalent themes which emerged from the data. The five themes are discussed below, in no particular order.

6.2.1 Organisations Recognise a Cost Saving from Implementing FWAs

The data from the interviews suggests that a major incentive for companies to implement FWAs involves the costs associated to office space and utility consumption. Companies noted that office space has become a significant expense as the company expands and noted the impracticalities of having to move offices or redesign office space as they grow. FWAs were, therefore, perceived as a solution to extend their staff compliment without having to expand their office space.

It can, however, be noted that the organisations interviewed were all situated in high valued real estate areas and the cost incentive may not have been as prevalent in smaller organisations where space is not a constraint or where real estate is inexpensive.

Fleetwood (2007) argues that there are two main reasons organisations choose to implement FWAs. The one is for economic profit driven reasons and the second is to accommodate employees work-life balance. Fleetwood (2007) further suggests that organisations which prioritise profit when implementing FWAs may not recognise the employee benefits to the same extent as organisations which prioritise employees' needs when implementing FWAs. Hill, Ferris & Martinson (2003) also state that organisations are using FWAs as a cost reduction strategy.

The study investigated what employee's thoughts were regarding why their organisation offers them FWAs. The results indicated that employees who felt as though FWAs were granted because 'the company cares' had a more positive attitude towards the organisation when compared to employees who felt the organisation offered FWAs purely as a profit driven initiative.

Affective commitment refers to how much an employee feels the employer cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001). Affective commitment is, therefore, not only an antecedent to employee engagement, but closely related to perceived organisational support and well-being.

The research results found in this study are in line with Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades (2001) and Fleetwood (2007). The way employees perceive the reasons for why companies implement FWAs is, therefore, closely associated to employees' attitude towards the organisation and their affective commitment for the organisation.

6.2.2 Organisations Recognising FWAs as a Global Trend

Companies have recognised that, in order to remain competitive, they need to attract and retain the best talent available (Chabowski & Mena, 2017). As a result, companies globally have started exploring ways to become more appealing to employees by implementing flexible working arrangements to encourage autonomy and work-life balance. Research highlights a positive relationship between organisational support practices and employee performance (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Caesens et al., 2016).

Respondents in the research noted that FWAs have become a popular practice. They also recognised many leading organisations as examples of companies who have high employee engagement and high performing employees.

The World at Work Report (2015) reported that 80% of organisations globally offer employees a form of flexible work arrangements (World at Work, 2015). Therefore, it can be deduced that FWAs have become a global trend.

Many respondents in the research referred to human resource practices happening in North America and Europe. Chandra (2012) shows in his study that companies in the United States and Europe are indeed more focused towards catering for employee needs. The study further mentions some of the companies globally which are renowned for having high employee engagement by using a work-life balance scale.

A common reference which respondents used as a good example of flexible working and happy employees was 'Google'. Gillett (2016) noted that one of the reasons the global giant 'Google' has such a good reputation and is considered as one of the best companies to work for is because of their holistic view on flexible working. The results also found that organisations believed that output-based management has become a more effective management tool as opposed to traditional methods of assessing employee performance. Zeijen, Peeters & Hakanen (2018) mention that organisations have started to be more output focused and have incorporated self-management practices to encourage a more dynamic and decentralised approach to working.

6.2.3 Organisations Recognise Employee Needs

This study found that a major motive for implementing FWAs was that companies recognised that they need to start catering for the needs of their employees. The experts interviewed suggested that, by recognising the needs of employees, it allowed employees to better balance their work with their personal lives and this resulted in favourable outcomes.

The study found that the companies have recognised that all employees are different in their work approach and it was important to cater for the different styles of working to get the most out of each employee. The study found that organisations implemented FWAs with the belief that employees are happier and more engaged when offering FWAs. Companies identified employees' physical and psychological health as a priority to get the most out of their human resources.

A common motive for organisations to implement a flexible work arrangement policy is to assist employees to better balance their time between work and their personal circumstances (Chen & Fulmer, 2017).

Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart & Cory (2017) argue that organisations cannot afford to ignore employees' needs, as the results can be detrimental to the business. Ignoring the needs of employees can cause significant loss in talent and result in high absenteeism (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart & Cory, 2017). Many respondents noted that catering for employees' needs is closely associated with employee performance and talent retention.

Flexible work arrangements have been highlighted as policies implemented to assist with work-life balance, employee well-being and productivity (Caesens, Marique, Hanin & Stinglhamber, 2016).

6.2.4 Organisations Catering for the Needs of Millennials

Literature suggests that employee needs are changing and younger generations entering the working environment are not only motivated by monetary reward and that a balanced life has become an expectation (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Thompson, Payne & Taylor (2015) found that younger generations prefer more autonomy and are more inclined to blend work and personal time at their own discretion. Lyons & Kuron (2014) suggest that millennials have become more demanding in having flexibility in their work. Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley (2013) go as far as saying that FWAs were designed for younger generations entering the work environment.

The study found most organisations implemented FWAs in order to cater for millennials. The respondents interviewed found that, in order to foster innovation and remain relevant to the younger generations, they had to become less rigid in their ways and implement policies which allowed more flexibility. The study recognised a logical relationship between practices which cater for millennials and talent retention and attraction.

One of the challenges noted in the study was that older generations showed more resistance towards the flexible working arrangement practices. This notion is supported by Sweet, Pitt-Catsoupes & Boone James (2016) who found that older managers were less likely to implement flexible work arrangements.

6.2.5 Organisations Using FWAs to Attract and Retain Talent

A primary reason companies decided to implement FWAs was to remain relevant in the eyes of current and prospective employees. Organisations recognised the fight for talent and mentioned that if you are not moving with the times and giving employees what they want then they will simply leave.

Organisations therefore found FWAs to form a part of their value proposition and all the experts interviewed demonstrated pride towards the fact that their organisation offered FWAs. The research found that experts and employees believe that FWAs portray a lot about a company's culture and values, which is a key factor in retaining and attracting talent.

There are conflicting views in literature about whether FWAs have a relationship with talent attraction and retention. Kossek, Hammer, Thompson & Burke (2014) considered FWAs as a tool to attract and retain talent. The notion of FWAs being related to talent is further supported by Matos & Galinsky (2014) who state that organisations use this human resource practice to give them a competitive advantage by being an attractive organisation to work for. The authors mention that the practice is mutually beneficial and thus a good practice to use to acquire and retain talent.

However, Thompson, Payne & Taylor (2015) found no significant relation between FWAs and an organisation's attractiveness to employees. Literature is, therefore, not clear on whether FWAs do in fact attract and retain talent.

Based on research gathered from interviewing employees, the results found all 15 employees placed significant value on FWAs as a value proposition. Employees were asked how important FWAs were to them and whether they would consider working for a company which does not offer FWAs. The responses were all aligned and the data found that employees place a significant value on FWAs and the majority of employees would not like to work for a company which does not offer FWAs. The research found that employees gave two main reasons for not wanting to work for a company that does not offer FWAs. The first was related to them enjoying the benefits of FWAs such as work-life balance and the second was that the majority of employees felt that companies who do not offer FWAs are rigid and inflexible.

6.3 Discussion of Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2- What perceived employee engagement benefits do organisations recognise from implementing FWAs?

Research Question 2 sought to identify the major benefits related to employee engagement that companies recognise from implementing FWAs. The views of the field experts were used to gather the necessary data to answer Research Question 2.

The results reflect four dominant themes which emerged from the data and presented in Chapter 5. The four themes are discussed, in no particular order, below.

6.3.1 Higher Engagement Recognised from Offering FWAs

The views from three of the experts interviewed found that there was a direct relationship between FWAs and employee engagement. The experts felt that after implementing FWAs they were able to see the impact in their employee engagement survey results. However, Expert 4 and Expert 8 mentioned that there are too many other variables which impact the surveys and an increase in the employee engagement survey scores cannot be directly attributed to FWAs. Part of the justification the researcher used to conduct qualitative research was that it would be difficult to quantify a relationship between the two researched constructs based on various other factors which may have an impact on employee engagement survey results. Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo (2015) agree that a limitation in quantifying the relationship between FWAs and employee engagement is the external factors which can influence the perceived relationship.

Most of the experts found that there is a relationship between FWAs and an employee's engagement. Many of the experts did not necessarily state a direct relationship but they would suggest a knock-on effect whereby FWAs impacted antecedents of employee engagement; such as employees' happiness and well-being. The notion of employee happiness and employee well-being having an influence on employee engagement is widely supported in literature (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018; Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015; Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017; Zhong, Wayne & Liden, 2015).

Literature has conflicting views on the relationship between FWAs and employee engagement. Some research found positive relationships between the two constructs

(Bal & De Lange, 2014) while other researchers found no relationship between employee well-being and employee engagement (Zheng et al., 2015) even though research has found it to be an antecedent of employee engagement (Brunetto, Teo, Shacklock & Wharton, 2012). Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo (2015) suggest that solely implementing FWAs cannot improve employee engagement.

Employee engagement is a large construct with various sub-constructs defining the concept (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010). The researcher, therefore, aimed to understand the benefits that organisations recognise from implementing FWAs and then link it back to the literature to understand which constructs of employee engagement are influenced by FWAs. This was done rather than making inferences on the overarching construct.

6.3.2 Improved Employee Well-being and Mental State, from Having FWAs

Experts interviewed found various benefits related to overall employees' state of mind and well-being. Benefits observed by the experts included employees' happiness, their attitudes, energy levels, creativity, health, stress levels and sense of empowerment.

The construct of employee engagement is defined as an individual's cognitive, behavioural and affective energy in their work performance (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011). Employee engagement has also been defined as an employee's positive state of mind related to their vigour, absorption and dedication (González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006). The view that a positive psychological state of mind is required to drive employee engagement and performance is supported by Parker & Griffin (2011). Literature has suggested a positive relationship between organisational support practices, employee well-being and employee's positive psychological state (Hosie & Sevastos, 2010). The literature is, therefore, closely affiliated to the view of the respondents.

Employee well-being was a constant construct mentioned by all of the experts interviewed. Experts found that FWAs were a successful tool in allowing employees to improve their overall well-being associated to work-life balance and self-management.

Job satisfaction has been recognised as a construct within employee engagement by various researchers (González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006; Kurtessis et al., 2017). During the interview process experts noted that, by offering employees FWAs,

they saw an improvement in their attitude towards their work. Experts also noted that they found employees to be less stressed at work. This view is supported in literature by Bakker & Demerouti (2007).

Although there have been conflicting studies about FWAs impact on employee well-being (Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart, 2018), the results found employee well-being a dominant theme when exploring the benefits of FWAs.

Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher (2015) conducted a systematic synthesis of narrative evidence present in literature and found that employees' state of mind was a predictor in employee engagement.

6.3.3 Employee Performance

Experts were asked what benefits they recognised from implementing FWAs and the majority believed that there was a positive relationship between giving employees the autonomy to carry out their work and their productivity and quality of their work.

An increase in performance regarding employees' productivity, quality of work and internal and external customer satisfaction was mentioned. The notion that employees were more productive when given the option of having flexibility was based on the opinion that all employees are different and they are all unique in when and where they are most productive. Experts found that, by providing FWAs, they could accommodate for different employee working styles.

There are mixed views in literature when analysing FWAs and employee productivity. Some literature has found an association between FWAs and an increase in productivity (Hammer et al., 2005; Gajendran, Harrison & Delaney-Klinger, 2015). However, there have also been some conflicting views that suggest working from home tends to disrupt work flow and decrease engagement levels (Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart, 2018).

As stated above, experts found that FWAs had a positive influence on employees' engagement. There is a vast amount of literature which is in support of the notion that employee engagement drives company performance (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010; Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017). Therefore, it can be inferred that, by seeing an improvement in employees' engagement, employee performance will be positively affected.

The study found that there is an increase in productivity from the majority of employees, however, experts did point out that there are employees who abuse the policy and this naturally results in a decrease in employee performance. Overall, the study found that productivity increased when employees made use of FWAs. The researcher further interrogated the notion of employee productivity when interviewing the various employees. Results from employees' responses related to performance is discussed in the below Research Question 3.

6.4 Discussion of Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What are employees' lived experiences of flexible work arrangements (through an employee engagement lens)

The objective of Research Question 3 was to understand the views of FWAs from the perspective of employees. The researcher felt that in order to have an objective study it was important to gain insight from employers (experts) as well as employees who have FWAs available to them. Recognising the views of employees also allowed validation or contradiction of the experts' views.

By performing in-depth interviews with employees, the results found some of the strengths and weaknesses of FWAs. This allowed for richer insight and discussion for future research and advice to practitioners.

6.4.1 Employees Recognise Improved Work-life Balance from Having FWAs

The most prevalent theme emerging from the interviews with employees was that they experienced a better work-life balance from having FWAs. Employees gave various examples of how they are better able to balance their work-life by having FWAs, these included less time spent commuting, more family time and more time to do personal activities such as going to the gym and running errands.

Non-monetary initiatives by employers, such as FWAs, have been becoming increasingly more popular as they have been recognised as successful practices to help employees better balance their lives (Zheng et al., 2015). Employers mentioned that FWAs need to work in conjunction with other policies which help employees with a work-life balance, such as fitness facilities and health days. However, Zheng et al. (2015)

found that FWAs were a much more effective mechanism than other monetary initiatives were in helping employees with their work-life balance.

Literature communicates strong arguments that FWAs support work-life balance which results in higher employee engagement (Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015). However, the notion that FWAs are indeed a coping mechanism for employees to balance their work-life conflict is still debated in literature, with researchers such as Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley (2013) and Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart (2018) finding little to no significance between FWAs and employees' ability to balance work-life conflict.

Many of the employees interviewed said that FWAs have allowed them to decrease their commute times, which was mentioned as a source of stress and unproductivity due to wasted time in traffic. This view was supported in literature that stated that commute times were found to result in stress (Zhou, Wang, Chang, Liu, Zhan & Shi, 2017) and absenteeism (van Ommeren & Gutierrez-i-Puigarnau, 2011).

Some researchers have argued that FWAs can negatively impact work-life balance because employees are unable to differentiate between work and personal time, especially when working from home (Hill, Ferris & Martinson, 2003) and that working from home can increase stress (Schmidt & Neubach, 2007). Only two employees out of the 15 interviewed felt that, by working from home, work-family conflict increased because they were not able to distance themselves from their work as there was technically no start and finish time. The results found that employees suggested that working from home requires discipline, not only to perform their work but to know when to stop working.

Pienaar (2008) argues that employees have no control over their work load and, therefore, flexibility in executing work has no impact on employees' ability to cope with work and family conflict. Pienaar (2008) suggests that coping strategies for employees would be far more beneficial as coping mechanisms. The study did not find that employees found their work load challenging but were more focused on needing flexibility to execute their work.

Literature has advocated work-life balance as a coping mechanism for employees and has found a positive relationship with employees' attitudes (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) and increased employee engagement (Parkes & Langford, 2008; Richman, Civian,

Shannon, Jeffrey Hill & Brennan, 2008). The link between work-life balance and reduced stress which enable employee engagement is also pronounced in literature (Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015).

6.4.2 Employees Recognise Improved Morale from Having FWAs

The study found that employees had improved morale from receiving FWAs. The data found that employees felt trusted and respected by their organisations. The majority of employees also felt that, by receiving FWAs, their organisation was practicing their values. Employees felt empowered when they were granted the autonomy to perform their work. Autonomy has been found to increase employee engagement (Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2007).

The majority of employees recognised FWAs as the organisation being supportive towards their personal needs and way of working. Literature shows strong relationships related to organisational support, organisational commitment and employee engagement (Caesens et al., 2016). Organisational support theory recognises fairness, human resource practices and supervisor support as the major drivers (Kurtessis et al., 2017), all of which were constructs emerging from interviews with employees.

One of the main themes which emerged from the data was the construct of trust. Trust was mentioned in positive and negative terms. Employees explained how they tend to feel more appreciated and motivated when their employer shows them trust through their flexible work arrangements and, conversely, employees felt that being micro managed showed a lack of trust which demotivated and disengaged them. Chen & Fulmer (2017) found that FWAs promoted trust within employees which results in more motivated and harder working employees. Hill, Ferris & Martinson (2003) also suggested that by showing employees trust, employee morale and motivation improves. This is a key attribute of employee engagement (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011). Employee engagement increases by improving the behaviour of employees through supportive human resource practices (Caesens et al., 2016).

Employees noted how they enjoy the fact that they can manage their own time. There have been many studies which show that self-management has a positive relationship with employee engagement (Breevaart, Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Zeijen, Peeters & Hakanen, 2018). The idea that self-management drives employee engagement was seen in the data. Employees felt more in control and focused in their work because they

could choose when and where to work. This can be interpreted as being more engaged, based on definitions found in literature (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011).

6.4.3 Increase in Productivity from having FWAs

The results found that employees were a lot more productive from using FWAs. The reason for increased productivity were related to less distraction when working from home, being able to work at times which they are most productive and having less work-family conflict which allowed them to be more focused on their work.

Another key concept which the results showed was that employees were more willing to put in extra effort in reciprocity to the organisation. This is referred to as discretionary effort in literature, a primary output of employee engagement (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018; Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015; Brunetto, Teo, Shacklock & Wharton, 2012; Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010; Saks, 2006; Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017; Zhong, Wayne & Liden, 2015).

The higher levels of discretionary effort were evident from the results. The results found that employees were willing to give more back to the company in return for the companies trust and empowerment granted to them. In exchange for working from home, employees were also willing to work longer hours as a trade-off. The study also noted that many employees still felt as though FWAs had negative connotations linked to it and they would, therefore, put more effort into their work to try to remove the biases attached to FWAs. A study by Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees & Gatenby (2013) supported the findings. By having more control, employees working from virtual offices have displayed higher levels of discretionary effort, work performance and engagement (Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees & Gatenby, 2013). However, Hill, Ferris & Martinson (2003) argue that working from home can lead to a decrease in work-life balance. Bal & De Lange (2014) argue that the use of FWAs does not correlate with employee engagement but rather that employees that have the option of FWAs show higher levels of engagement. The data analysed did not support the views of Bal & De Lange (2014). The study found that employees who had access to FWAs and were not able to fully use the policy (As a result of their managers or colleagues' negative opinions on FWAs) seemed more disengaged and resentful towards the company.

The results also found that employees were more engaged with their work because they were better able to balance their work-life conflict. This resulted in an improved

psychological state from having less stress, anxiety and distractions and they were, therefore, more productive and efficient in their work. Research has supported the findings of the study, arguing that employees need to have work-life balance in order to better perform and engage with their work (Bal & De Lange, 2014; Kurtessis et al., 2017).

The study also found that employees were more productive from the reduction in commute times to and from work. Many employees found that they saved time by avoiding traffic and, as a result, had extra time in their day which they could dedicate to completing their work tasks. The study also found that there was a psychological aspect to spending time in traffic which made employees more stressed and disengaged when they arrived at the office. The view that reduced commute times can reduce stress and increase engagement is supported in the literature. Zhou, Wang, Chang, Liu, Zhan & Shi (2017) found a correlation between reduced commute times and stress, which leads to higher engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

The study's results found that when employees use flexibility, their well-being, work-life balance and discretionary effort improves. This was found to be a driver of work performance. Literature has been mostly agreeable that employee engagement does result in increased employee performance (Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel & LeBreton, 2012).

6.5 Discussion of Results for Research Question 4

Research Question 4: What are some of the drawbacks of FWAs arrangements and how can FWAs be improved to promote employee engagement?

Research question 4 was designed to discover some of the drawbacks of FWAs in practice and aimed at providing practical ways in which FWAs can be improved to enhance employee engagement. The research question is discussed in two parts; Part A (drawbacks of FWAs) and Part B (improvements of FWAs to promote employee engagement).

The study analysed the data from the eight subject matter experts as well as the 15 employees interviewed in order to answer this question. Respondents were asked what they feel some of the drawbacks are of having FWAs within their company and how FWAs can be improved to promote employee engagement.

The views of the respondents are discussed below and concluded in Chapter 7 where the researcher has proposed a framework which can be used by practitioners to successfully implement FWAs to best promote employee engagement.

Most of the literature focused around the positive aspects of FWAs with limited studies which aim to investigate the drawbacks of FWAs. The majority of literature also used quantitative methods to distinguish whether relationships existed with FWAs and, therefore, failed to recognise some of the drawbacks. The literature was focused around the level of significance FWAs have with other constructs such as employee engagement. The research, therefore, used qualitative methods to get a deeper understanding of the drawbacks and recommendations to improve FWAs. Researchers Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher (2015) also found that limited research exists around practical recommendations for the implementation of FWAs. Research question 4 is of significant importance to provide practical recommendations which was lacking in literature.

Part A: Drawbacks associated with FWAs

6.5.1 Policy Abuse by Employees as a Drawback of FWAs

The results found that offering FWAs to employees often resulted in employees taking advantage of the policy and misusing the policy. Abuse of the policy included employees starting late and leaving early, employees claiming to work from home when doing personal activities and employees not achieving their work duties as a result of not spending the necessary time on work activities.

When certain employees abuse the FWAs policy, their colleagues developed resentment towards the policy. This is because of the development of negative perceptions that the policy is not fair and consistent to all that use it.

The abuse of the policy by certain individuals seemed to be the exception rather than the norm. The experts found it difficult to manage employees who were abusing the policy and suggested that revoking the flexibility for all would not be fair and taking it away from the individual would result in resentment and disengagement. A constant theme that was presented was that if the policy was better defined there would be no grey areas whereby employees are able to take advantage of the flexible arrangements provided.

The notion of employees abusing FWAs was not pronounced in literature. One of the experts suggests that most of the studies that analyse FWAs practices are performed in countries such as the United States of America where labour laws are a lot less tolerable of non-performing employees and, thus, have a certain performance culture instilled in companies who would make use of FWAs.

6.5.2 Breakdown in Communication

A concern by employees was that communication had suffered as a consequence of colleagues having FWAs. Some of the major concerns noted by employees were that their colleagues were unavailable for meetings and it was difficult to meet deadlines when relying on colleagues who were exercising their FWAs. The results also found that FWAs often had a negative impact on the team dynamic, especially where communication was poor. This was often owing to the use of unreliable methods of technology to compensate for not being physically present in the office.

Those companies that practice open and effective communication suffered fewer drawbacks to their FWAs policy than those companies which did not. However, the results were split, with some experts and employees suggesting that communication is improved when having FWAs because it forces communication with one another.

Literature shows little support for communication being negatively affected by FWAs. There have been studies that recognise employees struggling to schedule their time well (Nord, Fox, Phoenix & Viano, 2002). Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman (1999) also found that employees were not able to successfully complete work tasks as a result of poor time management. Although the constructs of poor time management can be somewhat linked to a disturbance in teamwork and communication, the literature does not highlight communication as a major drawback of FWAs. This has been recognised as a potential gap in literature.

6.5.3 Employees Perceived Fairness of FWAs

The results found that employees had mixed feelings around the fairness of FWAs. FWAs were, at large, implemented by the manager's discretion within the organisation and this resulted in inconsistency throughout different managers and departments. The result of the inconsistency was that employees started comparing to one another and questioning why some employees had more flexibility than others. In many cases

employees within companies did not receive FWAs at all, even though they had the option of FWAs, but their direct reports did not believe in the practice. The notion of favouritism was also a prevalent concern raised by employees and it resulted in feelings of injustice, despondence and resentment, ultimately causing employees to become disengaged with their work.

Perceived fairness was also largely impacted by the company's culture and resistance to change. Many employees shared experiences that the culture of the organisation and perception of many managers does not support the notion of FWAs.

The notion of organisational culture as an enabler of FWAs is common in literature. Johnson, Lowe & Reckers (2008) suggests that traditional cultures within an organisation is often a prohibitor of change and that FWAs practices can be negatively perceived if there is not a shift in culture within the organisation. Constructs such as human resource practices, values of the company and assumptions of appropriate behaviour were prominent throughout the interviews. The study found that the recruitment process played an imperative role in ensuring that correct employees, who will be well fitted into the culture of the organisation, are recruited. The constructs of culture mentioned from the data seem to correlate with the views found in literature. It was seen that culture is necessary for effective decision making and action and cohesiveness that binds the organisation in its thinking and manner of working (Detert, Schroeder & Mauriel, 2000).

The notion of fairness is supported in literature. Hegtvedt, Clay-Warner & Ferrigno (2002) suggest a lack of fairness within FWAs can result in employees being resentful towards their colleagues and the organisation. Fairness has also been associated to employee well-being (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000), which is a key driver of employee engagement (Caesens et al., 2016). Caesens et al. (2016) further suggest that employees who recognise the organisation as being supportive and fair demonstrated higher levels of organisational commitment and employee engagement. Therefore, it can be inferred that perceived fairness of FWAs is imperative to drive employee engagement.

6.5.4 Technology Readiness as a Disabler of FWAs

Technology readiness was closely associated to the breakdown in communication. The study found that poor technology capabilities as a result of poor internet connectivity and incapable telecommunications application software resulted in ineffective remote communication. The study found that employees in more technical demanding roles that

required the use of advanced software were unable to work remotely as they required connectivity to the local network. Experts and managers also noted that technology was a key enabler to successfully implement FWAs. A significant investment into enablers such as laptops and mobile data connectivity was imperative to successfully implement FWAs. The study found that some employees had access to FWAs but were not physically equipped with the necessary hardware to use FWAs. Once again, this resulted in negative perceptions around fairness of the policy.

The sources of literature used in the study were predominantly from international journals which analysed FWAs in the context of developed countries. The literature made no mention of technology being a disabler of FWAs. The researcher inferred that technology was not as much of a concern in more developed countries where the cost of technology and the speed of internet was more advanced than within the South African context.

Part B: How FWAs can be Improved to Promote Employee Engagement

Part B of research question 4 will discuss the various suggested improvements around the implementation of FWAs to improve employee engagement. The section will discuss practical recommendations which can be used in industry.

6.5.5 Effectively Defining and Communicating FWAs Within the Organisation

The results suggest that companies that had poorly defined FWAs were not successful in implementing FWAs and, subsequently, were not recognising the benefits of FWAs. The results found that access to FWAs by employees was prohibiting when there was not a policy to refer to. It also found that the arrangements were generally at the discretion of managers. This had various negative outcomes as mentioned in Part A. A poorly defined policy also had an effect on the management process of FWAs and the fairness of how the policy can be used and who is allowed to use the policy.

In many organisations the policy was not openly communicated which resulted in negative perceptions and biases associated to employees who tried to make use of the policy. It was suggested that managers should be better educated and informed about the policy so that they can incorporate the policy in their respective teams.

In order to remove the bias associated to FWAs, it was found that the policy needed to be more openly discussed. The study found that employees who had open

communication about their personal circumstances with their managers and received well defined FWAs showed much higher levels of engagement than those employees who did not have this same level of openness and understanding with their managers.

The study noted suggestions by employees that the human resource department should be more involved in the communication of the policy to employees. This is so that employees can understand which FWAs they are entitled to, how they go about receiving FWAs, who makes the decisions regarding FWAs, what the decision process entails, how FWAs are managed and what the consequences are of abusing the policy. The study also found that it was imperative that managers have a good understanding of the FWAs policy and understand why the organisation has the policy. An organisation needs to foster a culture which allows embracement of the policy. Without embracing the policy, inconsistencies and biases will remain, which will result in poor implementation and adoption by employees. Literature has supported the notion that embracing the policy through an enabling culture is paramount (Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo, 2015). Literature has further supported the studies' findings by emphasising the importance of two-way communication among managers and employees (Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo, 2015).

6.5.6 Receiving Buy-in From Management and Leadership

A prominent suggestion by respondents was the necessity for management and leadership to buy into the notion of FWAs. The support from the leadership team was noted as imperative for FWAs to effectively drive employee engagement.

The study found that FWAs was often nothing more than a policy and that the lack of embracement from management meant that the policy was more 'lip service' than actually becoming a part of the organisations culture and way of working.

The resistance found by managers resulted in disengaged employees. The reasons associated to the disengagement were as a result of employees feeling distrusted and unsupported. Organisational support and trust have been found in literature as enablers of employee engagement (Cooper-Thomas, Xu & Saks, 2018; Kurtessis et al., 2017; Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017).

The study also found that the negative perceptions and biases related to FWAs could only be overcome if management within the organisations started modelling the policy

and setting an example that it is ok to use the policy and encourage other employees to make use of the policy. Researchers Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart (2018) recognise studies which emphasised a necessary culture regarding supportive structures, leaders, colleagues, and the working environment as a key enabler of effective FWAs.

Employees also expected a level of understanding from their managers and the organisation about their work-life balance and work-family conflict. This view is supported in literature by Zheng et al., (2015). Organisational support and a sense of care by the organisation are evident in literature as being enablers of employee engagement (Cooper-Thomas, Xu & Saks, 2018).

The study also found that having FWAs in isolation was not an effective strategy to promote employee engagement. The study found that organisations need to incorporate other supportive practices and foster an agile working culture to successfully improve employee engagement. The results of the study are supported in literature. Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit & Lo (2015) found that a number of other supporting initiatives are needed to effectively promote employee engagement. The notion that additional FWAs alone are not enough to provide employees with work-life balance is evident in literature (Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart, 2018).

6.5.7 Improving Communication Within the Organisation

As a resolution to the challenge of a breakdown in team dynamic and communication, employees suggested that there be an improvement in communication methods and techniques. For companies to fully recognise the positive effects of FWAs, improved communication methods were necessary. The study found that FWAs is, at large, a new initiative used within organisations and employees are therefore poorly equipped to effectively communicate without being physically present within the office. The study suggests that communication tools be enhanced within organisations offering FWAs. These tools include better use of information sharing, platforms which allow team members to all be aware of one another's working arrangements and overall improvement in etiquette related to informing one another about deadlines and attendance of meetings.

This study also found that FWAs' success was highly dependent on line managers successfully managing the policy. The study found that the onus was on the managers to make FWAs a success. Without managers having good relationships with their

employees, knowing what FWAs they require and creating a psychological contract with their employees around the appropriate use of FWAs, the practice would be a failure.

This study found that the organisations who had less disruptions as a result of FWAs, had implemented core hours to encourage presence in the office and meetings. The research also found that creating a supportive office environment encouraged employees to make less use of mobile working and enjoyed coming into the office.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented a discussion of the results found in chapter 5. The discussion examined the various themes which emerged from the thematic analysis and debated this study's findings with findings in literature. The discussion further uncovered elements of FWAs which are not prevalent in literature, such as FWAs policy abuse by employees and technology readiness as a requirement to enable FWAs. The discussion further operationalised some of the prohibitors of FWAs as well as proposed solutions and improvements to best implement and manage FWAs in an effort to drive employee engagement.

The following chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the above discussion.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the influence that flexible work arrangements have on employee engagement. The business landscape is changing at a rapid pace and companies are finding it difficult to gain a competitive advantage and promote innovation (Chabowski & Mena, 2017). Innovative human resource practices have become increasingly more popular on the basis that employees are recognised as a key resource for the long-term survival of organisations (Chabowski & Mena, 2017).

In an effort to promote more dynamic ways of working, organisations have started implementing flexible work arrangement practices to adapt to the evolving work environment (Zeijen, Peeters & Hakanen, 2018). The influence of FWAs is, however, still heavily debated in literature (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). Researchers have argued that ignoring employees' well-being and work-life conflict can be detrimental to the business (Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart & Cory, 2017). Flexible work arrangements have had varying findings on whether the practice is in fact a suitable initiative to deal with employees' well-being (Zheng et al., 2015). This study has brought insight into the debate around the influence FWAs has on employee well-being, an antecedent of employee engagement (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018; Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015; Brunetto, Teo, Adelson & Reio, 2017; Zhong, Wayne & Liden, 2015).

The benefits of employee engagement are prominent in literature (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). The benefits of employee engagement as a competitive advantage within business can be better understood by highlighting the influence that flexible work arrangements have on employee engagement and by providing a framework to successfully implement and manage FWAs.

This chapter presents the conclusions to this study by providing a summary of the research findings and recognising the implications for theory. The chapter further highlights the implications for business and provides a proposed framework. Limitations to this study and suggestions for future research have also been noted in the below chapter.

7.2 Principal Findings

This study has effectively answered the research problem set out in chapter one, which was to understand whether FWAs do influence employee engagement. The study can be summarised into three main areas. The first area is the necessity for organisations to implement FWAs. The researcher found five main reasons for why organisations in South Africa have started implementing FWAs. The reasons can be summarised into an overarching construct; that the business landscape is changing and employee needs have become an important element for businesses to remain competitive (Chabowski & Mena, 2017). The second area of this study found the employee engagement benefits recognised from implementing FWAs. The benefits associated to FWAs can be summarised as FWAs improving overall employee well-being which is an evident driver of employee engagement (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018; Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015; Brunetto, Teo, Adelson & Reio, 2017; Zhong, Wayne & Liden, 2015) as well as employee productivity which is a recognised outcome of employee engagement (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). Lastly this study assessed some of the drawbacks of FWAs which were concluded as breakdowns in communication and a lack of fairness which resulted in various negative outcomes.

7.2.1 Drivers that Promote the Implementation of FWAs

The first objective of the research was to establish the reasons companies in South Africa are implementing FWAs. By understanding the perceived need for implementing FWAs, the study was able to recognise the changing of the business landscape and identify the benefits which organisations are recognising from having FWAs.

Profitability is the core driver of business and companies are finding the costs associated to office space a major expense within the business (Fleetwood, 2007; Hill, Ferris & Martinson, 2003). The study found that FWAs is an effective way to reduce companies' costs associated to office space.

Companies globally have recognised the importance of catering for employee needs (Chabowski & Mena, 2017). The research found that FWAs are recognised as the future way of carrying out business. This study concludes that FWAs are a globally recognised practice and companies can no longer ignore the fact that employees are the key to gaining a competitive advantage and an organisational priority is, therefore, to cater for employees' needs.

The research also found that organisations have recognised that there are different generational needs within the workplace and that companies need to recognise that employees cannot all be managed the same way. FWAs have become an expectation to millennials, demanding a more holistic balance between work and life and wanting more flexible means of working (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

FWAs have been identified as a contributor towards attracting and retaining talent. The research not only found FWAs to be attractive but found that employees were deterred from working for companies who did not offer FWAs and can be noted as being of a high importance to employees. The results from the research support the work of Gajendran & Harrison (2007); Kossek, Hammer, Thompson & Burke (2014) and Kurtessis et al. (2017).

7.2.2 Employee Engagement Driving Organisational Performance Through FWAs

FWAs were found to improve organisational performance by positively affecting employee engagement enablers, as well as having direct organisational performance outcomes. The major benefits associated to employee engagement referred to employee morale, employee well-being, employee happiness, a reduction in employee stress, which was found to improve their cognitive presence, and more energised employees. Employees were able to display higher levels of engagement as a result of FWAs allowing them to better balance their work-life conflict. Employees recognised feelings of trust and empowerment as a necessary antecedent for high levels of employee engagement (Chen & Fulmer, 2017; Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017).

As a result of FWAs, employees display higher engagement in their work by having the ability to work remotely and focus their efforts more effectively. Employees with FWAs were also found to be more productive from the autonomy granted which allowed them to work during times which they found were most productive for them, at locations which allowed them to be both productive as well as innovative. FWAs were also found to promote affective commitment and discretionary effort, two prominent outcomes of employee engagement (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018; Bailey, Madden, Alfes & Fletcher, 2015; Shuck, Adelson & Reio, 2017).

7.2.3 FWAs Enabling Employee Well-being: An Antecedent of Employee Engagement

The major finding of this study related to FWAs driving employee well-being, which was found to positively influence employee engagement. Various quantitative studies have debated the relationship between FWAs and employee well-being and the influence employee well-being has on employee engagement (Brunetto, Teo, Shacklock & Wharton, 2012; Zheng et al., 2015). The research found that FWAs promote employee well-being by allowing employees to better balance their work-life conflict. Employee well-being was found to increase from using FWAs as a result of employees identifying feelings of being entrusted, empowered and supported by the organisation. It can be noted that employees who recognised the company as being supportive were more willing to reciprocate with discretionary effort. FWAs supported employee well-being and the research found employee engagement to increase as a result. This notion is partly supported in literature (Caesens et al., 2016; Kurtessis et al., 2017). The study found FWAs promoted antecedents of employee well-being such as enabling healthier lifestyles, reducing stress from work-life conflict, reducing commute times and improving employees resonating with their work environment.

7.2.4 Gap Analysis of FWAs

A primary objective of the research was to provide practical recommendation to practitioners by understanding some of the drawbacks of FWAs and to identify ways of improving FWAs in order to promote employee engagement. Through the conduction of a gap analysis, the research was able to identify drawbacks of FWAs which were not recognised in literature. Most of the literature was formed by quantitative studies which sought to find whether a relationship exists between FWAs and constructs of employee engagement. These did not tend towards prioritising the drawbacks and seeking improvements for the practical implementation of FWAs. The study found that poor management of FWAs can have vast negative effects on the business, including breakdown in communication and abuse of the policy by employees. The perceived fairness of the policy was found to be crucial in the successful implementation of the policy. Literature advocates fairness as a prerequisite for employee well-being and engagement (Caesens et al., 2016). It was further found that the readiness of technology, as an enabler to remote working, was overlooked by organisations implementing the practice.

7.3 A Proposed Framework

This section presents a proposed framework which provides insight into the learnings this study has found. The aim of the qualitative study was to obtain richer insight (Merriam, 2009) into reasons for successes and failures of FWAs and the impact it has on employee engagement. The aim of the study was to understand the influence FWAs have on employee engagement but, more so, to understand why the relationship exists, what causes the relationship and how it can be improved to promote employee engagement.

The below framework (Figure 9) has been created as a summary and conceptualisation of the learnings found throughout the research process.

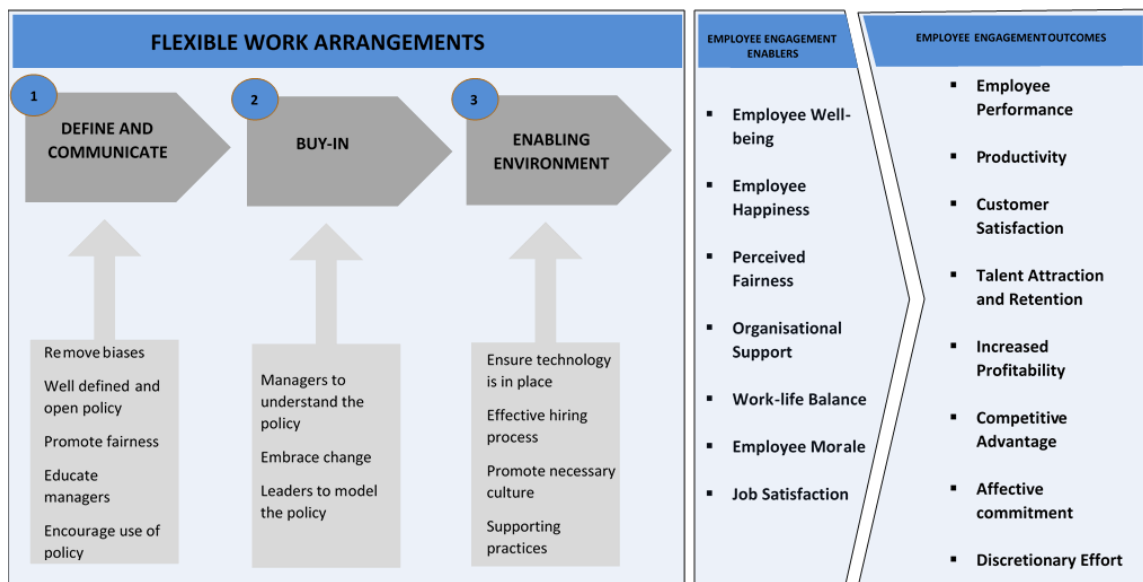


Figure 9: Flexible Work Arrangements Framework

The framework in Figure 9 above synthesises the research to provide practical recommendations for practitioners, to better implement and manage FWAs to improve their employee engagement.

The framework has three key criteria for the successful implementation and management of FWAs. The first criteria is to define and communicate the policy. The research found that poorly defined policies within organisations offering FWAs resulted in a distorted perception of fairness. Further, employees showed disengagement when they did not have access to the policy without understanding the reason why. The research also

proposes that a poorly defined policy was open for misinterpretation which resulted in some employees abusing the policy. By defining the policy well, employees also recognised that the organisation cares about them and supports them, which was found to be a key driver of employee engagement. Core working hours should also be clearly communicated so that there is no misunderstanding around start and finish times and no breakdown in team meetings.

Once the policy is well defined, a complimenting imperative is for the policy to be well communicated. The research found that there was little understanding about the policy and managers were left to implement the policy at their discretion which was often done so informally. The result of a poorly communicated policy meant that employees felt animosity towards colleagues who made more extensive use of the policy. The various biases and misconceptions about the policy also resulted from having little communication about FWAs, the purpose they serve and the importance of having them in the business.

The second criteria for successfully implementing FWAs is to receive the buy-in from management. One of the biggest prohibiting factors found, that hampers employee engagement, was the lack of buy-in from management into the policy. It is essential for companies to fully embrace the policy and further have the company's leadership team model the policy. Biases need to be removed from the policy and this could be done by training managers about the policy and how to manage the policy. For FWAs to truly be effective, the change needs to be embraced and biases need to be removed so that employees do not end up with feelings of guilt, resentment and reluctance to use the policy. These are all detrimental to employee engagement.

The third criteria for implementing and managing FWAs is creating an enabling environment. Based on the evidence found in the research, it is strongly suggested that an enabling culture is needed for FWAs to effectively drive employee engagement. The environment should include practical factors. These include ensuring the necessary technology is available for employees to work remotely, ensuring the availability of communication platforms, ensuring the organisation is hiring a goof fit into their flexible working culture and, lastly, ensuring supporting practices are in place to compliment FWAs. These supporting practices include agile work spaces, health promoting initiatives and a supportive working environment.

The three criteria mentioned in the framework were found to positively affect various enablers of employee engagement such as employee well-being, employee's perception of fairness and support by the organisation, employees' work-life balance, happiness and morale and their levels of job satisfaction. The successful management of FWAs also found to have a direct impact on employee engagement outcomes such as productivity, talent attraction and retention, discretionary effort and organisation commitment.

7.4 Implications for Business

The research has proposed practical ways in which practitioners can successfully manage and implement FWAs to promote employee engagement. The research has recognised that FWAs do have an influence on various constructs of employee engagement, which has become a necessary driver for businesses to gain a competitive advantage and enhance performance outcomes. The research has also uncovered gaps in the literature which have been operationalised in the form of a framework to guide practitioners in successfully improving employee engagement within their organisations.

The implications for business can be highlighted as follows:

- Implementing FWAs has become a necessity for organisations to save costs, cater for employees' needs, attract and retain talent and cater for variations in employees' generational demands.
- FWAs are successful tools to promote employee well-being, which is necessary for employee engagement to proceed.
- Employees recognise organisational support and autonomy as a sign of trust and respect and are more likely to display discretionary effort and commitment to the organisation.
- Organisations need to recognise that not all employees have the same response to traditional working environments and based on this notion, companies need to use FWAs to cater for different working styles in order for employees to produce their best results.
- Perceived fairness by employees is a major element when implementing policies.
- Organisations need to recognise that FWAs in isolation are not enough to improve employee well-being and that a specific culture is necessary to recognise the effects of employee engagement.

- Limitations to implementing FWAs can have negative outcomes. It is necessary for organisations to first ensure that structural enablers, such as technology, are in place.
- The buy-in into the policy is an imperative for the implementation of FWAs. Implementing FWAs with poor buy-in from management results in resentment and disengagement of employees. Furthermore, the policy needs to be modelled by leadership within the business to remove biases and negativity around the policy.

7.5 Limitations

Limitations to the study can be noted as follows:

- The relatively small sample size limits the ability to generalise the findings to other contexts
- The study only made use of organisations that offer FWAs, this may have encouraged bias in the study.
- The research was limited to multinational organisations across six different industries.
- The majority of employees interviewed were professionals with tangible outcomes. The results may have shown higher levels of abuse and difficulty in implementing FWAs with employees whose work is less tangibly measured.
- Four out of the eight subject matter experts interviewed were responsible for the implementation of FWAs and could, therefore, be seen as being less objective.
- Organisations used in the study had the reputation for already having high employee engagement and the effects of FWAs could be somewhat distorted by other enabling cultural elements of employee engagement.

7.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Throughout the data gathering process, the researcher noted potential themes emerging which were outside of the scope of research. These are, therefore, suggested as potential, future research:

- There is little empirical evidence around different generational views of FWAs. At face value it was found that millennials value FWAs a lot more than older generations, however, further research is required.

- The researcher found that women were perceived to value FWAs more than that of men. Further research around gender preferences to FWAs will better understand the value that different genders place on work-family conflict and FWAs.
- The research was limited to organisations offering FWAs and more focused on the positive effects of FWAs. Future research may find that there are many more drawbacks associated to FWAs and it may be of value to study companies who do not have FWAs and understand why they have decided not to implement the practice.
- The research found that open plan offices tended to disrupt employees. Further research is required to understand the effects that open plan offices have on employee productivity and engagement.

7.7 Conclusion

The literature has found varying results around the influence that FWAs have on employee engagement. This study has been successful in concluding that FWAs have a positive influence on various constructs of employee engagement with the most prevalent finding being that FWAs do promote employee well-being, which was observed as a key enabler of employee engagement.

The research further recognised various gaps in literature around the drawbacks of FWAs and further managed to create a framework which highlights the necessary criteria and climate needed to implement and manage FWAs to promote employee engagement.

The research has, therefore, not only contributed to literature by supporting the notion of FWAs influencing employee engagement, but also hopes to contribute to the practice of management through the use of the 'Flexible Work Arrangements' framework by managers and leaders who are trying to improve employee engagement through the advancement of flexible working practices.

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9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Invitation to Participants in Research Study

Dear XXXXX

Thank you for connecting earlier today. As I mentioned, I am completing my MBA at the Gordon Institute of Business Science and I am currently in the process of collecting data to complete my research thesis.

My research aims to understand the influence Flexible Work Arrangements has on Employee Engagement. I believe that you have the necessary field expertise to provide key insight into this topic. I would appreciate your participation in this regard and request your formal consent to take part in one of my interviews.

The interview will be semi-structured and will last approximately forty-five minutes. As I mentioned, the interview will be completely anonymous for you, the organisation and the employees. Attached is also a letter of the consent form which I need you to sign and forward back to me.

The research questions asked, aim to better understand the following:

1. Why do organisations in South Africa implement Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)
2. What are the perceived employee engagement benefits of implementing FWAs
3. What are the lived employee engagement experiences of FWAs (asked to employees)
4. How FWA can be improved to promote employee engagement

Please can you confirm your agreement to take part in the interview and indicate your availability to be interviewed during the month of July 2018.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Marcel Weideman

17390118@mygibs.co.za

Appendix 2: Consent Form (Employer/ Field Expert)

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM:

Understanding Flexible Work Arrangements and its Influence on Employee Engagement: An Explorative Study

Researcher: Marcel Weideman, MBA student at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria

I am conducting research which will examine the Influence of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) on Employee Engagement. I am trying to establish the employee engagement benefits and/or drawbacks, both from the employer and employee perspective, as well as investigate possible improvements which can be made when implementing FWA within an organisation.

The interview is expected to last between forty-five minutes and an hour. The insight gained will help me better understand the different employee engagement benefits and/or drawbacks associated with flexible work arrangements.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the option to withdraw at any time, without any penalty. The audio recording of the interview is voluntary, and you may choose to not have the interview recorded. All data gathered will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Please raise any concerns with me or my supervisor:

Marcel Weideman
17390118@mygibs.co.za
078 247 3373

Professor Karl Hofmeyr
hofmeyrk@gibs.co.za
011 771 4125

Participant's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Consent Form (Employees)

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM:

Understanding Flexible Work Arrangements and its Influence on Employee Engagement: An Explorative Study

Researcher: Marcel Weideman, MBA student at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria

Name of Participant: _____

1. I confirm that I understand what the research is about and that I have had a chance to ask questions
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without reason and penalty
3. I agree to take part in the research and understand that all data gathered will be kept confidential and anonymous
4. I agree for my interview to be recorded
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotations in publications

Participant's name: _____

Signature: _____

Researcher's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please raise any concerns with me or my supervisor:

Marcel Weideman
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078 247 3373

Professor Karl Hofmeyr
hofmeyrk@gibs.co.za
011 771 4125

Appendix 4: Interview Questions for the Organisation (Field Expert)

Date:

Start Time:

Name:

End Time:

Organisation:

Job Title:

Question 1:

Why did your organisation decide to implement Flexible Work Arrangements?

- What was it like before?
- Why the shift?

Question 2:

What Flexible Work Arrangement practices has your organisation implemented and who can use the arrangements?

- Why those policies?
- Why those people?

Question 3:

What employee benefits have you observed?

- Employee satisfaction
- Employee well-being
- Employee work-life balance
- Employee commitment
- Employee turnover

Question 4:

What benefits have you observed for the organisation?

- Productivity
- Financial performance
- Customer satisfaction
- Absenteeism
- Product/ service quality

Question 5:

What are some of the drawbacks of flexible work arrangements within your organisation?

How can FWA be improved to promote employee engagement?

Appendix 5: Interview Questions for Employees

Date:

Start Time:

Organisation:

End Time:

Question 1:

What is your understanding of Flexible Work Arrangements?

- Which FWAs do you use and why do you use them?

Question 2:

What are your feelings and thoughts about flexible work arrangements? What do you like and dislike about them?

- Work-life balance
- Well-being

Question 3:

Why do you think your organisation offers you flexible work arrangements?

Question 4:

How important is FWAs to you? Would you work for an organisation that doesn't offer you FWAs? WHY?

Question 5:

What are some of the drawbacks of FWAs and how can FWAs be improved?

Appendix 6: Ethical Clearance Letter

**Gordon
Institute
of Business
Science**
University
of Pretoria

05 July 2018

Weideman Marcel

Dear Marcel

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

Appendix 7: Atlas.ti Codebook

Individual Codes Created

Ability to have more employees than desks
Ability to study part-time
Ability to work remotely and attend to work if need
Abuse and take advantage of FWAs
Additional management from managers which is time consuming
Agile work environment fosters innovation
Agile work environments have taken away etiquette and privacy
Agile work space
Agile work space means you cannot find that person
Agile work space promotes inter-departmental communication and collaboration
Agreement between manager and employee
Allow employees to apply
Allow employees to have more autonomy and be more mature
Aspirational to get FWAs as a reward
Assumptions are made by managers
Balance work and family conflict
Balance work life
Based on flexible working employees need to improve their communication skills
Being anti-social and not connecting with people
Being available if you are out of the office
Being understanding of colleagues work arrangements
Bring the best out of people and FWAs allows that
Burnout from not balancing work
Buy-in from management
Can't replace the human element in communication
Catering for different people and their needs- Individualism
Clarity of policy to employees and managers
Collaboration is difficult because everybody is on separate schedules
Coming in early allows work to get done without distractions
Communication platform which allows people to see their colleagues' diaries
Company not offering FWAs talks about their value and culture
Compressed work weeks
Conflict in family caused when working too hard without balance

Contract of working
Convenience of FWAs
Core hours
Cost of implementing technology
Cost per employee decreases
Cost saving of utilities, tea, bathrooms etc
Cost saving with having less fixed desks
Create happier employees
Creates a more casual work environment
Creative away from office
Culture creation
Customers needing to get hold of employee
Dealing with people taking advantage of the system and how it affects others
Delay in responses from colleagues due to FWAs
Difficult for manager and organisation to measure output
Difficult for managers to manage
Difficult to measure absenteeism because employees won't declare it
Difficult standardising FWAs policy which can have problems being poorly defined and open for interpretation
Difficult to turn off work with technology
Distractions at the office
Don't like being micro managed
Don't need to be at work to do work
Dynamic environment
Educating and awareness of FWAs & promoting
Embracing an organisation's values
Employee fear
Employee health associated with FWAs
Employee Well-being
Employees are able to do their best work possible
Employees are more productive when they have autonomy
Employees asked for FWAs
Employees feel a company who does not offer FWAs talks about their culture and values and is rigid
Employees feel lucky and fortunate
Employees have a deeper level of satisfaction
Employees misunderstanding or misinterpretation of FWAs

Employees must know what their deliverables are
Employees will want to come to work
Empowering employees
Enable remote working- not limited
End up working harder because of having the trust of FWAs and showing appreciation
Energy created from working anywhere and any time
Extreme case of resigning because of not getting FWAs with new manager
Feedback loop to help improve the FWAs experience
Flexible Place
Flexible working hours
Formalise Policy
Forward thinking
Freedom and choice associated with having FWAs
Function related FWAs and role and team specific
Future world of doing things
FWAs can be seen as favouritism
FWAs can have you lose touch of what's happening in the organisation from not having
informal chats with colleagues
FWAs creates a relaxed environment
FWAs differs from manager to manager at manager discretion
FWAs is a process and journey
FWAs requires responsibility and maturity
FWAs very important
Gives employees choice
Global meetings and reporting mean different time zones and they are not in office
Going to gym and FWAs allows for this
Good management is required
Guilt of using FWAs
Having a life outside of work
Higher Engagement
Home office based
Honesty and trust
Hot desks
Improved quality of work
Inconsistency in the policy
Incorporate FWAs in the onboarding process
Internal billing

Internal customer satisfaction
International/ global Trend and standard to have FWAs
Keep up to date with what's happening at the office
Keeping up with the times
Legal implications of FWAs
Less anxiety when using FWAs
Less Autocratic and rigid
Less desks than employees
Less meetings and prioritisation
Less stressful
Level of comfort
Losing face-time and connection
Major global firms leading FWAs such as Google
Management need to practice the policy and lead by example
Manager must be clear in terms of outputs and expectations
Managers lose touch and less communication with all their team members
Managers need to make more effort to stay connected with employees and in touch
Meetings are affected by FWAs
Millennials & Catering for new generations in business
Monetary value cannot replace FWAs
More creative away from office
More employee feedback
More focused at home
More involvement from HR
More momentum working from home
More productive at home (less distractions)
More productive at office because of children at home
More relaxed when boss is away
Motivated to work
Need to be at office to have effective communication
Negative bias attached to FWAs
Negative perception of FWAs
New way of doing things
Not enough desks for everyone to sit- Forced FWAs
Not having to ask for permission
Not productive all the time and need variety
Office mood improves from changing to more flexibility

Open and honest communication with employee and manager
Organisation believing in their people
Organisation needs to find a way to make it available to everyone
Organisation offers FWAs because they care for employees
Other employees need to respect their colleagues FWAs
Other policies and practices that work with FWA for work-life-balance
Output based not measured by hours
Perceived fairness of FWAs
Personal appointments
Policy lacks consistency
Policy needs equality
Poor balance causes a grumpy and disengaged employee
Poor communication about FWAs from organisation
Poor implementation of policy
Practical reasons for implementing FWAs
Problem solving ability outside of the work place
Problems are only picked up later
Psychology associated with working from different places
Question of how to manage those who abuse the FWAs policy
Redefined working hours, taking away from the business
Remote working from other regions
Requires managers to understand their employees
Resentment from employees who sees it being abused or who don't get FWAs
Respect shown from organisation to employee to balance their own lives and priorities
Retain talent in the business
Running Errands
Sabbatical as part of FWAs practice
Safety aspect of working late at office
Self-Management
Some managers don't like the policy which creates animosity with those who don't get it
Some managers want to see their employees
Some people are not equipped with the technology to use FWAs like laptops and 3G
Speed up decision making
Staff morale improves
Stigma attached to working from home, so employees have to try prove they are working
Support employees who have personal issues
Support from organisation

Takes away from the team dynamic
Talent attraction
Technology enables employees to work off-site
Technology Readiness
Traffic and commute times
Training management about the policy
Trust between employee and employer
Use FWAs as a reward
Use FWAs as a reward to employees or compensation for working overtime
Well defined boundaries are necessary
With organisation being accommodating employees will give back in return
Work life balance impacts employees' outputs
Work longer hours at home
Work period requirements
Would not work for company who did not offer

Themes Extracted

RQ1- T1: Cost Saving
RQ1- T2: Global Trend
RQ1- T3: Recognising Employee Needs
RQ1- T4: Catering for Millennials
RQ1- T5: Talent (Attract and Retain)

RQ2- T1: Higher Engagement
RQ2- T2: Improvement in Employees' Mental state and Well-being
RQ2- T3: Performance

RQ3- T1: Work-Life-Balance
RQ3- T2: Employee Morale
RQ3- T3: Productivity

RQ4|A- T1: Policy Abuse
RQ4|A- T2: Breakdown in Communication
RQ4|A- T3: Perceived Fairness
RQ4|A- T4: Technology Readiness

RQ4|B- T1: Define and Communicate the Policy

RQ4|B- T2: Buy-in from Leadership and Management modelling the policy

RQ4|B- T3: Communication