

**FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE:
MANAGER AND EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES**

Name: Fikiswa Ludidi

Student number: 19384913

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science,
University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of the
Master of Business Administration.

30 November 2020

ABSTRACT

FWAs have found increased attention among organisations who wish to support employee resolution of work-life conflict. The growing demand for FWAs by employees has resulted in the need by organisations to understand the resultant impact of FWAs on employee performance. The many quantitative studies on the matter had relied on Blau's (1964) social exchange theory to explain the positive impact FWAs can have on performance; there was scant literature on a direct relationship between FWAs and employee performance. The contrary findings of other studies also contributed to the question of the impact of FWAs on employee performance being deemed to be inconclusive. This resulted in confusion among organisational leaders and a reluctance to adopt these arrangements even in the face of increased employee demand.

The purpose of this qualitative, cross-sectional study was to gain deeper perspectives on the relationship between FWAs and employee performance. Data was collected from a sample of eleven employees and nine managers through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and a frequency analysis was used as a persuasive statistical measure to validate the themes that emerged from the analysis. The study found that contrary to extant literature, the pursuit of productivity was the primary motivator for employee demand and manager extension of FWAs. The pursuit of work-life balance was important, but it was a secondary motivator. The findings confirmed the continued applicability of Blau's (1964) social exchange theory in explaining how FWAs impact employee performance positively but also established a direct link between FWAs and employee performance. FWAs have a direct impact on performance by enabling employees to work where and when they are most productive. Workplace trust was found to be both an antecedent as well as effect of FWAs.

The manager-employee relationship was deemed a critical enabler to the success of FWAs. There also emerged common leadership attributes and behaviours among managers whose teams successfully exercised FWAs. An outcome of the study was a framework of the building blocks for effective FWAs. This framework provides a guide to organisations on how to adopt and ensure the optimal use of these widely sought employee practices.

KEYWORDS

Flexible Working Arrangements, Employee Performance, Employee Autonomy, Workplace Trust, Social Exchange Theory

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.

Fikiswa Ludidi

30 November 2020

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	i
KEYWORDS	ii
DECLARATION	iii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the research problem	1
1.3 The research problem	3
1.4 Aim and scope of the research	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Background on flexible working arrangements	8
2.2.1 The growing demand for flexible working arrangements	9
2.2.2 Flexible working arrangements in practise	10
2.3 Flexible working arrangements and employee performance	11
2.3.1 Autonomy	12
2.3.2 Productivity	13
2.3.3 Co-ordination and co-operation	14
2.3.4 Organisational culture	15
2.3.5 Employee wellbeing and retention	16
2.3.6 Job satisfaction, job attitudes, employee engagement and the social exchange theory	17
2.4 Manager-employee relationship	19
2.4.1 Trust	19
2.4.2 Performance management	20
2.5 Conclusion	21

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS	22
3.1 Introduction	22
3.2 Research Question 1: How have flexible working arrangements affected individual employee performance?	22
3.3 Research Question 2: What practices/methods contribute or could contribute to increasing work performance while making use of flexible working arrangements?	22
3.4 Research Question 3: Do employees view flexible working arrangements as a standard human resource practice or a privilege/benefit, and do they feel indebted/obligated to organisations for provision of these?	23
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	24
4.1 Introduction	24
4.2 Research methodology and design	24
4.3 Population	25
4.4 Unit of analysis	27
4.5 Sampling method and sample size	27
4.6 Data collection	29
4.6.1 Measurement instrument	29
4.6.2 Pilot interviews	33
4.6.3 Data collection	33
4.7 Data analysis	35
4.8 Strategies to ensure data integrity	39
4.9 Research limitations	40
4.10 Ethical considerations	41
4.11 Conclusion	41
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS	42
5.1 Introduction	42
5.2 Description of the sample	42
5.2.1 Background on the organisations	42
5.2.2 The sample	44

5.3 Data analysis.....	45
5.4 Presentation of the results.....	47
5.5 Results for Research Question 1.....	47
5.5.1 Autonomy.....	48
5.5.2 Engagement of employees.....	51
5.5.3 Productivity.....	53
5.5.4 Physical social interactions.....	56
5.6 Results for Research Question 2.....	57
5.6.1 Organisational elements.....	58
5.6.2 Manager-employee relationship.....	63
5.6.3 Co-ordination and co-operation.....	67
5.6.4 Mobility.....	69
5.7 Results for Research Question 3.....	72
5.7.1 Obligation to reciprocate.....	73
5.7.2 Reward.....	74
5.8 Conclusion.....	75
CHAPTER 6: A RECONCILIATION OF THE FINDINGS AND LITERATURE.....	78
6.1 Introduction.....	78
6.2 Discussion of the themes that emerged for research question 1.....	78
6.2.1 The autonomy provided by FWAs yields results.....	78
6.2.2 FWAs result in engaged employees.....	81
6.2.3 FWAs have a direct impact on employee productivity.....	82
6.2.4 FWAs reduce physical social interactions.....	84
6.3 Discussion of the themes that emerged for research question 2.....	85
6.3.1 The role of organisational elements in increasing performance.....	85
6.3.2 The manager-employee relationship: a critical enabler.....	87
6.3.3 The need for co-ordination and co-operation.....	90
6.3.4 Mobility sets things in motion.....	91
6.4 Discussion of the themes that emerged for research question 3.....	92

6.4.1	FWAs still recognised as a privilege by employees	92
6.4.2	FWAs as a reward	93
6.5	Implications for theory and considerations for organisations	94
6.5.1	Theoretical implications	94
6.5.2	Considerations for organisational leaders and HR Practitioners	94
6.5.2.1	Organisational elements	94
6.5.2.2	Workplace trust	96
6.5.2.3	Diversity and inclusion	96
6.5.2.4	Employee productivity	96
6.5.2.5	Employee wellbeing	97
6.5.2.6	Performance management	97
6.5.2.7	Physical social interactions	98
6.5.2.8	Leadership attributes and behaviours	98
6.5.2.9	Mobility	98
6.6	Conclusion	99
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION		101
7.1	Introduction	101
7.2	Principal findings	102
7.2.1	FWAs have a positive impact on performance	102
7.2.2	The building blocks of effective and fruitful FWAs	103
7.2.2.1	Organisational elements	104
7.2.2.2	Requirements of the manager	105
7.2.2.3	Requirements of the employee	106
7.2.3	Employees still view FWAs as a privilege/benefit	106
7.3	A framework for the successful implementation of FWAs	106
7.3.1	The organisation	107
7.3.2	The manager	108
7.3.3	The employee	109

7.4	Recommendations for future research	109
7.5	Limitations of the research.....	110
7.6	Conclusion.....	111
8	REFERENCE LIST	114
9	APPENDICES.....	122
	Appendix 1: Employee Interview Guide	122
	Appendix 2: Manager Interview Guide	125
	Appendix 3: Outlook Calendar Interview Invitation (Employees).....	128
	Appendix 4: Outlook Calendar Interview Invitation (Managers).....	129
	Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form	130
	Appendix 6: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement.....	132
	Appendix 7: Code Book from Employee Data Analysis.....	134
	Appendix 8: Code Book from Manager Data Analysis	141

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sample criteria for research participants	28
Table 2: Overview of sample	28
Table 3: Alignment between research questions and interview guide (employees)	31
Table 4: Alignment between research questions and interview guide (managers)	32
Table 5: Description of the organisations	43
Table 6: Description of the employees	44
Table 7: Description of the managers	45
Table 8: Percentage of the sample that referred to each theme and a percentage of frequency mentions for each theme per participant group	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: New codes generated by employees	38
Figure 2: New codes generated by managers	39
Figure 3: Overview of Themes and Sub-themes for RQ1	48
Figure 4: Overview of Themes and Sub-themes for RQ2.....	58
Figure 5: Overview of Themes and Sub-themes for RQ3.....	72
Figure 6: The building blocks for effective FWAs	107

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to gain managerial and employee insights on how flexible working arrangements (FWAs) impact employee performance. This is an explorative study in the field of Human Resource Management and Personnel Psychology.

1.2 Background to the research problem

Over the years, the competing interests of work and life responsibilities have resulted in added pressure and stress on employees. This battle for work-life balance resulted in increased employee absenteeism and turnover, ultimately impacting their wellbeing and resultantly affecting their performance at work (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

The need for employees to balance their work and life responsibilities is now largely recognised and accepted by organisations (Kelliher, Richardson & Boiarintseva, 2017) and this is further embraced and facilitated through the provision of FWAs (Azar, Khan & Van Eerde, 2018; Regus, 2017). To attract, motivate and retain talent, organisations need to remain abreast of the latest organisational and human resource management policies and practices. The growing interest in FWAs is also a direct response by organisations, to employees' evolving needs (Regus, 2017).

FWAs are practices that allow employees to exercise some degree of flexibility in the way that they work. Organisations can offer either employer-oriented FWAs or employee-oriented ones. Employer-oriented FWAs aim to serve the needs of the employee e.g. shift work to ensure continuous production or customer service, and employee-oriented practices aim to serve the needs of the employees e.g. flextime, flexplace or reduced hours (Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019). Employee-oriented FWAs are the most largely offered by organisations (Bekery, Morley, Tiernan, Purtill & Parry, 2017). The focus of this study is on employee-oriented FWAs.

Employees are increasingly demanding FWAs, and this demand is observed across different generations of the workforce (Bal & De Lange, 2015; Bloom & Van Reenen, 2006; Regus, 2017; SABPP, 2018). Bloom, Liang, Roberts and Ying (2015) observed the reluctance of managers to implement FWAs, as there is no opportunity to supervise their employees. The provision of FWAs enhances organisations' employee value proposition and it has been argued that FWAs can assist organisations with talent attraction, motivation and retention (Peretz, Fried & Levi, 2018; Thompson, Payne & Taylor, 2015) thus manager resistance to its adoption is a concern.

This decision as to whether organisations should provide FWAs has been taken out of organisations' hands due to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The traditional workplace will never be the same as the largely effective Work From Home (WFH) and Work From Anywhere (WFA) practices have forced organisations to question their long-held beliefs on ways of working and the role of an office environment (Boland, De Smet, Palter & Sanghvi, 2020). Understanding employee performance in the context of FWAs is now more urgent than before and even with a vaccine for COVID-19, workplace practices have changed forever. This study will focus on FWAs that were in place prior to the onset of COVID-19. The exclusively remote way of working that was experienced due to the COVID-19 restrictions was not flexible working, it was the very opposite as the workforce moved from working exclusively in the office to working exclusively from home.

It was found that organisations who were perceived to be supportive of work-life balance through the provision of family-supportive policies, observed increased employee affective commitment to the organisation (Azar et al., 2018; Mills, Matthews, Henning & Woo, 2014). This was observed even for employees who did not have dependants to care for; family-supportive policies were thus valued by all employees, irrespective of their family structure (Mills et al., 2014). This supports the view that the demand for FWAs spans across generations.

Beyond the improvement in employee wellbeing that FWAs bring by supporting the resolution of work-life conflict, other employee wellbeing benefits from working outside of the office can be observed. Windeler, Chudoba and Sundrup (2017) found that working from home provided a break from workplace social interaction and the

wellbeing benefits of this 'time-out' exceeded those afforded by a weekend break. Any improvement in employee wellbeing leads to increased employee performance (Allen et al., 2013).

Of the various forms of employee-oriented FWAs, the most widely applied are those of flextime and flexplace (Allen et al., 2013; Azar et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2015). Flextime enables the employee to alter their working hours and not prescribe to the traditional 08:00 to 17:00 workday and flexplace allows for the employee to work somewhere other than the traditional office space (Shockley & Allen, 2007).

1.3 The research problem

There have been very few studies on FWAs in developing countries (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019; Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020), however the increasing availability/use of them has been observed (Horwitz, 2017). Of the South African participants as part of a Regus (2017) study, more than 60% reported that they work remotely for two and a half days or more in a week. With the increasing adoption of FWAs, organisations have sought to understand the impact that these have on employee performance and consequently organisational outcomes. "Business people's priorities are shifting: more and more businesses are becoming open to valuing employee performance and productivity rather than actual in-office face-time" (Regus, 2017: 27).

There have been contradictory and inconsistent research findings on the impact of FWAs on employee performance (Allen et al, 2013; Azar et al., 2018; Berkery, Morley, Tiernan, Purtill & Parry, 2017; Putman, Myers & Gailliard, 2014), making it difficult for organisations to evaluate its efficacy as well as formulate and implement Human Resource (HR) practices that benefit employees whilst ensuring the business as a going concern. These inconsistencies have largely been attributed to differing definitions of FWAs; lack of clarity on whether it is the availability of FWAs or its use that is being evaluated, as well as an inability to factor in contextual issues in how FWAs are implemented (Allen et al., 2013; Berkery et al., 2017; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). The gap in conclusive literature on how FWAs impact employee performance (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017) and other organisational outcomes can be attributed to insufficient qualitative studies that

uncover and yield insights on the individual experience, exercise, and impact of FWAs (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Bloom et al. (2015) posited that the uncertainty about the efficacy of FWAs also contributed to its low adoption among organisations.

Any improvements in job satisfaction, job attitudes and overall employee engagement have been linked to positive employee performance (Bal & De Lange, 2015; Carter, Nesbit, Badham, Parker & Sung, 2018; Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011; Thompson et al., 2015). Where FWAs positively impact these outcomes, an increase in employee performance should then follow; these outcomes then play a mediating role in the relationship between FWAs and employee performance. There have been inconsistent findings on the impact of FWAs on these mediating variables.

A number of studies (Azar et al., 2018; Bal & De Lange, 2015; Berkery et al., 2017; Bloom et al., 2015; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) found that FWAs positively impact job satisfaction, job attitudes and/or employee engagement but other works (de Menezes & Kelliher 2011; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020) failed to establish this connection. Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) also found a positive association between flexplace and employee work effort but a negative association between flextime and employee work effort.

There is an opportunity to address the gaps in literature (Berkery et al., 2017; Conradie & de Klerk, 2019; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Thompson et al., 2015) as well as inform HR practitioners through a qualitative study on the impact of FWAs on employee performance. In doing so, the true link of the above-mentioned mediating variables can be interrogated and other factors that have been brought about by the availability/use of FWAs that contribute or could contribute to employee performance can be uncovered.

Blau's (1964) social exchange theory has been used recurrently to explain the positive impact that FWAs have on job satisfaction, positive job attitudes and employee engagement (Allen et al., 2013; Berkery et al., 2017; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Social exchange theory examines the obligations that arise out of interactions between parties. Where one party receives a perceived benefit from another party, the first party is then obligated to the second party. In the context of FWAs, employees perceive FWAs as a privilege extended to them by employers, and

express this appreciation through increased job satisfaction, employee engagement and positive job attitudes, and consequently increased work effort and performance.

In a more recent study, Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) found that although employees made use of FWAs to better balance their work and life responsibilities, this did not result in increased employee performance. This departure from earlier studies can probably be explained by the increased prevalence of FWAs within organisations. Where employees no longer view FWAs as a privilege and special benefit, there will be no increased employee performance as there will no longer be an obligation to reciprocate. This finding has significant implications for researchers and practitioners as these mediating variables (job satisfaction, positive job attitudes and employee engagement) have largely been used as indicators of the positive impact of FWAs on employee performance. By gaining an in depth understanding of how individual employees experience FWAs, other practices of how performance can be better managed and improved can be uncovered.

FWAs also require a review of performance management practices between managers (supervisors) and subordinates (employees). “Despite their contributions, research findings reveal tensions and contradictions in the ways the employees, managers and organisations develop, enact and respond to (work flexibility) initiatives” (Putman et al., 2014, p. 413). Although organisations are increasingly open to performance management practices that measure performance and outcomes over in-office face time (Regus, 2017), a number of South African managers express fear and anxiety over managing employees who make use of FWAs (SABPP, 2018; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). There are IT systems that can help track employee productivity but organisations still place great value on traditional modes of management through regular online meetings and telephone calls (Regus, 2017). It was in 2011 that de Menezes and Kelliher called for additional research studies providing a better explanation of how FWAs impact employee performance but there are still inconsistent findings on this issue (Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019). An understanding of how managers lead and manage the performance of employees who exercise FWAs can inform future HR policies and practices.

1.4 Aim and scope of the research

The increasing demand (by employees) and provision (by employers) of FWAs warrants an understanding of how FWAs impact employee performance. There have been inconsistent findings across studies as well as scant research from a South African perspective (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). Organisational outcomes are different across organisations but the pursuit of them, particularly those that affect the business as a going concern, is largely driven by employee performance; the monitoring and management of which remains essential.

The study will interrogate the social exchange theory explanation that has largely governed the FWAs and employee performance relationship; if the employees no longer view FWAs as a benefit, will organisations no longer gain the desired sustained or increased employee performance? This study also aims to uncover additional practices that contribute to the effective and fruitful implementation of FWAs by employees, yielding improved employee performance. Could there be other factors that directly impact employee performance, outside of the mediating variables of job satisfaction, job attitudes and employee engagement?

The scope of the research was limited to employees of South African organisations offering FWAs in the form of flexplace and flextime as these are the most widely applied practices (Allen et al., 2013; Azar et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2015). Thompson et al. (2015) found that the provision of either flextime or flexplace, and not necessarily both; is sufficient to increase the attractiveness of an organisation to potential and current employees.

This study aims to gain in depth insights on how FWAs impact the performance of South African employees by interrogating whether the theory of social exchange still holds, as well as uncovering additional individual practices that serve as a barrier or enhance performance. A manager (supervisor) and employee (subordinate) perspective will be sought in attempt to contribute to HR policies and practices that effectively serve both the manager and the employee.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

FWAs were originally extended to employees who had young children and other family members to care for (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). They were introduced as part of organisations' family-friendly policies but over the years, these have come to be extended to all employees with the view of aiding everyone in their pursuit to resolve work-life conflict. Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) found that family responsibilities did not moderate the relationship between the FWAs and work effort. In addition to not being determined by generational differences, the demand for FWAs are thus also not impacted by the degree of employees' family responsibilities.

Initially, the impact of FWAs could not be assessed but they gained the attention and adoption of organisations because they were in demand by employees and were inexpensive to implement (Bloom & Van Reenen, 2006). They became an inexpensive but significant tool through which organisations could differentiate themselves. With the increasing adoption of FWAs over the years, both researchers and practitioners sought to understand the impact that they had on organisational outcomes – employee performance being a significant contributor to this.

Although it has largely been accepted that FWAs are beneficial to employees and consequently the organisation, there has been inconsistency in research findings. This inconsistency, as well as a lack of in depth understanding on this matter, has impacted adoption and had resulted in the inability of practitioners to formulate and implement suitable HR policies and practices that enable the strategic outcomes of organisations. Employee performance is essential to the achievement of organisational outcomes and it is thus imperative for organisations to have a comprehensive understanding of the impact of FWAs, from a manager and employee perspective.

Blau's (1964) social exchange theory has been used to explain the positive impact that FWAs have on employee performance; the reliance being that FWAs drive certain mediating variables that in turn drive employee performance. For this theory to hold, an obligation or indebtedness has to arise on the part of the employee. In a

recent study, Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) suggested that the social exchange theory might not hold as they had observed that employees no longer viewed FWAs as a benefit and thus felt no obligation to reciprocate with increased performance. This was further supported by their finding of a negative association between FWAs and work effort. The implications of this shift on the effectiveness of FWAs are significant and this warrants a further investigation.

2.2 Background on flexible working arrangements

FWAs are HR policies and practices that afford employees' flexibility and autonomy over the temporal and physical aspects of their work (Hill, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin & Pitt-Catsouphes, 2008). Although there are various forms, the most widely applied by organisations are flextime and flexplace (Allen et al., 2013; Azar et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2015).

Flextime refers to the ability to determine one's work hours, a departure from the scheduled 08:00 to 17:00 workday and flexplace refers to the ability to work remotely, away from the traditional workplace environment (Shockley & Allen, 2007). In recent times, flexplace has grown from WFH to WFA, a welcome development as the traditional flexplace predominantly allowed employees to only WFH (Choudhury, Larson & Foroughi, 2019). WFA enables employees to live and work anywhere.

Organisations can choose to increase the flexibility of their work practices by providing more than one form of FWAs. FWAs were found to be more effective when more than one form is provided (Chen & Fulmer, 2017; Conradie & de Klerk, 2019; SABPP, 2018; Thompson et al., 2015) however Thompson et al. (2015) found that even the provision of one increases the esteem of an organisation in the minds of employees. The contextual aspect of FWAs – how they are defined, implemented and exercised – requires attention to facilitate a contribution to literature and findings to better inform HR policies and practices for organisations (Allen et al., 2013; Azar et al., 2018; Berkery et al., 2017). Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) sought to examine the differing impacts flexplace and flextime can have on performance and observed a negative association between flextime and employee work effort but a positive association between flexplace and employee work effort.

2.2.1 The growing demand for flexible working arrangements

The growing demand for FWAs was observed by Bloom and Van Reenen (2006) as early as 2006. At this time, organisations were providing these as ‘family-friendly’ policies targeted at employees who had young children and elderly or disabled dependants to care for. A review on the extant academic literature at the time did not aid the FWAs agenda as de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) failed to produce sufficient evidence for a business case for organisations; the authors cited inconsistent findings across the reviewed studies.

In the first half of the last decade, as employees continued to battle work-life conflict, organisations gained considerable interest in the solutions that could be provided by FWAs (Allen et al., 2013). Bal and De Lange (2015) found that flexible working practices were highly sought after by employees across generations, and organisations could no longer afford to provide FWAs as ‘family-friendly’ policies targeted only at employees with family responsibilities. Organisations who provided FWAs began to capitalise on their advantageous position, utilising their provision of FWAs as a competitive tool in the pursuit to attract, motivate and retain talent (Thompson et al., 2015).

In recent years, organisations have come to recognise and accept the need for employees to balance their work and life responsibilities (Kelliher, Richardson & Boiarintseva, 2017) and FWAs have become increasingly adopted as part of HR practices (Azar et al., 2018; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Regus, 2017). In a study of 20 000 senior managers and business owners across 14 developed and developing countries, Regus (2017) found that over 50% exercise flexplace practices; over 60% of South African participants reported that they spend a minimum of two and a half days in the week working remotely.

Even amidst this growing demand for FWAs, large corporations such as Yahoo!, IBM, Bank of America, HP and Best Buy have discouraged and discontinued these practices (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

2.2.2 Flexible working arrangements in practise

FWAs emerge from either formal or informal arrangements. Formal arrangements are those that arise as a result of the existence of the organisation's policy on flexible working. They often involve a written request and acknowledgement as well as an HR representative. Informal arrangements emerge from a discussion between the employee and the manager (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017).

Formal team or organisation-wide policies have been viewed as rigid and inflexible. To combat this, Putman et al., (2014) and de Menezes and Kelliher (2017) advocated for managers to be given greater autonomy in how HR policies are implemented as this will enable them to provide their teams with informal, customised arrangements that will also result in the organisation yielding benefit. The inconsistency observed by Bloom et al. (2015) in how the US airline industry exercised FWAs is testimony to this need to be able to have informal, personalised arrangements. All of JetBlue Airlines' call centre agents worked from home yet American Airlines did not allow any remote work.

The scarce legislative development on flexible working has focussed on formal FWAs and not on informally established arrangements (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). This deficiency of legislation could be a contributor to the reluctance of organisations to implement FWAs. In South Africa there is currently no legislation governing all forms of flexible working, the implementation of FWAs are at the organisation's discretion. den Dulk, Peters and Poutsma (2012) found that there is low adoption when work-family arrangements are left to the organisations' discretion. Their study also found that public provisions gave rise to a society-wide shift in employee expectations about work-family support.

Although there is consistency in the definitions and scope of flextime and flexplace, there is still variation in how organisations offer and employees exercise these. An employee could work remotely one day a week whereas another employee could opt to do so for four days a week. The same example can be used to illustrate the variety that employees exercise in how they schedule their work hours. The impact of this variation is largely unknowns as it was not accounted for in the numerous quantitative studies on the subject (Allen et al., 2013; Berkery et al., 2017; Putman et al., 2014).

Biron and van Veldhoven (2016) suggested that a balanced approach (three days in the office in one week and three days working from home in the next week) could enhance employee wellbeing and motivation.

2.3 Flexible working arrangements and employee performance

How an employee's performance is assessed is context-dependent and varies across organisations (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). In studies assessing FWAs and performance, the various authors have taken care to define what aspects of employee performance were under review. For de Menezes and Kelliher (2011), employee performance entailed productivity, performance ratings and quality of work, yet the same authors confined the definition to just performance ratings in 2017.

For this study, performance refers to the employee delivery against agreed-upon outcomes and this could be achieved through productivity, quality of work and/or other means. A significance of gaining manager and employee perspectives is that 'performance' ultimately comes down to an evaluation of the progress of what a supervisor and subordinate have agreed on in terms of expected deliverables and outcomes. What is critical to surface in this study are the techniques that can aid this performance when employees are exercising flexible ways of working. Organisations began to provide FWAs in response to a drop in performance associated with work-life conflict, the intention has always been to maintain or even enhance employee performance. Consequently, organisations need to be aware of what they need to have in place to ensure that performance does not decline (SABPP, 2018).

In an FWA-related context, there have been inconsistent findings on the performance outcomes of FWAs, resulting in a non-exhaustive but exhausting list. Kelliher and Anderson (2010) found that FWAs were positively associated with increased work effort whereas Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) found that this was not the case. de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) observed a reduction in absenteeism but could not find a direct association with employee performance, whereas Berkery et al., (2017) could find no association with absenteeism but observed a direct increase in employee performance.

Many researchers (Bal & De Lange, 2015; Conradie & de Klerk, 2019; Thompson et al., 2015) established that FWAs resulted in increased employee engagement which in turn increased employee performance. Bloom et al., (2015) established a direct positive impact on performance when employees worked from home and this was attributed to the quieter, less disruptive home environment as well as less leave taken and fewer sick days. Bloom et al., (2015) posited that the social exchange theory may have been a contributor, but it was not the main driver of performance. More recently, van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) found that FWAs had a negative direct association with employee performance; de Menezes and Kelliher (2017) found this specifically in the case of formally established FWAs. An improvement in job satisfaction and positive job attitudes was observed by Azar et al., (2018) and de Menezes and Kelliher (2017).

2.3.1 Autonomy

In allowing employees to exercise flexibility in how and where they work, FWAs afford autonomy (Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019). High levels of autonomy in employees exercising FWAs were found to relate positively to employee performance (Putman et al., 2014; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). Kelliher and Anderson (2010) linked this to the social exchange theory positing that employees valued the autonomy that FWAs allow them to have over their work and they were willing to exercise additional effort in return for this.

Berkery et al., (2017) and de Menezes and Kelliher (2017) also recognised the mediating role that autonomy plays between FWAs and job satisfaction, and the latter was then observed to have a positive impact on employee performance. de Menezes and Kelliher (2017) also found that formal FWAs were perceived as reduced autonomy and thus resulted in reduced job satisfaction.

It could be argued that the increased flexibility that would be a result of organisations providing more than one form of FWAs (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019; SABPP, 2018; Thompson et al., 2015), could lead to increased autonomy and ultimately in increased performance. Autonomy is a critical enabler of performance in employees exercising FWAs, the effects on increased performance would be reduced without the freedom and self-governance that FWAs yield. From a practical and tangible

perspective, FWAs provide employees the autonomy to work in an environment and at a time that is most conducive to their performance (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Leslie, Manchester, Park & Mehng, 2012).

2.3.2 Productivity

In a study by Boom et al. (2015), the productivity of employees working from home improved by way of an increased length in working hours as well as an increase in the calls taken during those hours i.e. an increase in efficiency. The participants attributed the increased working hours to the convenience of being at home and in one's own space – the ease with which they could get something to eat and make use of the bathroom. The participants attributed the efficiency in processing calls to the quieter home environment. Working from home is associated with fewer interruptions that are often experienced by being in the office (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). In a Regus (2017) study, 74% of the participants said that working closer to home resulted in improved concentration levels and productivity. When comparing stress levels and ability to concentrate between WFH and working at the office, employees cited travel time, office politics and social interaction as factors that contributed negatively to their stress and concentration levels when working at the office (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016).

The findings of studies on the impact of FWAs on productivity are however also inconsistent. Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) found a positive association between flexplace specifically and work effort, this in contrast to the negative association between flextime and work effort. de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) did not find a link between FWAs and productivity.

Although the productivity benefits of working from home have not been denied (Bloom et al., 2015; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020), the growing interest in FWAs has been attributed to the aspiration by organisations to support their employees' resolution of work-life conflict, not to increase their productivity. One could argue that this could lead to organisations underestimating the direct positive impact on productivity that FWAs have. In determining whether to extend FWAs to an employee, the decision should not hinge on their degree of work-life conflict but rather on the potential FWAs have on increasing the employee's performance.

2.3.3 Co-ordination and co-operation

As organisations continue to drive collaboration inside and outside the organisation, how employees co-ordinate themselves and co-operate with each other as they exercise FWAs is important. van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) recommended that organisations pay attention to improving co-operation and collaboration to ensure performance is optimised when employees make use of FWAs. Azar et al. (2018) also acknowledged this imperative for organisations to understand the consequences that FWAs have on the performance of not only the individual but teams and the organisation.

van der Lippe and Lippényi's (2020) study sought to understand how the performance of an individual working from home would be impacted by team dynamics. The more the employee's team members worked from home, the worse the employee's performance became. Being away from one's team led to increased work effort but not in the way of productivity, the employee had to spend more time and effort in learning or resolving a problem. The manager's performance rating of the team as a unit also decreased with the increase of team members working from home. The participants in a study by Bloom et al. (2015) mentioned that WFH can be lonely and they sought physical social interaction with colleagues.

In their study, van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) acknowledged the growing development of IT systems that could facilitate better co-operation and knowledge sharing but they were sceptical about how these would be received by employees. Would they view them as supportive tools as they navigated FWAs or would they perceive them as organisational surveillance tools?

Managers need to be mindful that FWAs can result in reduced physical interactions that facilitate knowledge sharing, the development of interpersonal skills, as well as the building and nurturing of relationships. The unintended consequences of FWAs cannot be negative team performance. This requires organisations to be proactive in understanding the impact of FWAs on employee performance. Teams continue to collaborate cross-functionally and across organisations, and a study such as this one will contribute to the understanding of the techniques and tools that will aid the effectiveness of FWAs.

2.3.4 Organisational culture

Organisations who adopt FWAs to remain competitive for talent in the market and do not adopt them with the view to serve both the organisational and employee needs of enabling productivity and the resolution of work-life conflict respectively, will not be able to yield the full benefits of these arrangements. They will be content with organisational cultural barriers in the successful implementation of FWAs, as there is no true organisational commitment and belief in the potential of FWAs improving employee performance. It is in such environments that managers are likely to send mixed messages and colleagues are not supportive of those who exercise FWAs. Putman et al. (2014) noted that the managers' views and attitude towards FWAs is the best predictor of whether employees view these arrangements as available to them or not – even with the existence of a formal, organisation-wide policy in support of FWAs. The role of a supportive manager and environment is critical in the successful implementation and exercise of FWAs by employees (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Timms, Brough, O' Driscoll, Kalliath, Sui, Sit & Lo, 2015).

Although organisations are making attempts to respond to employee needs by adopting flexible working practices, managers in some organisations were found inept to lead employees who were making use of FWAs (SABPP, 2018; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). SABPP (2018) specifically uncovered manager inability to measure employees based on their output over where and when they work.

A study by Bloom et al. (2015) observed the reluctance of managers to have employees WFH where they could not be directly supervised. The managers concerns were soon allayed as the performance of WFH employees increased. The limitations of organisational culture soon resurfaced with the reduced rates of promotion amongst employees who were working from home. The managers confessed that this was not due to their performance but that their reduced visibility had resulted in them not being 'top of mind' when talent discussions were had. Leslie et al. (2012) found that the impact of FWAs on one's career depended on what your manager attributed your use of FWAs to. Where the manager believed that the employee exercised FWAs to improve productivity, this resulted in a favourable view but where the manager believed that the employee exercised FWAs to better balance work-life responsibilities, the employees' career prospects were negatively impacted.

Career limitation is another unintended consequence of FWAs that managers and employees need to be aware of, and that HR practices and policies need to solve.

Manager bias against FWAs can also impact their subjective evaluation of employees. de Menezes and Kelliher (2017, p. 1056) cautioned that “line managers who are not completely supportive of a flexible working arrangement may find their assessment of the flexible worker’s performance, consciously or otherwise, influenced by their beliefs about the arrangement.”

Putman et al. (2014) posited that one way to overcome the organisational cultural barriers would be to make FWAs an employee right. Their belief is that this would enable employees to exercise them without fear of manager retribution. The aim of the study by Putman et al. (2014) was to examine the tensions in workplace flexibility and make recommendations on how to solve for these. The recommendation to make FWAs an employee right may solve for the unsupportive work environment, but they neglect to assess the impact on employee performance that this recommendation would have.

It is important for organisations to understand their cultural barriers that may impact successful implementation and practise of FWAs. The successful implementation would be increased employee performance coupled with reduced work-life conflict. Line managers may be given autonomy in establishing informal, personalised arrangements with their employees (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017) but an antecedent of this is their acceptance and endorsement of an organisational culture that supports FWAs. The reluctance of line managers may also put pressure on senior leadership to discourage FWAs, thus disabling organisation-wide adoption.

2.3.5 Employee wellbeing and retention

FWAs have also been found to have a positive impact on employee wellbeing and retention. Although the studies did not establish a direct link to employee performance, the impact of FWAs on employee wellbeing and retention is important as these are significant organisational outcomes that are widely pursued by organisations. Uncovering how FWAs positively affect employee wellbeing could

also help to overcome organisational barriers to FWAs, as these are not only organisational but managerial goals as well.

The social interactions that take place at work can be exhausting and flexplace allows employees to take a break from this and recharge (Windeler et al., 2017). Lower stress levels were observed in employees (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) and although their study found that there was increased intensification of work, Kelliher and Anderson (2010) did not observe any negative effects that could be associated with intensification of work. When employees worked remotely, there was less leave taken and fewer sick days (Bloom et al., 2015).

FWAs were found to result in reduced absenteeism (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011) and were positively associated with retention (Bloom et al., 2015; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). Berkery et al. (2017) did not establish a link between flextime and reduced absenteeism but they did find increased employee motivation, job satisfaction and reduced stress levels.

2.3.6 Job satisfaction, job attitudes, employee engagement and the social exchange theory

In their review of 100 years of research on performance appraisal and performance management, DeNisi and Murphy (2017, p. 427) observed that as researchers and practitioners gained an increasing interest in performance management, “the underlying theoretical models switched from measurement-oriented models to motivation models.” This shift explains the concurrent increased interest in constructs such as job satisfaction, job attitudes and employee engagement as ways to motivate employees and thus increase employee performance (Carter et al., 2018; Christian et al., 2011).

Blau’s (1964) social exchange theory has frequently been used to explain the role of mediating variables on the performance outcomes of FWAs (Allen et al., 2013; Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019; Azar et al., 2018; Berkery et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2018; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). “The idea is that when employees are provided with opportunities for learning, social support, and feedback in their work roles, they seek

to balance the exchange by responding with greater effort and focus” (Carter et al., 2018, p. 2489).

The afore-mentioned group of studies did not establish a direct link between FWAs and employee performance. The positive impact on employee performance was mediated by job satisfaction, job attitudes and employee engagement. Blau’s (1964) social exchange theory holds that as parties interact, certain obligations arise out of these engagements. For so long as one party believes that he is receiving a benefit from the another, the first party will feel obliged to repay this debt or return this favour. In the context of FWAs, employees perceive these as a privilege or benefit afforded to them by the organisations they work for. In view of this favourable treatment and special accommodation by their employers, employees reciprocate with increased job satisfaction, positive job attitudes and employee engagement. They then express this appreciation through increased work performance, as previously noted from the literature.

Participants in a 2015 experiment by Bloom et al. attributed their increased performance to the convenience of being home and the conduciveness of a quiet home environment – the social exchange theory was a contributor but it was not the main driver. In more recent studies, Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019), and van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) found a negative association between FWAs and employee performance. Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) posited that employees still experienced reduced work-life conflict but they did not experience any increase in job satisfaction, positive job attitudes or employee engagement because, with the prevalence of FWAs, they no longer viewed them as a privilege or benefit and consequently felt no obligation to reciprocate with increased performance.

FWAs have become increasingly prevalent thus the study aims to contribute to the literature investigating whether the social exchange theory still applies in the context of FWAs. If the social exchange theory holds, organisations will need to amplify their initiatives that seek to positively influence job satisfaction, job attitudes and employee engagement, as the prevalence of FWAs in organisations will intensify the competition for talent. Azar et al. (2018) also recommended that organisations monitor the role of mediating variables as they ultimately impact employee performance.

2.4 Manager-employee relationship

2.4.1 Trust

The reluctance by managers to adopt FWAs because they have no sight of their employees at work (Bloom et al., 2015; de Menzes & Kelliher, 2017; Putman et al., 2014; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020) implies a lack of trust that the employees will indeed deliver on the agreed-upon outcomes unless the temporal and physical aspects of their work are aligned to those of the manager. Trust is then an essential component of a critical enabler of FWAs: the manager-employee relationship. The significance of a supportive manager has already been highlighted (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Putman et al., 2014).

In examining the obligations that arise out of interactions between parties, the social exchange theory has also been used to understand why trust in the workplace can result in outcomes such as increased performance and positive job attitudes (Chen & Fulmer, 2017; Gill, Cassidy, Cragg, Algate, Weijs & Finegan, 2019; Salamon & Robinson, 2008). By extending the trust upfront, the trustor (in this case the manager) takes a risk, displaying their vulnerability and good will because in trusting, they are offering benefits without the employee necessarily having to earn them. This display of goodwill then results in an obligation arising in the trustee (the employee), to return that trust and a relationship of mutual trust is then established. This mutual trust enables positive employee performance and job attitudes.

Felt trust or the feeling of being trusted increased the trustee's sense of autonomy, which has been found to decrease turnover intentions (Gill et al., 2019). Lau, Lam and Wen (2014) also found that beyond the sense of obligation that arises in the trustee, felt trust results in increased organisational-based self-esteem and this too results in increased work performance. From an organisational culture perspective, employees' collective perceptions of trust in the workplace have an impact on individual and team performance. Salamon and Robinson (2008) found a strong association between trust in leadership and collective felt trust employees experienced at the team level.

2.4.2 Performance management

When organisations adopt flexible working practices, it is important to ensure that both managers and employees are adequately equipped to ensure the success of FWAs.

“Managers who have not received adequate training in managing flexible workers, may find it more difficult to manage and assess the performance of employees that are mostly away from the workplace or present at different times, thus resulting in lower ratings” (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017, p. 1066). Timms et al. (2015) also recommended that organisations educate their leaders on FWAs to mitigate similar outcomes. SABPP (2018) supported this view observing that South African managers were unable to manage performance based on outcomes or targets; they still considered an employee’s adherence to a traditional 08:00 to 17:00, in-office workday as an indicator of performance. Managers wanted employees to WFH no more than one day a week, as they believed that they needed to supervise their work (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). For FWAs to be implemented and exercised in a way that increases employee performance, managers need to be equipped with the skills and mindset to manage performance based on outcomes.

There are IT systems that can also help track employee productivity through their online activity. Only 66% of the participants in a Regus (2017) study were in favour of having their productivity tracked and measured through IT systems. van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) questioned how employees would receive IT-enabled systems – would they be viewed as productivity-enabling tools or the organisation’s surveillance tools? Regus (2017) found that in monitoring their productivity, employees preferred that the organisation use the traditional techniques of phone calls and monthly meetings. The study also found that leaders largely agreed with employees as they cited regular meetings (video conferencing and in-person) and telephone calls as critical tools to effectively manage performance. Organisations opted for these traditional methods over investing in IT systems that track employee productivity. It could be argued that productivity tracking tools that are viewed as surveillance tools could counter the autonomy afforded by FWAs.

Müller and Niessen (2019) posited that to maintain or increase performance while WFH, employees must exercise self-leadership. They then investigated the relevant variations in self-leadership that employees exercise on home days over office days and these were found to be self-reward, self-goal setting, visualisation of successful performance, and evaluation of beliefs and assumptions. These variations could be attributed to the autonomy that is afforded to the employees by WFH. Gaining an understanding of the practices that aid the effectiveness of FWAs assists HR practitioners in organisations to formulate suitable enabling programmes and interventions.

Azar et al. (2018) also identified another technique that aids employee performance while making use of FWAs, that of planning behaviour. They showed that employees who could better manage their time and plan their workday, successfully yielded the benefits of FWAs as a tool to resolve work-life conflict.

2.5 Conclusion

Although there have been inconclusive findings regarding the impact of FWAs on employee performance, the extant literature largely supports a view that there is a positive impact. The studies largely indicate that this impact is mediated by job satisfaction, job attitudes and employee engagement, with the result that organisations are largely focussed on positively shifting these mediating variables. There is a dearth in qualitative studies that provides insights on other factors that may have a direct and positive impact on performance. As this study seeks to uncover these, the researcher aims to contribute to literature, a list of structural, cultural and relational prerequisites for the successful and effective implementation and exercise of FWAs in organisations.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter follows a detailed explanation and rationale for the research questions that were addressed in this study. The literature review that the researcher undertook in Chapter 2 formed the basis for the decision to confine this study to the below three questions. By gaining an in depth understanding of how individual employees experience FWAs and the impact thereof on performance, other practices of how performance can be better managed and improved can be uncovered.

3.2 Research Question 1: How have flexible working arrangements affected individual employee performance?

The aim of this question is to understand the effect that FWAs have on employee performance, if any. Literature largely attributes increased employee performance to the mediating variables of job satisfaction, job attitudes and employee engagement. Could the contribution of the other factors be underestimated in literature? An understanding of any negative aspects may also assist HR practitioners to formulate programmes and interventions that can mitigate these.

3.3 Research Question 2: What practices/methods contribute or could contribute to increasing work performance while making use of flexible working arrangements?

This question aims to uncover the specific practices/methods that managers and employees could implement to ensure increased performance. The participants will be required to rely on what is already in use as well as what they would amend or implement, were they in a position to do so.

3.4 Research Question 3: Do employees view flexible working arrangements as a standard human resource practice or a privilege/benefit, and do they feel indebted/obligated to organisations for provision of these?

The social exchange theory has widely been used to explain how FWAs result in increased performance. The obligation that arises in employees on being allowed to exercise FWAs impacts the mediating variables referred to under research question 1 and these then positively impact performance. Recent literature, referred to under Chapter 2, suggested that in the absence of this obligation employees failed to respond with increased performance. This question aims to probe whether employees who make use of FWAs still feel obligated to respond with increased performance. It will be interesting to also observe whether the growing interest and adoption of FWAs by other teams or organisations will remove this sense of obligation.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter entails the research methodology and design components that were selected for this study. Through this exploratory study, the researcher sought to gain insight into the perspectives held by managers and employees about the relationship of FWAs and employee performance. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews from 20 participants (nine managers and 11 employees) across three financial services organisations. It was most recently Azar et al. (2018) who called for a qualitative study that would yield deeper insights and contribute to the body of literature considering inconsistent findings on the impact of FWAs on employee performance.

4.2 Research methodology and design

Interpretivism is a philosophy that seeks to deepen the understanding of the human experience by interrogating their differences as social actors (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Leitch, Hill and Harrison (2010) provide that this philosophy makes way for the social world to be understood according to people's self-understandings. As the researcher aimed to gain an understanding of the impact of FWAs on performance through the lens of individual managers and employees, interpretivism was the most suitable research philosophy.

Induction involves a 'bottom up' approach to theory development (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As the researcher aimed to collect data, analyse it with a view of making generalisations or formulating speculative propositions, and then add to the body of knowledge or theory; the suitable approach was an inductive one.

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews of individuals in supervisory and subordinate positions. As the interviews were the only qualitative data collection technique, the researcher made use of a mono method.

There had been insufficient findings on the direct impact of FWAs on employee performance (Allen et al., 2013; Azar et al., 2018). The positive effect of FWAs on

employee performance was mediated by other variables and thus explained using the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). The researcher sought to gain manager and employee insights on their experienced effects of FWAs on performance in an effort to mitigate the growing consistency and contribute to theory by uncovering whether the social exchange still applied. An exploratory study is one where the research study probes deeper, uncovering new insights by casting a new perspective on the topic (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As this definition aligned with the desired aims of the researcher, the purpose of the research design was exploratory.

A cross-sectional research study is one that is undertaken at a specific point in time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The selection between a cross-sectional design versus a longitudinal one is based on practical considerations. As the researcher has a limited amount of time in which to complete the research report, a cross-sectional design has been selected.

In seeking to capture the individual's story through their own lens as much as possible, within the parameters of the constructs of FWAs, manager and employee perceptions, the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews. This form of data collection provides a guideline at the outset, of the themes that the researcher would like to explore. This is done through a set of predetermined questions, but also allows for a degree of flexibility, this is through the variation of the order in which the questions are asked and the themes covered (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher may also opt to exclude some themes and questions.

4.3 Population

The population of a study is the group of participants who would be able to provide insights and who would be available to the researcher (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As the performance of an employee is strongly influenced and regulated by the relationship between the manager and the employee, the population for this study was comprised of managers (supervisors) and employees (subordinates). It is imperative that the manager and employee be aligned on performance expectations and desired outcomes thus they are the most important stakeholders in the pursuit to further understand the relationship between FWAs and employee performance (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Putman et al., 2014). The purpose of the study was not

to understand specific manager-employee relationships; thus, the managers and employees were not selected because they were connected through reporting lines. This approach aided the researcher in being exposed to greater diversity in thought and experiences about the impact of FWAs on employee performance.

Due to practical considerations and the qualitative nature of the study, the population was limited to participants across three organisations in the financial industry and who resided in Johannesburg, South Africa. The advantage of this was the exclusion of regional and industry effects that could influence perceptions.

Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2013) recommended that research participants have similar characteristics. As the scope of the study was limited to employee-oriented FWAs in the way of flextime and flexplace, the employees needed to exercise one or both forms of flexible working and the managers needed to extend same to their teams. The FWAs could be formally or informally established but it was required that the arrangement exist between the employee and the line manager about the employee's exercise of FWAs.

The manager had to have been in a management position for a minimum of three years. The rationale for this was the experience required, the manager had to understand the dynamics at play when managing a group of people as well as the required environment for team members to achieve business outcomes. They needed to have completed a performance cycle supervising a team that was making use of FWAs to be able to review the performance. The employee or manager needed to have completed a performance cycle while making use of FWAs to be able to review their own or subordinate's performance, respectively.

The employee needed to have completed a performance cycle while making use of FWAs to be able to reflect on and provide insight on their stakeholder review of their performance.

4.4 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this study were individuals, managers and employees who had experience with FWAs. The researcher sought to probe their perspectives and gain insights to add to the body of literature on whether FWAs result in increased or reduced employee performance.

4.5 Sampling method and sample size

The decision on how to sample is important as it speaks to the reliability and validity of a study. Incorrect sampling could mean that the findings of your study cannot be generalised to apply to the rest of the population (Denscombe, 2010). As the researcher did not have a list of all the managers and employees who would form part of the population, a sampling frame could not be used and the sample did not represent the population statistically (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher made use of non-probability sampling techniques.

In qualitative research studies, non-probability sampling is most frequently used and purposive sampling specifically enables the researcher to rely on their own judgement in the selection of a group of people who will be able to best answer the research questions and meet objectives (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The selection of purposive sampling as a technique allowed the researcher to select suitable candidates for this study.

The researcher also relied on convenience and snowball sampling techniques to secure research participants. Through convenience sampling, the researcher was able to make use of their personal and professional networks to put together a list of suitable candidates. Snowball sampling allowed the researcher to receive participant recommendations from interviewees who were already part of the sample (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Both these additional sampling techniques assisted the researcher in diversifying the sample across the lines of gender, race, department and job level. Table 1 provides a view of the sampling criteria for the selection of participants.

Table 1: Sample criteria for research participants

	Manager	Employee
Organisation type	Financial services	Financial services
Participant location	Johannesburg, South Africa	Johannesburg, South Africa
Minimum period in job role	3 years	1 year
Minimum period making use of FWAs	1 year	1 year
Type of FWAs	Flexplace and/or flextime	Flexplace and/or flextime

Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) recommended that six to twelve interviews were likely to be sufficient to achieve a desired research objective. They did caution that this would likely not be enough if the sample were relatively heterogenous, a bigger sample would then be required. The researcher secured a sample of 20 and this sample size proved to be a healthy one to demonstrate saturation in data collection and analysis. Table 2 provides an overview of the sample and a more detailed description of the sample will follow in Chapter 5.

Table 2: Overview of sample

Sample category	Total no. of participants	Participants from Company X	Participants from Company Y	Participants from Company Z
Manager	9	3	0	6
Employee	11	5	2	4

The sample of employees was more diverse in terms of department as compared to the sample of managers. What was of unexpected additional value to the study were the insights by the managers who work in the Organisational Effectiveness department as they had rich insights not only about their own experience but the experiences of other managers in the organisation.

4.6 Data collection

4.6.1 Measurement instrument

“Without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002, p. 14). In the design of a measurement instrument, the researcher must ensure the validity and reliability of this instrument.

Semi-structured interviews are appropriate where the researcher seeks to gain individual insights about a particular topic to contribute to the literature and theory development (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). It was befitting for the researcher to make use of semi-structured interviews in gathering data; they aligned with the exploratory nature of the research study.

Semi-structured interviews provide a guideline at the outset, of the themes that the researcher would like to explore. This is done through a set of predetermined questions, but also allows for a degree of flexibility, by means of the variation of the order in which the questions are asked and the themes covered (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This set of predetermined questions formed part of the interview guides (Appendices 1 and 2) that the researcher made use of during the interviews. Participants were requested to participate through telephone calls and emails and once a date had been agreed, the researcher sent a calendar invite (Appendices 3 and 4) with confirmation details about the interview as well as a reminder of the topic and what was being requested of the participant. The interview questions were not shared ahead of the interview to avoid prepared responses. The researcher also shared a consent form (Appendix 5) for the participant to sign; it explained the confidentiality of the study (Zikmund et al., 2013).

In line with Jacob and Furgerson’s (2012) recommendations, the questions were open-ended and expansive and allowed the participant to take the question in several directions – some that the researcher did not anticipate but this is what qualitative research is all about. This approach did not hamper validity as the researcher ensured that the critical topics and questions were covered by continuously referencing the interview guides.

At the beginning of each interview the researcher reminded the participants of the purpose of the study, the anonymity and confidentiality assured as per the consent form (Appendix 5), the fact that the session was going to be recorded as well as their ability to opt out of the interview at any time. The participants were also reminded that the perspectives that were sought were those of flexible working and not exclusive remote work as what was experienced during the COVID-19 restrictions. This reminder was of particular importance as the respondents were working exclusively from home at the time, this a form of inflexible working. The researcher also recapped the definitions of flexplace and flextime to ensure that the participants were aligned with the researcher, each other, and the purpose of the study. These initial measures were to ensure that the fundamental constructs of the study were well understood by all participants and to the same degree. A set of preliminary background questions, as outlined in the interview guides, were also posed to the participants to confirm the sample criteria and to set the participant at ease with the researcher. The relevance of these cursory measures were confirmed when the researcher had to suspend an interview with a participant as they turned out to be a shift worker, this is a form of employer-oriented FWAs (Berkery et al., 2017) and not a flextime worker.

The questions in the interview guide were designed to address the research questions and this ensured that they aligned with the purpose of the study as the research questions had been formulated with the consideration of the literature review in Chapter 2. In conclusion, each participant was asked how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their world of work. Due to the magnitude of the effects of the pandemic and its direct impact on working conditions, the researcher would have been remiss not to consider it as part of this study, albeit a small part.

The interview guides enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth view into the participants' perspectives on the impact of FWAs on employee performance as the questions were anchors ensuring alignment to the necessary constructs and the research objectives but they were also open-ended and facilitated a meaningful dialogue between the researcher and participant. Tables 3 and 4 illustrate which interview questions were used to probe insights on each research questions. It is important to note that the questions that were posed in the interview were not limited to those included in the interview guides.

Table 3: Alignment between research questions and interview guide (employees)

	Research Questions	Interview Questions
1	How have FWAs affected individual employee performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Please share some background on your FWAs: how did they come about, how long have you been making use of them – just your general experience. b) How have FWAs impacted your work performance? c) Have FWAs had any other impact on you – be it from a work or personal perspective?
2	What practices/methods contribute or could contribute to increasing work performance while making use of FWAs?	<p>[Guided by how the above question has been answered]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) If you were in a position to do so, what changes would you make, regarding Flexible Working Arrangements that you think would result in your increased work performance? e) Are there any negative aspects of FWAs?
3	Do employees view FWAs as a standard human resource practice or a privilege/benefit, and do they feel indebted/obligated to organisations for provision of these?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f) Do you have a formal/informal arrangement with your manager regarding your FWAs? g) How do you feel about having a manager/working for an organisation that allows for FWAs? h) If you were looking to change jobs and evaluating whether a company is a fit for you, what are the work practices and policies that you would be looking out for, the ones you would insist on? <p>There are some basic rights at work – these are largely governed by legislation. And then there are also benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) How do benefits make you feel about your manager/organisation? j) In today's working world, do you think FWAs should be a benefit or a basic work right?

	Additional question on COVID-19	k) Let us talk about COVID-19, how did this impact your world of work and performance?
--	---------------------------------	--

Table 4: Alignment between research questions and interview guide (managers)

	Research Questions	Interview Questions
1	How have FWAs affected individual employee performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Please share some background on the FWAs you have with your team: how did they come about, how long have you been making use of them – just your general experience. b) [Guided by how the above question has been answered] What influenced your decision on what form of FWAs to extend to your team? c) How did your management style change, when your team started making use of FWAs? d) How have FWAs impacted your team’s work performance? e) Have FWAs had any other impact – be it from a work or personal perspective?
2	What practices/methods contribute or could contribute to increasing work performance while making use of FWAs?	<p>[Guided by how the above question has been answered]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f) If you were in a position to do so, what changes would you make, regarding Flexible Working Arrangements that you think would result in your team’s increased work performance? g) Are there any negative aspects of FWAs?
3	Do employees view FWAs as a standard human resource practice or a privilege/benefit, and do they feel indebted/obligated to organisations for provision of these?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> h) Do you have a formal/informal policy on FWAs in place with your team? i) How do you think your team feels about having a manager/working for an organisation that allows for FWAs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How do you think this view impacted their performance?

		j) Do you think organisations should provide FWAs across the organisation or this should be at the discretion of the manager?
	Additional question on COVID-19	k) Let us talk about COVID-19, how did this impact your team's world of work and performance?

4.6.2 Pilot interviews

In preparation for the data collection phase of a study, Saunders and Lewis (2018) recommend the researcher conduct a pilot interview to test the clarity, timing, relevance, and validity of the interview questions. Pilot interviews were conducted with four personal acquaintances and work colleagues (one manager and one employee) who met the sample criteria.

These test interviews were instrumental in providing the researcher with useful feedback on how the interview guide should be refined. The introductory script was tweaked to fully recap the topic of discussion, caution against confusing flexible working and the COVID-19 exclusive WFH and remind the participants of the definitions of flexplace and flextime. The researcher realised that the managers would have to be prompted to discuss any changes to their management styles when they started extending FWAs to their teams. The researcher also became familiar with the kind of responses the various questions types elicited and tweaked the questions to first probe, then specify and only as a last resort pose a direction question to the participant. These amendments contributed to the reliability of the study.

4.6.3 Data collection

An Outlook calendar invitation (Appendices 3 and 4) was sent to each participant to secure their availability and confirm the interview time and duration. Due to the restrictions of COVID-19, the semi-structured interviews were conducted by use of video conferencing tools (Zoom and Microsoft Teams) instead of physical face-to-

face interaction as the researcher had initially planned. This was not a limitation of the study as Saunders and Lewis (2018) do not advocate for one interview channel over another, what they do stress is the importance of the number of interviews that are conducted. By the time of the first interview, all participants had been WFH for a minimum of six months and had been using video conferencing tools to communicate and connect with others thus the researcher was not worried about the participants' ability and familiarity with the video conferencing tools. Although the researcher recommended Zoom, the participants were able to select their preferred tool and certain participants opted for Microsoft Teams. The researcher had been making use of both tools.

The Outlook calendar invitation (Appendices 3 and 4) was coupled with a reminder of the topic of discussion as well as the sample selection criteria to ensure alignment. This invitation also included an electronic link by which the participants could access and sign the required consent form (Appendix 5). The confidentiality of the session was further assured by the researcher's use of a private Zoom room and the security measures of both Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This additional step to make the participants comfortable was of import to the researcher as employee performance is a sensitive subject and amid general cybersecurity concerns. The invitation included guidelines on how best to position the participant's mobile phone or laptop to ensure optimal recording and online face-to-face visibility and interaction between the researcher and participant.

All interviews were conducted within three weeks. One-on-one interviews, over group ones, allow the researcher to focus on the participant establishing a connection that supports a sincere and transparent discussion that would be missed in a group setting (Denscombe, 2010).

The researcher made use of the below guidelines from Jacob and Furgerson (2012) on how to conduct an interview effectively:

- The researcher maintained eye contact with the participant and did not take any notes as they had the video recording to rely on. Eye conveys that the researcher is interested in the participant and their contribution.

- The researcher made use of basic counselling skills (paying attention, responding appropriately, nodding in agreement) to assure the participant that they were listening.
- The researcher encouraged the free flow of the conversation but also stayed focussed and steered the conversation back on track where the researcher felt that the participant may have strayed too far. This exercise of control was also aided by the pilot interviews.
- The researcher adhered to the allocated time except for two instances where the researcher checked that the participant was comfortable to go over the allocated time.
- The researcher shared the audio recordings with the transcriber right away.

The duration of the interviews was between 25 minutes and an hour and 20 minutes, the average interview lasted 45 minutes. The interview guide provided the necessary direction and ensured that the researcher elicited the responses that would help address the research questions. The researcher requested a potential second interview with the participants, the researcher wanted to secure access to the participant in the event that they needed to clarify some of the responses or pose additional questions that they may have missed (Saunders & Lewis, 2018); this step contributed to the reliability of the data analysis.

The interviews were recorded, and the audio transcriptions were shared with the transcriber. To preserve confidentiality in this study, the transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix 6). The video recordings assisted the researcher to capture the participants' cues and conduct which would prove helpful when analysing the data.

4.7 Data analysis

“Data analysis is central to credible qualitative research” (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3351). These words emphasise the importance of this phase of the research process. Data collection, interview transcription and data analysis were concurrent processes. As an interview was concluded, it was shared with the transcriber and the transcriptions were then used to analyse the data using computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti) and Microsoft Excel. This approach was

recommended by Saunders and Lewis (2018) to improve on and inform subsequent interviews by making use of learnings and insights gained from completed interviews. This approach also helped the researcher monitor the demonstration of data saturation.

The data from the study was analysed using an inductive approach. This approach allowed for the codes, code categories and themes to emerge from the data and not from a predefined code book based on the literature (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). On receipt from the transcriber, the transcriptions were anonymised by removing the identifiers. They were then uploaded to ATLAS.ti to begin the thematic analysis process. Two ATLAS.ti projects were created for the two participant groups. The researcher wanted to ensure reliability of the data by mitigating the temptation to find connections between manager and employee responses when none existed. The codes were created in ATLAS.ti but the code categories and themes were finalised with the reliance of Microsoft Excel. In qualitative analysis, code frequency does not equate importance thus the researcher did not use a ranking system to recognise the importance of a code over others (Clarke & Braun, 2016).

The thematic approach to the analysis process was based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) prescribed six steps. Thematic analysis not only aids the identification, reporting and analysis of the emergent themes, it can further develop the comprehension and interpretation of the research problem (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In a 2018 critical reflection on their widely used approach, Clarke and Braun confirmed the intention of its use; "We intended our approach to TA to be a *fully* qualitative one. That is, one in which qualitative techniques are underpinned by a distinctly *qualitative* research philosophy that emphasises, for example, researcher subjectivity, as a resource (rather than a problem to be managed)" (p. 107). This confirmation contributes to the validity of the approach and the reliability of this study.

The application of Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis:

1. The researcher familiarised themselves with the data

The audio recordings were transcribed and the researcher read through each transcript twice and watched the video interview to take note of participant cues e.g. for emphasis.

2. Generation of initial codes

The researcher generated and assigned codes to the dataset to signify insights that contributed to addressing the researched questions. The researcher generated fewer codes with each successive transcription. A total of 161 employee codes (Appendix 7) and 139 manager codes (Appendix 8) were generated using ATLAS.ti. What was of significance is the similarity in data sets resulting in the generation of a high number of identical codes across both projects.

3. Search for themes

The codes were collapsed into code categories based on emerging patterns and the categories were ultimately collapsed into themes. This process was done by means of Microsoft Excel. The researcher maintained two distinct processes between the employee and manager analysis although the similarities and common themes were increasing. The researcher wanted to preserve the use of an inductive approach in the emergence of the themes.

4. Review the themes

To ensure that the themes emerged inductively and reflected the intent of the participants, the researcher reviewed the themes against the code categories, the codes, and the dataset of selected quotations.

5. Define and name the themes

In step 4, the researcher was satisfied with the validity of the themes and their adherence to the inductive analysis approach that was selected for this study. In this step, the researcher refined the themes with the consideration of the emergent patterns as well as the purpose of the research study.

6. Produce the report

The researcher identified quotations from participant responses that best conveyed the sentiment of the final themes. The presentation of these and the discussion thereof in conjunction with the literature will take place in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Data saturation was demonstrated during the analysis of the participants' transcripts. Data saturation is not reached or established but rather demonstrated and it is an indicator that additional research could prove to be counterproductive or of very little contribution in addressing the research questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

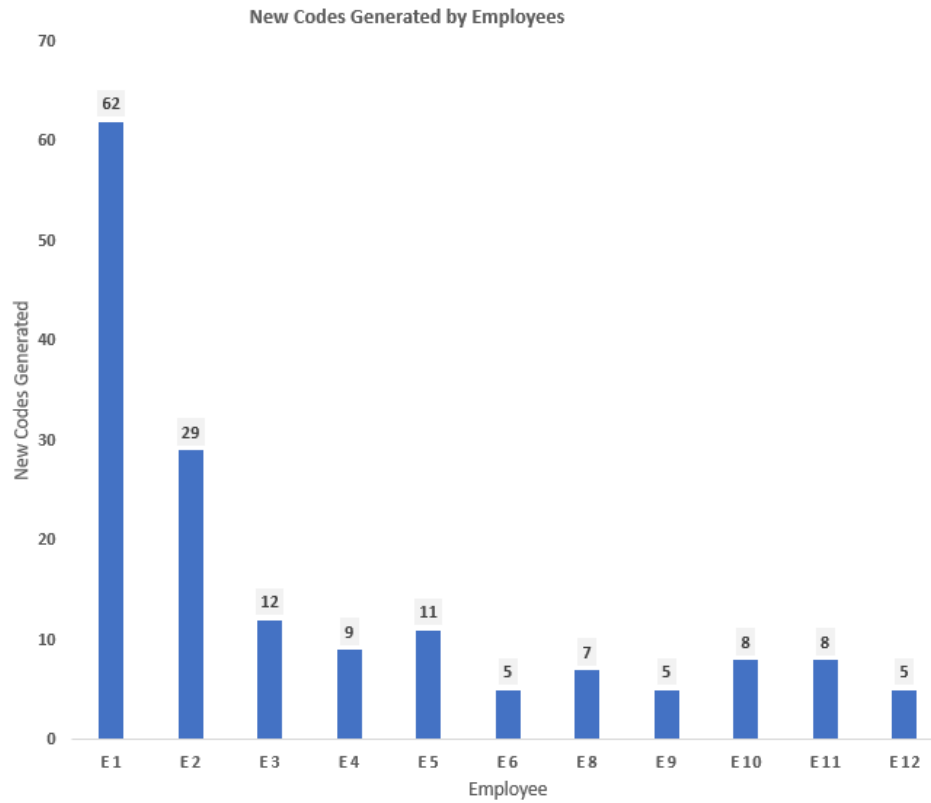


Figure 1: New codes generated by employees

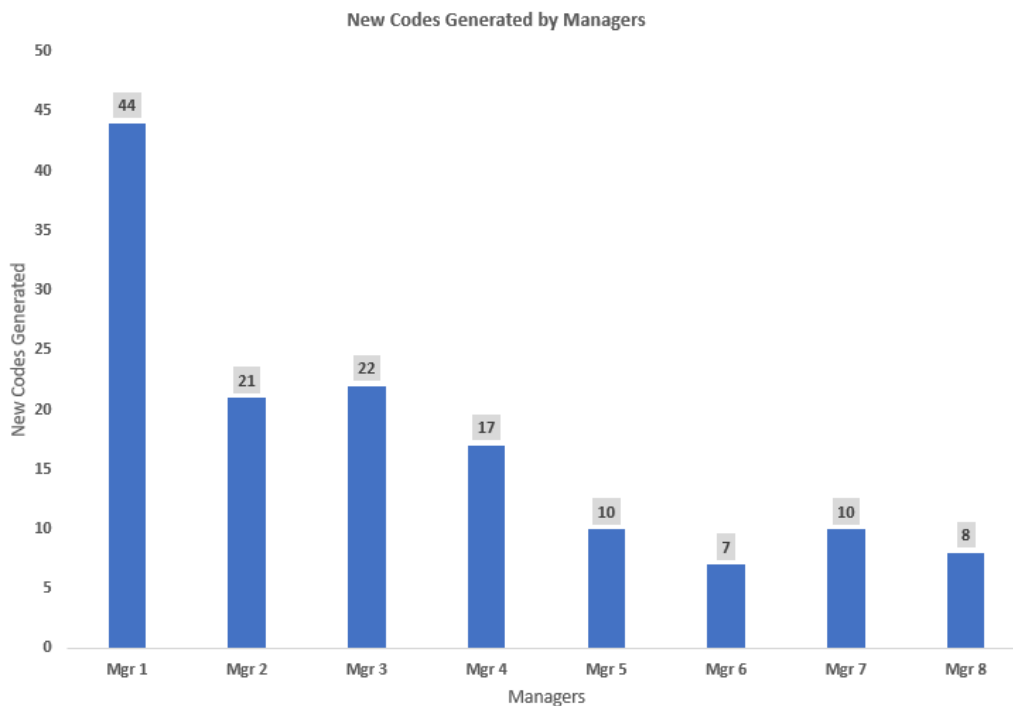


Figure 2: New codes generated by managers

The researcher relied on Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs and Jinks's (2018) model which is suited for inductive studies and prescribes that this type of saturation is concerned with data analysis and not collection. The question as to whether saturation has been demonstrated relates to the emergence of new codes and themes.

4.8 Strategies to ensure data integrity

Validity speaks to the assurance of the data collection methods in measuring that which they were intended to measure and whether the findings reflect what it was that they intended to represent (Zikmund et al., 2013). Reliability speaks to consistency – the data collection methods and analysis procedures must produce consistent findings (Saunders & Lewis, 2018); it is providing the assurance that were your study is to be replicated, the same findings and conclusions would be reached.

Internal validity refers to the credibility of the research study (Shenton, 2004). In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument thus every effort must be made to mitigate researcher bias. The use of purposive sampling was used to ensure that the participants met the sampling criteria. Purposive and snowballing

sampling techniques were utilised to counter the number of participants secured through the researcher's personal and professional networks (convenience sampling). The themes that emerged from the dataset were consistent irrespective of the relationship that the participant had with the researcher.

At the time of the interviews all the participants were exclusively WFH due to the COVID-19 restrictions. There was the risk that those working conditions would cloud their responses on flexible working but the researcher reminded the participants of the purpose of the study and the topic at hand at solicitation, interview confirmation, interview introduction and during the interview. This contributed to the validity of the study.

The researcher made use of one data collection method, this contributed to the reliability of the study. Some of the participants were unknown to the researcher and this would have mitigated subject bias however the topic of employee performance could persuade all participants to misrepresent the truth as they may not want to admit to poor performance. This was mitigated by the researcher's emphasis that the focus of the study was on the impact of FWAs and that negative or no impact would also be an important contributor to the study.

There were other measures that contributed to the integrity of the data; these were covered in previous sections of this chapter.

4.9 Research limitations

A risk of semi-structured interviews is subject bias – this is when the participant does not tell the truth (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As the researcher asked employees to discuss their performance and managers were asked to discuss their team's performance which in turn is a reflection on their own performance, it is possible that the participants were not completely honest.

There is the risk of geographical bias as the study was limited to participants from three financial services organisations located in Johannesburg; the outcomes could thus not be generalised across regions. A further study would be required to assess

the generalisability of the findings. Johannesburg is notorious for its high traffic levels and this could impact the participants' demand and attraction to FWAs.

Although the study was cross-sectional and did not allow for the engagement of participants prior and post an intervention that could have possibly impacted their perceptions; the undertaking of this research study at the time of COVID-19 which had a significant impact on participants' research conditions must be noted. The researcher was not trained to conduct research interviews and this could have had an impact on the data that was generated.

4.10 Ethical considerations

The researcher received approval for data collection from the University of Pretoria's Ethics committee thus ensuring that the intended data collection would be ethical. The participant consent form and the transcriber confidentiality agreement were part of the documents that were reviewed by the ethics committee thus it was only after the approval had been received that the researcher made contact with possible participants and shared the relevant documents. The consent secured the required participant permission to a) conduct the recorded interview and b) make use of the participant's answers as part of the dataset for the study. The participants' confidentiality was conveyed to them and assured through the anonymising of their names in the storage and reporting of the data as well as the use of cybersecurity measures to ensure the online interview took place in a confidential environment.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter outlined and justified the chosen research methodology and design for this study. An overview of the population, unit of analysis, sampling method and size was provided. The researcher explained the measurement instrument, data collection and analyses processes. In support of these, the researcher outlined the strategies that were adopted to ensure data integrity. It is important to note that the literature (Saunders & Lewis, 2018) supported the view that the use of online video conferencing tools did not prejudice the study. It could be argued that the retention of the recorded video session provided a better opportunity for the researcher to revisit the interview and note additional, useful cues.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a description of the sample group will be followed by the presentation of the findings from the data collection and analysis stages of this research study. From the inductive approach to the thematic analysis, themes emerged and these are presented in line with the relevant research questions.

The interview questions were open-ended to avoid guiding or influencing the participants' answers. As a result of the conversational nature of the interview, the participants' answers did not follow a particular sequence; some participants were able to answer all three research questions in one response. This did not affect the researcher's ability to code the data and connect the emerging themes to the research questions.

5.2 Description of the sample

The researcher conducted 21 online interviews, one (Employee 7) was excluded from the results presented because the participant turned out to exercise shift work (an employer-centred form of flexible working) over flexplace and/or flextime as per the sample criteria. The participants were all based in Johannesburg and they were from three organisations in the financial services industry.

5.2.1 Background on the organisations

Of particular interest was whether the size and age of the company would impact the form of FWAs they had. From the insights gained from all participants, the size and age of the organisation was not a barrier or enabler to the adoption of FWAs by an organisation. Table 5 provides a description of the organisations that the participants worked for. As confidentiality was assured to the participants (see consent form in Appendix 5), the information on the organisations is not specific.

Table 5: Description of the organisations

Company Name	No. of Employees	Company Age	Formal Organisation-wide FWA Policy	Formal Team-wide FWA Policy
Company X	50 000 – 60 000	+100 years	No	Yes
Company Y	3000 - 4000	30-50 years	No	No
Company Z	30 000 – 40 000	+100 years	No	Yes

It is important to further explain Table 5 to comprehend the significance of the information.

Company X

Company X does not have a formal organisation-wide policy; however, the participants expressed the existence of a formal organisation-wide philosophy that was prescribed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). They attributed the shift in the organisational culture in support of FWAs to this CEO endorsement, and line managers need to motivate why they are not implementing FWAs in their teams over why they are. Some teams have formal FWAs; however, FWAs are largely implemented via informal discussions between the line manager and the employee.

Company Y

Company Y has neither organisation-wide nor team-wide formal FWA policies. Mention of flexible working is made in various organisation-wide newsletters but there has been no explicit CEO or other senior leadership endorsement. The researcher struggled to find more participants from Company Y and the two who were interviewed mentioned that very few employees exercised it because it was not encouraged within the organisation; in fact, some managers forbade it.

Company Z

Company Z does not have a formal organisation-wide policy, although some heads of departments have expressed their support of FWAs. It is the teams within these

departments that largely have formal FWAs however, FWAs are largely implemented via informal discussions between the line manager and the employee.

5.2.2 The sample

The sample was made up of nine managers (four males and five females) and 11 employees (five males and six females). The females ended up outweighing the males because the researcher continued with the interviews even after she had demonstrated saturation, this a mere confirmation measure. Tables 6 and 7 provide a description of the participants. The identities of the participants remain confidential and the below thus includes anonymised names. All participants were based in Johannesburg and all interviews were conducted online and recorded. The participants were all exclusively WFH due to the restrictions that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 6: Description of the employees

Name	Company name	Department	Gender	Job level	Generation	FWA Policy exercised
Employee 1	Company X	Communications	Female	Middle	Millennial	Flextime
Employee 2	Company X	Communications	Female	Middle	Millennial	Flexplace & Flextime
Employee 3	Company X	Events	Female	Middle	Millennial	Flexplace & Flextime
Employee 4	Company Y	Marketing	Female	Junior Executive	Millennial	Flexplace & Flextime
Employee 5	Company Z	Human Capital	Female	Middle	Baby Boomer	Flexplace
Employee 6	Company Z	Organisational Effectiveness	Female	Senior	Generation X	Flexplace & Flextime
Employee 8	Company X	Legal	Male	Senior	Millennial	Flextime
Employee 9	Company Y	Marketing	Male	Middle	Millennial	Flextime
Employee 10	Company X	Wealth & Investment	Male	Junior Executive	Millennial	Flexplace & Flextime
Employee 11	Company Z	Customer Value Management	Male	Senior	Millennial	Flexplace & Flextime
Employee 12	Company Z	Market Intelligence	Male	Middle	Millennial	Flextime

The sample was skewed towards millennials and this was a concern for the researcher but it ultimately did not have an effect as interviews were conducted until

saturation could be demonstrated i.e. no new codes were generated in the inductive analysis. The departmental, generational and gender differences also did not influence the participants' answers, the same themes emerged irrespective of these differences. The interview for Employee 7 was cut short and not used as they turned out to be a shift worker and not a flextime worker.

Table 7: Description of the managers

Name	Company name	Department	Gender	Job level	Generation	FWA Policy for team
Manager 1	Company X	Marketing	Male	Senior	Millennial	Flexplace & Flextime
Manager 2	Company X	Marketing	Male	Senior	Millennial	Flexplace & Flextime
Manager 3	Company X	Marketing	Male	Executive	Generation X	Flexplace & Flextime
Manager 4	Company Z	Home Finance	Male	Executive	Millennial	Flexplace & Flextime
Manager 5	Company Z	Marketing	Female	Senior	Millennial	Flexplace
Manager 6	Company Z	Marketing	Female	Senior	Millennial	Flexplace
Manager 7	Company Z	Organisational Effectiveness	Female	Executive	Generation X	Flexplace & Flextime
Manager 8	Company Z	Organisational Effectiveness	Female	Executive	Generation X	Flexplace & Flextime
Manager 9	Company Z	Organisational Effectiveness	Female	Senior	Generation X	Flexplace & Flextime

The sample was skewed towards managers in Marketing departments and this was a concern for the researcher but it ultimately did not have an effect as interviews were conducted until saturation could be demonstrated i.e. no new codes were generated in the inductive analysis. The level, generational and gender differences also did not influence the participants' answers; the same themes emerged irrespective of these differences.

5.3 Data analysis

The data from the manager and employee interviews was analysed separately using ATLAS.ti and Excel programmes. The researcher wanted to ensure that the themes that emerged from each participant group represented their perspectives alone and

were not influenced by each other. Having followed this process, similar but not identical codes were generated in the analysis; however, identical sub-themes and themes emerged. Frequency analysis was used to provide a view of the percentage of the sample that referred to each of the 10 themes as well as a view of how frequently each theme was mentioned in the interviews. In qualitative research, frequency is not an indicator of importance. During the analysis process, the researcher was particularly interested in any insights that had not been mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 2. A frequency analysis assisted the researcher with surfacing the themes – the contribution of which may have been under emphasised in the same body of literature. The frequency analysis (Table 8) also provided a view of whether a particular group placed greater emphasis on a theme as compared to the other.

Table 8: Percentage of the sample that referred to each theme and a percentage of frequency mentions for each theme per participant group

Research Question (RQ)	Theme	Participant group	Participants who referred to theme (%)	Comparison of theme mentions between participant groups (%)
RQ1	Autonomy	Employee	91%	69%
		Manager	89%	31%
RQ1	Engagement of employees	Employee	91%	86%
		Manager	44%	14%
RQ1	Productivity	Employee	91%	61%
		Manager	89%	39%
RQ1	Physical interactions	Employee	55%	78%
		Manager	22%	22%
RQ2	Organisational elements	Employee	91%	58%
		Manager	100%	42%
RQ2	Manager-employee relationship	Employee	100%	45%
		Manager	100%	55%
RQ2	Co-ordination and co-operation	Employee	55%	29%
		Manager	100%	71%
RQ2	Mobility	Employee	82%	64%
		Manager	67%	36%
RQ3	Obligation to reciprocate	Employee	55%	55%
		Manager	100%	45%
RQ3	Reward	Employee	45%	55%
		Manager	44%	45%

5.4 Presentation of the results

The themes that emerged have been presented in alignment with the relevant research question. This study focussed on flexible working that was afforded to the participants prior to the restrictions implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic upset the world of work across industries as it resulted in workforces, outside essential services, working exclusively from home. All the participants worked from home at the onset of the restrictions. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked how their world of work was affected by the pandemic. In their responses, managers were encouraged to speak about their own experiences as well, not only those of the employees. At the end of the results presentation for each sub-theme, there will consequently be a 'COVID-19 impact' paragraph where relevant.

5.5 Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How have flexible working arrangements affected individual employee performance?

This question aimed to uncover the manager and employee views on the effect that FWAs have on employee performance, if any. All employees and all managers stated that FWAs had resulted in a positive impact on employee performance. Through the interviews, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the enablers and barriers of FWAs on performance, as per the participants' lived experience. The insights from the participants' answers also helped the researcher determine what other variables (new or understated, direct or mediatory); beyond the mediating variables of job satisfaction, job attitudes and employee engagement that dominated the literature had a positive impact on performance. The interview questions that were put before the participants are included in Tables 3 and 4 in Chapter 4.

Four themes emerged from the participants' answers. What follows is a discussion of the themes and sub-themes.

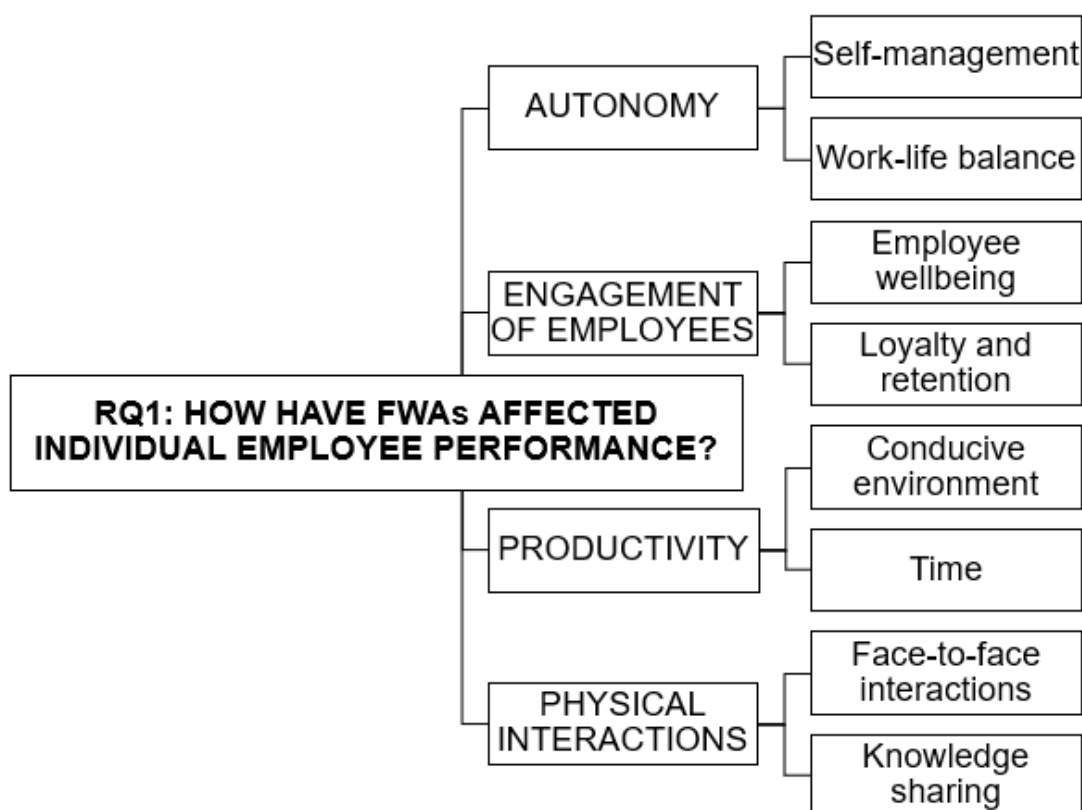


Figure 3: Overview of Themes and Sub-themes for RQ1

5.5.1 Autonomy

Seven employees and seven managers expressed that FWAs gave them the freedom to self-manage. They felt trusted and empowered to do their work. Two of the managers also recognised the impact that FWAs have on employees' sense of agency and trust.

Employee 2: *"You are feeling as though you are actually empowered to make decisions because you are trusted to perform and execute on behalf of the organisation."*

Employee 12: *"It gives you freedom. Like I feel, I feel trusted. I feel that I could do work."*

Manager 7: *"I think it gives people a sense of agency...if people have a sense of agency in the sense that they are considered to be in charge of their own destiny and how they structure their work, I think people pitch up differently."*

Manager 8: *"I think it feels empowering, it feels you are trusted here."*

Overwhelmingly, managers and employees agreed that the autonomy afforded by FWAs enabled employees to better balance work-life responsibilities, irrespective of the degree of family responsibilities. The view was that this ability to better balance enriched their personal lives and made them happier.

Employee 1: *"I definitely think that the flexible hours help with your mental health because then you can plan things that are still important in your personal life. So, for example, if I have a yoga class on a Monday afternoon that is inflexible, I can be flexible with my working time to make it to something that's important to me."*

Employee 11: *"I think a better work-life balance. It has improved my life balance and quality of life."*

Manager 4: *"People are more happier because they get that extra bit of time to spend with their families, right? People are productive so that the company is actually benefiting and our customers are actually benefiting as well."*

There was a practical impact that was highlighted by a majority of employees: the freedom to schedule one's day in a way that allowed one to work where and when they were most productive. This was about more than resolving work-life conflict; it was also about people being productive at different times and in different places. Five managers also recognised this, with two highlighting how inflexibility limited employee productivity and creativity.

Employee 9: *"It was about working when I am the most productive. Some people are productive at 06:00. I'm not, you know what I mean."*

Employee 12: *"I would really appreciate an environment where I'm able to have some form of flexibility where I can make my own decisions and structure work around what I feel is comfortable, and will allow me to produce good results."*

Manager 8: *"I think it allows them to flourish more because it also gives them the freedom to manage their time and their deliveries a lot more effectively."*

Manager 5: *"So, you know when you restrict a person to perform during certain working hours. I mean, you're not always going to get the best from them."*

One employee mentioned how the ability to better balance work-life priorities empowered her to advance her career.

Employee 4: *“Look, something that I am proud about and I think more specifically from a female perspective is the fact that I was able to advance my career while starting a family. And I think a lot of that is only because of the flexibility that I had.”*

Employees did not make direct reference to a sense of indebtedness arising from autonomy, but three managers recognised this obligation that arose in employees because FWAs allowed them to self-manage and better balance their work-life priorities.

Manager 2: *“I think it definitely enables discretionary effort. People go the extra mile and are willing to do more work than they normally would.”*

Manager 8: *“If I’m going to be a stickler about 08:00 to 17:00, then people are not going to willingly give that discretionary effort.”*

Five employees made mention of the negative aspects associated with the autonomy afforded by FWAs.

Employee 1: *“I think that for a lot of people, too much flexibility might make it harder for them to distinguish between the different roles that they have – whether it would be a side hustle or just being at home... Therefore, I do believe that a lot of people take advantage of the flexibility.”*

Employee 10: *“The ease with which people begin to procrastinate with flexibility, and it’s not because they are bad people or anything like that, but procrastination goes hand in hand with flexibility.”*

COVID-19 Impact

Employees mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in reduced flexibility in the way that they work, not only in terms of location but also time. There was pressure for all employees to be online during both traditional working hours and outside of these hours as well. With the whole family being at home and the additional pressure

to work longer hours, employees found a lack of healthy boundaries between work and life responsibilities.

Employee 1: *“I’m working like its work time and I feel like there's more pressure to prove that I’m not slacking at home than there is when I was in the office.”*

Employee 4: *“When I was working from home before COVID-19, it was just me in the home space and home became a quiet space. Whereas during COVID-19, it became a little bit of a family space.”*

Managers observed a frustration in their employees who make use of FWAs, due to the reduced agency and freedom. The employees enjoyed the additional time they were able to spend with their families however they also expressed the strain they were under in trying to maintain healthy work-life boundaries.

Manager 6: *“At the time, kids were home as well. Therefore, as working parents or single parents, people were starting to take strain. You had to juggle teaching your child and being in a Teams meeting the whole day. So, the balancing became a nightmare, especially for me.”*

5.5.2 Engagement of employees

Four employees emphasised the health benefits of not having to sit in traffic, as they did not have to either be at work at a specific time or work from the office. Two employees also mentioned the anxiety associated with being a sitting duck for criminals in peak Johannesburg traffic. Managers did not make any reference to the health benefits associated with employees not sitting in traffic.

Employee 2: *“People came in stressed from sitting in traffic. People came in worried that they were late. So, you would use about the first 30 minutes of the meeting trying to read the room, wondering if you’re in trouble and if everything is okay.”*

Employee 12: *“Missing traffic was a big thing, especially going to [Johannesburg CBD]. There was an element of safety. Driving into Bank City, I am aware of what time to leave.”*

Three employees also expressed the negative impact that FWAs can have on employee wellbeing. Working outside of a structured 08:00 to 17:00 day or at home resulted in one working longer hours, there was a lack of a healthy boundary between work and life responsibilities. Only one manager mentioned negative effects on wellbeing, and these were around ergonomics issues.

Employee 2: *“My lack of self-discipline when it comes to managing my time, at times I would just go on for hours and hours. It can get unhealthy because you can burnout...you burnout faster so you have to watch out for things like that.”*

Employee 10: *“From a personal perspective, I became strained because I took on too much and as you know with flexi-hours, you tend to work late into the evening as well, and you don’t really know how much time you have available for certain things.”*

Manager 1: *“Some people are working from the dining room table, you know. They don’t have an ergonomic chair...you know, so that they can actually sit for long hours, otherwise you get strained.”*

The non-prevalence of FWAs aided employee loyalty and retention. The majority of employees stated that FWAs increased their attachment to their departments and/or organisations. Those who had briefly returned to an inflexible environment found that they were not willing to stay due to the lack of FWAs. Two managers mentioned the positive impact that FWAs had on employee loyalty.

Employee 10: *“So, it was great for me and it made Company X as an organisation to be even more attractive to me.”*

Employee 4: *“In my second company I ended up staying there for almost nine years...and I think a lot of that was driven by the fact that I had an understanding manager where I was able to maintain my productivity. I was able to have an open relationship in terms of what my work conditions were.”*

Manager 4: *“So, people started asking when they were considering leaving, whether the company that they were moving to encouraged flexible working hours, and where companies didn’t, people made the decision not to leave.”*

Manager 8: *“It does have an impact on loyalty. It may change now as more organisations are embracing flexible work arrangements.”*

COVID-19 Impact

One employee experienced increased anxiety and stress due to the increased volume and urgency of work. Four employees also complained of 'meeting fatigue' due to the increase in the number of meetings. One flextime-only employee missed the physical movement that one had when they moved around the office. Two flextime-only employees also mentioned that they did not think being able to WFH made it easier to work the longer hours. One employee observed that the exercise and implementation of FWAs would now increase and FWAs would be less of a differentiator going forward.

Employee 12: *“And the meetings are just a lot! It’s too many meetings to be honest. People just call meetings for the sake of having a meeting.”*

Employee 1: *“You don’t feel it as much though, because like I’ll end a call and go and do something that I would not have done when I just got home from sitting in traffic for an hour.”*

Four managers said that some employees felt alone and isolated and the longer working hours had a negative impact on their mental health.

Manager 9: *“Productivity certainly went up, but so did exhaustion... in the long run you really have to be cautious and manage people’s stress levels – and help them manage their stress levels and digital exhaustion.”*

5.5.3 Productivity

Seven employees and four managers mentioned that FWAs allowed employees to work in an environment that was conducive to their productivity. They mostly mentioned a quiet environment that FWAs afforded however, four employees also mentioned that the ability to WFA helped them to unlock creativity and provide a different perspective. Two employees also said that they appreciated the comfort and convenience of being in their own environment when working from home. Three managers cautioned the need to ensure that the WFH space was indeed conducive to work. They said that employee performance was negatively impacted where employees did not have a quiet space to work, adding to this was load shedding and

internet connectivity challenges. One manager also highlighted that the environment must be conducive to having virtual meetings.

Employee 6: *“So, I would then mostly use my work from home flexibility to do my design work, thinking work, or research work.”*

Employee 4: *“I sometimes feel that you just need a change in scenery to, I think, allow you to see things differently and to view the world differently.”*

Manager 7: *“I have a couple of introverts who really need a lot of alone time to think deeply about things before they can process it and put their thoughts down into a framework, as an example, and give them more space. Let them work for 3, 4, 5 days back-to-back at home.”*

Most employees and managers attributed the need for a quiet environment to the fact that the office was a disruptive space that did not allow one to focus. One manager noted that working away from the office not only aided the people who were being disrupted but the disruptors as well.

Employee 5: *“There’s now people in your space, you know. So, it’s just quieter and you don’t have that interruption of people thinking you’re available just because you’re sitting at your desk.”*

Employee 8: *“I’m currently in an open plan environment – it is not conducive for productivity.”*

Manager 4: *“One of my team members who is a social butterfly, for as long as she was in the office, she constantly had people at her desk who interrupted her and she was talking to everybody. Whenever she went to grab coffee, it would take about five hours for her to return to her desk. So, her productivity in the office was significantly diminished.”*

Nine employees mentioned that they had more productivity time because they did not have to sit in traffic or even travel when they worked from home. Four employees mentioned that when they started making use of FWAs, they noticed that they worked longer hours because they worked until the job was done – under fixed hours they

used to work according to the time they had and not according to the outcome they had to deliver.

Employee 1: *“Get in the car, get up in the morning, get ready for work, rush to work – so you're eliminating that and you actually have those extra hours to just get going on work.”*

Employee 2: *“I would wake up and think about just sending that presentation but I would be sitting with it presentation until 13:00 or even 15:00. And that's when I realised that I haven't even eaten or moved from my bed, you know.”*

COVID-19 Impact

One flextime-only employee expressed that being able to work productively at home had influenced her to want to exercise flexplace going forward. Another employee said that the focus time she used to have with FWAs was disrupted because she was now getting emails from colleagues at any time of the day. Six employees also mentioned that they worked longer hours, with four of them saying that they were more productive because of the lack of travelling time.

Employee 1: *“I have always seen work as a place you go to, now it's actually a thing you do.”*

Employee 9: *“I honestly believe that I have been more productive during COVID-19 than I would have if I was still travelling to the office.”*

Three managers found that their teams adjusted easier to working from home as they were exercising flexplace prior to the restrictions.

Manager 6: *“For some reason I think people became more responsible before COVID-19 around the flexibility of working from home such that when COVID-19 came it was never a stress or strain on the performance of the team.”*

5.5.4 Physical social interactions

More than half of the employees and two managers attested to FWAs resulting in reduced face-to-face interactions that helped employees build and nurture relationships. Two employees also spoke about how this was particularly challenging when they joined new teams who were already making use of FWAs. These physical interactions also facilitated knowledge sharing and problem-solving. The team could learn better from each other when they were in the same environment and certain problems could be resolved faster over quick informal discussions.

Employee 6: *“I think there is a negative aspect that makes you lose that cohesion, and that culture connection you have at work.”*

Employee 11: *“There’s also just this non-physical thing that happens when you come into an environment that’s new, right? It’s like that energy or knowledge bounces off the walls, so if you are there you absorb so much more quickly.”*

Manager 3: *“The incremental component [of your job] is your relationships, your networks and how you service those. And that generally happens through a face-to-face interaction over a cup of coffee or a joke here and there – you get to constantly build equity in those relationships.”*

COVID-19 Impact

Four managers and one employee mentioned that working exclusively from home had impacted the ability to nurture important relationships. Another employee attributed the increased number of meetings to the lack of physical informal discussion in the office. Four managers also spoke about the loss of the collaboration and problem-solving opportunities that were provided by face-to-face interactions.

Employee 4: *“I think that throughout my career I have unconsciously built my work-based relationships on informal engagements.”*

Manager 5: *“Although we try to have our coffee sessions, we no longer feel like a team. It’s not the same.”*

Manager 1: *“I think that there are times when you need to collaborate or resolve things by bringing people into a room. The planning or meeting scheduling (checking everyone’s diaries for suitable times) requires more effort than simply calling everyone into a room to quickly resolve something.”*

5.6 Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What practices/methods contribute or could contribute to increasing work performance while making use of flexible working arrangements?

This question aimed to uncover the specific practices/methods that managers and employees could implement to ensure increased performance. In answering the interview questions (Tables 3 and 4 in Chapter 4) that were aligned to this research question, the participants were required to rely on what is already in use as well as what they would amend or implement, where they were in a position to do so.

Four themes emerged from the participants’ answers. What follows is a discussion of the themes and sub-themes.

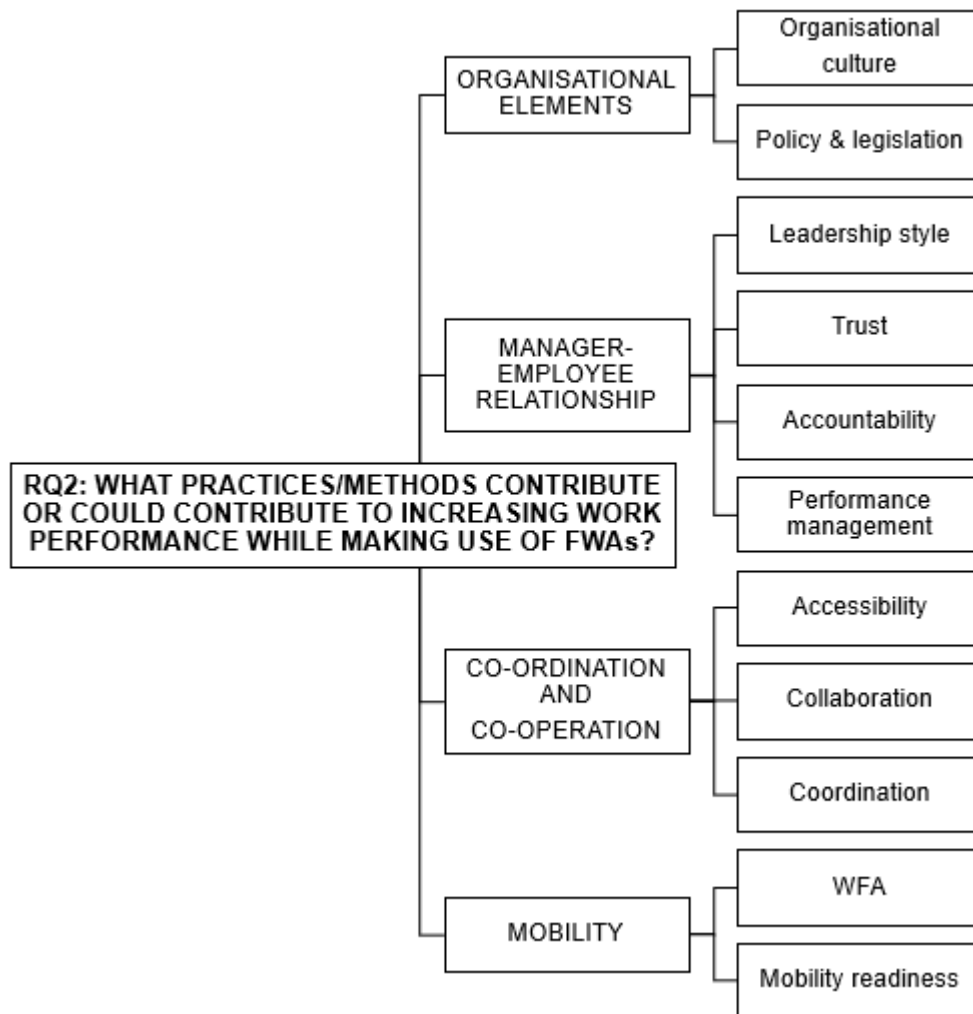


Figure 4: Overview of Themes and Sub-themes for RQ2

5.6.1 Organisational elements

Managers and employees spoke about how a supportive organisational culture is a powerful enabler of FWAs. Leaders in Company X and Company Z were both empowered to implement formal team-wide policies (Table 5), however the managers and employees testified that they either only had informally established arrangements or they had customised the formal policy; all formal policies had been adapted to suit the manager and employee. The managers testified that they extended FWAs to their entire teams, being allowed to exercise FWAs was not based on merit or seniority. It is important to note that there were no managers from Company Y in the sample. Employees in Company Y said that their FWAs were not exercised team-wide but on a one-on-one agreement with one's line manager.

On the surface, the adoption rate and the ease with which FWAs were exercised in the organisation should have been at similar levels but this was not the case, and this is due to the impact of organisational culture. In Company X and Company Y, FWAs were not publicly supported and endorsed by senior leadership and this proved to be a barrier in the exercise and implementation of FWAs. In contrast, the CEO in Company Z publicly advocated FWAs and all the employees in the organisation were aware of this. This leader-led support contributed to an environment that was less judgemental and unaccommodating to the managers and employees of Company Z although they admitted that the organisation still had a long way to go on this issue.

Employee 1 (Company X): *“I do think that there is that cultural thing of not understanding that somebody’s been there for nearly three hours before you walk in the door.”*

Employee 9 (Company Y): *“You know what kills the culture of flexibility? It’s perceptions.”*

Employee 2 (Company Z): *“Even the EXCO members, some of them mention that we have to be practical in terms of how we approach this because you may need drop off or pick up your kids therefore you won’t be available all the time. The business has taken this into consideration and it sort of filters to the rest of us, the lower level guys.”*

Two managers in Company Z testified to the difficulties that they experienced with their peers when they started extending FWAs to their teams, this was prior to the CEO’s public endorsement. One manager in Company X mentioned that he still felt the pressure to conform even though he had the discretion to establish informal arrangements with his team.

Manager 1 (Company X): *“I cannot really tell my team to come in at 12:00 and leave at 15:00, when the whole organisation is doing 08:00 to 17:00.”*

Manager 7 (Company Z): *“I think it put focus on my team at times. They sometimes felt a little guilty. It ended up with me bumping heads a couple of times with my colleagues. We need to appreciate that we have different views on this and then*

people would want to put a policy to ensure that everyone is treated the same. And we can because people are different.”

Two managers and six employees agreed that there was a need to change the widely held belief that if you were not working a 08:00 to 17:00 workday or you were not working from the office, you were not being productive. One flextime-only employee also acknowledged that she had also believed this about flexplace. The employees also expressed that it was in fact inflexible working that contributed to reduced employee productivity.

Employee 1: *“I didn’t really take the work from home option before COVID-19 because you always think about work as a place that you go to.”*

Employee 8: *“With most places you start working at a certain time thus employees become clock-watchers.”*

Employee 11: *“You are forced to work fixed hours and you always have to be in the office therefore, you have no incentive to work beyond that.”*

The organisational culture needed to shift to embrace online meetings. Six employees said that their companies had the technology to facilitate online meetings, but it was still perceived to be rude and offensive not to be in physical attendance, one could only dial in under exceptional circumstances.

Employee 11: *“I had a manager who was a fan of it. They believed it was rude for someone to dial-in via Skype instead of attending the meeting physically.”*

Three employees said that exercising FWAs could also be a career-limiting move. In order to advance one’s career, one still needed to be seen in the office during the traditional workday hours.

Employee 10: *“People who tend to get big roles and become CEOs are people who behave in a certain way. These people generally get to the office at 07:00 and leave at 17:00, regardless of whether they are high performers or not...simply because they are there and they look the part.”*

Employee 2: *“Senior leaders are generally out of the office by 17:00 or whenever they need to go...obviously they are not there to see your long hours either.”*

Three managers and three employees were of the view that the work policies that were implemented by their organisations were outdated and needed to change. One manager pointed out that legislation was also still designed for a traditional workday.

Employee 11: *“You’re sitting at your desk from 08:00 to 17:00 because it’s what has been happening for last 30 years. That’s not impactful.”*

Manager 1: *“I really believe that in terms of the relationship between employer and employee, it should be equal. No-one is more superior than the other...no one is doing someone a favour.”*

Manager 7: *“We still have a traditional 08:00 to 17:00 mindset, if you think about how our work contracts are set up. It’s based on an outdated way of thinking, but we haven’t yet managed to grapple, particularly in our legislative environments, which is unionised and in support of employee job security. It’s difficult to try and breach or change some of these things now.”*

A small group of employees and managers were also of the view that work policies were designed with the consideration of the minority of people who contravene them, they were always limiting.

Employee 1: *“My concern is that the one or two people who abuse it will ruin it for everyone.”*

Manager 7: *“We build rigorous rules because we assume that people are going to break the rules. Therefore, we put stuff in place to make sure that they don’t break the rules. It stifles creativity. It stifles people’s energy.”*

Five managers agreed that FWAs should be an organisation-wide philosophy and not a policy. Two of these managers were of the view that having formal policies around flexible working was counterintuitive. Two managers were of the view that there should be a formal organisation-wide policy. All the managers advocated for the decision on whether an employee can exercise FWAs to ultimately sit with the line manager. They all mentioned that if there is a shift in the organisational culture

to support FWAs, then managers would have to explain why they *could not* over why they *would not*. Employees and managers alike acknowledged that FWAs could not be exercised in all job roles.

Manager 8: *“I think it should be an organisational-wide philosophy or a way of work that is being embraced, managers who come to play should know that that’s how things are done. However, I do think that, to a certain extent, you need to give your manager some discretionary allowance to see how they structure these things.”*

COVID-19 impact

Due to the persistent culture of clock-watching and being perceived as only being productive when one is in the office, the organisational culture of the organisations under study proved to be a significant barrier with the restrictions. People felt under pressure to prove that they were working by being online all the time as the organisational culture advocated for visibility in the office as an indicator of performance over an employee’s actual work outcomes. The advantage of employees working exclusively from home was the dispelling of some of the widely held negative beliefs about FWAs and employee performance. Four managers were also of the view that restrictions led to the realisation that more meetings could take place online effectively.

Employee 9: *“I believe that’s why employee productivity increased, however it was not coming from a good place.”*

Manager 6: *“And also, people wanted to prove that they were available. They would respond to emails sent at 21:00 or 23:00.”*

Manager 2: *“I think the perception, or rather; the fear of allowing that to happen has probably vanished because companies have been forced to do it. Now that they’ve been forced, I believe they’ve seen the benefit of working from home.”*

5.6.2 Manager-employee relationship

From how FWAs are initiated and successfully regulated to their effectiveness on employee performance, a heavy reliance was placed on the manager-employee relationship by managers and employees alike.

Employee 1: *"I think it comes down to the relationship you have with your line manager."*

Manager 3: *"I believe that the recruitment process is vital. It's not just about the psychometric assessments and strategy questions, those are baselines but it's about chemistry."*

Trust was resoundingly recognised as an antecedent to the successful exercising of FWAs. The impact of felt trust on the employee was discussed in the relationship between autonomy and trust under the presentation of the results related to RQ1. Employees expressed that they did not want to feel watched and micromanaged.

Employee 2: *"I think it contributes to loyalty. It contributes to the retention of the employees."*

Employee 9: *"I'll tell you what I think the problem is, one word: trust. People don't trust each other in the corporate environment. If I ask you to do something for me as part of a project, I need to trust you."*

Manager 7: *"I think it's implicitly anchored in trust."*

Manager 2: *"You called on me because you expect a certain level of knowledge and professionalism from me. So as such, allow me to do it."*

Two employees felt that trust improved their attitude and mindset towards the organisation with one of them stating that 'trust' was one of the organisation's values and FWAs were a proof point of this trust. Seven employees and five managers said that for FWAs to be effective there must be trust that the employee is getting the work done, especially on the part of the line manager.

Employee 12: *“However with the other guys who had lost the manager’s trust, it was strictly no; you have to be in the office because clearly you cannot work from home if you’re on your own.”*

Manager 6: *“I think where there’s a lack of trust within that particular team, managers find it hard to allow them the flexibility that is there.”*

To be trusted, employees need to be trustworthy. It was six employees and five managers who recognised this need for employees to earn trust by being accountable to their line manager on their whereabouts as well as delivery of work.

Employee 12: *“I like the idea of working from home but it comes with a lot of accountability.”*

Manager 5: *“Trust goes both ways. As an employee you need to be trustworthy.”*

Manager 9: *“Sometimes it has been difficult to get a hold of certain individuals during flexible working time.”*

Employee 10: *“I think it all boiled down to the fact that I delivered on all my responsibilities so that they could trust that I would use my time wisely.”*

During the interview and data analysis phases, the researcher was aware of certain leadership attributes and behaviours that appeared to be common amongst all nine managers. They were consultative and empathetic in how they lead their teams. When probed on why they took the decision to offer FWAs, they mentioned being aware of the employees’ personal circumstances, recognising individuality and also ‘putting themselves in the employees’ shoes when reflecting on what decisions to make for the team.

Manager 3: *“On a needs basis. People are human, I start on the basis of being kind and caring and understanding of people.”*

Manager 8: *“I believe that as a leader it is important that you check in and don’t assume based on anything, who would like it and who would not. Really, speak to them, engage with them and check in because you might be surprised what lands and what works for whoever.”*

Manager 1: *“My perspective on this is always about how I feel about it as well. I always try to put myself in my team’s shoes and ask how this would impact them.”*

One manager observed the dearth in research that shows evidence of how FWAs positively affects employee performance makes it even more difficult to have faith in the effectiveness of FWAs. Four managers did not deem it necessary to wait to build trust with an employee before extending FWAs to them. They said that it was important to trust employees upfront and then institute remedial action when necessary instead of doing things the other way around, as most managers tend to do. One manager mentioned that it was important to provide transparency to your team and that they in turn would do the same.

Manager 7: *“I just I think there's a big philosophical mindset where we need to move from point of departure of distrust to trusting people. Otherwise, why bring them into the organisation in the first place?”*

Manager 5: *“For example, what I do with my team is that I let them know that I am available during certain times as I will be at the doctor. Then, that’s when you start to instil a culture of trust.”*

Seven managers believed in the enablement of employees through giving them autonomy to manage themselves. This was discussed in detail under the presentation of the results related to RQ1. Two managers also mentioned that this was influenced by their own line manager’s management style.

Manager 4: *“Let’s have a centre of excellence – I’m not too bothered about how and where you deliver that from.”*

Manager 5: *“I’m fortunate in that the way that I manage is how my manager manages me...she doesn’t micromanage at all. The general consensus is that we are adults.”*

There was a consensus that FWAs were likely to be ineffective if the manager did not measure performance according to outcomes over how well an employee adhered to traditional working practices of where and when they worked. Eight employees testified that this was their managers’ approach and seven managers said that this was also their performance management philosophy. This shift required

the manager to have a clear understanding of how they were going to measure outcomes and performance. It was key to align with the employee on performance expectations and gain an understanding of what they would need to deliver the work. Only one employee was aware of the use of an online tool by their manager to track their productivity.

Employee 2: *“Having an understanding with my line manager is important, as long as the work gets done...go home but be responsible and perform your duties. Provided that it doesn’t affect your work and performance then do whatever you need to do.”*

Manager 7: *“Look, I don’t want to work any other way. It’s not my style to micromanage; I’m not a policeman by any stretch of the imagination.”*

Manager 8: *“We have performance contracting anyway, but I believe flexible work will expose the holes if you are not sure what you are measuring, output wise.”*

Another requirement for FWAs to have a positive impact on employee performance was around performance discussions. Five managers stated that the manager and employee needed to have performance discussions continually throughout the year instead of on an annual basis. Two managers mentioned that they were not deterred by any negative impacts FWAs could have on performance, as they were able to pick up any performance dips quickly. Three other managers highlighted the importance of addressing any performance-related concerns right away.

Manager 7: *“It’s implicit in the relationships that you have with the team. How performance plays out and the ability to stay on top of performance and not measure it in 6-month intervals or 12-month intervals.”*

Manager 7: *“I think it’s really embedded in the core of being able to have courageous conversations with people as soon the issue arises, you don’t wait for a performance review.”*

Manager 9: *“It was pretty quickly evident when things were not working out.”*

Two managers acknowledged that FWAs were not the best course of action for poor performing employees who needed to be monitored and guided. Another two managers supported this view, stating that prior to extending FWAs to their teams; managers had to carefully consider what impact it would have on their employee performance. There was a likelihood that employees who were unproductive under flexible working were the same employees who were reluctantly productive at the office.

Manager 2: *“Let’s say, for instance, you have an employee who is not performing, and they are on performance management. Such an individual would not benefit from flexible working arrangements because of course you need to keep a close eye on them.”*

COVID-19 impact

Three managers and one employee mentioned that they had to improve their communication skills when the restrictions were implemented; this increased communication enabled them to understand their team better. One manager stated that his belief that poor performing employees could not be managed virtually had changed. The lack of trust resulted in additional stress and pressure for people to prove that they were working.

Manager 1: *“You needed to do more in terms of communicating, be more of a communicator, and be more aligned.”*

Employee 2: *“Whenever we have connect sessions, people will tell you how many emails they sent that day and you are like why are you sending all these emails, since when do you count the number of emails you send in a day.”*

5.6.3 Co-ordination and co-operation

Managers and employees said that when an employee exercised FWAs they had to be intentional in how they organised and presented themselves to stakeholders. FWAs did not have to result in reduced customer engagement and collaboration.

Two employees and six managers emphasised the importance of being accessible to stakeholders when exercising FWAs. Accessibility also referred to being proactive in solving for infrastructure and connectivity challenges.

Manager 3: *“It’s about accessibility; it’s not necessarily about physically sitting in your seat. I look at [the lady] who runs events...when I try and phone her, I don’t know if she’s in Jo’burg or in Durban because she travels between the two but she answers my calls and responds to my WhatsApp texts. She also responds to emails. I’ve heard no complaints.”*

Employee 5: *“If the tools you require to work aren’t working from home, then you need to get to an office to work.”*

It was important to show stakeholders that just because one was exercising FWAs, their ability to collaborate was not diminished. This required the employee to ensure that their calendar was updated and reflected availability. Two employees said that they had a core window period for meetings to enable collaboration.

Employee 12: *“My role requires a bit of interaction with people, and sometimes they didn’t know where I am. They never know if they should set up meetings with me in Sandton or Fairlands. Alternatively, whether I’m working from home, people literally get to the office and ask where I am. So, from a dependency perspective, people also didn’t know where I was.”*

Employee 6: *“I think for most people, our unwritten rule was that you know you needed to be available between 08:00 and 15:00 for face-to-face meetings.”*

Manager 5: *“We don’t only work within just our team. We collaborate a lot with other departments and business units. Therefore, the expectation is that you can arrange meetings between these overlapping hours.”*

Managers found that they had an additional responsibility to ensure that they not only connected with the team but that the team connected with each other.

Manager 1: *“I think I probably became more structured in terms of setting up meetings to catch up as opposed to being able to quickly reach out to my direct reports when I see them in the corridors.”*

Manager 8: *“Weeks could go by with the team not coming together or seeing each other. Therefore, as a manager, one-on-one meetings and team meetings become critical.”*

COVID-19 impact

One employee mentioned that she was more accessible than ever due to working exclusively from home whereas a manager said that this had reduced accessibility. Another manager mentioned that because she was forced to have all her meetings online, she realised how effective they can be and would in fact schedule more meetings with her team. Employees who made use of FWAs struggled to collaborate with members of other teams who were not used to flexible working.

Manager 8: *“I would probably put in shorter frequent check-in points, even if it would be virtually, and so that’s one thing I would change.”*

Manager 1: *“Even with WhatsApp, people blue tick or ignore you, although at times my request is urgent.”*

Employee 2: *“What was most frustrating was having to deal with the guys that are not used to working from home and having to be patient with them – they need time to adjust to this because everything now turned into a meeting.”*

5.6.4 Mobility

A critical enabler of FWAs was the employee having the tools and equipment that they required to ensure that they could work away from the office. The onus was not only on the organisation to provide these, but also for the employee to ensure that he was equipped. The degree of support provided to the employees differed among the organisations.

Manager 5: *“You also need to understand that you don’t have the luxury of using the equipment which the bank pays for such as the office landline for example. You now are using your own cell phone. For 3G, you are given limited data thus you might need to use Wi-Fi as a backup – for those who have Wi-Fi. What about those who don’t have Wi-Fi – what does that mean in terms of loading additional data bundles?”*

Manager 8: *“For us, what’s important is that you don’t just take people out there without really thinking about what process it might impact or what resources they may need.”*

Employee 2: *“I mean right now, for example, our machines are equipped with landlines which are ultimately our Teams and Skype. You’ve got a 3G card, which means you can connect. You also have a laptop that you can move around with.”*

To further support mobility and flexibility, employees from Company X and Company Z could work from other campuses. One employee thought that this could be further enabled by banks by allowing their employees to work from the branches as well.

Manager 6: *“In my case, I allow my team to work from a remote location. There’s someone in my team who stays in Pretoria, and she could work from the [Pretoria] office once or twice a week depending on our meetings.”*

Employee 8: *Especially the banks, right? I need to print. Why do I need to drive all the way to Rosebank when there is a Company X right here?*

COVID-19 impact

At the onset of the restrictions, flextime-only employees struggled to adjust to WFH, as they were not familiar with what tools and equipment they required. There was also a challenge around migrating work processes online as there was some work that could only be done at the office due to legacy systems. Some managers and employees relied on physical interaction for their work and they had to figure out how to deliver the same experience to customers virtually.

Employee 3: *“I think the biggest issue is that there was a lot of unknowns and there were a lot of breaches which were unintentional – compliance and risk breaches.”*

Employee 10: *"I had to travel to places to meet clients, and we had so many planned initiatives and engagements in different countries and when COVID-19 hit, that essentially wiped out my entire KPIs for the year."*

Manager 8: *"We've had to learn how to facilitate workshops online. Coach online. Consult online."*

Having worked exclusively from home, the employee and manager perspective on flexplace had shifted. In addition to exercising more flexplace by WFH, employees wanted to be able to WFA. WFA would also enable employees to work even when they travelled. One manager mentioned that he would encourage his team to WFA exclusively.

Employee 4: *"Some of the changes that I might consider or that employers may need to consider is the concept of working from anywhere."*

Employee 8: *"A lot of us have extended families...our families are not from Jo'burg and sometimes we have a wedding, funeral or other event that requires our attendance from 16:00 to 17:00 yet you have to take five days off."*

Manager 5: *"A lot of our team members, or two members to be exact, decided to go and work from a different province as soon as the lockdown was announced."*

Manager 4: *"I would actually insist on them not coming to the office. They will have to justify why they have to come into the office."*

One employee was of the view that everyone was more accessible under COVID-19 restrictions because they were forced to embrace the various online communication platforms.

Employee 1: *"Therefore, we are finding ourselves more accessible because it's no longer just email that people are getting hold of you on."*

5.7 Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: Do employees view flexible working arrangements as a standard human resource practice or a privilege/benefit, and do they feel indebted/obligated to organisations for provision of these?

This question aimed to probe whether employees who made use of FWAs still felt obligated to respond with increased performance. The social exchange theory had widely been used to explain how FWAs result in increased performance. FWAs positively impact the mediating variables referred to under RQ1 and employees then repay the resultant obligation to reciprocate, with increased performance. The researcher also sought to establish whether the growing interest and adoption of FWAs by other teams or organisations would eliminate this sense of obligation. The interview questions that were put before the participants are included in Tables 3 and 4 in Chapter 4.

Two themes emerged from the participants' answers. What follows is a discussion of the themes and sub-themes.

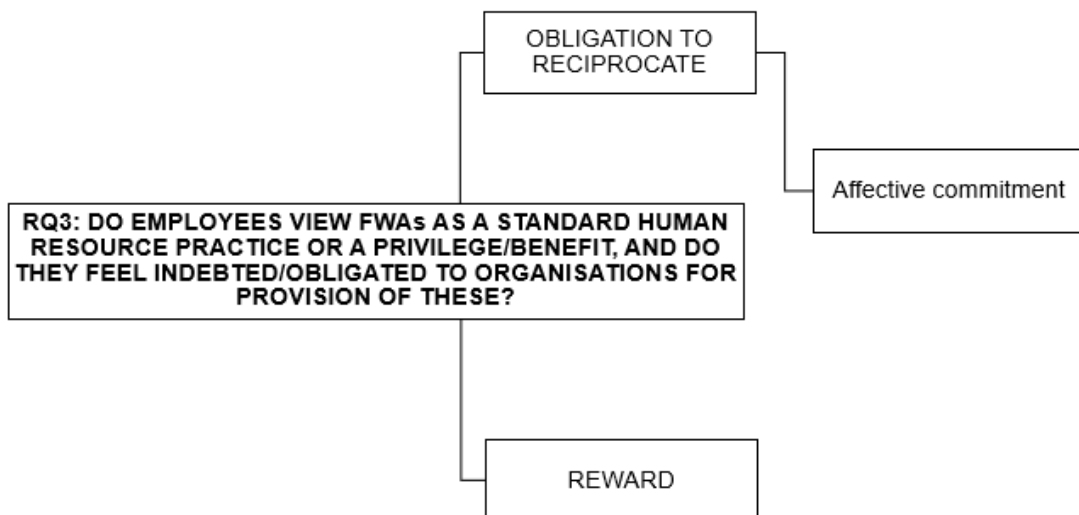


Figure 5: Overview of Themes and Sub-themes for RQ3

5.7.1 Obligation to reciprocate

All employees were appreciative that they could exercise FWAs thus there was increased affective commitment. Two of these employees, however, were adamant that FWAs should be a basic work right and not a benefit; organisations should be compelled to provide them. All nine managers said that their teams were appreciative of the fact that they could exercise FWAs.

Employee 4: *“My overall sentiment was definitely a lot more positive and I do sometimes feel like I am an ambassador for the company.”*

Employee 12: *“I certainly do appreciate it...and I mean that I appreciate my manager for being quite open with the idea of working from home.”*

Manager 2: *“Well, I think they love it and that the feedback has been extremely positive. I find that the team is very thankful and sometimes a bit too thankful for me allowing them the space and that flexibility to work from wherever they want.”*

Manager 7: *“They were all very happy with the ability to work from home. Some of them felt guilty, although this wasn’t necessary, they should only feel guilty if they’re not delivering, but otherwise all is good.”*

Five employees spoke directly to a sense of indebtedness for being able to exercise FWAs and both employees and managers were of the view that employees expressed their appreciation through increased performance.

Employee 1: *“It’s almost like a give and take, that mutual understanding where you’re looking out for me, and I’m going to look out for you as well... if somebody is accommodating to you then you don’t mind those extra hours in the afternoon.”*

Employee 10: *“I did feel slightly special that I could do that and at the same time I think that’s what made me work harder and I wanted to prove that I could do it under those conditions.”*

Manager 8: *“If a person feels that you treat them that way, releasing discretionary effort is a lot easier because it feels like you are giving them something and in turn it makes it easier for them to give to you.”*

Manager 3: *“In fact, I would go as far as saying that you probably get more out of it because again, you’re building on your equity. You’re using your goodwill and so forth and building equity. If I had to phone somebody at 19:30 in the evening, they have a choice, they can decide if they will take the call or not but 90% of my staff will take that call – whether it’s 21:00 in the evening.”*

COVID-19 impact

Having exercised remote working for several months, managers and employees made no mention of this having had an impact on whether they viewed FWAs as a benefit or work right. Managers and employees alike merely made mention of how other employees would now insist on them. One manager said that increased adoption of FWAs would not impact the sense of obligation that employees felt as this arose in response to feeling supported. However, one employee believed that if FWAs were made basic work rights over benefits, the entitlement would result in decreased employee performance.

Employee 6: *“Any company that thinks it’s a benefit is smoking their socks! Give that another five years and they’re going to be under the water because staff are expecting benefits at a certain levels and roles. This is not a nice-to-have.”*

Manager 8: *“In my mind, even if more organisations implemented it, I don’t think it would mean less of a discretionary effort. It’s just how it makes a person feel. If they feel they have the opportunity to juggle or schedule work for other areas of their life, then they’re willing to go beyond their call of duty for the organisation.”*

5.7.2 Reward

Four managers mentioned that because employees often worked outside of the 08:00 to 17:00 work hours, they were happy to extend FWAs to them as it was only fair. One manager did admit to using FWAs as a once-off reward mechanism. Three employees were of the view that FWAs should be granted based on merit or seniority but two were repelled by their observations of other people’s managers making use of FWAs as a reward mechanism.

Manager 1: *“My belief is that if I want to expect someone to occasionally take my phone call at 21:00 or respond to my WhatsApp outside of work hours, surely then they should have the same liberty as well.”*

Manager 3: *“I also quite liked flexi-hours or flexi-place as a reward mechanism. If somebody is feeling a little bit tired, burnt out, it’s ok to allow them to work from home said.”*

Employee 12: *“I think it should be given on merit, and I say this purely because I’ve seen this outside of Company Z too, where people are given FWAs they become entitled. You then see their performance dropping because they are working from home.”*

Employee 2: *“I also did see some people using it to manipulate their teams. Where it was used a reward over your head to work from home.”*

5.8 Conclusion

From the 20 interviews and the analysis of the data collected, 10 main themes and 20 sub-themes emerged. The themes were predominantly supported in literature but what was of appeal to the researcher were the findings that were either unexpected or underemphasised in extant literature. There were no conflicting sentiments between the managers and employees although they held original views at times.

As proposed in the literature, FWAs were found to have a positive impact on affective commitment, job satisfaction, job attitude, employee engagement, work-life balance, and overall employee wellbeing. These were the mediating variables that increased employee performance, employee loyalty and retention. In addition to this, the participants expressly indicated that they viewed FWAs as a privilege for which they felt indebted. Traffic was found to have a negative impact on wellbeing. This was emphasised by all participants and is significant as the negative association with traffic is predominantly about the loss of productive time instead of health impacts.

It was well documented in literature that FWAs provided employees with the autonomy to self-manage and better balance work and life responsibilities. How this

then results in increased employee performance was also explained using the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964).

What was understated in the literature was the practical impact of autonomy in that it enabled employees to work where and when they were most productive. Autonomy facilitated the recognition of employees as individuals who were productive under different conditions; this was recognised by managers and employees alike. This illustrated the direct impact that FWAs have on employee productivity. Participants cited productivity as the primary motivation for making use of FWAs, this over the pursuit of work-life balance as predominantly stated in literature. An unexpected finding related to autonomy and specifically work-life was from a female junior executive who said that FWAs made it possible for her not only to better balance work-life responsibilities but also to advance her career.

The negative aspects of FWAs were found to be that too much flexibility could result in an inability to maintain healthy work-life boundaries. FWAs were also found to have a potential negative impact on the building and nurturing of relationships due to reduced physical social interactions. The findings showed that this could be mitigated by the intentional scheduling and co-ordination of employees and managers.

In terms of organisational elements, an unsupportive organisational culture was found to be a significant barrier to the effective exercise of FWAs. Managers and employees posited that an organisation-wide philosophy, not policy, and a supportive organisational culture would enable the increased adoption and successful use of FWAs by employees. All the managers also advocated for the decision on the employee use of FWAs to sit with the manager.

The implementation and regulation of FWAs, as well as the impact they had on employee performance, relied heavily on the manager-employee relationship. As a foundation of this relationship, trust was found to be an antecedent to the extension of FWAs by managers to their teams. In turn, employees expressed how felt trust empowered them and increased their affective commitment and, accordingly, their performance. There was also a recognition of the reciprocal duty of employees to be trustworthy by being accountable.

The findings revealed that for FWAs to be successful, performance needs to be evaluated and managed according to outcomes instead of time spent in the office. The findings also revealed that the managers in the sample had common leadership attributes and behaviours which contributed to the successful performance outcomes that FWAs yielded in their teams.

A discussion of the literature and the results presented above will follow in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: A RECONCILIATION OF THE FINDINGS AND LITERATURE

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will entail an integrated discussion of the literature in Chapter 2 and the findings in Chapter 5. The researcher will review the themes that emerged from the findings against the extant literature in to confirm what is already known and surface any significant or understated manager and employee insights on the impact that FWAs have on employee performance.

6.2 Discussion of the themes that emerged for research question 1

Research question 1: How have FWAS affected individual employee performance?

This question aimed to uncover the manager and employee perspectives on the impact that FWAs have on employee performance, if any. All employees and all managers said that FWAs had resulted in a positive impact on employee performance. Through the interviews the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the enablers and barriers of FWAs on performance, as per the participants' lived experience. The insights helped the researcher determine what other variables (new or understated, direct or mediatory), beyond the mediating variables of job satisfaction, job attitudes and employee engagement that dominated the literature, had a positive impact on performance. In this chapter, the four themes and eight sub-themes that emerged will be discussed together with the relevant literature.

6.2.1 The autonomy provided by FWAs yields results

Both managers and employees testified to FWAs giving employees a sense of agency and autonomy. This is in line with the body of literature on the link between FWAs and autonomy (Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019; Kelliher & Anderson; 2010, Putman et al., 2014; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). The employees also expressed appreciation to their managers and/or organisations for the provision of this

autonomy – it increased their affective commitment of which job satisfaction is related (Berkery et al., 2017; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). It was managers and not employees who expressly mentioned that employees felt indebted to the manager and/or organisation although indebtedness could also be inferred from the employees' appreciation. Blau's (1964) social exchange theory was then still applicable as employees were willing to exercise additional effort in return for this autonomy, as observed by Kelliher and Anderson (2010).

Being allowed to exercise FWAs also made employees feel trusted and this was recognised by managers and employees alike. Felt trust also increased the employee's sense of autonomy (Gill et al., 2019). Blau's (1964) social exchange theory has also been used to explain how trust in the workplace results in increased performance, reduced turnover intentions and positive job attitudes (Salamon & Robinson, 2008; Gill et al., 2019). As FWAs have a positive impact on trust, this is important for organisations to note. Trust will be discussed in greater detail under the discussion of the literature and results related to research question 2.

In agreement with the literature (Allen et al., 2013; Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019; Azar et al., 2018; Bal & De Lange, 2015; Bloom et al., 2015; Chen & Fulmer, 2017; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Mills et al., 2014; Putman et al., 2014; Regus, 2017; SABPP, 2018), the self-governance that was facilitated by FWAs enabled employees to better balance work-life responsibilities. The findings also showed that this was not influenced by the degree of family responsibilities (Mills et al., 2014).

An unanticipated finding was that of a junior executive who mentioned that FWAs made it possible for her not only to better balance her work-family responsibilities, but it enabled her to advance her career. This finding is important for organisations and HR practitioners who continue to battle to formulate interventions and policies that aid equity in the workplace. FWAs could assist organisations not only to attract, motivate and retain women in the workplace, but they would enable optimal performance and career progression as well. A recent study by Chung and van der Horst (2018) assessed the likelihood of mothers to stay employed after childbirth if they can exercise FWAs but it did not examine how FWAs can support career advancement and job promotion. Chung and van der Horst (2018) found suggestive evidence that the availability and use of FWAs increased the likelihood of first-time

mothers to stay in employment however, they established an association between FWAs and reduced working hours for all mothers. Additional research is required on the impact of FWAs on the career advancement of women.

The ability to self-manage also facilitated the embrace of employees' individual working styles: they could work where and when they are most productive. The extant literature (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Leslie et al., 2012) recognised this but what was of appeal to the researcher was the resounding recognition (by managers and employees) of this as the primary motivation for the use of FWAs, more than the need to balance work-life responsibilities although this too was still an important contributing factor. This is of significance as FWAs were introduced and are still recognised as family-friendly policies, the primary motivation for organisations to adopt them has evolved to support all employees in the pursuit of work-life balance (Allen et al., 2013; Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019; Azar et al., 2018; Bal & De Lange, 2015; Bloom et al., 2015; Chen & Fulmer, 2017; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Mills et al., 2014; Putman et al., 2014; Regus, 2017; SABPP, 2018) but FWAs have rarely been adopted due to the direct impact that they have on productivity. There is a dearth in literature that recognises that employees demand FWAs because they enable them to work in an environment that ensures that they are at their most effective, FWAs are a tool for productivity. This could be attributed to the dominance of quantitative studies on FWAs over qualitative studies that yield in-depth perspectives.

It was employees and not managers who acknowledged that the ability to self-manage and better balance work-life responsibilities could result in negative employee performance where the employee did not have healthy work-life boundaries or gave in to procrastination. Azar et al. (2018) found that planning behaviour could help alleviate this. This was a mere acknowledgement of the possible negative effects of the autonomy provided by FWAs, none of the employees had experienced this themselves. It is possible that young employees who have just started working may not be so adept at time and boundary management and may require additional support. The participants of the study were millennials and of middle to senior management. From a job level perspective, it could be argued that this would not have an impact as the participants of Bloom et al.'s (2015) study were

call centre employees and the study found increased employee performance under FWAs.

Under the restrictions of COVID-19 the absence of healthy work-life boundaries was experienced by both managers and employees when they worked exclusively from home. The exclusive WFH resulted in reduced flexibility not only in location but also time as employees were required to be online all the time. Managers and employees recognised a need to work from both home and the office.

6.2.2 FWAs result in engaged employees

Although they did not speak directly to improved wellbeing, the researcher observed that employees were happier and more cheerful when they detailed their journey from inflexible to flexible working. Managers also mentioned increased levels of happiness in their teams. This is consistent with the literature on FWAs resulting in improved wellbeing (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Windeler et al., 2017).

Employees mentioned that sitting in the Johannesburg traffic contributed to their stress and anxiety and that FWAs (flexplace and flextime) alleviated this as they did not have to sit in traffic. This finding was not about the inconvenience of having to travel to work or the distance between home and the office but specifically about stress that was caused by having to sit in traffic. The fact that managers did not mention this may signal an unknown or underestimated benefit of FWAs on employee wellbeing by leaders in organisations. Regus (2017), and Chen and Fulmer (2017) recognised the benefits of not having to commute or reduced travel time but it was Zhou, Wang, Chang, Lui, Zhan and Shi (2017), and Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020) who specifically spoke to the stress levels associated with the commute to work.

Some employees reported that the longer working hours associated with FWAs had a negative impact on their health, if unregulated. They mentioned that with FWAs they often lost track of time as there was no specific time that signalled the end of their workday. When implementing FWAs, organisations need to be mindful of its unintended consequences and support employees appropriately. Planning

behaviour (Azar et al., 2018) and self-leadership (Müller & Niessen, 2019) are required competencies for effective use of FWAs. Prior to the working conditions of COVID-19 restrictions, managers were largely unaware of the negative impact on wellbeing of these extended working hours and the support that employees required in regulating WFH.

One manager mentioned that COVID-19 working conditions had also highlighted the negative impact on wellbeing that WFH can have if employees do not have suitable ergonomic furniture. Employees did not make mention of this or a desire for their employers to provide this for them. This implies that employees took full responsibility for the environment in which they worked when WFH and did not view this as an employer responsibility. Organisations who are reluctant to adopt FWAs for fear of the associated employee support costs would need to be cognisant of this.

Consistent with the literature (Bloom et al., 2015; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011), employees acknowledged that the non-prevalence of FWAs aided loyalty and retention and managers bore testimony to this. Organisations are reviewing their work policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Boland et al., 2020) and the adoption of FWAs will likely increase, organisations need to be aware of this. FWAs will no longer be a differentiator for organisations that already extend them to employees, and for organisations that do not, they need to begin doing so. Employees who had briefly returned to inflexible working environments found that they were no longer willing to work under those conditions and either returned to their old jobs or found new jobs that would allow them to exercise FWAs. This signals that where organisations take the decision to extend FWAs to employees, revoking these will have an impact on employees' affective commitment and ultimately their performance.

6.2.3 FWAs have a direct impact on employee productivity

As previously stated, the autonomy afforded by FWAs enabled employees to work in environments that were conducive to their productivity. Further to this selection being based on whether one functioned better in the morning or evening, both managers and employees said that FWAs allowed them to have quiet time and focus time either by arriving earlier and leaving later or by not working at the office at all.

The office space was found to be disruptive and a barrier to concentration, and productivity (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016; Bloom et al., 2015; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2010; Regus, 2017; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). One manager observed that WFH aided both those who experienced the disruption and the disruptors themselves. This finding is of importance to organisations who have pursued open plan office spaces over the last two decades. Two employees also mentioned that they enjoyed the comfort and convenience of WFH.

All of the above findings are consistent with Bloom et al.'s (2015) study which also found a direct link between FWAs and employee productivity. This is of importance as Bloom et al.'s (2015) study was on junior level, call centre employees as compared to this study with a sample of middle to senior management employees. The findings contrast with de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) who did not establish a direct link between FWAs and productivity.

In addition to aiding concentration and productivity, four employees mentioned that FWAs helped them to unlock creativity and provided a different perspective that ultimately contributed to their performance.

Managers highlighted the need to ensure that the environment in which an employee will work is indeed conducive to FWAs. This is in line with the discussion on performance management which will be undertaken in the discussion of the literature and results related to research question 2.

Another finding of the direct impact of FWAs on employee productivity was employees testifying that they had more productivity time because of the time they saved due to not sitting in traffic or commuting (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2010). It is important to note that employees felt that they could get more rest yet still put in longer working hours than what they would have under inflexible working conditions. Employees mentioned that when they began to make use of FWAs they worked longer hours because they worked until the job was done; under the fixed hours of inflexible working, they used to confine their work to the hours prescribed in the traditional workday and not according to the outcome they had to deliver. It is possible that with FWAs, an employee's sense of achievement rests solely in the

completion of tasks and this then results in the working of longer hours, but this would require further research.

Avgoustaki and Bessa (2019) found a positive association between flexplace specifically and work effort but a negative association between flextime and work effort. This is in contrast with the findings as the sample contained two flextime-only employees who formed a part of the employees who mentioned that FWAs had a direct positive impact on the amount of time they allocated to work.

A flextime-only employee said that working from home under COVID-19 restrictions had changed her views on the productivity associated with WFH. She had not exercised flexplace in the past because she did not believe that it would aid her productivity. It could be argued that many employees around the world share her sentiment on this and organisations need to be aware of the potential increase in employee demand for FWAs.

6.2.4 FWAs reduce physical social interactions

According to the findings from both managers and employees, FWAs resulted in reduced physical social interactions and this impacted the employees' ability to build and nurture relationships. With the use of FWAs, employees had to work harder at maintaining work relationships. This was mentioned as a limitation but not as a barrier to the exercise of FWAs as employees do have physical social interactions, there are just reduced under FWAs. This was mentioned to highlight the additional duty on employees in building and nurturing relationships.

Not being in the same space as one's colleagues also resulted in fewer opportunities for knowledge sharing and team learning. The team could learn better from each other when they were in the same environment and certain problems could be solved faster over quick informal discussions. Two employees bore testimony to a flatter learning curve when one joins a team that exercises FWAs. This finding bears testimony to van der Lippe and Lippényi's (2020) study that found that being away from one's team led to increased work effort but not in the way of productivity, the employee had to spend more time and effort in learning or resolving a problem. Unlike van der Lippe and Lippényi's (2020) study, the findings did not suggest an

overall decrease in employee and team performance, this was a limitation of FWAs, one that was overcome with the use of technological collaboration tools and an intentional co-ordination that aided co-operation and collaboration.

COVID-19 restrictions eliminated physical interactions in the workplace with the exclusive WFH. Participants complained that they felt isolated from their colleagues during this period and confirmed that they wanted to be able to work from both home and office. This is in accordance with Bloom et al.'s (2015) study whose participants WFH four days in a week. They mentioned that WFH can be lonely and they sought physical social interaction with colleagues.

6.3 Discussion of the themes that emerged for research question 2

Research question 2: What practices/methods contribute or could contribute to increasing work performance while making use of FWAs?

This question aimed to uncover the specific practices/methods that managers and employees could implement to ensure increased performance. In answering the interview questions, the participants were required to rely on what is already in use as well as what they would amend or implement, were they in a position to do so. In this chapter, the four themes and 11 sub-themes that emerged will be discussed together with the relevant literature.

6.3.1 The role of organisational elements in increasing performance

In accordance with the literature (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Putman et al., 2014; Timms et al., 2015), an unsupportive organisational culture was recognised, by all participants, as a significant barrier to the exercise of FWAs. This proved to be the case even in environments where employees had existing informal arrangements with their line managers; the admonishment and judgement by colleagues made it difficult to exercise FWAs effectively. Both managers and employees made frequent reference to the need to eliminate the culture of 'clock-watching' which prevailed in their organisations.

It is this inhibitive culture that convinced some employees that the exercise of FWAs could be career limiting. The two employees explained that one's presence at the office was still deemed an indicator of performance in their specific departments. These findings are in accordance with studies by Bloom et al. (2015), and Leslie et al. (2012) and are another indication of an inhibitive organisational culture.

Managers also experienced disapproval from their peers; they found that their peers viewed believed that their motivation for extending FWAs to their teams was to differentiate them from others, not to aid employee performance. In Company X, managers and employees said that the CEO's endorsement of FWAs contributed to a supportive organisational culture over this matter.

Manager and employees were of the belief that their organisation's policies were outdated and presented a barrier to the adoption of FWAs. It was pointed out that South African legislation governing employees at work made no mention of flexible working practices. den Dulk, Peters and Poutsma (2012) found that there is low adoption when work-family arrangements are left to the organisations' discretion. Their study also found that public provisions gave rise to a society-wide shift in employee expectations about work-family support. Governmental advocacy on FWAs could aid the necessary organisational shifts.

Most of the managers were of the view that having formal policies around flexible working was counterintuitive; they recommended an organisation-wide philosophy and supportive organisational culture over a formal policy. This aversion to formal policies finds support in de Menezes and Kelliher (2017) who found a negative relationship between formally established FWAs and employee performance. Both employees and managers acknowledged that FWAs could not be exercised in all job roles and all the managers were of the view that the decision as to whether to extend FWAs to employees should sit with the line manager. The rationale was that where there is an organisation-wide philosophy with an enabling culture, line managers would find it very difficult to avoid allowing their teams to exercise FWAs. de Menezes and Kelliher (2017) and Putman et al. (2014) also recommended that line managers be given greater autonomy over this decision.

Managers and employees said that their organisations had the technological tools to conduct online meetings but that the virtual attendance of a meeting was frowned upon. The COVID-19 restrictions facilitated the rapid adoption of these tools as employees were forced to work exclusively from home. This is important as van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) acknowledged that they did not consider the effect of online communication and collaboration tools in their study, which found that FWAs had a negative impact on overall team performance.

The WFH that was enabled by the restrictions also helped to dispel myths associated with performance when employees WFA. It must be noted that the performance levels were much higher than required and this reflected organisational cultures. Employees who have never made use of FWAs felt under pressure to prove that they were working by being online all the time as the organisational culture advocated for visibility in the office as an indicator of performance over an employee's actual work outcomes.

6.3.2 The manager-employee relationship: a critical enabler

The findings supported the literature (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Putman et al., 2014) in placing great reliance on the manager-employee relationship for the successful initiation and regulation of FWAs as well as their impact on employee performance.

Trust was resoundingly recognised as an antecedent to the successful exercising of FWAs. The reluctance of managers to adopt FWAs citing the inability to have sight of their employees at work (Bloom et al., 2015; de Menzes & Kelliher, 2017; Putman et al., 2014 & van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020) implied a lack of trust and this was confirmed by the findings as managers and employees said that the lack of trust was a vital barrier to the implementation and exercise of FWAs. In addition, most participants were of the view that for FWAs to be effective there had to be trust that the employee was getting the work done, especially by the line manager. Managers also observed that when there was a lack of trust within a team, the manager often found it difficult to allow the team to exercise FWAs. Trust between a manager and the employee can also have spill over effects to the rest of the team. Salamon and

Robinson (2008) found a strong association between trust in leadership and collective felt trust employees experienced at the team level.

There was a view that the way that work policies are designed has an influence on this. One manager remarked that we design rigid policies with the minority of people who are going to break them in mind instead of designing policies that will enable, support, and empower employees.

Another component of trust was the 'felt trust' that employees experienced in having been allowed to exercise FWAs. They expressed a sense of appreciation for being entrusted with the autonomy to self-manage their ways of working and two employees expressly stated that felt trust improved their attitude and mindset towards the organisation. As per the literature (Gill et al., 2019; Lau et al.; Salamon & Robinson, 2008), felt trust resulted in increased affective commitment and ultimately employee performance.

There was a reciprocal nature of this trust relationship that was advocated by the participants in this study. As mentioned, managers had to trust employees, but it was also emphasised that there was a duty on the part of the employee to be trustworthy. Employees had to play their part and ensure that they were accountable to their managers and they consistently delivered the required work. Most of the managers were of the belief that an employee's trustworthiness should not be a prerequisite, they encouraged managers to trust employees upfront and then implement remedial actions if the employee breaks the trust. This is an important consideration as it addresses lack of trust that would exist when a person joins a new team, the findings suggest that this should not be a barrier to the immediate exercise of FWAs by the new employee.

There were common leadership attributes and behaviours among the managers that became apparent during the data collection and analysis phases of this study. The findings suggested that these were not as a result of extending FWAs to their teams but an antecedent of them; when probed directly on the changes that they had made to their leadership styles when they started making use of FWAs, all the managers responded that they had made no changes to their leadership styles. They were consultative and empathetic in how they lead their teams. They did not

necessarily enjoy a close personal relationship with their team members, but they emphasised the importance of being aware of their personal circumstances. They also recognised and embraced the individuality of their team members, they stated that they were willing to extend FWAs to their teams because they were aware that employees were different and thrived under different working conditions. It could be argued that the recognition and embrace of individuality is an antecedent to FWAs.

One manager said that she bred trust and encouraged accountability in her team members by being transparent and accountable to them as well. She kept the team updated on where she was working from and ensured that she also delivered on agreed-upon outcomes. Most of the managers expressly stated their belief in the enablement of employees through giving them autonomy to manage themselves.

The findings posited that the effectiveness of FWAs on employees relied on an outcomes-based form of performance management. The employees said that they contracted with their managers on delivery of outcomes and then monitored the quality and timelines of these over having their performance measured based on outcomes as well as time spent in the office. The managers expressed that they had conveyed to their teams that what was of primary concern was outcomes, where and when they achieved those outcomes was of no importance to them. There was consensus among all participants that this form of performance management was not prevalent in their organisations and there was a reluctance to adopt it, this reluctance in accordance with the literature (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; SABPP, 2018; Timms et al., 2015; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

Only one participant made mention of a productivity tool that tracked their performance. In managing performance, managers and employees made mention of effective contracting and frequent check-ins. Only 66% of the participants in a Regus (2017) study were in favour of having their productivity tracked and measured through IT systems. van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) questioned how employees would receive IT-enabled systems – would they be viewed as productivity-enabling tools or the organisation's surveillance tools? If viewed as surveillance by employees, this could impact the trust that is required for FWAs to be successful. Regus (2017) also found that in monitoring their productivity, employees preferred that the organisation use the traditional techniques of phone calls and monthly

meetings. The study also found that leaders largely agreed with employees as they cited regular meetings (video conferencing and in-person) and telephone calls as critical tools to effectively manage performance. How useful, appropriate, and effective online productivity tracking tools are warrants additional study.

In terms of the manager-employee relationship, another requirement for FWAs to have a positive impact on employee performance was continual performance management discussions instead of reviewing performance on an annual basis. This was mentioned as a requirement by managers, it was not something that they started doing on implementation of FWAs; they had frequent performance discussions with their teams prior to them exercising FWAs. Employees did not mention an increase in the frequency of performance discussions they had with their managers when they started to make use of FWAs. Two managers mentioned that they were not deterred from FWAs by the possibility of a negative impact on performance as in their experience they were able to pick up any performance declines right away. This insight could ease the fears of managers who are reluctant to extend FWAs to their teams, but they would have to be mindful of the need to have regular performance discussions that accompanies it.

Azar et al. (2018) recommended planning behaviour as a tool to aid the effectiveness of FWAs on performance. This could address the findings from employees about their unintended working of longer hours and the negative impact this has on their health. This could also be of use for employees who have no sense of self-leadership. As Müller and Niessen (2019) observed, employees made use of increased self-leadership variations on the days they worked at home over the days they worked in the office. This was attributed to the autonomy that is afforded by WFH.

6.3.3 The need for co-ordination and co-operation

Although FWAs have an impact on physical social interactions, this can be mitigated by employees being intentional in how they schedule and co-ordinate their work activities. Azar et al. (2018) and van der Lippe and Lippényi (2020) highlighted the need for organisations to monitor the impact of FWAs on collaboration and co-operation. Managers and employees emphasised that FWAs did not have to result

in reduced customer engagement and collaboration, they emphasised the importance of being accessible when making use of FWAs. The onus was on the employee to ensure that they were available and accessible to stakeholders, to the extent that when they experienced connectivity challenges, they were required to then go to the office. The ability to deliver on outcomes could not be compromised by FWAs, this was recognised and accepted by both managers and employees. This onus on the employee indicates that when an employee is exercising FWAs they have an additional duty to proactively manage work relationships and activities. Managers said that they also had an additional responsibility to ensure that they not only connected with the team but that the team connected with each other.

The impact of reduced co-ordination and co-operation could be seen in van der Lippe and Lippényi's (2020) study where the more the employee's team members worked from home, the worse the employee's performance became and this also had a negative impact on overall team performance. The findings however suggest that this can be overcome through intentional scheduling and co-ordination of work activities.

6.3.4 Mobility sets things in motion

For employees to effectively exercise flexplace, they need the necessary tools and equipment to ensure that they can WFA. Managers and employees recognised a dual responsibility between the organisation and the employee to ensure that the employee is equipped. The degree of support differed among the organisations. One organisation did not provide any additional support over ensuring that the employee had a laptop and could access the necessary systems whereas another organisation subsidised the employee's data costs. Mobility was also supported through the employees' ability to work from any of the organisation's campuses but an employee of one of the retail banks pointed out that this could be further enabled by allowing the employees to work from the bank branches as well.

What is of importance to note is that employees did not cite a lack of organisational support with mobility enablement as a barrier to their exercise of FWAs. This indicates that employees recognised that because they had the option to work from

the office, when they chose to WFA, it was their responsibility to ensure that they were enabled to do so.

The remote work that was facilitated by the COVID-19 restrictions highlighted the lack of mobility enablement for some organisations. After a period of adjustment, all participants managed to continue servicing their clients, albeit virtually. At the time of the interviews all participants had overcome connectivity challenges and had comfortably settled in to WFH. An impact of this remote work did result in both employees and managers saying that their perspectives on flexplace had shifted and they now wanted to be able to WFA. This is of import for organisations to note as they will need to play their part in supporting WFA mobility.

6.4 Discussion of the themes that emerged for research question 3

Research question 3: Do employees view FWAs as a standard human resource practice or a privilege/benefit, and do they feel indebted/obligated to organisations for provision of these?

This question aimed to probe whether employees who made use of FWAs still felt obligated to respond with increased performance. The social exchange theory had widely been used to explain how FWAs result in increased performance. FWAs positively impact the mediating variables referred to under RQ1 and employees then repay the resultant obligation to reciprocate, with increased performance. The researcher also sought to establish whether the growing interest and adoption of FWAs by other teams or organisations would eliminate this sense of obligation.

6.4.1 FWAs still recognised as a privilege by employees

The self-governance that was facilitated by FWAs enabled employees to better balance work-life responsibilities as per the literature and this increased their affective commitment (Azar et al., 2018; Mills et al., 2014).

All participants expressed appreciation for being allowed to exercise FWAs, there was increased affective commitment. In response to whether they viewed FWAs as a privilege or basic work right, most employees responded that they viewed them as

a privilege. The two employees who were in favour of FWAs becoming basic work rights were worried that the maintenance of these as a privilege or a benefit would result in the continued low adoption by organisations however they too expressed appreciation of their organisations for allowing them to exercise FWAs.

The employees felt indebted to their organisations and expressed an obligation to reciprocate the privilege they had in exercising FWAs. Managers were also of the view that employees expressed their appreciation through increased performance.

The obligation to reciprocate means that Blau's (1964) social exchange theory still holds in explaining the role of mediating variables on the performance outcomes of FWAs (Allen et al., 2013; Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019; Azar et al., 2018; Berkery et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2018; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). FWAs have a positive impact on affective commitment and employees repay this debt by increasing their performance. Although the findings have shown that the participants cited productivity as their primary motivation for the exercise of FWAs i.e. there is a direct link between FWAs and productivity, any impact on the mediating variables that enable increased employee performance is important for organisations note.

There was no indication that the prevalence of FWAs would result in reduced appreciation by employees of FWAs. One manager was of the view that it would not have an impact on the sense of obligation that employees felt as the obligation arose in response to feeling supported and this would not be eliminated by the prevalence of FWAs in organisations.

6.4.2 FWAs as a reward

A few employees expressed their disapproval of managers who extended FWAs to their teams as a reward mechanism. The motivation was neither to improve productivity nor to support them in better balancing their work-life responsibilities. One manager in the sample said that he made use of increased flexibility in existing flexible working arrangements as a reward mechanism over and above the regular use by his employees. This use of FWAs as a reward confirms the findings of a study by Bathini and Kandathil (2019). This study found that managers intentionally extended flexplace to their employees in exchange for additional work effort; the

requirement of increased performance in exchange for flexibility was explicitly stated. Other managers did not make mention of the use of FWAs as a reward mechanism. They cited increased productivity and better balance of work-life responsibilities as the motivations for allowing their teams to exercise FWAs. The use of FWAs as a reward is outside the scope of this study.

6.5 Implications for theory and considerations for organisations

One of the researcher's intended outcomes was to contribute to the body of literature on the impact of FWAs on employee performance as well as provide recommendations to HR practitioners and organisational leaders on the enabling programmes and interventions that they can implement. An outcome of the discussion of the findings from Chapter 5 and the literature review from Chapter 2, was the implications for theory and considerations for organisations that follow below.

6.5.1 Theoretical implications

This study has found that Blau's (1964) social exchange theory can still be used to explain the relationship between FWAs and positive performance. It can also be used to explain how the constructs of autonomy and trust which are also connected to FWAs ultimately result in increased employee performance. A direct relationship between FWAs and employee performance was also established as FWAs result in increased creativity, concentration, and productivity.

6.5.2 Considerations for organisational leaders and HR Practitioners

6.5.2.1 Organisational elements

- Flexplace and flextime were found to have a positive impact on employee performance. This was found regardless of whether an employee exercised one or both forms of FWAs.
- The findings confirmed that FWAs are not 'family-friendly' policies but rather 'work-life friendly' policies as they are demanded by employees irrespective of the degree of family responsibilities.

- FWAs enable autonomy which in turn has a positive impact on employee performance. This autonomy must be preserved. Although it was recognised that ‘too much flexibility’ may negatively impact performance where employees do not manage time or have healthy work-life boundaries, the solution is not stringent policies that curb flexibility. Employees should be supported with interventions that will educate them on self-leadership, planning behaviour, time management and boundary management. These interventions will also assist with the unhealthy longer working hours that can be experienced by employees under FWAs.
- Organisations should opt to adopt an organisation-wide philosophy, not a policy, and support this with an enabling culture. CEO advocacy of FWAs contributes to an enabling culture. All participants made mention of a ‘clock-watching’ organisational culture which is a barrier to FWAs and needs to be shifted.
- The decision as to whether to extend FWAs to employees should ultimately sit with the line manager.
- Organisations need to lobby government to update legislation to make mention of FWAs as this will provide the assurance that they are not in contravention of existing legislation.
- The participants mentioned that once they experienced flexible working they were not prepared to move back to inflexible working environments. It is important for organisations to note that once they implement FWAs in their organisation it will be difficult to revoke them. Another implication is on increased employee demand for FWAs. It can be inferred that due to the exclusive WFH conditions of COVID-19, employees around the world will now demand a degree of flexible working. There will be increased adoption of FWAs by organisations and they will thus be less of an employer differentiator.
- The COVID-19 restrictions were a perfect test case of employees exclusively WFH and, except for one manager, all participants complained about the reduced flexibility, lack of healthy work-life boundaries, lack of physical interactions with colleagues and other stakeholders. Participants wanted to work from both home and the office so the office place should not be completely eliminated but the office space can be reduced and adapted to a hot desk environment to accommodate a workforce that makes use of flexible working.

6.5.2.2 Workplace trust

- Participants highlighted a lack of trust in the workplace. Organisations need to work to build trust as the positive impact of trust on performance is well documented in literature. Employees also mentioned that FWAs made them feel trusted, this thus supports the business case for their adoption.
- Organisations also need to encourage trust as it was also found to be an antecedent to FWAs; if a manager does not trust their team, they are unlikely to allow them to exercise FWAs. This felt trust by employees results in their increased performance as they want to reciprocate the trust with increased performance.
- Organisations must encourage the exercise of upfront trust. By extending trust upfront, there will be no need for a waiting period to 'build trust' prior to the implementation of FWAs. This has an implication on new joiners of a team that is already making use of FWAs. Any negative consequences that may be feared about this approach are mitigated by manager testimonies that with FWAs, performance declines can be picked up almost immediately if the manager has regular performance discussions with the employee.
- Organisations must also insist that employees display trustworthiness by being accountable. This was a finding by employees which indicated their recognition of this responsibility.

6.5.2.3 Diversity and inclusion

- Better work-life balance supports the gender-equity agenda in the workplace. FWAs could help attract, retain, and motivate women as they facilitate their career progression.

6.5.2.4 Employee productivity

- All participants cited the pursuit of productivity more than the pursuit of work-life balance as the primary motivations for the use of FWAs. FWAs have a direct impact on productivity as they allow employees to work where and when they want. A part of this is linked to individuality, e.g. some employees are more productive early in the morning or late at night. The second part which

may surprise organisation leaders is the finding that the open plan office set up which has been cited to promote collaboration is not a conducive environment for creativity, concentration, and productivity; this was noted by both managers and employees.

6.5.2.5 Employee wellbeing

- FWAs contribute to employee wellbeing by alleviating the stress and anxiety associated with sitting in traffic. It is about more than just the saved travel time that employees have testified they allocate to work, there is a benefit on employee wellbeing. The saved travel time also contributed to wellbeing in the way of additional rest.

6.5.2.6 Performance management

- Employees mentioned that when they started making use of FWAs, they became more focussed on completing a task and were willing to work longer hours to do so. The inference was that their sense of achievement became based on task delivery. This required additional research, but it is worth organisations taking note of it as a benefit of FWAs.
- Managers need to be skilled on how to manage performance outcomes instead of their team's time spent at the office. The need to physically monitor employees is a significant barrier to FWAs and it indicates a lack of trust by the manager.
- Managers need to conduct continual performance reviews instead of once-off annual reviews.
- Managers must rely on regular performance discussions to monitor employee performance rather than online productivity tools that may erode manager-employee trust.

6.5.2.7 Physical social interactions

- FWAs result in reduced physical social interactions that can negatively impact the building and nurturing of relationships, and knowledge sharing. This can be mitigated using technological collaboration tools as well as intentional scheduling and co-ordination on the part of the employee. There has been increased adoption and use of the mentioned collaboration tools due to COVID-19.

6.5.2.8 Leadership attributes and behaviours

- To make it easier for managers to effectively lead teams that make use of FWAs, organisations need to encourage certain attributes and develop specific leadership behaviours:
 - Empathy
 - A consultative nature
 - An awareness of team's personal circumstances
 - Recognise and embrace employee individuality
 - Lead by example
 - A trusting nature
 - A belief in the enablement of employees by giving them autonomy to self-manage
 - Subscribe to outcomes-based performance management
 - Regular performance coaching and discussions with one's team
 - Create opportunities for team connection and collaboration

6.5.2.9 Mobility

- Employees did not request additional employer support for data and office furniture when making use of FWAs which implies that employees take full responsibility for the environment in which they work when they WFH or WFA thus there should be no fear of a cost burden on the employer when employees make use of FWAs.

- The support offered by organisations differs, but the minimum employee requirement is that of a laptop and the ability to access the necessary systems when they WFA.
- COVID-19 has resulted in employees increased demand to be able to WFA.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the findings from Chapter 5 and the literature from Chapter 2 were integrated to be able to determine similarities and contrasts between the two pieces of work. Additional literature helped to explain unanticipated findings, solidifying the reconciliation of the study's findings and the extant literature.

The pursuit of productivity was found to be the primary motivator for the employee demand and manager extension of FWAs; the pursuit of work-life balance was deemed a secondary motivator. This was an unanticipated finding as although FWAs have been found to contribute to productivity, this has not been cited as the main reason for the growing interest in them by employees and organisations.

It was confirmed that Blau's (1964) social exchange theory can still be used to explain the positive impact that FWAs have on performance. The mediating variables of autonomy, affective commitment, job satisfaction, positive job attitude and employee engagement resulted in an obligation by employees to reciprocate with increased employee performance. In addition to this indirect link, a direct relationship between FWAs and employee performance was established; FWAs had a direct impact on employee performance by enabling employees to work where and when they were most productive. This has been understated in extant literature.

The positive impact of workplace trust in literature is well documented. What was of significance from the finding was its emphasised connection to FWAs. Trust is an antecedent to FWAs, but it is also an outcome of the autonomy afforded by FWAs.

Other understated findings that were confirmed were the positive impact of FWAs on employee's stress levels due to the elimination of time spent in traffic, the role of FWAs as a proponent the career advancement of women, and the performance management approach that is required for FWAs to be effective. An unanticipated finding was the emergence of common leadership attributes and behaviours among the manager participants whose teams were successful in their use of FWAs.

The COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in reduced autonomy, flexibility, and physical interactions but it resulted in unhealthily increased working hours. The significant finding from its impact was the confirmation by participants that they wanted flexible work and not remote work; they wanted to work from both the office and home. This chapter concluded with recommendations for organisations as well as a view of the implications for theory.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain manager and employee insights on how FWAs impact employee performance. In the fierce competition for talent, organisations need to stay abreast of HR practices and policies that can help them attract, motivate and retain talent. The growing interest in the practice of FWAs in recent years can primarily be attributed to an attempt by organisations to support employees in the battle to balance work-life responsibilities that had begun to have a negative impact on performance (Allen et al., 2013; Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019; Azar et al., 2018; Bal & De Lange, 2015; Bloom et al., 2015; Chen & Fulmer, 2017; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011; Mills et al., 2014; Putman et al., 2014; Regus, 2017; SABPP, 2018). This study confirmed that the employee's demand for FWAs was not impacted by their degree of family responsibilities (Mills et al., 2014).

The predominantly quantitative research studies on the matter supported the view that FWAs had a positive impact on employee performance. This was by means of the positive impact that FWAs had on the mediating variables of affective commitment, job satisfaction, job attitudes and overall employee engagement. Blau's (1964) social exchange theory had thus largely been used to explain the positive impact on employee performance. The study sought to interrogate the validity of the social exchange theory explanation and possibly contribute to the dearth in studies that established a direct, non-mediated link between FWAs and employee performance.

This qualitative study also aimed to uncover additional practices that contributed or could contribute to the effective and fruitful exercise of FWAs by employees. The researcher intended to contribute to literature, a list of structural, cultural, and relational prerequisites for the successful and effective implementation and exercise of FWAs in organisations.

In this chapter, the principal findings of the study will be presented as well as a framework in support of the effective implementation and use of FWAs to guarantee

increased employee performance. As the implications for theory and considerations for organisations were laid out in section 6.5 of the previous chapter, this chapter will conclude with the limitations of this study as well as the researcher's recommendations for areas of future research.

7.2 Principal findings

The research questions for this study were designed to interrogate the impact of FWAs on employee performance, uncover the methods/practices that contribute to increased employee performance and establish whether Blau's social exchange theory could be used to explain the positive impact of FWAs on employee performance. This section entails the principal findings of the study in addressing these research questions.

7.2.1 FWAs have a positive impact on performance

FWAs were found to have a positive impact on employee performance for both flexplace and flextime. The literature (Allen et al., 2013; Avgoustaki & Bessa, 2019; Azar et al., 2018; Berkery et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2018; de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) that explains this increased performance by means of the positive impact that FWAs have on the mediating variables affective commitment, job satisfaction, job attitude and overall employee engagement, was supported by the findings. The autonomy that FWAs afforded employees also had a positive impact on the same mediating variables (Putman et al., 2014; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). The study also confirmed the connection between autonomy and felt trust. Blau's (1964) social exchange theory was thus still applicable in explaining the relationship between FWAs and employee performance.

The ability to self-manage allowed employees to better balance work-life responsibilities and work when and where they were most productive. The latter illustrated the direct impact that FWAs have on employee performance, confirming the scant studies that found a direct link between FWAs and increased productivity (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Leslie et al., 2012). Productivity was also found to be the primary motivator for employee demand for FWAs, this over the pursuit of work-

life balance. FWAs afforded employees an environment conducive to creativity, concentration and productivity as compared to the disruptive open plan office space (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016; Bloom et al., 2015; Regus, 2017); van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

FWAs were found to have a positive impact on employee wellbeing and contributed to loyalty and retention. In addition to the sunnier dispositions, employees made mention of how the elimination of the time spent sitting in traffic resulted in reduced stress and anxiety levels and a positive mindset. There is minimal literature on the positive wellbeing effects that FWAs have on employees who have traffic-congested commutes to work (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020; Zhou et al., 2017).

The aspects of FWAs that resulted in a negative impact on employee performance were found to be an inability to maintain healthy work-life boundaries as well as a lack of time management, planning behaviour (Azar et al., 2018) and self-leadership (Müller & Niessen, 2019). This study found that HR practitioners needed to ensure that employees who make use of FWAs are equipped with these self-management skills.

FWAs were found to result in reduced physical workplace interactions that employees relied on for knowledge sharing and to build and nurture relationships (Bloom et al., 2015; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020). There was recognition of an additional responsibility on managers and employees to ensure that they were available to and connected with all stakeholders. This study also found that there was no appetite for exclusive WFH or WFA, employees wanted to work from both home and the office.

7.2.2 The building blocks of effective and fruitful FWAs

The elements that contributed and could contribute to the positive impact of FWAs on employee performance fell under three categories: the organisation, the manager and the employee.

7.2.2.1 Organisational elements

An organisation-wide philosophy, instead of a policy, supported by CEO-endorsement and an enabling organisational culture was identified as the best way to implement FWAs. In alignment with de Menezes and Kelliher (2017), it was recommended that the decision as to whether an employee could exercise FWAs should ultimately lie with the line manager. South African legislation does not make mention of, let alone provide for, flexible working and this was found to be a contributor to the low adoption of FWAs by organisations. den Dulk, Peters and Poutsma's (2012) study found that public provisions gave rise to a society-wide shift in employee expectations about work-family support. Governmental advocacy on FWAs could aid the necessary organisational shifts.

An inhibitive organisational culture was recognised as a significant potential barrier not only to the adoption but to the effective use of FWAs. A shift in the culture of clock-watching would eliminate the judgement and admonishment from colleagues.

Trust was found to be an antecedent to FWAs as it enabled the adoption of FWAs by managers. The managers could trust their team and not need to supervise them as they worked. Salamon and Robinson (2008) also found a strong association between trust in leadership and collective felt trust employees experienced at the team level. Employees expressed appreciation to the manager and/or organisation for being trusted to exercise FWAs. Blau's (1964) social exchange theory was also used to understand why trust in the workplace can result in outcomes such as increased performance and positive job attitudes (Chen & Fulmer, 2017; Gill, Cassidy, Cragg, Algate, Weijs & Finegan, 2019; Salamon & Robinson, 2008).

The study found that an outcomes-based performance management approach contributed to the effectiveness of FWAs. In agreement with the literature (Bloom et al., 2015; Leslie et al., 2012), managers and employees said that their organisations still viewed time at the office as an indicator of performance and this was a barrier not only to their exercise of FWAs but career growth prospects as well.

Employees took responsibility for their work environment when they made use of WFH or WFA but the minimum requirement in terms of employer support was found

to be a laptop as well as technology in the way of access to the necessary work systems. There was no finding of a significant financial outlay required of organisations for the implementation of FWAs.

An unexpected finding was that employees who made use of FWAs were no longer willing to go back to working in inflexible environments.

7.2.2.2 Requirements of the manager

Another unanticipated finding of the study was the common leadership attributes and behaviours among the managers who were interviewed. These proved to contribute to their team's effective exercise of FWAs and the increased performance. They were empathetic and consultative in their leadership styles and although they did not necessarily enjoy close relationships with their team, they were aware of everyone's personal circumstances. The managers recognised and embraced their team members' individual working styles and that they were productive under different environments.

The managers had a trusting nature and encouraged transparency and trust through leading by example. They were willing to trust employees upfront and only institute stringent policies as a remedial measure. A consequence of this trust was that they did not require their teams to be in front of them to confirm that they were working or delivering to stakeholders. They believed in the enablement of their teams by giving them the autonomy to self-manage. This is rare as the literature testified to a reluctance of managers to adopt FWAs citing the inability to have sight of their employees at work (Bloom et al., 2015; de Menzes & Kelliher, 2017; Putman et al., 2014; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

The managers' priority was outcomes, and this was evident in the way they communicated with their teams and managed performance; in-office time was not an indicator of performance for them. They communicated frequently with their team on performance, referencing regular performance discussions and coaching sessions. They managed the reduced physical interactions by proactively creating

opportunities for the team to connect and collaborate, both through virtual and physical interactions.

7.2.2.3 Requirements of the employee

The study found that it was employees and not managers who highlighted the duty on the employee to reciprocate upfront trust by being trustworthy. A demonstration of this trustworthiness was accountability to the employee's manager and other stakeholders. A lack of time management skills and planning behaviour was found to have a negative impact on employee wellbeing, but this could be mitigated through time management and planning behaviour. In addition to these, employees were encouraged to exercise self-leadership and boundary management skills to manage and support their exercise of FWAs.

7.2.3 Employees still view FWAs as a privilege/benefit

As confirmed under 7.2.1, Blau's (1964) social exchange theory can still be used to explain the relationship between FWAs and increased employee performance. The employee participants either expressed a sense of indebtedness to their manager and/or organisation or explicitly expressed the obligation to reciprocate the favourable treatment of being able to exercise FWAs. The manager participants also confirmed that their teams repaid the 'debt' of being able to exercise FWAs with increased performance. The findings did not suggest that the increased prevalence of FWAs would result in a diminished sense of obligation as the obligation arose out of employees' appreciation for support not an appreciation for preferential treatment. Managers and employees sought after the increased adoption of FWAs across their organisations as this would create the enabling organisation culture mentioned under 7.2.2.1.

7.3 A framework for the successful implementation of FWAs

Out of the reconciliation of the study findings and the extant literature, the researcher produced a framework (Figure 6) that outlines the essential building blocks of the successful adoption and implementation of FWAs as well as the interplay of the

organisation, the manager and the employee. This framework provides a view of the components that are necessary for FWAs to result in increased employee performance.

7.3.1 The organisation

Figure 6 illustrates how the organisation is a cog in a broader micro or macro environment, but that it is also needs to be an environment in which the manager and employee can effectively exercise FWAs. The micro and macro environments are where the organisation competes for talent. The intensity of the competitor rivalry would be driven by the prevalence of FWAs as well as the degree of technological and furniture support that organisations provide to their employees to enhance their WFH or WFA environments. The latter will likely be the differentiator going forward as there is likely to be increased adoption of FWAs in response to the increased employee demand driven by the remote working conditions of the COVID-19 restrictions. Governmental advocacy in the way of public provisions will also drive increased adoption of FWAs.

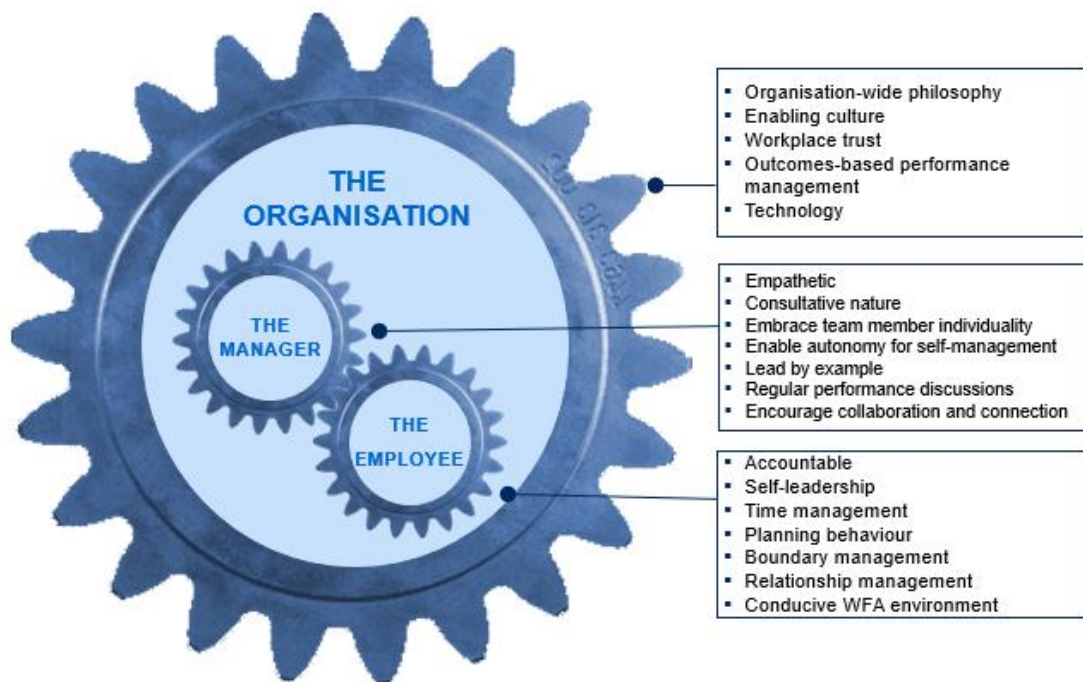


Figure 6: The building blocks for effective FWAs

Inside the organisation there needs to be a CEO-advocated, organisation-wide philosophy instead of a formal policy, the restrictions of which could inhibit flexibility. The organisational culture needs to be supportive and enabling of the adoption and exercise of FWAs.

Organisations need to breed trust as this is an antecedent to the adoption of FWAs but felt trust in employees also contributes to employee performance. There needs to be an outcomes-based approach to performance management, this approach advocates for the focus to be on creating the environment and providing employees with the tools necessary for them to achieve the agreed-upon outcomes. This should be the primary indicator of performance. The organisation needs to provide the technological equipment and access that is necessary for the employee to do their job but the WFA environment in which the employee works is the employee responsibility. A potential employer differentiator could be the FWA support provided to employees.

7.3.2 The manager

The manager needs to make use of empathy and consultation to understand, keep up with and be able to meet the needs of the employees. They need to recognise team members as individuals and embrace this individuality through the understanding that employees may be productive under different conditions. The management style must enable the autonomy for employees to self-manage when and where they work without the manager requiring them to be in the office so that they have physical oversight over their work. This will breed team-level trust and the manager can further encourage this by being transparent and displaying the behaviours that they would like their team to exercise.

The manager can support and further the effects of the outcomes-based performance management approach by means of real time feedback and regular performance discussions. It is the manager's responsibility to ensure team learning and knowledge sharing through the creation of opportunities for team-level connection and collaboration.

7.3.3 The employee

The last component to workplace trust is the individual employee; to unleash the optimal positive impact that trust can have on performance, the employee must reciprocate the trust that is extended to them by being trustworthy through accountability. The employee must be able to exercise self-leadership, time management, planning behaviour and boundary management. The competencies will further enable the self-management that is conferred by FWAs by ensuring that it is utilised effectively and contributes to employee performance.

When exercising FWAs, employees need to increase their proactivity in building and nurturing the relationships with stakeholders. They will need to ensure that they are deemed appropriately available and accessible, the lack of physical interaction must not compromise the quality of the stakeholder relationship. Lastly, the employee needs to be responsible for how conducive their WFA is. It is the employee who must provide the ergonomic furniture, enabling atmosphere and internet connectivity.

7.4 Recommendations for future research

As mentioned in the background for this study, there is a dearth in qualitative studies on FWAs and the effects thereof. In the conduction of the study and from the reconciliation of the findings and the literature, other areas for future research emerged. The researcher makes the following recommendations for future studies related to FWAs:

- The role of FWAs as a proponent in the career advancement of women. FWAs can go further than just ensuring women continue to work by helping them to better balance work-life responsibilities, FWAs could advance gender equity in the workplace by ensuring that women can attain senior leadership positions.
- The findings posited that effective management of FWAs requires time management, planning behaviour, self-leadership, and boundary management. It could be argued that first-time employees with no work experience may not possess these skills sufficiently to enable them to make use of FWAs effectively.

- A knowledge sharing environment enables faster team learning. The impact of FWAs on the learning curve (and resultant performance) of employees who are joining a new team requires further research.
- Under FWAs employees have been found to work longer hours, the findings of this study also confirmed this. The outcomes-based approach to performance could be the cause of this as the employees' sense of achievement could now solely be determined by their completion of tasks. The full impact of the outcomes-based approach to performance requires additional study.
- The leadership attributes and behaviours that resulted in the effective management of employees who made use of FWA was an unanticipated finding of this study. Additional research could uncover additional attributes and behaviours.

7.5 Limitations of the research

As highlighted in Chapter 4, qualitative studies are subject to limitations such as researcher bias, subject bias and the non-generalisability of results to the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The limitations of this study were identified as:

- Subject bias which is when the participant does not tell the truth (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As the researcher asked the employees to discuss their performance and managers were asked to discuss their team's performance which in turn is a reflection on their own performance, it is possible that the participants were not completely honest.
- The size of the sample as well as the confinement of participants to the financial services industry limits the generalisability of the study.
- The employee sample was skewed towards millennials and this was a concern for the researcher, but it ultimately did not have an effect as interviews were conducted until saturation could be demonstrated.
- The manager sample was skewed towards managers in Marketing departments and this was a concern for the researcher, but it ultimately did not have an effect as interviews were conducted until saturation could be demonstrated.

- There is the risk of geographical bias as the study was limited to participants who resided in Johannesburg; the outcomes could thus not be generalised across regions.
- As this study was qualitative, a quantitative study could be beneficial in supporting the qualitative findings with statistical findings. A quantitative study is also required to test the validity of the framework.
- As the researcher was the primary research instrument, this study was exposed to researcher bias. The researcher was also not trained to conduct interviews.
- This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and all participants were working exclusively from home. As the participants were not exercising FWAs at the time of the interviews, their responses could have been influenced by their COVID-19 working conditions.
- Cross-sectional studies limit the scope of the research to a point in time.

7.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain insights on manager and employer perspectives on the impact of FWAs on employee performance. The increase in demand for FWAs by employees resulted in a need by organisations to better understand this relationship to make informed decisions about its adoption, regulation, and use. Literature mainly prescribed that the primary reason for the demand by employees for FWAs was to better balance work-life responsibilities.

Extant literature comprised predominantly of quantitative studies suggested a positive impact that was explained by Blau's (1964) social exchange theory. In accordance with this theory the impact of FWAs was mediated by employee autonomy, affective commitment, job satisfaction, positive job attitude and employee engagement; there was scant literature confirming a direct link between FWAs and employee performance. There were also studies that did not establish an association between FWAs and employee performance at all, resulting in inconclusiveness on this matter. Recent studies suggested that the growing adoption of FWAs resulted in a negative or zero impact on performance as the employees no longer viewed FWAs as a privilege and consequently felt obligated to reciprocate with increased performance, as prescribed by the social exchange theory.

This qualitative study sought to provide clarity, assess implications for theory and contribute to literature, a list of structural, cultural, and relational prerequisites for the successful and effective implementation and exercise of FWAs in organisations.

The most enabling organisational environment was found to be where there existed an organisation-wide philosophy, not policy, that was supported by an enabling organisational culture. In such an environment, the decision as to whether an employee could exercise FWAs still resided with the manager. Workplace trust was already known to increase employee performance but its significance in relation to FWAs was undervalued in literature yet given prominence in the findings of this study. Managers needed to feel that they could trust team members to be able to extend to them FWAs. The autonomy afforded by FWAs also made employees feel trusted. The employees practised an outcomes-based performance management approach and the organisation ensured that they had the technological support required to exercise FWAs. These were found to be the building blocks for FWAs required for increased employee performance at the organisational level.

This study confirmed the mediating role that autonomy, affective commitment, job satisfaction, positive job attitudes and employee engagement play in the relationship between FWAs and employee performance. This confirmed the continued applicability of Blau's (1964) social exchange theory. It is important for organisations to continue to prioritise the improvement of these engagement drivers as they contribute to increased performance. In agreement with the literature, FWAs were found to have a positive impact on employee wellbeing and work-life balance. The findings suggested that further to supporting them in the better balancing of work-life responsibilities, FWAs could aid the career advancement of women.

This study also served to confirm findings that were understated and scantily represented in the literature. More importantly than work-life balance, the participants declared that it was the pursuit of productivity to which the demand for FWAs could be attributed. Open plan office spaces were deemed disruptive and barriers to creativity, concentration, and productivity. This was an important implication for organisations who have adopted open plan office spaces to drive collaboration.

The impact of FWAs on employee wellbeing was also underrated as literature makes very little mention of the impact of traffic on employee wellbeing, yet the study participants emphasised the reduced stress and anxiety levels associated with not

having to sit in traffic. A negative impact on employee wellbeing was found to be the unhealthy longer working hours that employees can work due to a lack of time management, planning behaviour, boundary management and self-leadership. HR practitioners and organisations need to prioritise interventions and programmes that build these competencies in employees as the increased work effort yields increased performance, but it should not be to such an extent that it has a detrimental effect on wellbeing.

FWAs could result in reduced physical interactions but the impact of this could be managed through proactive stakeholder relationship management by employees. The creation of a conducive WFA environment was deemed to be the employee's own responsibility thus organisations should not worry about significant financial outlays when debating the implementation of FWAs.

The study found great emphasis placed on the relationship between the manager and the employee as an enabler of the successful use of FWAs. Certain leadership attributes and behaviours were found to contribute to the effective management and use of FWAs yielding increased employee performance.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on general working conditions and the participants of this study were forced to work exclusively from home. They did not appreciate the reduced autonomy, flexibility, physical interactions, and the pressure to work longer hours presented by the COVID-19 world of work. Flextime-only employees found that they now wanted to exercise flexplace as well. The most significant finding of this study in relation to FWAs and COVID-19 was that employees who made use of FWAs did not want increased flexibility in the way of remote work, they wanted to work from both the office and home.

FWAs have a positive impact on employee performance, directly and indirectly. The benefits that can be yielded from employees making use of FWAs outweighs any costs that organisations could incur in the provision of equipment and the necessary training to facilitate their implementation. An outcome of this research study was a framework providing the essential building blocks that organisations need to put in place to ensure that FWAs increase employee performance.

8 REFERENCE LIST

- Allen, T., Johnson, R., Kiburz, K., & Shockley, K. (2013). Work-family conflict and flexible work arrangements: Deconstructing flexibility. *Personnel Psychology, 66*(2), 345-376. doi: 10.1111/peps.12012
- Avgoustaki, A., & Bessa, I. (2019). Examining the link between flexible working arrangement bundles and employee work effort. *Human Resource Management, 58*(4), 431-449. doi: 10.1002/hrm.21969
- Azar, S., Khan, A., & Van Eerde, W. (2018). Modelling linkages between flexible work arrangements' use and organizational outcomes. *Journal of Business Research, 91*(October 2018), 134-143.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.06.004>
- Bal, P.M., & De Lange, A.H. (2015). From flexibility human resource management to employee engagement and perceived job performance across the lifespan: A multisample study. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 88*(1), 126-154. doi: 10.1111/joop.12082
- Bathini, D.R., & Kandathil, G.M. (2019). An orchestrated negotiated exchange: trading home-based telework for intensified work. *Journal of Business Ethics, 154*(2), 411-423. <https://doi-org.uplib.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3449-y>
- Berkery, E., Morley, M.J., Tiernan, S. Purtill, H., & Parry, E. (2017). On the uptake of flexible working arrangements and the association with Human Resource and organizational performance outcomes. *European Management Review, 14*(2), 165-183. doi: 10.1111/emre.12103
- Biron, M., & van Veldhoven, M. (2016). When control becomes a liability rather than an asset: Comparing home and office days among part-time teleworkers. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 37*(8), 1317-1337. doi: 10.1002/job.2106
- Blau, P.M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. New York, NY: Wiley.

- Bloom, N., Liang, J., Roberts, J., & Ying, Z.J. (2015). Does working from home work? Evidence from a Chinese experiment. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(1), 165-218. doi: 10.1093/qje/qju032
- Bloom, N., & Van Reenen, J. (2006). Management practices, work-life balance, and productivity: A review of some recent evidence. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 22(4), 457-482. doi: 10.1093/oxrep/grj027
- Bloomberg, L., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing qualitative research: A roadmap from beginning to end*. London: Sage Publication.
- Boland, B., De Smet, A., Palter, B., & Sanghvi, A. (2020, June 8). Reimagining the office and work life after COVID-19. *McKinsey & Company*.
<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/reimagining-the-office-and-work-life-after-covid-19#>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Carter, W.R., Nesbit, P.L., Badham, R.J., Parker, S.K., & Sung, L. (2018). The effects of employee engagement and self-efficacy on job performance: a longitudinal study. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29(17), 2483-2502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1244096>
- Chen, Y., & Fulmer, I.S. (2017). Fine-tuning what we know about employees' experience with flexible work arrangements and their job attitudes. *Human Resource Management*, 57(1), 381-395. doi: 10.1002/hrm.21849
- Christian, M.S., Garza, A.S., & Slaughter, J.E. (2011). Work engagement: A quantitative review and test of its relations with task performance. *Personnel Psychology*, 64(1), 89-136. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-6570.2010.01203
- Choudhury, P., Larson, B.Z., & Foroughi, C. (2019, August 14). Is it time to let

employees work from anywhere? *Harvard Business Review*.

<http://web.b.ebscohost.com.uplib.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&sid=a219538c-ac04-44d8-9624-6681ca0b25d8%40pdc-v-sessmgr06>

Chung, H., & van der Horst, M. (2018). Women's employment patterns after childbirth and the perceived access to and use of flexitime and teleworking. *Human Relations, 71*(1), 47-72. doi: 10.1177/0018726717713828

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2016). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12*(3), 297-298. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2018). Using thematic analysis in counselling and psychotherapy research: A critical reflection. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 18*(2), 107-110. doi: 10.1002/capr.12165

Conradie, W.J., & de Klerk, J.J. (2019). To flex or not to flex? Flexible work arrangements amongst software developers in an emerging economy. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 17*, 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v17i0.1175>

de Menezes, L.M., & Kelliher, C. (2011). Flexible working and performance: A systematic review of the evidence for a business case. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 13*(4), 452-474. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2370.2011.00301

de Menezes, L.M., & Kelliher, C. (2017). Flexible working, individual performance, and employee attitudes: Comparing formal and informal arrangements. *Human Resource Management, 56*(6), 1051-1070. doi: 10.1002/hrm.21822

den Dulk, L., Peters, P., & Poutsma, E. (2012). Variations in adoption of workplace work-family arrangements in Europe: the influence of welfare-state regime and organizational characteristics. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 23*(13), 2785-2808. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2012.676925

- DeNisi, A.S., & Murphy, K.R. (2017). Performance appraisal and performance management: 100 year of Progress? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 421-433. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0000085>
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects* (4th ed.). London: McGraw-Hill Education
- Gajendran, R.S., & Harrison, D.A. (2007). The good, the bad, and the unknown telecommuting: Meta-analysis of psychological mediators and individual consequences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(6), 1524-1541. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.92.6.1524
- Gill, H., Cassidy, S.A., Cragg, C., Algate, P., Weijs, & Finegan, J.E. (2019). Beyond reciprocity: The role of empowerment in understanding felt trust. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 28(6), 845-858. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2019.16758586>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82. <https://journals-sagepub-com.uplib.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Hill, E.J., Grzywacz, J.G., Allen, S., Blanchard, V.L., Matz-Costa, C., Shulkin, S., & Pitt-Catsoupes, M. (2008). Defining and conceptualizing workplace flexibility. *Community, Work & Family*, 11(2), 149–163. doi: 10.1080/13668800802024678
- Horwitz, F. (2017). International HRM in South African multinational companies. *Journal of International Management*, 23(2), 208-222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2017.01.005>
- Jacob, S.A., & Furgerson, S.P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(42), 1-10. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ990034.pdf>

- Kelliher, C., & Anderson, D. (2010). Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work. *Human Relations*, 63(1), 83-106. doi: 10.1177/0018726709349199
- Kelliher, C., Richardson, J., & Boiarintseva, G. (2017). All of work? All of life? Reconceptualising work-life balance for the 21st century. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 29(2), 97-112. doi: 10.1111/1748-8583.12215
- Lau, D.C., Lam, L.W., & Wen, S.S. (2014). Examining the feeling of being trusted by supervisors in the workplace: A self-evaluative perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 35(1), 112-127. doi: 10.1002/job.1861
- Leitch, C.M., Hill, F.M. & Harrison, R.T. (2010). The Philosophy and Practice of Interpretivist Research in Entrepreneurship. *Organizational Research Methods*, 13(1), 67-84. <https://journals-sagepub-com.uplib.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/1094428109339839>
- Leslie, L.M., Manchester, C.F., Park, T., & Mehng, S. (2012). Flexible Work Practices: A Source of Career Premiums or Penalties? *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(6), 1407-1428. doi: 10.5465/amj.2010.0651
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9(3), 3351-33514. <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/335/553>
- Mills, M.J., Matthews, R.A., Henning, J.B., & Woo, V.A. (2014). Family-supportive organizations and supervisors: how do they influence employee outcomes and for whom? *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(12), 1763-1785. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.860387>
- Morse, J.M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research.

International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1(2), 13-22.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/160940690200100202>

- Müller, T., & Niessen, C. (2019). Self-leadership in the context of part-time teleworking. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 40(8), 883-898. doi: 10.1002/job.2371
- Peretz, H., Fried, Y., & Levi, A. (2018). Flexible work arrangements, national culture, organisational characteristics, and organisational outcomes: A study across 21 countries. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 28(1), 182-200. doi: 10.1111/1748-8583.12172
- Putman, L.L., Myers, K.K., & Gailliard, B.M. (2014). Examining the tensions in workplace flexibility and exploring options for new directions. *Human Relations*, 67(4), 413-440. doi: 10.1177/0018726713495704
- Regus. (2017). *The workplace revolution*.
<https://www.regus.co.za/work-southafrica/wp-content/uploads/sites/131/2017/06/GBS-Report.pdf>
- Salamon, S.D., & Robinson, S.L. (2008). Trust that binds: the impact of collective felt trust on organizational performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(3), 593-601. doi: 10.1073/0021-9010.93.3.593
- SABPP. (2018). *Flexible work practices*.
https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.sabpp.co.za/resource/resmgr/website_files_1/publications/fact_sheets/fact_sheet_2018/fact-sheet_may-2018_v003-wit.pdf
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology*, 52(4), 1893-1907. <https://doi-org.uplib.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>
- Saunders, M.N., & Lewis, P. (2018). *Doing research in business & management:*

An essential guide to planning your project (2nd ed.). Harlow: Pearson.

Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research reports. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75.

<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/uplib.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=c56c8bd6-0133-41ef-894f-754be386673b%40pdc-v-sessmgr04>

Shockley, K.M., & Allen, T.D. (2007). When flexibility helps: Another look at the availability of flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 71(3), 479-493. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2007.08.006

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

Timms, C., Brough, P., O' Driscoll, M., Kalliath, T., Sui, O., Sit, C., & Lo, D. (2015). Flexible work arrangements, work engagement, turnover intentions and psychological health. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 53(1), 83-103. doi: 10.1111/1744-7941.12030

van der Lippe, T., & Lippényi, Z. (2020). Co-workers working from home and individual and team performance. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 35(1), 60-79. <https://doi-org.uplib.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/ntwe.12153>

Weideman, M., & Hofmeyr, K. (2020). The influence of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement: An exploratory study. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(0), 1-18.

<https://sajhrm.co.za/index.php/SAJHRM/article/view/1209>

Windeler, J.B., Chudoba, K.M., & Sundrup, R.Z. (2017). Getting away from them all: Managing exhaustion from social interaction with telework. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(7), 977-995. doi: 10.1002/job.2176

Zhou, L., Wang, M., Chang, C., Liu, S., Zhan, Y., & Shi, J. (2017). Commuting stress process and self-regulation at work: Moderating roles of daily task significance, family interference with work, and commuting means efficacy. *Personnel Psychology, 70*(4), 891-922. doi: 10.1111/peps.12219

Zikmund, W. G., Babin, B. J., Carr, J. C., & Griffin, M. (2013). *Business research methods* (9th ed.). Mason, OH, USA: Cengage.

9 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Employee Interview Guide

EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Title: Flexible Working Arrangements and Employee Performance: Manager and Employee Perspectives

Participant Name:	Start Time:
Job Title:	End Time:
Organisation:	Date:

Thank you for making the time to talk to me today. As you know, your responses will remain confidential. All data will be stored and reported anonymously. Before we start, just a reminder that I will be recording this conversation – are you still comfortable for me to do so? I do not know where your speaker is located but if you could ensure that you are close to it as I am recording the interview. Some people have had to lift their laptops slightly by just putting a book underneath.

Today, I would like to chat to you about your experience and perspectives on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs), particularly how they have impacted your work performance. My study is specifically on *Flexible* Working Arrangements, thus life before COVID-19. I am going to ask that you take yourself back to your working life pre-COVID 19 and reflect on your experience then. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in employees working exclusively at home, thus our working life under COVID 19 and its resultant restrictions were/are not a reflection of FWAs.

My study focuses on two types of FWAs: flexplace (having the autonomy to work from both home and the traditional workplace) and flextime (having the freedom to work outside of the traditional 08:00 to 17:00 time frame), however, please feel free to share all of your experiences around any flexibility that you experience in your working arrangements.

Background on participant

1. Please tell me about yourself

- a. What is it that you do at [organisation name], what is your job title?
- b. Which generation are you a part of? (Baby Boomer/Generation X, Xennials, Millenials)
- c. Are you back at the office or are you working from home?

	Research Questions	Interview Questions
1	How have FWAs affected individual employee performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> l) Please share some background on your FWAs: how did they come about, how long have you been making use of them – just your general experience. m) How have FWAs impacted your work performance? n) Have FWAs had any other impact on you – be it from a work or personal perspective?
2	What practices/methods contribute or could contribute to increasing work performance while making use of FWAs?	<p>[Guided by how the above question has been answered]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o) If you were in a position to do so, what changes would you make, regarding Flexible Working Arrangements that you think would result in your increased work performance? p) Are there any negative aspects of FWAs?
3	Do employees view FWAs as a standard human resource practice or a privilege/benefit, and do they feel indebted/obligated to organisations for provision of these?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> q) Do you have a formal/informal arrangement with your manager regarding your FWAs? r) How do you feel about having a manager/working for an organisation that allows for FWAs? s) If you were looking to change jobs and evaluating whether a company is a fit for you, what are the work practices and policies that you would be looking out for, the ones you would insist on? <p>There are some basic rights at work – these are largely governed by legislation. And then there are also benefits.</p>

		<p>t) How do benefits make you feel about your manager/organisation?</p> <p>u) In today's working world, do you think FWAs should be a benefit or a basic work right?</p>
	Additional question on COVID-19	v) Let's talk about COVID-19, how did this impact your world of work and performance?

Thank you again for your time. As I analyse the data, I may reach out to you again to ask additional questions or to clarify some of the responses.

Appendix 2: Manager Interview Guide

MANAGER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Title: Flexible Working Arrangements and Employee Performance: Manager and Employee Perspectives

Participant Name:	Start Time:
Job Title:	End Time:
Organisation:	Date:

Thank you for making the time to talk to me today. As you know, your responses will remain confidential. All data will be stored and reported anonymously. Before we start, just a reminder that I will be recording this conversation – are you still comfortable for me to do so? I do not know where your speaker is located but if you could ensure that you are close to it as I'm recording the interview. Some people have had to lift their laptops slightly by placing a book underneath.

Today, I would like to chat to you about your experience and perspectives on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs), particularly how they have impacted your team's work performance. My study is specifically on *Flexible Working Arrangements*, thus life before COVID-19. I am going to ask that you take yourself back to your working life pre-COVID 19 and reflect on your experience then. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in employees working exclusively at home, thus our working life under COVID 19 and its resultant restrictions were/are not a reflection of *FWAs*.

My study focuses on two types of FWAs: flexplace (having the autonomy to work from both home and the traditional workplace) and flextime (having the freedom to work outside of the traditional 08:00 to 17:00 time frame), however, please feel free to share all of your experiences around any flexibility that your team experiences in their working arrangements.

Background on participant

2. Please tell me about yourself
 - a. What is it that you do at [organisation name], what is your job title?
 - b. Which generation are you a part of? (Baby Boomer/Generation X, Xennials, Millenials)

c. Are you back at the office or are you working from home?

	Research Questions	Interview Questions
1	How have FWAs affected individual employee performance?	<p>w) Please share some background on the FWAs you have with your team: how did they come about, how long have you been making use of them – just your general experience.</p> <p>x) [Guided by how the above question has been answered] What influenced your decision on what form of FWAs to extend to your team?</p> <p>y) How did your management style change, when your team started making use of FWAs?</p> <p>z) How have FWAs impacted your team’s work performance?</p> <p>aa) Have FWAs had any other impact – be it from a work or personal perspective?</p>
2	What practices/methods contribute or could contribute to increasing work performance while making use of FWAs?	<p>[Guided by how the above question has been answered]</p> <p>bb) If you were in a position to do so, what changes would you make, regarding Flexible Working Arrangements that you think would result in your team’s increased work performance?</p> <p>cc) Are there any negative aspects of FWAs?</p>
3	Do employees view FWAs as a standard human resource practice or a privilege/benefit, and do they feel indebted/obligated to organisations for provision of these?	<p>dd) Do you have a formal/informal policy on FWAs in place with your team?</p> <p>ee) How do you think your team feels about having a manager/working for an organisation that allows for FWAs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How do you think this view impacted their performance? <p>ff) Do you think organisations should provide FWAs across the organisation or this should be at the discretion of the manager?</p>

	Additional question on COVID-19	gg) Let's talk about COVID-19, how did this impact your team's world of work and performance?
--	---------------------------------	---

Thank you again for your time. As I analyse the data, I may reach out to you again to ask additional questions or to clarify some of the responses.

Appendix 3: Outlook Calendar Interview Invitation (Employees)

Dear [name]

Thank you for availing yourself to talk to me.

I would like to chat to you about your experience and perspectives on flexible working arrangements (FWAs), particularly how they have impacted your work performance. My study is specifically on *flexible* working arrangements, thus life before COVID-19. I am going to ask that you take yourself back to your working life pre-COVID 19 and reflect on your experience then. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in employees working exclusively at home, thus our working life under COVID 19 and its resultant restrictions were/are not a reflection of FWAs.

We will be making use of Zoom, please let me know if this will be a challenge. You can dial in from your cell phone, you can just prop your phone up to ensure that the camera is steady as we will have a face-to-face session.

Ahead of the interview, please can I ask you to sign and return a consent form to me. I will send you a DocuSign link so that you can sign electronically. Please also check your junk mail for this as it does sometimes land up there.

Join Zoom Meeting

[Zoom link]

Meeting ID: [meeting ID number]

Passcode: [meeting password]

Appendix 4: Outlook Calendar Interview Invitation (Managers)

Dear [name]

Thank you for availing yourself to talk to me.

I would like to chat to you about your experience and perspectives on flexible working arrangements (FWAs), particularly how they have impacted your team's work performance. My study is specifically on *flexible* working arrangements, thus life before COVID-19. I am going to ask that you take yourself back to your working life pre-COVID 19 and reflect on your experience then. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in employees working exclusively at home, thus our working life under COVID 19 and its resultant restrictions were/are not a reflection of FWAs.

We will be making use of Zoom, please let me know if this will be a challenge. You can dial in from your cell phone, you can just prop your phone up to ensure that the camera is steady as we will have a face-to-face session.

Ahead of the interview, please can I ask you to sign and return a consent form to me. I will send you a DocuSign link so that you can sign electronically. Please also check your junk mail for this as it does sometimes land up there.

Join Zoom Meeting

[Zoom link]

Meeting ID: [meeting ID number]

Passcode: [meeting password]

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM FOR MBA RESEARCH REPORT

Research Title: Flexible Working Arrangements and Employee Performance:
Manager and Employee Perspectives

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am Fikiswa Ludidi and I am currently completing my Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degree at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). I am conducting research, the aim of which is to gain managerial and employee insights on how Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) impact employee performance.

This topic has become very important in current times and I would be honoured if you would grant me the opportunity to interview you and to utilise the data that I gather as part of my research. The interview will be recorded and it will last no longer than 60 minutes; the information gathered will only be used for the purpose of the research report.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Your participation is confidential, all data will be stored and reported anonymously, with identifiers used in place of your and your organisation's name. Should you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or myself.

If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor on the details provided below.

Researcher name: Fikiswa Ludidi

Supervisor name: Karl Hofmeyr

Email: 19384913@mygibs.co.za

Email: hofmeyrk@gibs.co.za

Cell: 072 395 4240

Office number: 011 771 4125

Signature:

Date:

Participant name: _____

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 6: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

This agreement is between:

Fikiswa Ludidi

(Researcher)

and

(Transcriptionist)

for

Research into Flexible Working Arrangements and Employee Performance: Manager and Employee Perspectives

Summary of job description/service provision:

Transcription of interviews conducted by Researcher into a word format for research analysis purposes.

I, as the Transcriptionist, agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential. I will not discuss or share the research information with anyone other than with the Researcher or others identified by the Researcher.
2. Keep all research information secure while it is in my possession.
3. Return all research information to the Researcher when I have completed the research tasks or upon request, whichever is earlier.
4. Destroy all research information regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Researcher after consulting with the Researcher.
5. Comply with the instructions of the Researcher about requirements to physically and/or electronically secure records (including password protection, file/folder encryption, and/or use of secure electronic transfer of records through file sharing, use of virtual private networks, etc.)

If you have any concerns, please contact the research, or the research supervisor directly. Contact information can be found below:

Researcher:

Fikiswa Ludidi

Email: 19384913@mygibs.co.za

Contact no: 072 395 4240

Supervisor:

Karl Hofmeyr

Email: hofmeyrk@gibs.co.za

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

Signature of Transcriptionist:

Date:

Appendix 7: Code Book from Employee Data Analysis

- Abuse of the privilege is only by a few
- Benefits are proof of employer going the extra mile
- Benefits contribute to employee retention but not loyalty
- Briefly moved back to an inflexible environment and did not like it
- Change: Change culture of clockwatching
- Change: introduce flexplace
- Change: more flexplace
- Change: more online meetings. No longer a perception of online meetings don't work
- Change: not only WFH but WFA
- Change: understand how many productive hours are required for a specific level of work
- Change: WFA would mean people can put in some hours even when they travel
- Change: You should be able to work wherever the bank has a presence, branch included
- Companies with inflexible fixed working hours tend to have clock watchers
- Company generally advocates for FWAs
- COVID impact: a need to better maintain work life boundaries
- COVID impact: adjusted easily to remote working because already had FWAs
- COVID impact: At the beginning people didn't know how they were going to work from home
- COVID impact: burnout
- COVID impact: did not know how to adjust their processes to online working at first
- COVID impact: difficulty in how to engage with one's team
- COVID impact: employee feels they have more time because they don't have to sit in traffic
- COVID impact: employee felt anxious due to volume and urgency of work
- COVID impact: employee found that they were more accessible to people
- COVID impact: employee was happy to be home and safe
- COVID impact: enabled WFA
- COVID impact: far more meetings that led to meeting fatigue

- COVID impact: felt trusted to deliver work even though working from home
- COVID impact: forced people to trust because there was no opportunity to micromanage
- COVID impact: FWAs not an employer differentiator but still a benefit
- COVID impact: initially struggled to get into a routine
- COVID impact: late night quiet and focus time compromised as everyone was online at all hours
- COVID impact: less balance and less flexibility. More pressure to be online during traditional working hours
- COVID impact: less physical movement because one is not moving around the office
- COVID impact: Load shedding impacted productivity
- COVID impact: longer hours are not felt as much because employee is working from home
- COVID impact: loss of informal engagements which were used to build work relationships
- COVID impact: more productive because of no travelling time
- COVID impact: new risk and compliance breaches
- COVID impact: no opportunity for informal chats which also has an impact on the number of formal meetings
- COVID impact: people now don't want to go back to the office
- COVID impact: People were feeling lonely and isolated at the beginning
- COVID impact: pre-COVID Flextime hours did not change
- COVID impact: Pro Flexplace because of COVID
- COVID impact: Productivity picked up because people felt pressure to prove they are working
- COVID impact: remote IT support
- COVID impact: started a new role. Learning curve would have been flatter sooner if not for COVID
- COVID impact: stress and pressure for people to prove they are working
- COVID impact: technology has been enabling, also various ways to connect
- COVID impact: there were concerns that people are not working from home
- COVID impact: worked longer hours
- Currently working from home
- Employee believed that work can only be done in the office

- Employee views/viewed FWAs as a privilege
- Employee would now require financial compensation for inflexible working arrangements
- Even with FWAs meetings were still largely face-to-face
- Face-to-face meetings & interactions are good for building and nurturing relationships
- Feeling trusted contributes to employee loyalty
- Feeling trusted improves your attitude and mindset towards the organisation
- Feeling trusted to deliver is an empowering thing
- Feels trusted and not watched all the time
- Fixed hours means you work according to the time you have and not according to what you have to deliver
- Flexplace means people don't have to physically attend low-priority meetings
- Flextime put employee in a good light as he was available when other people weren't
- For FWAs to work there needs to be trust (by everyone) that the employee is getting the work done
- For FWAs to work, employee must be accountable
- For FWAs to work, line manager must trust you
- For FWAs to work: employee must have a good relationship with line manager
- For FWAs to work: ensure your calendar is aligned to important matters so you don't miss out.
- For FWAs to work: there was a core window period for meetings to aid collaboration times
- Formal company policy
- Formal policy can limit flexibility
- Formal policy was flexible depending on line manager agreement
- FWAs allow for autonomy to work at one's most productive time
- FWAs allow for getting quiet time to focus
- FWAs allow you better balance of work and life priorities
- FWAs allow you to allocate some time to the important things in your personal life
- FWAs allow you to avoid crime that takes place during traffic

- FWAs allowed employee to have a family and advance her career at the same time
- FWAs and a supportive manager resulted in a positive attitude towards the company
- FWAs are a must, would not work for a company that didn't have these
- FWAs are not a benefit or nice to have
- FWAs are not practised in the same way in the company
- FWAs can enable cost efficiencies
- FWAs contributed to employee loyalty and retention
- FWAs facilitate a mutually beneficial relationship - company looks out for me so I look out for them
- FWAs give employee freedom and they want to give something back to company
- FWAs granted because of seniority
- FWAs had no impact on performance
- FWAs have had a positive impact on performance
- FWAs make employee feel like they are being given freedom by manager and/or organisation
- FWAs mean less time in traffic and more productive time
- FWAs should be a basic work right to encourage adoption
- FWAs should be given on merit
- FWAs should not be extended to everyone
- FWAs tend to be easier with strategic roles over operational roles
- FWAs were a privilege and employee wanted to show appreciation by improving performance
- FWAs were a proof point of the Company value of Trust
- FWAs you tend to work until the job is done, not watching hours so often longer hours
- Generation classification
- Hot desk environment in the office
- Hot desks curb the micromanagement culture
- Ideal work policies and practices: Agility and openness to new ways of doing things
- Ideal work policies and practices: wants to feel trusted and not micromanaged

- Ideal work practices and policies: Alignment to personal values
- Ideal work practices and policies: challenging and meaningful work
- Ideal work practices and policies: Close proximity to workplace
- Ideal work practices and policies: Culture that facilitates learning, growth and development
- Ideal work practices and policies: Culture where employees have a voice and are heard
- Ideal work practices and policies: diversity
- Ideal work practices and policies: enable WFAs e.g. help set up home office
- Ideal work practices and policies: FWAs
- Ideal work practices and policies: Leadership style. Manager who is not Big Brother and can collaborate with
- Ideal work practices and policies: Leave days
- Ideal work practices and policies: pay is important
- Ideal work practices and policies: people are held accountable for not upholding values and desired culture
- Ideal work practices and policies: Recognition and Reward systems
- Ideal work practices and policies: tangible benefits e.g. medical aid
- Improved employee mental health (due to the flexibility) which results in them viewing the company better
- Informal policy arrangement (conversation) with the line manager
- Job requires long hours so flextime allows for rest when one requires it
- Job Title
- Line manager and employee aligned on expectations prior to implementation of FWAs
- Line manager leadership style: prioritised outcomes over where and/or when one works
- Line manager needs to know where you are working
- Misconception is that because you are in the office you are working
- Negative aspect: career limiting as 7-5ers are seen as hard workers
- Negative aspect: FWAs can limit team learning
- Negative aspect: lack of healthy work-life boundaries can impact health
- Negative aspect: missing out on important things because you were not there
- Negative aspect: not doing one's work has an impact on collaboration with others

- Negative aspect: people are not accessible, they don't answer phones
- Negative aspect: people don't do the work
- Negative aspect: people struggling to have a healthy boundary between work and life responsibilities
- Negative aspect: some managers used it as a reward to manipulate their teams
- Negative aspect: the flexibility to structure your day can lead to procrastination
- Negative aspect: under flexplace there was a guilt of doing something personal when you don't have anything to do
- Negative aspects: people taking longer to deliver the work when WFH
- No negative impact on performance to date
- No timesheets
- No traffic facilitates a positive mood and headspace
- Office space can be disruptive and does not allow for focus
- Online productivity tracking tools not really used
- Only a few people abuse it yet the consequences are borne by everyone
- Productivity Measurement: outcomes measured through JIRA
- Productivity tracking tool can help where there's a lack of trust
- Senior leaders tend to be 9-5ers and at the office so don't tend to see impact of flexible workers
- Stigma: flextime people are always viewed as half day workers
- Stigma: no faith and trust that people are indeed working from home
- Technology has enabled flexible working
- The benefit companies get from employee loyalty and retention outweighs any costs of FWAs
- Today's work policies and practices are outdated
- Type of flexibility: Flexplace all the time
- Type of Flexibility: Flexplace in the event of a personal emergency
- Type of flexibility: flexplace on some days
- Type of Flexibility: Flextime all the time
- WFA can unlock creativity and a different perspective
- WFA is in the nature of the job
- WFH: if you had connectivity challenges you had to come to the office

- WFH: There's an obligation to work longer hours due to time saved from traffic
- When FWAs are not a benefit but a right, the entitlement leads to drop in performance
- With WFH you can manage disruptions and accessibility with Teams and Skype

Appendix 8: Code Book from Manager Data Analysis

- Ability to better balance work-life priorities affected performance positively
- Abuse of FWAs was only by a few
- Approach in team policy making: puts himself in shoes of team and considers impact
- Barrier to FWAs: lack of research on impact on performance
- Barrier to FWAs: Lack of trust
- Barrier to FWAs: legislation designed for an 8-5 work day
- Barrier to FWAs: Line managers who want to micromanage
- Barrier to FWAs: load shedding
- Barrier to FWAs: no conducive WFH/WFA environment
- Barrier to FWAs: organisational culture that doesn't support it
- Barrier to FWAs: technology that enables mobility
- CEO advocated for FWAs
- Change: aligning on team meeting days and times
- Change: Employer-employee relationship needs to shift to be equal
- Change: exclusively work from anywhere
- Change: get rid of the perception that if you are not in the office you are not working
- Change: incorporate short, frequent check-in meetings albeit virtual
- Change: increased flexplace
- Change: increased flextime
- Change: more online meetings
- Change: would have liked the other areas to have embraced it sooner to enable better collaboration and curb stigma
- Company has an official policy but they don't follow it
- Consideration when assessing whether to have FWAs: how will FWAs impact work performance?
- Consideration when deciding on format of FWAs: collaboration with other teams
- Consideration when deciding on format of FWAs: organisational culture
- COVID impact: ability to connect with family throughout the day
- COVID impact: allowed people to get to know each other on a personal level
- COVID impact: boundaryless environment

- COVID impact: drop in performance due to COVID frustrations
- COVID impact: employees can work productively at home
- COVID impact: enabled WFA
- COVID impact: felt alone and isolated
- COVID impact: had to improve communication skills
- COVID impact: had to learn new skills around effectively coaching and consulting online
- COVID impact: increased demands from business because of saved travel time
- COVID impact: initial improvement in performance
- COVID impact: less disruptions working from home
- COVID impact: load shedding
- COVID impact: longer working hours have had an impact on mental health
- COVID impact: loss of informal chats that build relationships
- COVID impact: loss of informal chats to quickly resolve a problem
- COVID impact: meeting fatigue
- COVID impact: micromanagers struggled at the beginning
- COVID impact: people were frustrated with their reduced sense of agency, loss of freedom to move around
- COVID impact: performance dip due to additional home responsibilities
- COVID impact: Poor performance issues can be managed virtually
- COVID impact: pressure to prove you are working
- COVID impact: productivity has increased
- COVID impact: sometimes people are inaccessible
- COVID impact: team had an easier adjustment as they were used to working from home
- COVID impact: working longer hours
- Currently working from home
- Employee view of having FWAs: they love and appreciate it
- Employees reward autonomy with increased work performance
- Employees reward flexibility, empathy, understanding and support with increased productivity
- Employees reward the extra time spent with family with increased performance

- Equipping employees for FWAs, there can be trade-offs e.g. you are saving on petrol so use that for data
- Face-to-face meetings and office visits would be at employee discretion, not a team effort
- Face-to-face meetings/engagements are critical to build and nurture relationships
- Flexplace: team roster, people chose which day worked for them
- For FWAs to work: avoid keyman dependency and have contingency plans
- For FWAs to work: be careful of inheriting an employee FWA, contract afresh
- For FWAs to work: employee must be able to have healthy work-life boundaries
- For FWAs to work: employee must be accessible
- For FWAs to work: employee needs to be open to feedback and performance coaching
- For FWAs to work: employee needs to understand what resources they have or will need to ensure they can work
- For FWAs to work: manager aligns with employee on expectations and resources employee needs to get the job done
- For FWAs to work: manager must have continual performance management conversations
- For FWAs to work: manager needs to be clear on how they measure outcomes and performance
- For FWAs to work: the line manager must trust the employee
- For FWAs to work: the team must be competent and hardworking
- Formal policy that allows for manager discretion
- Frequent team meetings (physical / virtual) help to build culture, are important
- Future of FWAs: company-wide philosophy and org. culture BUT still manager discretion on implementation
- Future of FWAs: employees are going to increasingly demand FWAs
- Future of FWAs: FWAs should be a company-wide philosophy and org. culture should support this
- FWAs allow employees to focus on side hustles
- FWAs allow employees to show up more authentically which in turn makes them want to do more for the company

- FWAs also have a wider societal benefit as people are operating from and available to their communities
- FWAs are easier to apply in middle to senior management
- FWAs do not work for poor performing employees who need to be monitored
- FWAs empower employees to work in the environment that best helps their productivity
- FWAs enabled employees to better balance work-life priorities
- FWAs free up time in employee schedules as they save on travel time
- FWAs had a positive impact on performance
- FWAs in the future: guidelines on what roles can/can't make use of FWAs and employee then line manager discretion
- FWAs make employees FEEL trusted and improves self agency
- FWAs result in employee share of mind, they continue to think about work beyond 9-5
- FWAs resulted in increased employee loyalty and retention
- FWAs were not the same from one employee to another
- FWAs: employees work longer hours
- Generation Classification
- Hot desk environment
- If a manager is a clockwatcher then so will employees, they will only work between 9 and 5
- If performance drops with FWAs, it doesn't take long for manager to ascertain this
- Important for employee to understand that with great trust comes great responsibility
- Inflexible work often results in employees choosing life over work or vice versa instead of working to integrate the two
- Inflexible working stifles productivity
- Informal policy (conversation) with the employee
- Informal team-wide policy
- Job Title
- Line manager must know where employee is
- Management style change with FWAs: became accustomed to having 1-on-1 and team meetings virtually

- Management style change with FWAs: manager had to be more structured in setting up 1-on-1s and team meeting times
- Management style change with FWAs: None
- Management style: address drop in performance right away
- Management style: consultative
- Management style: focused on outcomes, not a time watcher
- Management style: gives autonomy, leaves employee to self-manage
- Management style: important to probe drop in performance and not just revoke FWAs
- Management style: lead by example. Portray the same behaviours you want from your team
- Management style: Trusts employee upfront
- Manager can assess (prior to implementing them) who in the team could handle FWAs
- Manager is aware of the team's personal circumstances
- Manager needs to be mindful that flexibility does not mean employees are available 24/7
- Manager used FWAs as a reward mechanism
- Motivation for FWAs: employees were open with the manager about their needs
- Motivation for FWAs: Help team balance work-life responsibilities
- Motivation for FWAs: influenced by own line manager's management style of not micromanaging
- Motivation for FWAs: it's fair as employees often work outside of 9-5
- Motivation for FWAs: making people more productive and NOT on merit i.e. high performers only
- Motivation for FWAs: nature of the job required team to WFA
- Motivation for FWAs: people are productive under different conditions
- Motivation for FWAs: there was an organisational drive
- Negative aspect: employee doesn't do the work
- Negative aspect: employee not accessible as agreed
- Negative aspect: FWAs reduce the ability to have quick, informal chats to resolve a problem
- Negative aspect: infrastructure and connection problems
- Negative aspect: lack of good office equipment can impair health

- No performance issues with team members
- Open plan office space can be disruptive
- Prevalence of FWAs in organisations may affect employee retention negatively
- Prevalence of FWAs in organisations will not affect increased performance as employee still feels supported.
- Technology helps to enable FWAs
- Today's work policies are outdated
- Type of flexibility: flexplace
- Type of flexibility: flextime
- WFH allowed employees to have focus time
- WFH gives employees time to think about strategic issues