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

**The perceived organizational support and employee engagement in the
context of flexible working arrangements**

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

26 April 2021

ABSTRACT

The work environment has vastly become more demanding and organizational practises have required have needed to be cognisant of methods to keep employees engaged. The topic of flexible working arrangements (FWA) has grown in popularity by research scholars and business practitioners. Considerable research has been conducted on the various dynamics of FWA and the influence of employee engagement. This research however aims to explore emerging themes in perceived organizational support (POS) and employee engagement in the context of flexible work arrangements, to gain in-depth understanding of the relationship between POS and employee engagement, in addition to what has been contributed to literature.

The research study was conducted through qualitative methodology of exploratory obtained by the researcher. 14 semi-structured interviews were largely conducted through virtual communication platform, Zoom; and where possible interviews were conducted face-to-face, through open-ended questions. Respondents consisted of 7 Managers and 7 Employees from different organisations across three different industries. The analysis of the interviews was conducted through the six-stage thematic analysis.

The research found four emerging themes FWA associated with flexible working schedules, enabling infrastructure, work life balance and adapting to a new way of working. The research also found a positive relationship between employee engagement and POS through common themes such as trust between managers and employees, decision making and dedication to work tasks.

The perspectives and views from the participants were commonly affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore the researcher made every attempt to gain perspectives prior the pandemic and during the pandemic from the participants. The research was limited to medium to large sized organisations operating in South Africa.

KEYWORDS

Flexible Working Arrangement, Organizational Support, Employee Engagement, Work-Life Balance, Dedication

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's Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to perform this research.

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1.1   Introduction

The research objective is to investigate the relationship of perceived organizational support and employee engagement in the context of flexible working arrangements in an organisation. The work environment has vastly evolved and with that employees are now looking for flexibility in the way they work to maximise their time. The challenge for organisations is meeting the flexibility of employees without jeopardising business requirements (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). The concern of managers and organisations is whether employees remain equally engaged when working in flexible arrangements as opposed to working from the traditional workplace in the prescribed work hours. Managers may have a challenge of a loss of oversight of their employees and may need to exert a level of trust towards their employees that work deliverables will be met. Flexible work arrangements (FWA) have become a sought-after tool and mechanism by organisations to ensure that employees can continue fulfilling their work obligations. The research focuses on the empirical data and literature theory about perceived organisational support, employee engagement and Flexible working arrangements. The research first outlines the context and of flexible work arrangements and its significance in the work environment. The research then follows by establishing the perceived organizational support of flexible working arrangements and how it relates to employee engagement.

1.1   Background to the research problem

The context of flexible working arrangements

The increased demand for employee work requirements has led to employee demand for better work options, which have led to a growing interest from organisations to provide employees with more flexibility in the way work is conducted on a daily basis to reduce turnovers and enhance employee engagement (Timms et al., 2015). Flexible working arrangements (FWA) have become more significant with organisations now helping employees to find ways of balancing their work with personal life commitments (Chen & Fulmer, 2018).

 FWA has been widely studied and while there is no single definition for FWA. Flexible working arrangement is defined as the "arrangements that allowing work to be accomplished outside of the traditional temporal and/or spatial boundaries of the standard workday" (Rau & Hyland,

2002, p. 117). FWA have two distinct aspects: Rau & Hyland (2002) define FWA as the ability as an arrangement with the employer to perform work (sometimes referred to as teleworking or telecommuting) outside of the office premises of the employer; while Menezes and Kelliher (2017) refer to FWA as flexibility of employees to exercise a variety of working hour options at their discretion. It is an arrangement that allows employees to have choice to determine the length of service they are to engage the employer For the purpose of the research telecommuting and teleworking will be referred to as flexible working schedules. Hill et al. (2008) define FWA as the employees having the choice to decide when to work, and where they can engage in work.

The general understanding of the definition is that employees are given the option to be flexible in how they conduct their work requirements whether at the workplace or in working hours of their choice. FWA includes flexitime, working time, part-time or reduced hours, job sharing, career breaks, family-related and other leaves, compressed workweeks, and teleworking. These working arrangements are also often referred to as family-friendly, time, or more recently work–life policies(Chen & Fulmer, 2018). The appeal for FWA has become prevalent with most organisations with the advancement of technology. FWA have commonly been associated with organisational practice to assist employees balance work and non-work responsibilities (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013).

It is clear that flexible working arrangements have been around for some time, however global pandemic events have accelerated the adoption of FWA in HR policies. Organisations being forced to adopt FWA were due to the emergence of COVID 19, majority of employees are on a flexible work arrangement, and are working from home as of December 2019. Novel Coronavirus (referred to as the COVID-19) global outbreak out of Wuhan city which rapidly spread through person-to-person transmission (Fuk-Woo Chan et al., 2020). In order to curb the spread, organisations and institutions world-wide needed to adapt FWA practices which kept their employees at home and adopted safety measures proposed by the World Health Organisation (Hwang & Höllerer, 2020).

The relationship between perceived organizational support and employee engagement

Perceived organisational support (POS) has a broad narrative in which employees view the support from their organisations as valuable and an establish an aspect of trust between employees and their organisations, particularly when employees rely on the managers decision making to engage in their work deliverables, making special requests in the work

environment and understanding the relationship between employer and employees (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Srivalli & Kanta, 2016). POS may be defined as "employees' beliefs with regards to the extent to which the organisation values their and cares about their well-being" (Srivalli & Kanta, 2016, p 10).

While flexible working arrangements may imply that employees are working remotely or working in non-traditional working hours, POS has played a vital role in accommodating employees with the necessary equipment, authorisation to make decision without supervision and delegation to promote value in employees which encourages employee dedication and diligence. The aspect of trust in POS is also significant where manager require a level of trust for employees working in FWA. Kurtessis et al. (2017) found a strong correlation between employee trust in management and perceived organizational support.

In the information age, organisations have increasingly needed to adapt to dynamic changes of their industry environments while adapting to the dynamic demands of employees to remain engaged in the organisation (Baard & Thomas, 2010). Organisations also face a wide range in generational diversity, social diversity which may require policies in place to accommodate employees and enhance employee engagement (Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008).

Employee engagement is derived from the initial theoretical view of Khan (1990), who mentions that engagement in work as the emotional physical expression of themselves towards their work. The emotional aspect of employee engagement may be viewed as an antecedent to employee well-being (Halbesleben, 2010). As work engagement has developed, employees have now come to face increased levels of demand in their work and personal lives posing challenges which may hamper their engagement and may lead to reduced mental resources and energy; and ultimately resulting in employee burnout (Rudolph & Baltes, 2016). As employees are the driving force behind organisational production, it has become crucial for organisations to introduce innovative methods that my lower the risk of reduced work resources.

The second theory on employee engagement was derived from (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) which describes the positive mind set and employee has towards their work through dedication and absorption, contrary to employee burnout. Highly dedicated employees have found absorption in their work under traditional workplace environments as positive antecedent of work dedication. In the context of flexible working arrangements, absorption may possibly lead to increased probability of burnout (Rudolph & Baltes, 2016).

The question then arises whether employees are capable to produce the desired deliverables in unconventional working arrangements, which requires a level of trust between the manager and their employees. Allen, Golden, & Shockley (2015) investigate the various strategies organisations can adopt to implement FWA successfully in a manner that's fair for employees and the organisation.

Kurtessis et al. (2015) allude to the psychological connectedness which keeps employees engaged when they feel they have the full support of their leadership and managers. This may be argued that when employees are given a sense of responsibility and their managers trust them enough, employees will feel more engaged to their work.

Employees and managers have had differing reservations with regards to requesting FWA. Bal & De Lange (2015) discuss the practical implications for managers and organisations who do not take cognisance of the importance of FWA which may lead to high staff turnover, and disengaged employees. FWA have emerged a new dynamic of work-related challenges which require resilience from employees to remain engaged. Research has been conducted on the relationship of resilience, perceived organizational support and employee engagement (Meintjes & Hofmeyr, 2018). For the purpose of this research, the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee engagement will be investigated in the context of flexible working arrangements.

Employee engagement is human resources concept that describe the level of enthusiasm and dedication a work force feels about their job. It encourages employees to engage more often in many ways including to communicate with expectations and keeping employees informed. Stiles (2018) argued that having employees who are constantly focused, motivated, and passionate about their jobs presents companies with benefits such as increased profit and productivity, lower turnover, save costs, and increase organization image.

Employee engagement is an emotional investment employee received from the organization it involves passion, motivation, for employees to bring to work, it identifies with goals of the organization and align with employees' goals. Scientific literature provides the basis for that view. Buil, Martínez, Matute, & Normante (2018); Garg (2017) found the positive correlated relationship between employee engagement and performance, while Karatepe (2013) argue that engaged employee will increase customer satisfaction.

In order to equip employees with the necessary tools to exercise FWA, formal arrangements may have to be agreed upon initially. Limited research has been investigated whether formal and informal arrangements yield positive employee engagement, however, Menezes and Kelliher (2016) mention that informal FWA may foster commitment from the organisation that the employee's needs have been accommodated for. Informal FWA at the discretion of the employee tailors the individual's circumstances as opposed to a formalised flexible working arrangement (Menezes and Kelliher, 2016).

1.2   The purpose of the research

A recent study on the relationship between flexible working arrangements and the influence on employee engagement established some of the benefits drawbacks of implementing FWA (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020). This research discusses the aspects emerging from perceived organizational support and employee engagement within FWA.

The purpose of this research was to identify how FWA emerge from organisations and discuss the context and dynamics of flexible working arrangements. The qualitative research also discusses the employee perceived organizational support and how it translates to employee engagement in the context of flexible working arrangements. The evolving working environment has seen an increase in job demand with emerging constructs that affect employee engagement. The research focuses on employee dedication and work absorption as a factor of employee engagement within FWA.

The following section will look into the literature to establish our understanding of POS and employee engagement in the context of FWA.

CHAPTER 2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

The Review of related literature involves the systematic identification, location, and analysis of documents containing information related to the research problem. The literature review has several important purposes that make it well worth the time and effort. An important purpose of reviewing the literature is to discover research strategies and specific data collection approaches that have or have not been productive in investigations of topics like the one in discourse.

Flexible working arrangement (FWA) has been regarded by researchers on of the driving mechanisms to employee engagement as employees take responsibility to better manage their time (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). FWA practices have become popular with organizational HR practices to for employees to take advantage of the opportunity.

FWA is a term widely used and may be researched in the same lenses as Virtual teams (ability to work in remote locations while connected to the organizations systems. This is commonly practiced by consultants and employees who work on project sites) (Vitry, 2013) and teleworking (ability to work from home during working hours as an arrangement with the employer, while connected to the organizations systems) (Aguilera, Lethiais, Rallet, & Proulhac, 2016). For the basis of our research, FWA will refer to employees who have made arrangements with their organizations to from working schedule perspective as well as to work remotely at their discretion with approval of their organizations.

Perceived organizational support has been a widely studied construct referring to the agents of an organization (referred to as leaders) create a conducive environment for their employees, considering the psychological well-being, building trust and enhancing employee performance (Affum-Osei, Adom Asante, Kwarteng Forkouh, & Abdul-Nasiru, 2020). Perceived Organizational Support (POS) arose from the organizational support theory, providing organizational support for employees does forester positive benefits to an extent. Studies have found that employees who feel valued by their organization would identify themselves as part of the organization, which would result in increased effort in carrying out tasks for the organization (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-Lamastro, 1990). Similarly, research refers to POS as the employees view in which organizations have the interests of assisting employees achieve their goals (Kuvaas, 2008) .

Research has established that employees may see perceived organizational support as an opportunity to yield material gain in performance incentives rewarded by completing tasks for the organization. Therefore, the organizations expectation for high performance is correlated to employee expectation of incentives which enhances employee engagement (Eisenberger et al. 1990).

Understanding employee engagement has considerable interest to organizations as research has shown it may lead to positive business outcomes (Zhong, Wayne, & Lined, 2015). Khan (1990) emphasizes that perceived organizational support can motivate employees to perform towards tasks to benefit organizational performance. Employee engagement alone may not yield to high performance and positive business outcomes. Parker & Griffin (2011) argue that without the perceived organizational support, employees might display innovation not because they are engaged but because they fear redundancy. In general POS has a positive reciprocity dynamic contribution towards employee good perception of the organization with better performance and less absenteeism.

In order to establish an in-depth understanding of the literature review, the following aspects are investigated, the perceived organizational support as a mediator of employee engagement. The relationship of trust between the employee and the organization, Flexible working arrangement in the South African context.

2.2   The context of flexible work arrangements

Flexible work programs are work arrangements where in employees are given greater scheduling freedom in how they fulfil the obligations of their positions. The commonplace of these arrangements is in flexitime or flexible schedules, which provides workers far greater leeway in terms of the time when they begin and end work, provided they put in the total number of hours required by the employer. Flexible work arrangement are regarded as "any one of a spectrum of work structures that alters the time and/or place that work gets done on a regular basis" (Rau & Hyland, 2002, p. 117).

Flexible working arrangements were defined as working arrangements which allow employees to vary the amount, timing, or location of their work, specifically, arrangements that led employees work from the outside of workplace like teleworking or led them work at different standard working hours for the workplace like flexi time and compressed working time and allow them to choose to reduce the amount of time they are contracted

to work are included. Workplace flexibility can be explained as also the ability of employees to make changes on where, when and the total time they would spend or engage in work-related tasks (Rau & Hyland, 2002; Richman et al., 2008). Organizations across wide industries have found it necessary to adopt more flexible work arrangements for their employees in order to enhance employee performance and encourage a healthy work-life balance as family dynamics have changed (Ongaki, 2019).

The literature review focuses on Methods of offering work, time, and place flexibility; the advantage and disadvantage of flexible work arrangements; The effects of organizational culture practices on flexi work arrangements in South African.

2.2.1 Various methods of flexible working arrangements.

- The flexibility in terms of the amount of workload, reduction of standard time load of 40 hrs. per week in exchange of lower remuneration, establishment of part time work.

- The flexibility in the workplace, provide employees with control over where their work is done (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001). This provides the employees some portable means to enable them to perform their jobs in any place appropriate to them.

- The flexibility in workplace: employees exercise decision regarding time of the day arrive at work, (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999; O'Brien & Hayden, 2008; Rau & Hyland, 2002), and there are many methods that can be used such as flexible schedules, compressed work week and shift work.

2.2.2 Advantage of flexible work arrangement

More organizations have shifted their focus on how to potential changes work schedule will affect the product, reduced absenteeism, flexible options not only strengthen commitment, but also give employees more time to handle the very situations that sometimes lead to absenteeism. Achieve a balance between work and family, overall satisfaction, low workload stress, positive morale, quality of work life (Beauregard & Henry, 2008; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; McNall, Masuda, & Nicklin, 2009).

Business can also use flexible programs to address institutional problems. For instance, a small- or mid-sized business that is crammed into a small facility or office may want to explore telecommuting programs to relieve the situation without resorting to an expensive relocation or expansion. Low turnover rates, lower absenteeism, high degree of loyalty,

recruitment effectiveness , work productivity , positive work attitudes and strong relationship between the employee and the supervisor and(or) employer (Beauregard & Henry, 2008).

Finally, proponents say the flexible work programs can be beneficial to companies by enhancing their public image and expanding the number of hours during which customers can be serviced. Organisations who have been considered late adopters to FWA have found a significant need for employee support and investment in IT infrastructure with the emergence of the global pandemic, COVID-19 (Atiku, Jeremiah, & Boateng, 2020). Research has found immediate short term effects on how work was generally conducted from the work place and transitioning to flexible schedules and remote working, or location flexibility (Spurk & Straub, 2020).

2.2.3   Disadvantage flexible work arrangement

Business owners and managers need to recognize that flexible work arrangements are not always appropriate for all people, jobs, or industries. Flexible working schedules, for example, can be unproductive if used by employees who are unwilling or unable to put in a full day of work amid the non-work temptations (television, pleasure reading, housecleaning, etc.) of a home setting as well as family related distractions of those who have children they care for (Basile & Beauregard, 2016).

The costs associated with program planning, coordinating implementation, training managers, and controlling:

- supervision difficulties because of different working time.
- low productivity for individuals that are not able to use such programs.
- negative attitudes and resistance from some managers because of their feeling about losing some power.
- decline in productivity at the early and late working times cause the actual work begins only after the manager came to work.
- difficult in coordination because of different working time.

2.2.4   FWA in South African context

There is limited research on the adaptability of South African companies encouraging flexible working practices. It can be argued that the gap may be due to social and infrastructural gaps in the country alluding to insufficient access to connectivity is some

remote locations in the country (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). However, in most cases flexible working arrangements have had a positive perception in South Africa where the challenging aspect of commuting to work has been removed and employees may allocate their commuting time towards other commitments (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). A recent study was conducted with a framework for implementation of flexible work arrangements improving employee engagement in the South African context (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020). The research found three key criteria necessary in implementing FWA successfully discussed as i) Well defined organizational policies eliminate the possibility of employees being unaware of the opportunities for flexible work arrangements and may understand how to better put them to use for work-life balance, ii) Management support which has been identified a key factor in employee engagement and implementing FWA, iii) an enabling environment which supported by an organisation which has enabling culture providing employees with the necessary infrastructure to work remotely and complimenting practices.

2.2.5 Flexible Working Arrangements and work-life balance

Work-life balance is an important indicator for healthy professional wellbeing, research has predicted different: flexible work arrangements, policies on work life balance, benefits of work life, overview of work life balance literature.

The workplace flexi arrangements have their own benefits and shortfalls and may not be suitable of all job types or employees. An organisation that does fit the job type has an advantage for both the employer and the employee. The various job types applicable to the flexible working method are discussed as follows:

- The Telecommuting: which is perfect for any employee that can work remotely without supervision, that can work on the occupations such as computer programming, bookkeeping, and accounting and clerical fields. This is also applied in the following business sectors: banking, healthcare, accounting, and insurance to name a few. It is most supported by high-tech companies (Gad Abdel-wahab, 2008).
- Full-time workers make up a major percentage of workers in the education and health sectors whereas part-time workers equate to a low percentage of workers in the following sectors: mining, construction, and manufacturing (Jacob, Bond, Galinsky, Jeffrey Hill, & Jeffrey, 2008).

- Flexitime: In a recent study, it was established that certain occupations, depending on status levels, had the most access to flexible working times: management decision making and level of support has significant influence on employee access to FWA (Cooper & Baird, 2015).

2.2.5.1 Significant factors of work-life balance

The flexible working arrangements have grown to be a popular construct of research applied to employee engagement policies. In developed economies, private and public sectors institutions have encouraged flexible working arrangements for employees (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017).

A study commissioned by Visser & Williams (2006) reported the following significant factors on work-life balance:

- Employees experiencing a better work-life balance in their current working arrangements have a high job satisfaction. It can be argued that employees who feel that their organisation values their personal commitments and provides the flexibility for employees to handle personal commitments encourages a positive perception which the employee may have of their organisation.
- Organisations have reported a reduction in employee turnover where employees experienced a better work-life balance. Organisations who have invested in employee work-life balance which meets the needs of their employees have seen the benefit of employee turnover. However, some organisations have encountered a disconnect to employee needs for work-life balance, which paves the view that organisations have not well invested in implementation of work-life balance.
- Employees may have the perception that the organisation communicates work-life balance ineffectively and are inconsistent as not all employees experience the benefit of proposed work-life balance.

2.2.5.2 Benefits of flexible work-life balance

There are many factors influencing healthy work life balance, include job satisfaction, job stress, commitment to company, customer satisfaction, loss and replacement of employee cost and productivity. There are many benefits from applying flexitime and there are some negative outcomes, however the advantages to healthy work life balance are as follows:

- Reduced costs – high turnover and absenteeism, in any organisation, is a sign of job stress and low self-confidence therefore reducing absenteeism should be a priority because by doing so, business costs will also decrease (Allen et al., 2013; Lazăr & Raţiu, 2010).

- Enhanced organizational image and retention of "desirable" employees – this simply means that companies who are well-known for their progressive work-life balance, can attract the best of the best employees in terms of qualification and experience (Allen et al., 2013)

- Increased productivity and employees' performance – There are much research that proves that work-life initiatives have a positive impact on the employees and the company as well. Companies that offer a more diverse selection of work-life initiatives are in a better position to attract and retain quality employees thereby increasing performance and profits. Improved customer satisfaction (Berkery, Morley, Tiernan, Purtill, & Parry, 2017).

- Managerial support is viewed as a major contributing factor as far as work-life balance is concerned. Managers play a vital role in the successful implementation of these initiatives because they are in a highly influential position where they can easily encourage or discourage employees to balance work life and personal life (Chen & Fulmer, 2018).

- Career consequences is another barrier with regards to successfully implementing work-life initiatives. This method of negative thinking is one of main barriers against the use of these family friendly initiatives (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Kodz, Harper, & Dench, 2002).

- Organizational time expectation is the number of hours an employee is supposed to work, if he/she is expected to work over-time and if it is also expected that work be taken home to complete. It conveys the notion that those who implement work-life balance are not committed and therefore not deserving of promotions and salary increases. This theory was revealed after carrying out an experiment involving co-workers (Beauregard & Henry, 2008; Chen & Fulmer, 2018; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017).

This may seem far more feasible for developed economies who have low unemployment rates, comparably higher standards of living and the infrastructure to accommodate connectivity for flexible working arrangements (Stock, Strecker, & Bieling, 2016).

In the context of emerging economies, research has found that South African multinational companies were most prominent in flexible work practices (Horwitz, 2017).

2.3 Perceived organizational support relationship with employee engagement

The literature review focusses on the in-depth examination of perceived employee support, employee engagement and flexible working arrangement within the working environment, through investigation on books, journal, research work done in the past.

2.3.1 Perceived organizational support (POS)

POS is a form of individual thoughts and feelings regarding the amount of support from the organization to do their job. Perceived organizational support was considered as the "employees view their organization values their contribution and cares about the employee's wellbeing" (Eisenberger et al., 1990, p.52). Further studies on the topic of POS reflects the extent to which employees believe their organization values their contributions and genuinely cares about their well-being (Kinicki & Fugate, 2017). A meta-analysis evaluation on the theory of perceived organizational support was conducted comprising of three antecedents as conditions of employees; employee and employer relationship; and human resource practices (Kurtessis et al., 2017). The key emerging variable from the antecedents was manager support which has been specified as fundamental in FWA for the purpose of this research as manager and supervisor support is closely correlated to perceived organizational support. The key outcomes of POS from the study were associated with trust and employee well-being. Kurtessis et al. (2017) meta-analysis results on Human Resource Practices and Work Environments found that developmental opportunities and job security were strongly and moderately related to POS respectively.

Recognition comes in various forms including attractive salary, respect for their rights, understanding their needs, creating a good environment, equality, justice, harassment policies, and respecting their contributions. Employees who feel strongly supported will develop positive perceptions. A metanalysis study found there was a strong and moderate effect of POS on job satisfaction, involvement, organizational commitment, behaviour, and organizational citizenship turnover (Ahmed & Musarrat Nawaz, 2015). Kinicki & Fugate (2016) add the benefit of POS including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, task performance, and lower turnover of employees.

Further research suggests that Flexible working arrangements (FWA) has positive attributes to employee engagement. Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill and Brennan (2008) results of their research have found that perceived organisational support policies extended employee retention and enhanced employee engagement. Ortega (2009) observed that a growing concern by managers in their employee performance may have led to a growing trend in FWA practices. Research has shown there is some positive correlation when employees are offered FWA to enhance employee engagement (Ongaki, 2019).

2.3.2 Practice and Employee engagement support

Employee engagement is the strength of the mental and emotional connection employees feel towards the work they do, their teams and their organization.

Kahn (1990) defines employee engagement support as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". The cognitive aspect of employee engagement concerns at the beliefs about the organization, the leaders, and the working conditions. Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, (2006) formulated on the research conducted by Kahn (1990) and defined employee engagement as a fulfilling mental state by way of dedication and absorption towards their work. Dedication is referred to as a sense of enthusiasm towards their work while absorption is referred to as employees immersed and concentrated in their work and losing sense of time (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Factors affecting employee engagement and performance management are poorly implemented performance management processes, nature of work, reward and recognition and opportunities for growth (Govender & Bussin, 2020). In the final analysis a positive correlation between performance management and employee engagement as a higher level of engagement would result in increased performance.

2.3.3 Factors that influence employee engagement.

Employee engagement is the number one priority for human resources leaders. Scientific literature provides the basis for that view. Garg (2017) and Buil, Martínez, & Matute (2019) found the relationship between employee engagement and performance, while (Karatepe, 2013) argue that engaged employee will increase customer satisfaction.

Employee engagement is influenced by three psychological conditions available at work, the meaningful safety available at work, the emotional aspects that is determined by the interpersonal relationship, group and intergroup dynamics the psychological availability is influenced by depletion of physical energy, depletion of emotional energy, individual insecurity, and outside lives. (Halbesleben, 2010). The concern of how employees feel about each of the three psychological conditions and whether they have positive or negative attitudes toward the organization and its leaders. The physical aspect of employee engagement concerns the physical energies exerted by individuals to accomplish their roles. Kahn (1990), engagement means to be psychologically as well as physically present when occupying and performing an organizational role.

2.3.4 Employee engagement relationship with constructs

The theoretical views associated with constructs derived by Schaufeli et al. (2006) absorption, dedication and persistence requires awareness by the employer to better understand their employees and their working conditions to minimize the possibility of employee burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

2.3.4.1 The theoretical views of Employee Engagement:

The willingness to remain persistent in the organisation; and the determination and the commitment that employee gives towards the success of the work. Kahn (1990, p. 694) defined personal engagement as "expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performance". Alternative theoretical research define engagement as a state of mind of associated with dedication and absorption influencing the level of employee engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006). A study conducted by Meintjes & Hofmeyr (2018) found that there is a significant relationship between POS and employee engagement in a sales environment, however there was no significant relationship between resilience and employee engagement in a sales environment.

2.3.4.2 Benefits of employee engagement:

Increase employee productivity ,by working diligently and expand discretionary efforts in the work; high employee retention, employees have no reason to look for employment elsewhere they are recognized, for their contribution, there is career development , they are part of organization change; Increase customer satisfaction creates care about the

jobs and customers: lower absenteeism creates commitments to the mission of the organization; improving mental health in the workplace and matching employee energy with efficiency. Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) research model alludes to the fallacy of burnout as a positive outcome of work engagement. The research found that while extensive job demand resulting in burnout, it may lead to further engagement where employees are absorbed in their work. Other results in the research model show burnout may result in health issues which lead to increase in employee turnover. It can then be argued that the right level of absorption may derive positive results while excessive absorption may lead to employee turnover.

The next section investigates the literature of trust between organizational leaders and employees in the context of employee engagement.

2.4   The relationship of trust between the organization and employee engagement

The social aspect of trust between a manager of an organization and an employee is an important one for any organization. Developing organizational trust may be related to organizational characteristics such as perceived organizational support which could yield desirable outcomes for the employee (Ozmen, 2019).

Organizational trust is a complicated relationship. It is the willingness of employees to be vulnerable to the actions of their leaders. This is an assessment of trusting, competency, benevolence, and integrity of a Leader. Mayer, Davis & Schoorman (1995) describe three main factors affecting individual's willingness to exert trust: competence, benevolence, and integrity.

Trust is the most misunderstood word at work, resulting in perceptions of broken promises and trampled expectations. Trust relationship can be described as an assumption make by an involved party towards others regarding their prospective actions (Mayer et al., 1995). With the growing trend of employees demanding flexible work options from their organizations, managers have had to develop a sense of trust for their employees, particularly managers who are micromanagers (Richardson, 2010). Organizational Trust is therefore a bidirectional psychological contract between employers and employees that perceived organizational support will then entice the employee to deliver on their obligations.

2.4.1 Trust in the context of perceived organizational support

Kurtessis et al. (2017) based employee trust in management as a stronger correlation to POS. The manager and employee relationship based trust suggests that employees trust in their managers in influenced by their perception of organizational support as it signals care for the employee (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Richardson, 2010; Yunus & Mohammed, 2021). Trust is a key construct to organizational support derived from manager and employee relationship in the following:

- Managers have with limited oversight on employees require a level of trust in their employees to meet deliverables
- Employees earn trust by buying in with their managers to deliver on what is expected of them regardless of the working arrangements the employee may be taking part in.
- In FWA managers may require delegating more autonomy for decision making towards employees and trust that the employees measure up to the responsibility.

2.4.2 Building trust in the context of employee engagement

Trust is viewed as an element of social relations between employer and employees which can be related as an attribute towards employee engagement (Ozmen, 2019):

- Provide consistent and transparent communication practices,
- Establish living values.
- Show compassion and kindness without commercial motive.
- Recognize employee contributions.
- Provide opportunities for involvement.

The next section will look into the literature to develop an in depth understanding of flexible working arrangements.

2.5 Conclusion

After careful insight into the context of the literature, there has been a clear holistic view of perceived organizational support and employee engagement in the context of flexible working arrangements. However, the research also depicted that it's not POS alone that can influence employee engagement. The literature also unveiled that in flexible working arrangements, trust is an important construct between managers and employees (Richardson, 2010).

CHAPTER 3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions were developed on the basis of the literature review in order to gain in depth understanding of perceived organizational support and employee engagement in flexible working arrangements. Furthermore, this research will unpack any flexible working arrangements in a South African context, which may be adopted to enhance employee engagement.

3.1   Research question 1: What are flexible working arrangements in your organization?

The objective of the first research question seeks gain an understanding and perspective of the dynamics of flexible working arrangements are offered by organizations to their employees. The exploratory study will identify common themes amongst respondents aligned to the literature in Chapter 2.

3.2   Research question 2: What do employees perceive as organizational support for flexible working arrangements?

The second research question seeks to understand the perceived organizational support for employees working under flexible arrangements. The exploratory study will seek to gain an understanding of aspects of support provided to employees to work in flexible arrangements considering a wide dynamic of nuances that may influence employee working experience.

In addition, the research question will unpack what the aspects of building trust between managers and employees are, while in flexible working arrangements.

3.3   Research question 3: What is the impact of organizational support on employee engagement?

The third research questions seek understand the relationship between organizational support and employee engagement in flexible working arrangements. The objective is to identify themes whereby the participant varying experiences influence the level of engagement in their work.

CHAPTER 4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents all the tools and systems used for the research work. The chapter presents the methodology chosen to further investigate the research questions identified in Chapter 3. This chapter will establish the reasoning behind the research design and methodology as well as the rational and limitations encountered in the research.

Research methodology indicates the logic of development of the process used to generate theory that is procedural framework which arguably provides the basis for successful research (Pather & Remenyi, 2019). Methodological decisions are determined by the research paradigm that a researcher is following. Tucker, Powell, & Dale Meyer (1995) indicate the importance of embarking on qualitative research and moreso, the importance of researchers understanding qualitative methods to gain an understanding of a particular phenomenon.

Qualitative methods do require an objective measure as a positivist may not always produce reliable outcomes due to the nature of a qualitative research. It is therefore imperative to extend a diligent research criteria with credibility, dependability and transferability (Cassell & Symon, 2011).

Saunders & Lewis (2018) indicate using the exploratory approach when clarification is required on the problem identified. Exploratory research approach is best conducted through searching relevant literature, conducting interviews with relevant sample of participants as well as making use of focus groups (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). For the purpose of this research, a detailed literature review of the research problem was conducted in Chapter 2, which was then followed by semi-structured interviews. The research was conducted in a cross-sectional time horizon. Saunders and Lewis (2018) define cross sectional research as collecting collection method from participants at a singular point in time. As the research only requires data from participants for guided views at a specific point in time, no follow up will be required to motivate the analysis of the research.

The research method, design and data analysis utilized in this research were similar methods in research conducted by (Creswell, 2009; Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Tucker et al., 1995). Saunders & Lewis (2018) refer to research philosophy as a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development and nature of knowledge. The research study

followed a positivist philosophy based on ontological perceptions of organisational support for flexible working arrangements along with employee engagement in flexible working environments. Saunders & Lewis (2018) define pragmatism as a research philosophy in terms of practical applications which will be guided by the research questions.

4.2   Research Design

The objective of this research was an exploratory investigation of the identified subjects raised in the literature through finding answers emerging from the research questions.

The researcher made use of inductive reasoning which is defined as a generating theory because of collected data for analysis (Saunders and Lewis, 2018). The flexible structure behind the inductive approach allows for a deeper understanding of the context as well as understanding the perspectives and experiences of the interview participants (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The research collected through mono-method single collection (Saunders and Lewis, 2018). The research will utilize singular qualitative research method through semi structured interview questions from experienced employees in organizations in South Africa which offer flexible working arrangements.

The design and formulation of the research was subject to a number of emerging issues which ultimately rendered towards a qualitative approach as a preferable method. It is arguable that the superlative method for an exploratory study is through a qualitative approach as noted by Brad Shuck, Rocco, & Albornoz (2011) of the perception of employee engagement in relation to the theory. Furthermore, Govender & Bussin (2020) have given reason how their qualitative study has enlightened a deeper understanding of the relationship between employee engagement and performance management.

To understand the perception of employee engagement in the context of flexible working arrangements, it is through qualitative research interviews that the research was able to uncover the participant perception of organizational support by interviewing both managers and employees across four different industries which practice flexible working arrangements, by exploring different assumptions against the theory.

4.3   Population

The population of the research is defined as the complete set of the participants in the research study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

For the purpose of the research, the population consisted of stakeholders working in organisations that practice flexible working arrangements. It is noted that there have been many organisations who were late adopters of flexible working arrangements due to the emergence of the global pandemic, COVID-19 (Atiku et al., 2020). As the interviews were conducted during the period of the pandemic, the participants will relay their perspectives and experiences of flexible working arrangements both in pre pandemic, if possible, and during the pandemic.

The participants consist of both managers and employees with who are regarded as competent agents in their field of work. Competent participants are individuals of an organization who have contributed to productivity of an organization through various cycles under the organization (Karnouskos, 2017). For the purpose of this research participants who have seen through an average minimum of 3 financial cycles of their organizations, which would be classified as competent agents of an organization. The study was focused on four industries namely:

- Automotive
- Financial services
- Manufacturing
- Information and Communication Technology

The participants from these industries were selected from a varying selection of medium to large organizations across the chosen industries in order to gather a prudent sample of data.

4.4   Sampling method

Saunders & Lewis (2018) define a sample population group as a set of individuals available to make inferences with the researcher. A non-probability sampling technique was conducted, selecting one participant from a sample group at the discretion of the researcher. (Creswell, 2003). Table 1 describes the Population A consist of managers of organizations who are classified as individuals position as manager, senior managers and executives of organization. Population B includes employees who have currently flexible working arrangements or have the option to exercise flexible working arrangements in their organizations. Research has found that saturation in coding method is reached in the first 12 interviews where themes can be obtained for purposes of analysis (Guest, Bunce,

& Johnson, 2006). In addition, a convenience sampling was conducted on the basis of availability of participants and their accessibility.

Table 1: Population Sample Classification

Population	Participant	Industry sector	Gender	Organization size
A	Manager 1	Manufacturing	Female	Medium
	Manager 2	Financial Services	Male	Large
	Manager 3	Manufacturing	Male	Medium
	Manager 4	Automotive	Male	Large
	Manager 5	ICT	Female	Large
	Manager 6	Manufacturing	Male	Medium
	Manager 7	ICT	Male	Medium
B	Employee 1	Manufacturing	Male	Large
	Employee 2	Manufacturing	Male	Large
	Employee 3	Automotive	Male	Large
	Employee 4	Financial Services	Female	Large
	Employee 5	Financial Services	Male	Large
	Employee 6	Financial Services	Female	Large
	Employee 7	ICT	Male	Medium

4.5   Unit of analysis

Research describes the unit of analysis as the perspectives of the participant in the sample group providing the data as well as the measurement (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). For the purpose of the research the unit of analysis was the response from participant employee experiences of flexible working arrangements and how participant manager experience provides support to employees in flexible working arrangements.

4.6   Data collection

Data collection is considered as a method to allow the researcher to appropriately answer the research questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). An interview guide was put together to (**Error! Reference source not found.**) address the research questions in Chapter 3 which would extend a set of discussion themes for the purpose of this research. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with respondents where possible. The majority of interviews were conducted through virtual communication platform, Zoom, through open-ended questions. The average duration average duration of the interviews was 46min with varying responses dependent on the participants willingness to share and comfortability. Pilot interviews are considered important when conducting qualitative research to obtain valid and reliable data during the course of the interview (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Two pilot interviews were conducted to assist in refining the questionnaire to measure the duration of the interviews and the understandability of the interview questions. Pilot interviews were conducted with colleagues who were professionals in their fields. The first pilot interview with a manager and second pilot interview conducted with a specialist. Following the pilot interviews, the researcher then proceeded to initiate the interview phase. Refining the delivery of the questions was an ongoing process for the first two interviews to ensure participants understand the questions and to maintain a fluid discussion.

4.7   Data collection process

The process of the interview was conducted as follows:

- The interview participant was welcomed, and gratitude was extended for their willingness to participate in the interview for the purpose of this research.
- An overview of the research questions was explained to provide context before engaging in the interview questions.
- Participant audio responses were recorded on the virtual communication platform, Zoom. Where face-to-face interviews were conducted, recording software on the researchers MacBook Pro was used along with taking notes in the interview guide spreadsheet.
- In closing the participant was assured of their confidentiality and discretion of their responses.

- Recorded interviews were transcribed through Otter.ai transcribing software where key inputs were coded through Atlas.ti and Excel spreadsheet.

Prior to the interviews each interview participant provided a voluntary consent (APPENDICES

) to allow the researcher to record the interviews to ensure accuracy in the data collection, and to ensure confidentiality of the participant responses.

4.8   Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted by way of comparing the content and identifying similarities in respondents' answers. Where data is collected electronically by way of open-ended questions through voice recording and transcription, research suggests that content analysis technique is the most appropriate method to gain an understanding of the topic in question (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

For the purpose of this research an inductive content analysis approach was used to analyse the data for the researcher absorb the data and cater for new insights and themes to emerge from the analysis. Comprehensive notes were taken to subsidize the labels for codes and later categorized to process the large amounts of contextual information where themes and patterns were later observed. To achieve this, a six-stage analysis (Table 2) guideline was followed in the qualitative analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that qualitative analysis is not a linear process, however it is a recursive process where the steps require flexibility to align with the research questions.

Table 2: Six stages of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Stage	Process description
1. **Familiarize yourself with the data**	Transcribing the data, reading and noting down initial ideas
2. **Generate initial codes**	Coding interesting features of the data in systematic fashion across the data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. **Search for themes**	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

4. Review themes	Check if the themes work in relation to coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of analysis
5. Define and name themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definition and names to each theme
6. Produce the report	Final opportunity for analysis. Select vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back to analysis the research question and literature producing an academic report of analysis.

The researcher revised notes taken during the interview process and revisited the recordings of the participants to familiarise the content. A recursive process was followed during the coding process to revisit the data and cross reference with the research questions to align the code to the correct research question. The coding was conducted through Atlas.ti software where a common or high frequency of specific codes (**Error! Reference source not found.**) generated clear themes aligned with the research question.

4.9 Limitations

The researcher encountered a number of limitations emerging during the study.

- **Response biases:** The researcher noted by participants who had a negative experience with their organisation and may allude to a negative remark in flexible work arrangements, which may skew conclusions for the researcher.

- **The researcher bias**: The researcher was inexperienced conducting an exploratory study where subjective biases may emerge during analysis process (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

- **Non-probability sample:** the sample selection may not have represented the complete population and the industry selection disregarded other participating industries.

- **Interview duration**: Although time reservation was communicated to allocate approximately an hour for the duration of the interview, some participants rushed

through their responses which may have challenged the researcher to obtain the necessary responses for the interview.

- **Fluidity**: The interview guideline provided a structured guide for the interview process. The researcher made every attempt to maintain a fluid discussion during the interview. The respondents at times may have addressed proceeding questions during their response where the researcher may have proactively made an attempt to draft notes on those questions to avoid repetition

4.10 Conclusion

Qualitative analysis approach to research can present complex problems and nuances in the content analysis and thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For inexperienced researchers, the thematic approach is considered foundational for any beginner researcher to develop core skills useful for other qualitative methods. This chapter outlines the design and methodology adopted in order to achieve the objectives of the research report discussed in Chapter 1. The coding process outlined in the six stage thematic analysis assists the researcher to better organise large quantities of textual information into categories that can be better analysed (Weber, 1990).

CHAPTER 5   RESULTS

5.1   Introduction

The chapter covers the findings from the fourteen interviews which were conducted across four different industries from eleven different organizations. The sequence from the research questions presented in chapter three remain the foundation of the interview questions. Two interviews were conducted by face-to-face, while the remaining twelve interviews were conducted by virtual platforms using Zoom videotelephony software.

For the sake of consistency, the interview questions were aligned with the research questions as mentioned in Chapter three. The interview questions were used as a guideline during the course of the interview, however to due to the semi-structured and informal nature of the interview, the conversations were fluid and may have different structured between interview participants. It was also notable that in many cases, participants may have responded to a question before the interviewer had asked that specific question. A coding system was conducted by the researcher aligning themes with the relevant research question. The consistency matrix used to align the data collected with the literature and research questions.

5.2   Description of the empirical data

5.2.1   Interview duration

The data collection consisted of 14 semi-structured interviews over a duration of 647 minutes at an average of 46 minutes per interview. The shortest interview was 22 minutes long while the longest interview was 69 minutes long (Table 3).

Table 3: Interview participant details

Description	Details
Managers	7
Employees	7
Total Participants	14
Total duration of interviews (min)	**647.3**

Shortest interview	22.06
Longest interview	69.24
Average interview	46.24

5.2.2 Word count analysis of the interview transcripts

Atlas.ti qualitative software was used to analyse the interview transcripts which came up to 4,098 words, which were then edited to eliminate words with occurrences less than three times, ending with 1,713 words. The list was further filtered by removing descriptive words and pronouns, for example., "he", "she", "they" to reduce the total word count to 1,642 words. Ambiguous words such as "and", "so", "bad", which appeared over 2000 times collectively, were removed. The refined list ended with 1,634 words and word groups to enable context for the researcher to code the interview transcripts.

Word groups were conducted by common occurrences in the transcripts by way of frequency as displayed in (Figure 1). The words "working" (work; job; employment) had the highest frequency of use during the interviews appearing 737 times. The words "people" (employees; workers; personnel) had the second highest frequency appearing 687 times. The top five-word groups were the words "Working"; "People"; "Flexible"; "Organization" and "Support", which core to the research focus on perceived organizational support in the context of flexible working arrangements.

Figure 1: Top word group frequency
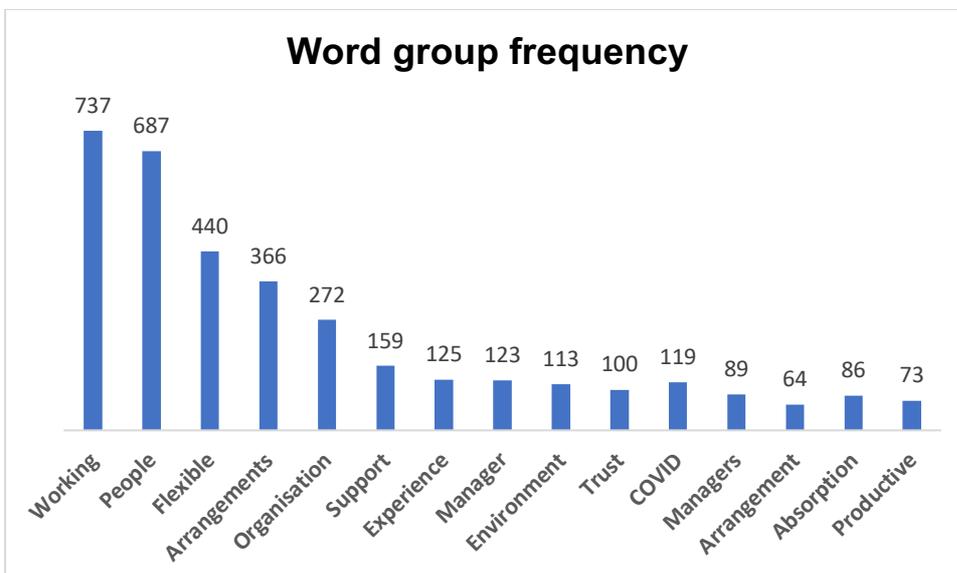
5.2.3 Description of the sample

The selected sample represents the population characteristics sampling for a non-probability quota (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The objective was to analyse the perspectives of respondents from Managers and Employees who work across four different sectors, namely financial services, manufacturing, information and communication technology (ICT), and automotive summarized in (Table 5).

In (Table 4) the researcher provides the gender demographics of the interview participants to assess the similarities or differences across the four different sectors. All participants were Black South African citizens.

Table 4: Gender summary of participants

	Manager	Employee	Total
Female	2	2	4
Male	5	5	10
Total	7	7	14

Table 5: Details of participant duration

Participant	Industry sector	Profession	Position	Duration (min)
Manager 1	Manufacturing	Engineer	Managing Director	56.14
Manager 2	Financial Services	Investment Analyst (CFA)	Head of Special Projects	57.33
Manager 3	Manufacturing	Executive	CEO	39.39
Manager 4	Automotive	Executive	General Manager	47.05
Manager 5	ICT	Operations (CA)	Head of Operations	69.24

Manager 6	Manufacturing	Business Development	Business development manager	45.55
Manager 7	ICT	Financial Risk Management	Head of Risk	33.00
Employee 1	Manufacturing	Sales Analyst	Business development	51.25
Employee 2	Manufacturing	Accountant (CA)	Financial Accountant	54.41
Employee 3	Automotive	Accountant	Financial Accountant	22.06
Employee 4	Financial Services	Credit Analyst	Associate Principal	59.24
Employee 5	Financial Services	Risk Analyst	Associate	45.31
Employee 6	Financial Services	Compliance Officer	Principal	31.09
Employee 7	ICT	Research Analyst	Associate	36.22

5.3   Results for Research Question 1

What are flexible working arrangements in your organization?

The objective of this research question was to identify the dynamics of a variety of flexible working arrangements offered by organizations. By understanding these dynamics, the researcher is able to perceive the differentiating factors that employees adopt flexible working arrangements. The benefit of the research questions provided awareness whether flexible working arrangement not available to all employees in the organization may be discriminatory due to the nature of the organization's operations.

In Research Question 1, there were four constructs that emerged from participant responses. Below (Figure 2) calls attention to the four constructs.

Figure 2: RQ1 results overview
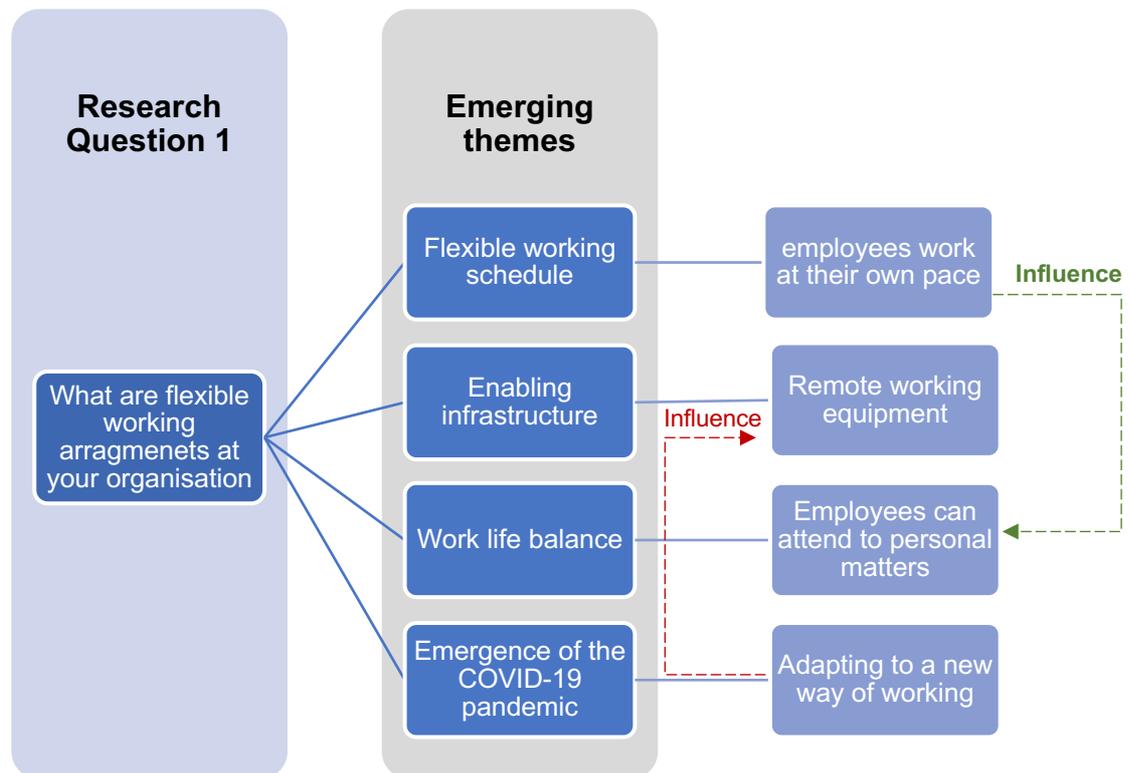
The literature in Chapter 2 stipulates the varying methods of FWA, the benefits of FWA and the context of FWA from a South African perspective. The researcher uncovered emerging themes related to flexible working arrangements which were unpacked in Figure 2. The themes are discussed in detail below with reference from the interview participants.

5.3.1 A flexible working schedule

Two of the managers interviewed made reference to flexible working schedules whereby employees can also attend to personal matters during the course of the workday without impeding on deliverables. The flexible working schedule theme influenced a level of improved work-life-balance for employees. Figure 2 illustrates how employees working at their own pace with a flexible schedule, enabled employees to attend to personal matters improving a better work-life-balance.

Table 6: RQ1 Manager responses referring to flexible working schedules

> Manager 1: "*Employees can attend to personal obligation and kind of decide their own schedule, on how it best suits their time…*"
>
> Manager 4: "*there was a policy in place that is flexible to the hours that people can work. So, you'll find someone that works from seven to four, or eight to five, and a few employees took advantage of that those that wanted to be early, would come at that time, and those that wanted to start later in the day.*"

Three employees made similar reference to flexible working schedules whereby an importance to manage their own work schedule was highlighted as some employees prefer unstructured working hours.

Table 7: RQ1 Employee responses referring to flexible working schedules

> Employee 7: "*…the view of having flexible working arrangements was that to facilitate or to allow certain employees to, you know, come into work early, leave earlier if they had pressing family commitments…*"

An important differentiating outcome from managers in the manufacturing industry was that flexible working schedules were applicable to some employees depending on their job environment. Employees working in plants or on production sites work in shifts and would not have the liberty to have flexible working schedules.

Table 8: RQ1 responses referring to flexible working schedules

> Manager 1: "*we have two sets of workers - office workers, and onsite workers, and if they onside workers, while onsite workers are not flexible... Because normally we have schedules that onsite have to keep up to, so they have a very strict working schedule. Whereas the people that work in the office or admin, project managers and our engineers, I think they have a bit more flexibility in their schedule*"
>
> Manager 6: "*…flexibility opportunities are really emerging within various divisions. What we haven't picked up at my workplace is within the*

> *production division where they are expected a certain number of outputs…*
> *they have to be available throughout the shift."*
>
> *Employee 3: "You find that also some of the employees are not able to*
> *remotely work because of the type of the work. So, for example, for me, I*
> *am content, I am able to complete my work from home, but for a person*
> *who's an engineer, they cannot specifically work remotely, you know,*
> *because of the type of work that they actually do on site..."*

5.3.2 Flexible working enabling infrastructure

Both the managers and employees recognized the necessity of having a robust flexible working infrastructure in order for work deliverables to be complete inside or outside working hours whether in the office or from a remote location.

Table 9: RQ1 responses referring to FWA enabling infrastructure

> Manager 3: *"support them and give them the tools to be able to work just*
> *as efficiently as they do at the office, for example, giving them modems,*
> *cell phones and laptops"*
>
> Employee 5: *"...in terms of equipment, the right software, the right*
> *"anything" that you would require for you to execute your day-to-day duties*
> *outside of office…"*

An employee from the manufacturing industry mentioned the challenges with dated infrastructure which creates a burdensome experience for employees in flexible working arrangements when the equipment provided does not entirely support remote working. It was also clear that the leadership in management is emersed in an old-school of thought as it had come across as reluctancy to adapt to the changes in the environment.

Th enabling infrastructure theme in Figure 2 illustrates how in organisations adopting flexible work practices late, were predominantly influenced by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was particularly common from respondents from the manufacturing industry.

Table 10: RQ1 Employee responses referring to FWA enabling infrastructure

> Employee 2: *"…so for people to be remote working, you have to carry a desktop, and the company is refusing laptops, because they obviously trying to cost save and things like that, but then they don't realise that, even if they buy a cheap laptop, you know, they could get people to be more productive"*
>
> Employee 2: *"I would say, I think it was a failure to adapt, or maybe the organisation to sort of averse to the new environments to say, because they just want to keep everybody in the same place in the office"*

5.3.3 Work life balance

Work life balance was a common theme amongst managers where organisations had introduced flexible working arrangements policies to assist employees with balancing personal commitments, more commonly with employees who had small children and were the primary care giver, while managing to meet their work deliverables. It had also emerged amongst managers that there had been evidence of improved employee performance when employees had a better work-life-balance. Table 11 reflects the managers responses regarding work-life-balance.

Table 11: RQ1 Manager responses referring to work-life-balance

> Manager 1: *"Recently, some of our employees had to take their children to school on the first day... not having a rigid work structure of clocking in and clocking out or you know, employees have been accountable for every minute of your day. I think it's also useful for a better work-life environment, and just satisfaction in work."*
>
> Manager 1: *"I tend to support employees, having a really good work-life-balance"*
>
> Manager 2: *"I think the flexible working arrangement is for parents who will need to do a drop-off in the morning or pick-up in our mid-afternoon or in the evening. And I think from an organisation and for any family responsibility, this type of issues there is that level of support"*

Similarly, employees were of the view that flexible work arrangements enabled employees to attend to urgent and personal matters during working hours and still have the flexibility to continue with work when the matters have been attended to.

Table 12: RQ1 Employee responses referring to work-life-balance

> Employee 5: "*I love the flexibility… More often than not, we've got other engagement, going about the work environment. I mean, it would be difficult to try and balance work and life in that sense that if, for instance, you quickly needed to go get your child in school for a given reason, but that is, in between working hours, you might find that, oh, I really don't have the luxury to do that.*"
>
> Employee 6: "I think we have flexible working hours to increase productivity, I think the whole purpose of it is to increase productivity and ensure work life balance"

5.3.4 Emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic

The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which required the researcher to gain perspective of respondents' experience prior to the emergence of COVID-19 and during the COVID-19. The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic theme in Figure 2 illustrates how the organisations adapting to a new way of working influenced remote working for employees where remote working infrastructures needed to be in place.

Table 13: RQ1 Manager responses from managers referring to the emergence of COVID-19

> Manager 3: "*Flexible working arrangements are available because they were induced by COVID. So, everyone has been working from home, which, in its own way, has become more flexible than a static desk office… So, with that it's induced a situation where employers have to be more understanding of people's personal lives since COVID, has resulted in people's jobs following them to their houses*"

It had also emerged from the respondents that organisations which had flexible working arrangements in place prior to the pandemic, were not actively using flexible working

arrangements as policy may have been in place, however management were discouraging employees to implement the policy

Table 14: RQ1 Employee responses referring to the emergence of COVID 19

> Employee 4: "*It was introduced before COVID. But it wasn't popularly used before COVID. And it was enforced by COVID. So, the main reason we are working from home is mainly because we want to control the disease.*"
>
> Employee 5: "*There were some departments that were very flexible enough to allow their staff members to work from home. On select days, if one wanted to work from home on a Tuesday and Thursday, they could do that, and so forth. So that already started to instil the culture of flexible working. So that was pre COVID. And I guess that helped the organisation to transition into COVID theory whereby we were all now forced to basically work from home.*

5.3.5   Conclusion

The respondent results reflected evidence of the trend in similar flexible working arrangements offered to employees across organisations, the most common theme which emerged was flexible working schedules and how it influences a better work life balance.

5.4   Results for Research Question 2

What do employees perceive as organizational support for flexible working arrangements?

The research investigated the perception of employees involving the level of support received from their organisations. The literature in Chapter 2 informs that perceived organizational support is generally about the employees view of how the organisation cares about their well-being and how employees are satisfied with their work. Research in the literature has also found that there is a statistically significant relationship between perceived organizational support and employee engagement.

Figure 3: RQ2 results overview
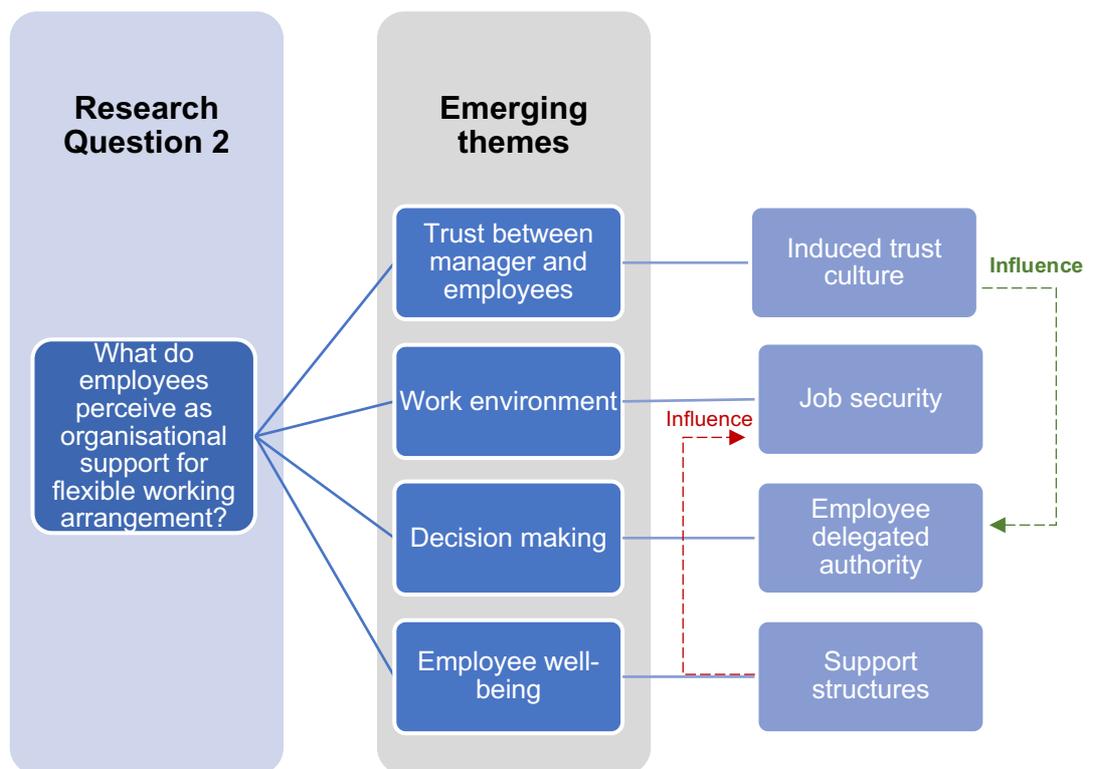
5.4.1 Trust between managers and employees

A key insight from participant responses made reference to the element of trust required between managers and employees particularly when in flexible working arrangements. A manager would generally not have visibility of employees working remotely as well as may have limited visibility of employees working on different work schedules. For employees who had micromanagers, flexibility was more of a challenge as the manager relied on full visibility to monitor their employees.

Table 15: RQ2 responses associated with trust between manager and employee

> Manager 4: "*Trust, very, very important ingredient. In this environment, trust is quite critical for people to trust each other*."
>
> Employee 1: "*I think when it comes to the trust manager relation, the trust between the manager and employee, it's a big contribution, because there isn't really communication without trust…*"

When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, organisation policy forced employees to work remotely and for managers this induced a new level of trust that was required between managers and employees.

Table 16: RQ2 responses from manager associated with trust

> Manager 4: "*trust is something that everyone was forced to trust, I think, under COVID, because there was no alternative, right? So even if you didn't trust, you have to deal with your distrust or mistrust of the team. I think what I will say about trust is that being forced to trust actually leads you to end up trusting because you don't have alternatives*"

Organisations that have had flexible working arrangements in place prior to COVID-19 pandemic have adopted a culture of trust in their organisation from conception of flexible working arrangement policies. Trust influencing organisation culture has also seen employees gaining more responsibility with delegated authority.

Table 17: RQ2 response associated with trust

> Manager 5: "*I think the emphasis at our organisation has always been accountability... the organisation operates from trust, until you prove yourself otherwise… that is what I have noticed in the organisation.*"

One manager from the manufacturing industry however experienced a disconnect of trust from employees. What emerged from the interview was the manager's organisation was less structured that other participants from a similar industry, which was a differentiating aspect. There was a significant level of mistrust between managers and employees.

Table 18: RQ2 response from manager referring to mistrust

> Manager 3: "… *we can trust them to do their jobs. But, you know, people are people at the end of the day, we have, equipment worth millions of Rands and so, trust is very minimal.*"
>
> Manager 3: "*We found that there's a huge disconnect to as a lot of the time when working remotely or flexibly? That, for some reason encourages people to take shortcuts*"

5.4.2 Work environment

Employees have expressed their importance of having an enabling work environment even when under flexible arrangements. The researcher was investigating the participants experience relating to their job security while working in flexible arrangements. There was little evidence that emerged of significant impact where flexible working arrangements influenced job security.

Table 19: RQ2 response regarding job security

> Manager 2: *"No, I don't think flexible working arrangements are a factor for job security in our organisation."*
>
> Manager 3: *"I don't see the impact of flexible work. I don't see the link between the two. So, no impact for us in terms of job security, as a result of work from home or flexible working times.*
>
> Employee 3: *"I don't necessarily think it affected it at all. I mean, we are moving into times when being based at office, or at a single particular building is becoming a thing of the past moreso now during COVID-19."*

There were however aspects which may have directly impacted employee job security which was the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic which affected organizational performance and lead to elements of employee concern about their job security.

Table 20: RQ2 response associated with job security

> Employee 1: *"I wouldn't say the flexible working environment affected job security. The reason why we have the flexible working environment, which is obviously due to COVID-19… which has obviously affected demand profits have been knocked. So, the organisation is obviously trying to find ways to reduce costs…So job security has definitely been affected there.*"

5.4.3 Decision making

Flexible working arrangements have positioned organisations to place more autonomy of decision making onto employees. Emerging insights from the participants resonated on the delegated authority extended to employees and support received from managers.

Table 21: RQ2 responses regarding decision making

> Employee 1: *"I would say the decision-making role has been expanded to the team a lot more, partly because of the thing I said where there's a certain limitation to communication".*
>
> Manager 7: *"I'm sure there has been instances where people have made minor decisions, but nothing of importance that they need to reach out to anybody".*
>
> Employee 7: *"I'm not in the same jurisdiction as my manager so, I always had to make decision without having consulted with him. also given the type of person that he is, he's always given us the possibility to make decisions that you don't have to consult with him when the Flexi working hasn't really changed that".*

The magnitude for decision making has not been extensively exercised in FWA depending on the work environment. Employee 1 experience of decision making had expanded on the basis of prompt communication is limited while in FWA and therefore expectations from management are for employees to make decisions within their authority without consultation and supervision.

Employee 7 made reference of their experience of manager and employee relationship in different jurisdictions. From assessing the participants response, it has been evident that FWA is a common practice when manager and employee are working in different jurisdictions. The manager has no direct oversight of the employee, however, has expectations that the employee will communicate effectively and deliver on expectations where decision making is required by the employee with limited consultation and oversight.

5.4.4 Employee well-being

Perceived organizational support is regarded as the employee's view that the organisation values their contribution and cares for their well-being. Responses from the participants referred to the emotional aspect of being valued and empathising with employees had a positive impact on their well-being. Manager 2 felt more invested in their organisation when their well-being was acknowledged by their superiors.

Table 22: RQ2 response associated with employee well-being

Manager 2: "When there were family responsibilities, my previous manager was one who valued the sanity and emotional well-being of the employee above anything else, because it was more for peace of mind."
Manager 2: "what I immediately felt from my manager, my CFO, was that I bought in to him and what he wanted, because he was interested in my well-being, my family's well-being and where my head was at. That is the culture in our group that filters down to people who have subordinate"

Emerging points from participants for organizational support for employee well-being was providing professional services available to employees who needed them, whether issues are work related or personal. Organisations have noticed working in flexible working arrangements particularly during the pandemic period have may have psychological impact on employees. There was only one respondent making reference to employees taking up professional services for their well-being.

Table 23: RQ2 response regarding professional assistance for employee well-being

Employee 4: "So my organisation at the moment, I would say the only thing that we are providing is, is the counselling, which is not enough."
Manager 4: "So I think it's more about the empathy. And then of course, if hard support is required, counselling and that kind of thing. And I think we've seen a few of our employees take advantage of that, because there was quite a lot of change happening, lots of frustration, anxiety, and that sort of thing"

5.5   Results for Research Question 3

What is the relationship of organizational support with employee engagement?

Research question 3 sought after themes associated with employee engagement in the given context of flexible working arrangements. Emerging themes from participants responses were associated with the challenges of remaining engaged in work considering the flexible work arrangements. The research was conducted during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic which emerged varying nuances related to employee engagement in this context. Emerging themes are illustrated in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: RQ3 Results overview
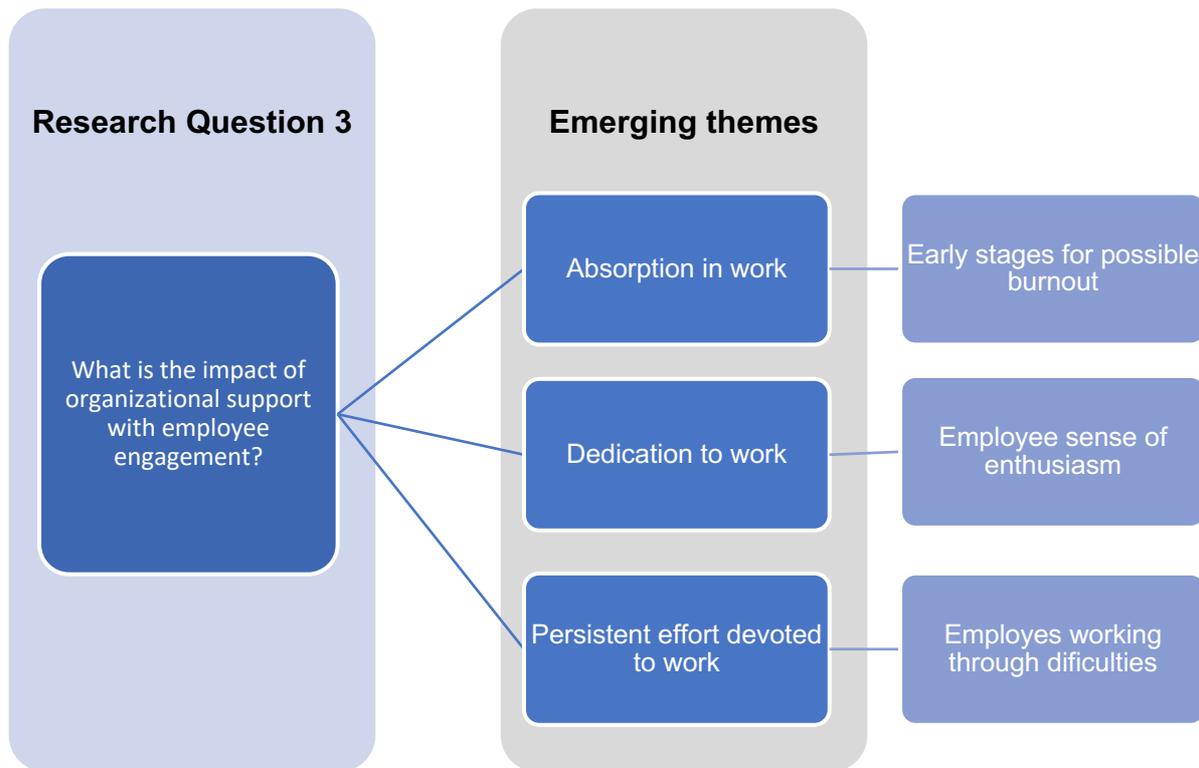
5.5.1 Absorption in work

The researcher investigated absorption experienced by employees in the various organisations across the four industries mentioned in Chapter 4. Respondents have found that working in flexible arrangements during a pandemic introduced a different dynamic of fatigue which may have not been experienced under normal circumstances. Employee 1 made reference to flexible working has not had a definite start and end working times Employees working remotely are assumed to be always available.

Table 24: RQ3 response regarding absorption

Employee 1: "you can get very absorbed in the work and lose track of time because we really there isn't any definitive starting and end times."

It had also been evident that employees felt that organizational support for employees facing absorption was an afterthought as oppose to proactive solution.

Table 25: RQ3 Managers responses regarding absorption

> Manager 2: *"I think there's not much support for mental well-being... I think obviously, the message is that your well-being is important to the organisation so, don't burn out".*
>
> Manage 1: *"I've had a couple of employees come to me, and let me know that, you know, they think that actually burning out. And I think normally, which is, you know, not how we supposed to do it. And I think it's an oversight on our part, that we only notice, you know, that level of absorption when it starts becoming kind of detriment"*

Employee 7 mentioned that working in flexible arrangements has brought a significant number of virtual meetings which take away from the time of meeting your deliverables. The organisations sent communication to employees to be weary of meeting overload. This has however not seen as very effective as most staff members overlook distribution emails and are already overloaded.

Table 26: RQ3 response regarding absorption

> Employee 7: *"The emails sent on the assumption that people read those emails… at the same time, they also need to be careful of overloading us with his meeting, because it's a very tricky situation now to not overload both calendars and emails"*

Manager 2 made reference to employees who live with families are less susceptible to absorption as family obligations will create a breakaway from being absorbed in your work beyond the required work hours.

Table 27: RQ3 response regarding burnout

> Manager 2: *"I know many colleagues who don't have families. They will work from early whenever they clock to start the day their day, not taking any breaks for lunch or supper, and then work into the night, doing that for a couple of days. That is a bit of burnout. With me (as a family man), maybe it's a bit different…"*

Employee 5 mentioned that employees experiencing absorption in their work is mainly due to the slow adaption to the way of working remotely. The assumption that employees are expected to be available at all times because they are working remotely has added to experienced absorption due to the pandemic which has impacted the financial services industry as demand in work has escalated.

Table 28: RQ3 response regarding absorption due to pandemic

Employee 5: *"it could be the fact that the employee is genuinely absorbed in the work, and they just don't see the difference in time, whether it's still within working hours, or if it's beyond working hours. Second of all, in our environment, because of COVID-19 has impacted, different companies across industries, the work has increased, the demand has increased expectations increased."*

5.5.2 Dedication to work

Excerpts from Manager 6 made reference to flexible working arrangements have enabled increased dedication to improving the quality of work deliverables. The participant's enthusiasm in their dedication towards their work was to build on their trust with their superiors.

Table 29: RQ3 response regarding dedication to work

Manager 6: *"it's really changed my dedication to the quality of my work. So, I pay more attention to the quality of that deliverable. And so that my employer can trust me better next time as well."*

Employee 7 alluded to working remotely has benefited their dedication to their work. Employees feel like they are more valued and take more responsibility for their work.

Table 30: RQ3 response regarding dedication in remote working

Employee 7: "Most of them actually more dedicated, hey, because of flexible working arrangements here, you know, because like they feel, you know, people always want to feel that they are valued, you know, kind of thing and they want to feel like they own their time."

5.5.3 Persistent effort devoted to work

Engaged employees have been found to apply persistent effort towards their work, however in flexible working arrangements there are varying challenges which employees may have experienced. Employee 5 from Financial Services mentioned that they have been fortunate to work in an environment with minimal distractions as they reside alone in their residence. Other employees may encounter distractions in their home while conducting work during work hours.

Table 31: RQ3 response regarding consistency when living alone

Employee 5: "*I would say consistent effort has been there. Especially because I have minimal distractions, I live alone and have no children. So, one can actually put in a focus time and put in the 100 things within a focus time. So, I believe my level of consistency has been there, it's been easier to maintain consistency.*"

Employee 1 from the manufacturing industry however, mentioned that working in isolation has been challenging to apply consistent effort in their work as there is little motivation when working in an isolated environment.

Table 32: RQ3 response regarding inconsistency when living alone

Employee 1: *"It's been very inconsistent, I think mainly because the motivation is solely from the individual, I can't really draw on my environment. So, depending on how I'm feeling that day, that's just the output, I can't really force it, there's some days where I'm just not up to it.*

5.6   Conclusion

This chapter extended a discussion from research data collected from 14 participating respondents investigating the research questions. There were 11 emerging themes from were outlined from the in-depth interviews conducted with managers and employees working in organisations spread between four industries mentioned in Chapter 4. The following Chapter 6 will discuss the results found in this Chapter with support from the literature in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 6   DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1   Introduction

The Chapter covers the findings and discussions of results from Chapter 5 with support of literature theory from Chapter 2. A thorough discussion is emerged when merging the results from the interview participants with the literature to address the research questions mentioned in Chapter 3. The sequence of discussion starts with the research questions whereby the research finding will contribute to an in depth understanding of perceived organizational support and employee engagement in flexible working arrangements. The research questions will be discussed in separation to maintain consistency along with the emerging themes, followed by supporting literature to motivate/rebut the findings.

6.2   Research Question 1

What are flexible working arrangements in the organisation?

The objective of this research question was to identify the dynamics of a variety of flexible working arrangements offered by organizations. By understanding these dynamics, the researcher can perceive the differentiating factors that employees adopt flexible working arrangements. The observations from the research questions provided awareness whether flexible working arrangement are not available to all employees in the organization; and may be discriminatory due to the nature of the organization's operations.

In Research Question 1, there were four themes which emerged from participant responses, namely: Flexi working schedule, enabling infrastructure, work life balance and adapting to new way of working. The sections below cross examine the emerging themes from Research Question 1 with the literature in Chapter 2 for similarities in support of the literature, or any differences not in support of the literature.

6.2.1   Flexible working schedule

The responses from the interviews suggest that one common aspect of a flexible working arrangement with an organisation is having a flexible schedule which is not fixed. A flexible working schedule does not however, suggest the employee can work less hours, but can structure their day to work at their own pace. Rau & Hyland (2002) argue that flexible arrangements are work structures with altered time enabling work to be done. Flexible time allows employees to take control of how they manage their working time. Respondent 6 in Table 6 mentions the benefit of flexible schedule which enables to balance attention between work and personal obligations.

The experience of the respondent in Table 6 supports the notion of workplace flexibility on when and total time that an employee can engage in work related tasks (Rau & Hyland, 2002; Richman et al., 2008).

Another method of a flexible schedule in the workplace is employees negotiating a time to arrive at the workplace or alternatively a time to start the day's work (Baltes et al., 1999; O'Brien & Hayden, 2008). A respondent from Table 7 having similar arrangements in their organisation supporting the notion discussed by (Hill et al., 2001). The research data conducted with the participants found that not all employees of the workplace have the liberty to practice flexible work schedules. Stavrou, Spiliotis, & Charalambous (2009) classify shift-work or in manufacturing industry as FWA, while Jacob et al. (2008) refers employees FWA in mining, construction and manufacturing industries as part-time workers. Table 8 response from Manager 1, Manager 6 and Employee 3 from the manufacturing industry, however, allude to the differentiation of the nature of work which are conducted by employees working in shifts at a plant or site. The respondent mentions FWA is not applicable as their work is solely site based and cannot be conducted remotely. It is noteworthy that the aspect of flexible schedule and remote working are not applicable to all work-place environments depending on the nature of work. Work-place environments considered to be office based have the liberty to exercise both methods of FWA.

The significant analysis found in this study supported by (Gad Abdel-wahab, 2008) noted that not all job types are fit for flexible working schedules and while employees who may have access, organisations require the infrastructure to enable employees to work remotely. Findings from the second emerging theme in flexible working arrangements is discussed in the next section.

6.2.2 Enabling infrastructure

The development of technological communication has changed the face of the way work is conducted remotely by employees in supported job types (Gad Abdel-wahab, 2008). Respondents from Table 9 mentioned the significant importance in organisation providing the necessary tools and infrastructure to support employees, enabling remote working employees to carry on with their work as best as possible with minimal interruptions (Ongaki, 2019). Remote working infrastructure is considered as broadband connectivity devices, laptops and mobile devices connected to the organisation's servers.

A significant finding in the emerging theme discussed in 6.2.4 refers to organisation which have been influenced to adopt flexible working infrastructure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic placing restrictions on individuals from working at their workplace. The event of the pandemic inevitably required employees to continue working remotely from their homes (Atiku et al., 2020). Responses in Table 10 from Employee 2 mention the frustrations encountered by employees when organisations had not yet adapted to flexible working arrangements, however, have now been forced into it due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The argument expressed by Employee 2 is that certain job types which are office bound have been confined by desktop computers which restrict work mobility, and employees have required special permission to move desktops to their homes for them to be able to conduct their work. An aspect that has emerged from the discussion was the "right to request" which has been supported by (Cooper & Baird, 2015). Cooper & Baird (2015) discuss how conflicting organizational policies on FWA have required Management commitment in structuring procedures for effective FWA outcomes. It may then be argued that Employee 2 organisation has not involved Managers in their FWA policies to mitigate mobility challenges when employees require FWA.

The findings in this study supported by (Ongaki, 2019) noted that organisations that have adopted flexible working policies in their Human Resource practices, had the intention of enhancing employee performance and improve the work-life-balance of employees. Findings from the third emerging theme in flexible working arrangements is discussed in the next section.

6.2.3   Work-life balance

Many recent studies have found the benefits or moreso, the objectives of FWA are to encourage a better work-life balance for all employees (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Visser & Williams, 2006). Managers who have extended FWA to employees for the purpose of improving a work life balance have witnessed a reduction in absenteeism and an increase in productivity and employee performance (Kodz et al., 2002; Lazăr & Raţiu, 2010). Kodz et al. (2002) also emphasize the importance of managerial support in implementing FWA as a key contributing factor to employee work-life balance. Manager 1 supports Kodz et al. (2002) in their response stated in Table 11 of their vital role in supporting their employees for a better work-life balance.

Mothers returning from maternity leave and parents who are primary caregivers to young children required more flexibility to balance their work and home responsibilities (Cooper & Baird, 2015). Manager 1 and Manager 2 in Table 11 made reference to employees responsible for meeting the day-to-day requirements of their young children to drop them off at school and pick them up during the standard working hours.

Research has suggested that organisations which possess an image promoting work-life balance are considered desirable for retaining employees, increasing productivity and attracting good talent to their organisation (Lazăr & Raţiu, 2010). The interview response from Employee 6 in Table 12 supports the notion of FWA having a positive impact on employees increasing their level of productivity and ensuring a work-life balance. It can then be argued that organisations who implement FWA policies for employees require management support to guide employees with embarking FWA to encourage a work-life balance. FWA policies have limited effect without the support from Managers.

6.2.4 Emergence of COVID-19

The last emerging theme from Research Question 1 which was discussed in the interviews with respondents was the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on organisations adopting FWA (Atiku et al., 2020). In 6.2.2 the researcher identified that organisations who were late adopters of FWA were coerced into FWA policies as a matter of policy regulations due to Lock-down restrictions. In Table 13, Manager 3 explains how FWA in their organisation was induced by COVID-19 which required employers to be more supportive as employees had their work follow them home.

Another significant finding was organisations which had FWA policies in place prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, what was noted from Employee 4, as stated in Table 14, there was a lack of Manager support for employees to take up FWA due to supervision difficulties which conflicted with employee needs for a flexible working arrangement despite the FWA policies in place. Research has found some Managers do encounter challenges when employee monitoring and supervision is required (Basile & Beauregard, 2016).

The findings from the interviews with the participants in Table 14 suggest that COVID-19 event played as a stimulus for organisations to adapt FWA policies effectively into practice and further supporting the notion of how key a role Manager support plays in employee flexible working arrangements (Cooper & Baird, 2015).

6.2.5   Conclusion

The responses from the interview questions uncovered what Managers and Employees perceived as flexible working arrangements from their experiences in their organisations. The research data found that flexible working schedules enable employees to control the pace of their work during the course of the day attending to work requirements and personal obligations. It was also clear that FWA is applicable to some job types in certain industries (Stavrou et al., 2009).

The respondent data was evident that the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic induced a new way of working for organisations, which influenced them to adopt remote working capabilities, particularly organisations considered to be late adopters of FWA. The results from respondents referring to FWA due to COVID-19 was consistent across the sample of participants, which has to be noted that the data was collected during the period of the pandemic.

A key theme across bother Managers and Employees on the objective of FWA was to provide employees with a work-life balance. Research has found evidence of employees with a work-life balance have high job satisfaction; and that the support from Managers plays a key role in employee work-life balance (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Visser & Williams, 2006).

6.3   Research Question 2

What do employees perceive as organizational support in flexible working arrangements?

This research question seeks the perceptions of employees from their experiences and observations on their views of organizational support in the context of flexible working arrangements. By understanding the perspectives of employees and the supporting statements from the managers, the researcher can assess the factors emerging themes in support of the literature in Chapter 2.

In Research Question 2, there were four themes which emerged from the data collected and discussed in Chapter 5. The four emerging themes which will be discussed are Trust Between Managers and Employees; Work Environment; Decision Making and Employee Well-being.

6.3.1 Trust between Managers and Employees

The observations from both managers and employees found that trust was of high importance in their organisations when employees are working in FWA. Outcomes were essentially due to the limited oversight on employees, managers regarded trust as an important ingredient to a working relationship. Similarly, for employees, who regarded a trustworthy relationship is key for effective communication and delegation of responsibility (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Ozmen, 2019).

Manager 4 in Table 15 emphasised that working in a flexible working environment, the trust factors is a critical resource for managers and employees to equip themselves with. Kurtessis et al. (2017) meta-analysis evaluation on the theory of perceived organizational support found that trust was a common outcome between employees and manager relationships.

It is important to note due to the research conducted during the global pandemic, perspectives of respondents were influenced by the COVID-19 environment. From the data collected from the participants, it had also been apparent that trust can be induced unto managers when events out of their control require them to trust their employees for business continuity. In Table 16 Manager 4 reflects how The COVID-19 outbreak has enabled employers and employees to make informed decisions and develop trust between stakeholders (Atiku et al., 2020).

A contrary response which arose from respondent Manager 3 found a disconnect in trust between managers and employees. The managers operate a small-medium sized business in the manufacturing industry where HR policies are relatively fluid. The researcher's observations were that an element of distrust during flexible working arrangements arose from employees due to lack of accountability, lack of response and not meeting deliverables despite all the support provided by the organisation. It may be argued that the disconnect may be in the level of support provided by managers. Kurtessis et al. (2017) mention that the generalised perception related to how the organisation values employee contribution along with care for employee well-being is what employees perceive as organizational support. Further research may be conducted on POS in the manufacturing industry where employee and manager relations may be studied.

6.3.2 Work Environment

An enabling work environment was an emerging theme in from the data collected from the interview participants whereby employees have expressed its importance particularly in the context of flexible working arrangements. Kurtessis et al. (2017) found that job security and developmental opportunities were moderately and strongly related to POS respectively. The researcher wanted to identify whether employees working in FWA had any impact on job security and had experienced any developmental opportunities.

The researcher engaged with both managers and employees to identify any relationship between FWA and job security. The responses from the participants in Table 19 found there was minimal impact on job security from an FWA perspective. Manager 2, Manager 3 and Employee 3 stated from their experience there had been no connection between job security and developmental opportunities in their work environment under FWA. However, it was noteworthy from the data collected that the respondent in Table 20 expressed that the main impact on job security was due to the COVID-19 pandemic moreso, than it was due to FWA. This was in relation to COVID-19 regulations halting business performance impacting company liquidity which threatened employee job security.

6.3.3 Decision Making

Research conducted by Kurtessis et al. (2017) found that employee participation in decision making was highly related to POS where work environment allowed the opportunity to delegate decision making responsibility to employees. The researcher's objective was to identify perceived organizational support whereby delegated authority for decision making was extended to employees while working in FWA.

Emerging insights obtained by the researcher by assessing responses from interview participant in Table 21 reviews manager and employee experience of delegating decision making to employees and experience to make decisions while in FWA. Employee 1 experience is there has been an increase in decision making participation with employees due to the nature of limited prompt communication where actions need to be taken.

We can then argue that employees experience perceives organizational support as the employer values their contributions to make the right decision in the best interest of the organisation. Kurtessis et al. (2017) supports the argument where the research mentions decision making ranked highly in job enrichment conditions closely related to POS.

6.3.4 Employee Well-being

Employee well-being is arguably a key construct in employee perceived organizational support as it's the employee's perspective that their contributions are valued while the employer cares for their well-being (Affum-Osei et al., 2020; Kinicki & Fugate, 2017; Kurtessis et al., 2017). It is worth noting that employees working in FWA experience challenges associated with personal life and work balance, physical and mental perspectives.

What has emerged from the researcher was the required support structures organisation need in place for their employees working in FWA. The data collected from participants found that support structures had a direct influence on employee job security.

Participant responses referred to in Table 22 from Manager 2, were of the view that vested interest into the organisation where contributions are valued, were returned by line managers valuing the sanity and well-being of employees which transitioned into the organisation's culture. Kurtessis et al. (2017) subjective well-being of employees based on the evaluating satisfaction was strongly associated with job satisfaction which supports of the data found from Manager 2.

Organisations have realised the need to actively take into consideration the mental well-being of employees as it has an impact on employee engagement and job satisfaction, particularly when employees are working in FWA (Giovanis, 2018). Findings from Employee 4 and Manager 3 in Table 23 refer to employers providing support structures for the mental well-being of employees experiencing frustration and on-job anxiety. The perspective of the participants is an emotional sense of care.

6.3.5 Conclusion

The responses from the interview questions focused on the key themes addressing perceived organizational support. The research data found that trust between managers and employees were critical particularly when employees are working under FWA (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Ozmen, 2019).

The respondent data was evident that the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic induced trust between managers and employees as employees were now required to make decisions with limited oversight while working under FWA. An opportunity for further research may be conducted on contrary mistrust of managers and employees working in FWA from the manufacturing industry in small to medium sized organisations.

6.4   Research Question 3

What is the impact of organizational support with employee engagement?

This research question seeks to find the relationship between perceived organisation support and employee engagement from observations of employee experiences associated with their dedication to work and effort applied which may also lead to work absorption. By understanding the perspectives of both managers and employee participants, the researcher can assess the factors emerging themes in support of the literature in Chapter 2.

In Research Question 3, the three emerging themes from the data collected and discussed in Chapter 5 were: Absorption in work; Dedication to work and persistent work through difficulties. The theoretical view of (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2006) defines employee engagement as a state of mind associated with dedication and absorption, which is in support of the emerging themes from the data collected by the researcher. Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) refer to absorption and dedication as critical dimensions of employee engagement.

6.4.1   Absorption in work

The Researcher's objective was to identify the working experiences of interview participants associated with their level of engagement. Respondent results referred to in Table 26 by Employee 1 mentions absorption experienced while working in FWA as employee time boundaries had become obscured when one is fully engaged in their work, which has been supported by the research of Meintjes & Hofmeyr (2018) and Schaufeli et al. (2006).

Absorption has been considered as a positive work ethic leading to enhanced employee engagement in the work environment, however excessive efforts may lead to occupational burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2006). In the context of FWA, the Researcher found the interview participants response in Table 25 who were absorbed in their work were vulnerable to occupational burnout and that employers were either oblivious to their experience; or was an oversight from the organisation's perspective. Manager 1 in Table 25 mentions that employees have been well engaged while working under FWA and absorbed in their work, however experiences from employee feedback referred to potential burnout which the organisation had not been aware of.

The Researcher found from the experiences of the participants that FWA had created an expectation that employees are readily available at all times and due to working flexibility, there had been an increase in job demand requirements along with back-to-back meetings. Due to the impact of the global pandemic, virtual meetings through telecommunication platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Teams or internal platform alternatives had increased popularity (Atiku et al., 2020).

From Employee 5 experience in Table 28 the technology in conjunction with the FWA had exacerbated employee absorption with intermittent meeting distractions to do their work. The Researcher also observed the organisations attempt to minimize employee overload through increase job demand and excessive meetings was to send communication across the organisation. The views of Employee 7 in Table 26 mentioned that email communication sent to the organisation to address meeting overload has been ineffective as it is assumed that employees have the capacity to read the communication emails.

It can then be argued that organisations address burnout as an afterthought with the assumption that excessively absorbed employees are engaged employees. Further research can be conducted on the extent to which absorption transitions to burnout in flexible working arrangements. The research conducted by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) on job demands and burnout may be used as a basis of the proposed study.

6.4.2 Dedication to work

The second emerging theme from Research Question 3 was associated with dedication to work. The theoretical view of employee engagement in the research conducted by Schaufeli et al. (2006) refers to dedication as a sense of enthusiasm towards work task deliverables. Meintjes & Hofmeyr (2018) and Schaufeli et al. (2006).

The Researcher's objective was to identify employee dedication towards their work in flexible working arrangements. The data emerging from the interview participant in Table 29 from Manager 6 suggests that FWA has contributed to employee dedication in enhancing the quality of their work which has had an influence on developing trust between manager and employee. It can be argued that dedication influences trust which is an antecedent of perceived organizational support. Dedicated employees working in FWA who trust their employer are regarded as engaged employees and may have the perception that their organisations support them.

Employee 7 in Table 30 mentions the employee experience of working in FWA has improved their dedication to their work as the opportunity to work with flexibility has awarded them greater ownership of their time and feel valued by the organisation for recognising the importance of FWA and impact it has on their time.

6.4.3 Persistent effort devoted to work

The Researcher's objective was to identify the experiences of the interview participants in terms of their persistent efforts and devotion towards their work in FWA despite any difficulties experienced which may hamper or enhance their engagement. Research conducted by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) found that there is a significant relationship between effort related on-work demand and absorption, while Kurtessis et al. (2017) theory suggests that POS is strongly related to employee effort devoted to work. It can then be argued that employee effort and devotion to their work is a connecting theme between POS and employee engagement.

The interview participant response from the data emerging in Table 31 found that Employee 5 from the financial services industry had minimal distractions from their place of work in FWA and were able to apply persistent effort towards their work. The response extracted in Table 32 from Employee 1, from the manufacturing industry, who similarly had minimal distractions from their place of work under FWA, had challenges to apply persistent effort as they found little motivation when working in isolation. Further studies may be conducted on employee engagement and effort devoted to work impacted by the motivation and work environment.

6.4.4 Conclusion

Employee absorption is a regarded as a positive work ethic leading to employee engagement, however organisations may need to take cognisance of excessive absorption may lead to possible burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Organisations can better prepare their employees through awareness of employees overly working hard and encourage amicable working practise.

The Researcher found that FWA has been a positive attribute to employee dedication towards their work and a key ingredient to establishing trust between managers and employees. Dedication can arguably be viewed as a key theme for both POS and employee engagement.

The general assumption that one can apply persistent effort when working with minimal distractions was contradicted by the evidence from the data collected from the interview participant in Table 32 which provides opportunity for further studies to be conducted on effort devoted to work impacted by motivation and the employee work environment.

CHAPTER 7   **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the relationship between perceived organisational support (POS) and employee engagement in the context of flexible work arrangements (FWA) exploring emerging themes which interconnect the relationship between POS and employee engagement. There have been several contributions to literature on the influence of employee engagement in FWA, however limited academic research has been conducted on FWA and its role in POS and employee engagement. This research intends to contribute to existing body of knowledge by examining the emerging themes influencing the relationship between perceived organisational support and employee engagement across various organisations in South Africa operating in three different industries.

In a constantly evolving work environment organisations have had greater job demand expected from employees, while employees seek reciprocal care in order to remain engaged particularly for employees working in flexible work arrangements. This has been essential for organisations to improve employee performance and minimise employee turnover.

POS has benefits for employers by enhancing employees' positive beliefs and attitudes about the organization. As a result, employees are more likely to be emotionally committed to the organization, inclined to increase performance and contributes to employees' psychological well-being (Ahmed & Musarrat Nawaz, 2015; Kurtessis et al., 2017). The research basis on employee engagement is founded in the existing literature conducted by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) on the theoretical study associated with the dedication and absorption.

The chapter covers the key findings from the research along with highlighting the practical implications for organisations. The chapter also briefly discusses the limitations of the research and provides recommendations for future research.

7.2 Principal findings

The study has effectively responded to the research problem as set out in Chapter 1 which aims to understand the emerging themes in perceived organisational support in the organisation and employee engagement in the context of flexible working arrangement. Flexible working arrangement have proven to have a positive association with employee

performance and provide work life balance for employees (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Ortega, 2009).

The four-emerging finding from the research conducted on perceived organizational support were trust between managers between managers and employees, work environment, decision making and employee well-being. A metanalysis study found there a moderate relationship of POS on trust between managers, employees and a stronger relationship on trust in the organisation (Kurtessis et al., 2017). The study found that the subjective well-being of employee engagement increases the feeling of well trusted and empowered by the organization. It can be noted that employees who recognised the company as being supportive were more willing to reciprocate with discretionary effort.

Further insights were gathered in relation to the employee dedication to work and absorption. The researcher found that while employees work in flexible work arrangements were more dedicated to their work and when absorbed in their work employees were highly productive. However, absorbed employees may face the possibility of potential burnout as employees working FWA environment increased on work demand with extensive meeting engagements (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

7.2.1 The context of FWA and employee engagement

FWAs were found to improve organisational performance by positively affecting employee engagement enablers, as well as having direct organisational performance outcomes.

Flexible work programs are work arrangements where employees are given greater scheduling freedom on how they fulfill the obligations of their positions. The most commonplace of these programs is flextime, which gives workers far greater leeway in terms of the time when they begin and end work, provided they put in the total number of hours required by the employer (Chen & Fulmer, 2018).

Employees were able to display higher levels of engagement because of FWAs allowing them to better balance their work-life conflict. Employees recognised feelings of trust and empowerment as a necessary antecedent for high levels of employee.

Flexible work programs arrangements provide greater scheduling freedom on employees how they fulfill their work obligations, more often FWAs, enable employees to display higher engagement in their work by having the ability to work remotely and focus their efforts more effectively.

Employees with FWAs were also found to be more productive from the autonomy granted which allowed them to work during times which they found were most productive for them, at locations which allowed them to be both productive as well as innovative. There are many factors influencing healthy work life balance, include job satisfaction, job stress, commitment to company, customer satisfaction, loss and replacement of employee cost and productivity. The respondent results reflected as evidence of the trend, in similar flexible working arrangements offered to employees across organisations, the most common theme which emerged was flexible working schedules and how it influences a better work life balance.

Work life balance is a common theme amongst managers, where organisations had introduced flexible working arrangements policies to assist employees with the balancing personal commitments, more commonly with the employees who had small children and were the primary care giver, while managing to meet their work deliverables. It had also emerged amongst managers that there had been evidence of improved employee performance when employees had a better work-life-balance.

The study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which required the researcher to gain perspective of respondents' experience prior to the emergence of COVID-19 and during the COVID-19.

7.2.2   Perceived organizational support and employee engagement

The empirical test derived by Kahn's (1990) model, found that meaningfulness, safety, and availability were significantly related to engagement. They also found job enrichment and role fit to be positive predictors of meaningfulness; rewarding co-worker and supportive supervisor relations were positive predictors of safety, while adherence to co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors. From the basis of the research followed the theoretical views derived from meta-analysis by Schaufeli et al. (2006).

Based on the vast amount of research on organizational support theory, our recommended practices for promoting POS are a work in progress. Perceived organizational support an important job resource that helps employees to cope with the growing job demands in the ever-demanding work environment. Past studies indicate that POS ensures organizational endorsement, faith, regard, and status to the employees (Ahmed & Musarrat Nawaz, 2015; Eisenberger et al., 1990).

7.3 Implications for management and other stakeholders

The research has identified practical ways in which practitioners can successfully manage and implement FWAs to promote employee engagement. The research has recognised that FWAs do have an influence on various themes of employee engagement, which has become a necessary driver for businesses to improve employee performance and reduce employee turnover

The creation of organizational cultures that support flexible working arrangements to meet the needs of employees and employers may be one of the major challenges facing organizations at a time when human resources are so crucial in the global economy.

There are many benefits from applying flexible schedules and there are some negative outcomes, however the advantages to healthy work life balance are as follows:

- Reduced costs – high turnover and absenteeism, in any organisation, is a sign of job stress and low self-confidence therefore reducing absenteeism should be a priority because by doing so, business costs will also decrease (Lazăr & Raţiu, 2010).

- Enhanced organizational image and retention of "desirable" employees – this simply means that companies who are well-known for their progressive work-life balance, can attract the best of the best employees in terms of qualification and experience.

- Increased productivity and employees' performance – There are much research that proves that work-life initiatives have a positive impact on the employees and the company as well. Companies that offer a more diverse selection of work-life initiatives are in a better position to attract and retain quality employees thereby increasing performance and profits. Improved customer satisfaction

7.4 Limitations of the research

The researcher encountered several limitations emerging during the study.

- The research was conducted during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the researcher had to gain the perspective of participant experiences prior and during the emergence of the global pandemic. It had been evident that the COVID-19 outbreak may have been the only stimulus for organisation to work in FWA.

- The sample selection may not have represented the complete population and the industry selection disregarded other participating industries. The selection of industry participants was based on ease of access to those particular industries to have a comparative view.

- The study did not take into context the leadership styles which may influence trust and the relationship between managers and employees. The research was particularly focused on emerging themes associated with the research question addressing perceived organizational support.

- Fluidity: The interview guideline provided a structured guide for the interview process. The researcher made every attempt to maintain a fluid discussion during the interview. The respondents at times may have addressed proceeding questions during their response where the researcher may have proactively made an attempt to draft notes on those questions to avoid repetition.

7.5   Suggestion for further research

The Researcher made note of various aspects which were outside the boundaries of the basis of research in the discussion section. A summary of suggestions for future research is given as follows:

- Further research may be conducted on POS in the manufacturing industry where employee and manager relations examining the element of trust. A contrary response which from a manager in the manufacturing industry found there is a disconnect in trust between managers and employees and provides the basis for potential research to be explored.

- The Researcher found that while common results from the research findings stated that employees can be more devoted towards work in FWA with minimal distractions, further studies may be conducted on employee engagement and effort towards work impacted by the motivation and work environment.

- Lastly further research can be conducted on the extent to which absorption transitions to burnout in flexible working arrangements. The Researcher found there may be a fine line between employee experience in work absorption and potential burnout which may be studied in greater depth for further research.

7.6   Conclusion

The literature has found a wide range of studies on flexible working arrangements discussing the differences provided by organisations and the benefits therein for organisations to implement FWA. The research has successfully explored the emerging themes which provided a clear holistic view of perceived organizational support and employee engagement in the context of flexible working arrangements. However, the research also depicted that it's not POS alone that can influence employee engagement.

The literature also unveiled that in flexible working arrangements, trust is an important construct between managers and employees (Richardson, 2010). The researcher absorbed from what the research in literature made reference to the themes addressed in the study. The researcher found a strong relationship of trust between managers and employees influences aspects of flexible working arrangements, perceived organizational support and employee engagement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 : Informed consent letter

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

Research topic:

The perceived organizational support and employee engagement in the context of flexible working arrangements

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am conducting research on Flexible Working Arrangements in an organization across various industries and I am trying to find out more about the perception of organizational support from employees and managers. Our interview is expected to last about 45 minutes and will help us understand how South African organizations implement flexible working arrangements for their employees and the association of employee engagement. **Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** *All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below*

Researcher name	**Odirile Moalusi**
Supervisor	**Anel Meintjes**
Email	**26115167@mygibs.co.za**

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2   : Interview questions addressing Research Question 1

Time allocation	Theme	Sub Theme	Research Question		Interview Question	Perspective (M/E)	Article
10 min	Flexible work arrangements	Work life balance/ flexible schedule	What are flexible working arrangements in your organisation?	Q1	Why do you think flexible working arrangments is available in your organisation?	Manager and Employee	Menez and Kelliher (2017), Conradie and de Klerk (2019)
				Q2	What does flexible working arrangement look like in your organisation?		
				Q3	How is your experience of flexible working arrangement in your organisation?		
				Q4	How is your employees experience of flexible working arrangments in your organisation?	Manager	
				Q5	How has your experience been with your manager under flexible working arrangements?	Employee	

Appendix 3   : Interview questions addressing Research Question 2

25 min	Perceived organisational support	Supervisor support/ Co-workers support	What is your view of organisational support for flexible working arrangement?	Q6	What is your experience of manager/supervisor support in your organisation?	Manager and Employee	kurtessis (2015)
				Q7	In the context of flexible work arrangements, how does the support from your manager inspire/enables you to achieve the goals of the organisation?	Employee	
				Q8	In the context of flexible work arrangements, how do you inspire employees to achieve the goals of the organisation?	Manager	
				Q9	How does your organisation associate trust between managers and employees in flexible working arrangements?	Manager and Employee	
		Fairness		Q10	What is your experience for employee participation in decision making, in the context of flexible work arrangements?	Manager and Employee	
				Q11	How do you feel your organisation supports the well-being of employees in flexible working arrangements?	Manager and Employee	
				Q12	How have flexible working arrangement impacted the level of job security for employees?	Manager and Employee	
		HR Practices of the organisation and job conditions		Q13	What is your experience of developmental opportunties in the context of flexible working environment?	Manager and Employee	
				Q14	In your work role, under flexible work arrangements, do you have autonomy to make decisions?	Employee	
				Q15	How have your work characteristcs been affected by flexible working arrangements?	Employee	

Appendix 4   : Interview questions addressing Research Question 3

15 min	Employee Engagement	Employee dedication towards work, vigor and absorption in their work	How does perceived organisational support associate with employee engagement?	Q16	How has employee dedication been affected by flexible work arrangements?	Manager	Meintjes and Hofmeyr (2018) and Pelzer (2019)
				Q17	How do you feel flexible working arrangement has affected your dedication to your work?	Employee	
				Q18	What difficulties have you encountered while working under flexible work arrangements?	Manager and Employee	
				Q19	Have you been able to put in persistent consientious effort into work while working under flexible working arrangements, even when facing difficulties?	Employee	
				Q20	What is your view of employee absorption in work while working under flexible work arrangements?	Manager and Employee	
				Q21	How are organisations supporting employees absorbed in their work while working under flexible work arrangments?	Manager and Employee	

Appendix 5   : Ethical Clearance

MastersResearch2020 <MastersResearch2020@gibs.co.za>   16 Nov 2020, 09:58
to me, MastersResearch2020 ▾

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

Ethical Clearance
Approved

Dear Odirile Moalusi,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Ethical Clearance Form

Kind Regards

Appendix 6 : Atlas.ti codes

Codes created

EE: Absorption commonly experienced by those with no family environments.
EE: Absorption mitigated by allowing employees to take time off
EE: Absorption mitigated through communication with employees to be cognisant of burnout
EE: Absorption only noticed as an afterthought when employees have burnt out
EE: always expected to be available for a meeting requires longer hours
EE: Challenges getting projects done because of ongoing meetings
EE: COVID environment there has been not been a lot of support for employees.
EE: dedication to work not hampered
EE: Dedication to work partly hampered
EE: Difficulties with home distractions
EE: Effort is inconsistent as motivation on work is self-drawn
EE: Electricity disruptions and connection issues have been an issue
EE: Employees dedication diminishes, now they do their own thing
EE: Employees have been difficult to get a hold of while in FWA
EE: Employees time management has been questionable
EE: Employees were more dedicated
EE: Experienced absorption regularly
EE: FWA has contributed to absorption in work
EE: Having a family breaks absorption
EE: Home office environment has not had any difficulties in doing work
EE: Home office environment needs to be established and adjusted
EE: Improved levels of engagement
EE: Individuals staying alone struggle to be more engaged.
EE: Management difficulty to oversee and monitor employee performance
EE: Motivation and engagement are correlated
EE: No absorption experienced at all in this organisation
EE: No tangible measures by organisation to address absorption
EE: not working as efficiently as opposed to working in the office
EE: Oversight on supporting employees absorbed in work
EE: Tracking deliverables and monitoring staff has been challenging while in FWA
EE: Work efficiency has been impacted due to working extended hours
EE: Work enjoyment has been affected.
EE: working harder and sometimes overtime
FWA: Ability to balance studies with work commitments
FWA: Adapting to the new way of working flexibly
FWA: Autocratic leadership style not supportive of FWA
FWA: Autonomy to decide how you want to schedule your day
FWA: Challenges with power cuts and connection issues
FWA: Decline in productivity
FWA: Dependent on having the correct infrastructure and environment
FWA: Developmental benefit to better use employee time
FWA: Emergence of the pandemic
FWA: Employees need to be micromanaged
FWA: Enabling employees to work during the pandemic

FWA: Flexible working schedule
FWA: Flexible working schedule has been expanded and measured for employees
FWA: Inability to adapt to the new way of working flexibly
FWA: Lack of prioritising work deliverables
FWA: Limited communication breaks responsiveness
FWA: Management has not been supportive of FWA
FWA: Managers need to trust subordinates to deliver
FWA: Managing meeting times with employees
FWA: Micromanagers having challenges adapting
FWA: Motivating employees by reminding them what they are working towards
FWA: Nature of work may not allow complete flexibility
FWA: Negative work experience
FWA: no clock watching
FWA: Not responsive to work emails
FWA: office workers
FWA: office workers have flexibility
FWA: onsite workers
FWA: onsite workers have the benefit of working shifts
FWA: onsite workers not much flexibility
FWA: Organisations not seizing opportunity for flexible working arrangement
FWA: Poor performance and lack of commitment
FWA: Positive experiences
FWA: Positive working experience
FWA: Preference to work from the office
FWA: Remote working
FWA: Responsible for their time
FWA: Senior employees have more flexibility
FWA: Support of infrastructure provided to employees
FWA: To enhance productivity
FWA: understanding employee preferred environment
FWA: Value associated with managers acknowledging well-being of employees
FWA: Value associated with trust
FWA: Valuing the emotional well-being of employees
FWA: Work life balance
FWA: Working at your own pace
POS: A difference of requirement between office staff and staff on site
POS: A disconnect in trust for employees as they have been found not to prioritize work
POS: Allowing staff to balance work and life obligations
POS: An expected level of maturity which requires working harder
POS: Collaborative participation has diminished from employees
POS: Creating an environment that enables staff to work at their best
POS: decision making for employees
POS: delegating of responsibility to inspire trust
POS: Employees become excited about work
POS: Flexible working arrangements has not had any correlation to job security
POS: Further challenges with working from home which are mitigated when at the office
POS: FWA forces managers to trust their employees

POS: FWA has contributed to low job security
POS: Giving employees perspective
POS: Growth is often progressed through starting consulting business
POS: Incentive based motion to inspire employees
POS: Low level of decision making for employees while in FWA
POS: management is sceptical of trusting employees with expensive equipment
POS: Management support enables employees to drive positive results
POS: Managers need a level of empathy to support employees
POS: Managing people and driving results
POS: minimal trust for employees
POS: no correlation with job security
POS: No development opportunities
POS: Online and e-learning developmental opportunities
POS: open door philosophy for employees who need support for well being
POS: Pandemic has been the main contributor to job security
POS: Positive experience with management supporting FWA
POS: Projects and work exposure to develop employees
POS: Provide means for staff to deal with stressful tasks
POS: providing employees with distance learning financial assistance
POS: Support from manager can drive positive results
POS: support of well-being is unstructured
POS: The environment provides no capacity for developmental opportunity
POS: Trust goes both ways between managers and employees
POS: Trust hampered due to low productivity
POS: Trust requires managers who understand the challenges
POS: Trusting employees to allow them the freedom to work in a way that's best for them
POS: Well-being of employees has been an afterthought
POS: Willing to go the extra mile for the employer
POS: work characteristics have changed positively towards productivity

Themes emerged

Research Question1
- Employees work at their own pace
- Remote working
- Work-Life-Balance
- Adapting to a new way of working

Research Question 2
- Induced trust
- Job security
- Employee delegated authority
- Support structures

Research Question 3
- Early stages of possible burnout
- Employee sense of enthusiasm
- Employee working through difficulties