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**Flexible Working Arrangements and how they affect
Employee Satisfaction and Productivity**

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Summary

The goal of this Master's Dissertation was to examine this so-called "redefined era" of work flexibility. I say "so-called" as from the evidence found while examining the topic of this Master's Dissertation, it had come to my attention that flexible working arrangements had been around for many years worldwide even though here in Cyprus such flexible working arrangements were introduced in Cyprus due to the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to limit and/or control the spread of the virus.

As you will see through my examination of this topic, many organizations had adopted attention flexible forms of work, which include, but are not limited to, flexible working hours, teleworking working from home, etc. This Master's Dissertation seeks to examine the questions of whether such flexible working arrangements affected in any way, either negatively or positively, employee productivity and satisfaction.

For the purposes of this Master's Dissertation, I used the qualitative method of research and conducted the following interviews:

- 20 face-to-face interviews with mostly open-ended questions allowing my respondents to analyze their thoughts where possible taking into account their feelings on the matters addressed. These 20 samples are employees of a large construction company in Cyprus. I tried to have a sample whereby the respondents were half males, half females and divided their positions - managerial positions and non-managerial positions. I then analyzed the results using Microsoft Excel.
- 2 telephone interviews with employees of another construction company in Cyprus and the interviews were more of a conversation like interview where I mostly allowed the respondents to talk freely without much guidance with regards the subject matter.
- Face-to-face discussion with four employees of a multi-asset broker in Limassol whereby all respondents were part of the Real Estate and Construction Department of this company.

The results showed that **nearly all** employees felt that some form of flexible working arrangements is desirable as this offers them a better balance between professional and personal life. There were some that agreed strongly with this and some that merely agreed, but all felt that such arrangements were desirable.

Περίληψη

Ο στόχος αυτής της διατριβής ήταν να εξετάσω τη νέα-λεγόμενη «επαναπροσδιορισμένη εποχή» ευελιξίας στην εργασία. Χρησιμοποίησα την φράση "νέα-λεγάμενη" λόγω του ότι, από τα στοιχεία που έχω συλλέξει για σκοπούς της αυτής της διατριβής, έχει έρθει στην αντίληψή μου ότι οι εργασίες με ευέλικτες ρυθμίσεις υπήρχαν εδώ και χρόνια παγκοσμίως, παρόλο που εδώ στην Κύπρο εισήχθησαν τέτοιου είδους ρυθμίσεις λόγω της πανδημίας COVID-19 ως τρόπος περιορισμού ή/και ελέγχου της εξάπλωσης του ιού.

Όπως θα διαπιστώσετε και εσείς, κατά την εξέταση αυτού του θέματος, πολλοί οργανισμοί είχαν υιοθετήσει ευέλικτες μορφές εργασίας, οι οποίες περιλαμβάνουν, ενδεικτικά, ευέλικτο ωράριο εργασίας, τηλεργασία, εργασία από το σπίτι κ.λπ. Η διατριβή αυτή επιδιώκει να εξετάσει τα ερωτήματα του κατά πόσον οι εν λόγω ευέλικτες εργασιακές ρυθμίσεις επηρέασαν με οποιονδήποτε τρόπο, είτε αρνητικά είτε θετικά, την παραγωγικότητα και την ικανοποίηση των εργαζομένων.

Για τους σκοπούς της παρούσας Διπλωματικής Εργασίας, χρησιμοποίησα την ποιοτική μέθοδο της έρευνας και διεξήγαγα τις ακόλουθες συνεντεύξεις:

- Είκοσι προσωπικές συνεντεύξεις με κυρίως ανοιχτές ερωτήσεις που επέτρεψαν στους ερωτηθέντες να αναλύσουν τις σκέψεις τους, όπου είναι δυνατόν, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τα συναισθήματά τους για τα θέματα που εξετάζονται. Αυτά τα είκοσι δείγματα είναι υπάλληλοι μιας μεγάλης κατασκευαστικής εταιρείας στην Κύπρο. Προσπάθησα να έχω ένα δείγμα σύμφωνα με το οποίο οι ερωτηθέντες ήταν μισοί άνδρες, μισές γυναίκες και μοιράστηκαν τις θέσεις τους - διευθυντικές θέσεις και μη διευθυντικές θέσεις. Στη συνέχεια ανέλυσα τα αποτελέσματα χρησιμοποιώντας το Microsoft Excel.
- Δύο τηλεφωνικές συνεντεύξεις με υπαλλήλους άλλης κατασκευαστικής εταιρείας στην Κύπρο και οι συνεντεύξεις ήταν περισσότερο μια συνομιλία μεταξύ αυτών των ατόμων με σκοπό να επιτρέψω στους ερωτηθέντες να μιλήσουν ελεύθερα χωρίς πολλή καθοδήγηση σχετικά με το θέμα.
- Δια ζώσης συζήτηση με τέσσερις εργαζόμενους multi asset broker στη Λεμεσό, όπου όλοι οι ερωτηθέντες ήταν όλοι κάτω από το Τμήμα Ακίνητης Περιουσίας και Κατασκευών αυτής της εταιρείας.

Τα αποτελέσματα έδειξαν ότι **σχεδόν όλοι** οι εργαζόμενοι θεώρησαν ότι κάποια μορφή ευέλικτων ρυθμίσεων εργασίας είναι επιθυμητή, καθώς αυτό τους προσφέρει μια καλύτερη ισορροπία μεταξύ επαγγελματικής και προσωπικής ζωής. Υπήρχαν ορισμένοι που συμφώνησαν έντονα με αυτό και ορισμένοι που απλώς συμφώνησαν, όμως όλοι θεώρησαν ότι τέτοιες ρυθμίσεις ήταν επιθυμητές.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Flexible working arrangements have been of concern over the years due to socio-economic challenges, technological advancements as well as globalisation of businesses. But in the recent years, more specifically since the end of 2019, flexible working arrangements have been impelled upon businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic whereby we all saw a rise in flexible arrangements at workplaces, either due to Governmental restrictions imposed; or even as an initiative from companies in order to combat the spread of the virus. Flexible arrangements include, amongst others, flexible working hours, remote working or rotation, which all became somewhat of a “norm” during the pandemic in Cyprus.

Flexible working arrangements have been largely made possible by forward-moving technology (Burgmann, 2012; Richardson and Mckenna, 2014). Technology allows for such flexibility making it possible for employees to work from home, therefore intertwining both career and personal life instantaneously (Andrejic, 2017).

It has been stated that “the context of work is changing precipitously due to the forces of technology, society, demography and globalisation, with the most recent pandemic crisis of covid-19 are creating more challenges and opportunities” (Sharifah and Sharija ,2021)

It has commonly been mentioned by many scholars that flexible working arrangements are useful to both employees and employers and do have a positive outcome on work-life balance and both the wellbeing and contentment of employees, as well as having positive effects on the level of productivity employees have when carrying out their tasks.

What I would like to examine with this Master's Dissertation is whether such flexible working arrangements lead to an increase in employee productivity and satisfaction and whether companies in the Republic of Cyprus should consider incorporating this trend even after the pandemic has become controllable and not such a high risk to mortality. I will focus though on whether the company I worked for till the end of October 2022, should consider incorporating this trend. More specifically, after this Master's Dissertation has been concluded I will present the literature found and the answers from the participants of the interviews carried out, to the CEO and HR Manager of the company which I worked for, in order to see whether flexible working arrangements should be incorporated.

I will try to examine both sides of the coin, in other words, how employers perceive flexible working arrangements and on the other hand, how employees perceive such arrangements. Are their views contrasting? And if so, for what reasons. I will also be comparing the results I found with the results from another two companies.

The reason why I decided to examine and elaborate on this topic is the fact that the pandemic seems to be never-ending with new variants surfacing ever couple of months and therefore it would be prudent to examine whether even under such circumstances one can carry out their work remotely, in the same manner as if they were at their work premises; whether they can carry out their work more effectively; whether such flexibility leads to less productivity; or whether there is no difference with regards to work productivity when one is working remotely or from the work premises.

If companies see that such flexible arrangements lead to higher employee productivity, even after the pandemic dissolves then maybe slowly they may decide to keep such arrangements in place or even offer such arrangements to their employees. If companies have a clear view that flexible arrangements result in increased employee productivity, they may decide to offer such arrangements in order to attract candidates that wish to juggle family responsibilities, studies or even their personal lifestyle (going to the gym, travelling, etc). As stated by Mascura, Korican and Krajnovic, work – life balance and work – life satisfaction may have an impact on productivity in the workplace. Many may argue that if one can juggle both their professional life and social life this is likely to result in less stress as employees will not have to worry about trying to fit

everything in to a hectic schedule and therefore this may likely lead to a more pleasant and productive environment with regards to their work. When the pandemic is just a memory of the past, I would like to see whether companies should keep this arrangement that has now been “forced” on us.

If able to get the feedback I want, I would also like to examine whether employers and employees perceive such flexible working arrangements differently. From a podcast I visited on December 17th, 2021 on “Productivity Puzzles with Bart van Ark”, Mr. Ark stated in his discussion that some argue that working from home during the pandemic “has done wonders for people and organization productivity” by saving time on commuting to the office for example. Mr. Andy Stuart who also joined the podcast, and in a CEO in Governmental Services also stated that working from home was a positive experience to him. But how do employers perceive this type of arrangement?

There are many views on such flexible arrangements and I must try to examine them spherically. Professor Diane Coyle of University of Cambridge who also joined the abovementioned podcast was “sceptical” on the working from home experience due to health issues. She took the podcast to another level stating that employees may strain their eyes, do not have the right equipment to work from home, chairs used at home are not always good for your posture, etc.

I want to examine what managers consider as “productivity of workers” and whether that differentiates from what owners of the organisation perceive “productivity of workers” to be. Mr. Stuart claimed in the abovementioned podcast that there is a major difference between the two. In a survey carried out by him he recognised that there are two most common ways which people view productivity; in other words, the quality of output produced regardless of the time it takes to produce such work and the other was around the efficiency and whether the employees produce more in less time. Such mixed views of how “productivity of workers” is defined means that I will look at the different responses from companies.

A summary of the results from the podcast highlighted that 70% of Senior Managers felt that organizations had the same or better levels of productivity when offering flexible working arrangements and 53% of those organizations felt employees were more productive in comparison to 25% that felt employees were less productive. With regards to how employees felt, 80% felt good or better when allowed to take advantage of flexible working arrangements, for many reasons, amongst others, due to the fact that employees could use technology in new ways, new

outcomes were created, no commuting, more focused, etc. But it is not all positive. Data showed that employees worked more, longer hours, more days and the hours that would usually be needed to commute to work had not been used for their personal leisure but used to carry out work. Therefore, employees devoted commuting time to work. Apart from that, as Professor Coyle stated, surveys highlighted that there are longer term impacts if employees work from home, such as not engaging with other colleagues, new employees will not learn the culture of the company as they will not have the interaction needed if they work from home, then there is the problem of home-schooling and if we go even deeper, the impact especially on women.

This topic is so broad therefore, I have chosen to focus on the following main areas which I will try to examine broadly:

1. How do employers perceive flexible working arrangements versus how employees perceive this? Is there a difference?
2. Are such arrangements beneficial for organizations in terms of employee productivity?
3. Should organizations incorporate such flexible arrangements even after the pandemic has faded away?

I will carry out a survey at a major construction company in Cyprus and see how managerial level staff perceive flexible arrangements in terms of productivity of employees and how employees below managerial level perceive it and whether they prefer such arrangements or not. I will also look at a vast number of articles on this topic and try to analyse surveys that have already been conducted. Finally, my conclusion will be a summary of all the above and whether I believe that flexible working arrangements should become a norm in organizations.

The following chapter will look at some definitions which will be crucial to this Masters Dissertation, such as what is the typical form of employment, what are flexible working arrangements, what corresponds to job satisfaction and employee productivity. I will furthermore present my literature review in accordance to books, articles, presentations, podcasts of some well-known and highly esteemed scholars.

Moving on, Chapter 3 is dedicated to defining the research methodology used to examine whether flexible working arrangements increase employee productivity and satisfaction. Interviews had been carried out for this purpose. Chapter 4 looks at the results of such interviews and last but not

least, Chapter 5 presents my conclusions on the subject matter taking into account the literature, research methodology and even my personal experiences.

Chapter 2

Definitions

What is “typical form of employment”?

In order to clearly understand the difference between one working via a “typical form of employment” and one being offered “flexible working arrangements” we must understand what “typical form of employment” is.

Generally, the basic difference of flexible working arrangements is the deviation of at least a parameter from the standard working model which a company applies. More specifically, typical form of employment is usually based on an agreement between two parties, hence the employer and employee. Through this agreement, the employee is obliged to abide by the employer’s instructions under the employer’s supervision. The employer determines both the time and the place where such employee will carry out his job based on directions and control of the employer. The agreement between employer and employee determines the employees schedule, as well as the approved remuneration (Stavrou and Kilaniotis, 2010).

The above highlights a basic typical working arrangement and should be considered as a reference point for understanding flexible working arrangements where any element mentioned above may be missing or where there is an element of “uncertainty” to the employment contract.

What is “flexible working arrangements”?

Flexible working arrangements is defined as *“any policies and practices, formal or informal, which permit people to vary when and where work is carried out”* (Maxwell et al., 2007). According to Menezes and Kelliher, 2011, *“a deliberately arranged FWA has positive impacts on organization related outcomes, such as increased financial performance, productivity, organizational commitment, and job-related wellbeing, and decreased labor turnover and absenteeism.”* Some forms of flexible working schedules have been introduced largely to meet employer needs for flexibility or to keep costs down (Stavrou and Kilaniotis 2010, p.894) but the necessity for flexible working arrangements is not exclusively for the well-being of the employees but also for organizational benefits.

Flexible working arrangements *“has the potential to be used as strategies to attract unique capabilities and build competencies for competitive advantage”* (Kotey, 2017) which may in turn *“positively affect financial performance”* (Kotey and Sharma, 2019).

In the Republic of Cyprus, flexible working arrangements have become more popular from the beginning of 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the island. As per Eugênia Viana Cerqueira, Benjamin Motte-Baumvol, in *“Flexible work arrangements and household-related journeys. Who takes the lead in dual-earner heterosexual couples?”* or *“alternative work designs”* as per Ann M Brewer, include *“teleworking, working from home, part-time working, or self-employment...have become a hot topic during the COVID-19 outbreak”*.

Workplace flexibility or flexible work arrangements has been around for some time now. As early as 2004, Halpern, D. F. stated that workplace flexibility *“is becoming a popular term in many work venues and research endeavors. It is heralded as a necessity in the contemporary workplace”*. But what is really meant by the term “workplace flexibility”?

Hilla E.J., et al, state in their article that “workplace flexibility” is *“the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where and for how long they engage in work related tasks.*

According to Geetha Subramaniam, Peck-Leong Tan, Balasundram Maniam, Ershad Ali, *“Workplace flexibility is about how flexible work is managed in the workplace so that both the*

employees and businesses benefit". They go on to comment that flexible working arrangements *"are considered a flexible component of 'family friendly policies' and are widely seen as ideal means to achieve a more balanced work and home life"*.

What is more, flexible working arrangements are considered both *"powerful"* and also have a *"positive effect on the employee's attitude and job satisfaction"* (Liechty and Anderson, 2007 p.g 304-317).

In the article by Ellen F. Smith, Declan O. Gilmer, Margaret S. Stockdale, "The importance of culture and support for workplace flexibility: An ecological framework for understanding flexibility support structures", it is stated that *"firms use flexible work arrangements (FWAs) to attract, retain, and satisfy human resource capital, while workers use them to manage work and nonwork demands and to reduce stress and conflict"*.

As per Cerqueira and Motte-Baumvol, 1998 there is no definition universally used with regards to the meaning of flexible work arrangements, but they state that there are two scopes as to how flexibility is perceived. These are the **temporal** and **spatial** dimensions (Burkinshaw, 2018; Moen et al., 2016). With regards to ***temporal flexibility***, *"multiple characteristics can be taken into account, such as the possibility of arriving late or leaving early on certain occasions, of being able to change one's schedule depending on the day and/or week, or even of having control of the schedule* (Schieman and Young, 2010). They go on further and state that *"flexible working can also include control over the number of hours worked, as with part-time jobs. Of course, all of these characteristics are understood to determine the actual level of work flexibility in different degrees. Conversely, Spatial flexibility is by Schieman and Glavin, 2008 as "allowing work outside the usual place of work. The definition of the usual place of work is open to debate. In general, what is covered is telework at home or in any other third place within the framework allowed by the employer and the legislation."*

It is undoubtable that due to the COVID-19 pandemic a major portion of global workforce had been led working from home or to work through more flexible working arrangements whether that be through working flexible hours or days which could assist in limiting contagiousness of the

pandemic to all company workforce or even due to the fact that many needed to stay home to home-schooling or childcare.

Some types of flexible working arrangements include:

1. Staggered hours: whereby as the UK Government defines this, “*an employee has different start, finish and break times from other workers.*”
2. Compressed hours: whereby employees are able to work their normal hours but during reduced number of days.
3. Adjusted shift rotations: allow employees to work in shifts or with rotation to avoid all employees being registered as a contact of someone if one of the employees are found positive to COVID-19.
4. Flexibility clauses: contained in employment agreements which allows employees to use flexibility with regards to times, hours and days of work.
5. Remote working: must have been the most common form of flexible working arrangements during the pandemic, allowing employees to work from home.

What is “job satisfaction”?

The purpose of this Master’s Dissertation is to see whether such flexible working arrangements increased employee job satisfaction. In order to examine this, we must first provide a synopsis of what **job satisfaction** is.

Job satisfaction is the affective orientation that an employee has towards his/her work. It can be considered as an overall feeling about the job or as a related constellation of attitudes about various aspects of the job. Affective disposition on job satisfaction consists of two facets: positive affectivity and negative affectivity. High energy, eagerness, and pleasurable involvement represent positive affectivity while distress, unpleasant involvement, and nervousness show negative affectivity.

What is “employee or workforce productivity”?

Apart from assessing whether through flexible working arrangements employees are satisfied, I would also like to examine through this Master’s Dissertation whether employee productivity is affected in any way, either positively or negatively when an organization allows for such flexible working arrangements or whether there is no connection between flexible working arrangement and employee productivity.

According to a definition provided by TechTarget, “*employee productivity (sometimes referred to as workforce productivity) is an assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers. Productivity may be evaluated in terms of the output of an employee in a specific period of time.*”

Literature Review on whether flexible working arrangements increase employee productivity and satisfaction

Historically, one may argue that the concept of flexibility is not a new concept but it had developed around 1980. Important references to the concept of flexibility have been made by the English researcher, John Atkinson during that time. Specifically, this concept was used when referring to the production industry as well as how it is possible to use human resources (Spreitzer et al., 2017).

The main purpose of flexibility is the survival of the business or the necessity for a business to maintain its identity, and differentiate from other businesses. Flexibility is defined in the international literature as “*the ability of change without the company differentiating its identity.*” When referring to “*corporate identity*” we refer to the way a company or business presents themselves to the public. Companies that are successful at developing a corporate identity are companies that people know by their logo, slogan, and mention of their name (Corporate Identity: Definition, Development and Standards, 2016).

Factors that define flexibility are the position that the business holds, both in the external environment as well as in the internal environment, the processes that adheres to systems. When the resources used by the business lead to capacity of the company develops its competitive advantage. In continuously changing environments adaptive approaches are the most significant survival asset (Spreitzer et al., 2017).

The dictionary meaning of “flexibility” is “the ability to be easily modified” or “willingness to change or compromise”. However, in order for flexibility to take place we must examine what was the normal course of doing things or what was the stable form of working. Flexibility may mean that a company has differentiated itself from other companies and this differentiation may be a reason for attracting new candidates for instance or even due to this differentiation, many employees may find this as a reason to stay in a company, therefore, leading to a decreased employee turnover.

Flexibility is a broad concept when we refer to companies. The term flexibility takes into account many factors such as industry, business, national or global economy, institutions, the business, in other words the external environment. Flexibility concerns the capability of a company to adjust to endogenous and exogenous changes and takes various forms (Stavrou and Kilaniotis, 2010).

Many surveys have taken place in order to establish whether this new norm of flexible working arrangements increases employee productivity and satisfaction. An estimate by Upwork found that 1 in 4 Americans is expected to work remotely through 2021 and out of these, 70% reported that they felt less stressed when working from home and 64% of those prefer hybrid models.

Furthermore, it was also reported that remote working helps in decreasing the amount of time whereby employees are unproductive, by 10 minutes per day to be precise. Moreover, employees working remotely work one more day per week and 47% are more productive.

Another study by Stadford, “Does Working from Home Work / Evidence from a Chinese Experiment” by Nicolas Bloom, James Liang, John Roberts, Zhichun Jenny Ying dated March 3rd, 2015 found that of 16,000 workers over a period of 9 months, working from home increases productivity by 13% due to the fact that employees are able to answer and/or make more calls per hour. This is due to the fact that at home the environment is quieter and employees take fewer breaks when at home as well as less or no sick leave days. This helped in improving work satisfaction as well.

Further to the above, a survey carried out by Connect Solutions showed that 77% of those who work remotely at least a few times a month led to increased productivity and that 30% carry out more work in less amount of time whereas 24% carry out the same work in the same amount of time.

Due to the pandemic, flexible working arrangements have increased worldwide. According to an article by Chandni Kazi and Claire Hastwell posted on February 10th, 2021, pre-pandemic, only 5% of American employees worked from home whereas by May 2020, more than 60% of American employees were working from home. A 2-year study by Great Place to Work of more than 800,000 employees at Fortune 500 companies, found that most people reported stable or even increased productivity level after they had commenced work with flexible working arrangements. Productivity was measured from March to August 2020 and this was compared to the same period in 2019. The survey that was carried out using 715 companies representing over 3 million U.S. employees highlighted the fact that employees felt that due to no daily commuting to work, no lengthy in-person meetings and other factors, helped them accomplish more work.

Another survey which had as its core working from home was that conducted by Aitasker on “The Benefits of Working from Home” published on March 31st, 2020 which found that more people are now searching for remote work opportunities. More specifically, the survey involved 1,004 full-time employees across the U.S., whereby 505 of whom work remotely. Some of the results from the survey were as follows:

- 1 in 4 had to quit their job due to the fact that commuting to work was too long;
- An annual average of \$4,523 had been saved by remote workers due to less fuel consumption;
- 408 hours or 17 days of free time per year was saved by the employees as they did not have to commute;
- Employees working remotely felt healthier in terms of exercising and diet;
- Employees working remotely work 1,4 days more every month or 16,8 days more annually when they are working from home;
- 10 minutes less distraction per day when working from home (27 minutes compared to 37 minutes);

- 56% of employees working on-site found ways to be distracted whereas only 39% found such ways when working remotely.

An article by Lucy O’Connar on “Do Flexible Work Hours Improve Employee Productivity?” updated on March 01st, 2021 found that by offering flexible working hours, businesses can benefit due to the fact that such arrangements can, amongst others:

- Reduce absenteeism: due to less stress, employees are able to manage their existing health conditions, therefore less sick leave time and more productivity;
- Attract and retain top-talent: she studied a survey conducted by IWG published on March 27th, 2019 which reflected that 80% of U.S. workers would turn down a job that did not offer flexible working arrangements and 53% of U.S. respondents stated that it was an important factor to be able to choose where their work location would be.
- Improves employee diversity: candidates that cannot work under a “traditional” working schedule such as candidates with disabilities or caring responsibilities would be able to apply and be awarded a job;
- Increase of job satisfaction, energy and creativity.

Flexible working arrangements have been characterised by managers and employees as more motivating than a bonus, as per CIPD’s article on “Flexible Working: the business case” published in November 2018. More specifically, 9 in 10 employees considered flexible working to be a key motivator with regards their productivity at work and 89% considered flexible working to be more motivating than financial incentives.

In a survey conducted by Regus with 200,000 respondents interviewed during September 2013, managers and business owners globally, believed that productivity was a direct result of flexible working and 75% of respondents agreed.

Kalpana Rathore Solanki states in her 2013 article on “Flexitime association with job satisfaction, work productivity, motivation & employees stress levels” that “*Job satisfaction, motivation is considered one of most essential components of work life, and one of the major factors that has influence on the individuals’ performance at work place.*” She goes on to say that job satisfaction, motivation “*affects the physical and mental capabilities of employees*” and therefore implies that

if an employee is satisfied with his job and feels motivated this means that he will perform better and be more productive at when carrying out their tasks. Productivity is when an employee is able “*constantly achieve his work-related goals*” and when an organizational provides for flexible working arrangements this, according to the research carried out by Kalpana Rathore Solanki “*is a very important factor which can drastically improve the productivity & confidence level, motivate the employee and reduce the stress levels of the employees at same times.*” When stress levels are reduced, employees are able to work better and therefore be more productive.

Sussanna Shagvaliyeva, Rashad Yazdanifard state in their 2014 article on the “Impact of Flexible Working Hours on Work-Life Balance” that many organizations are offering their employees flexible working arrangements as these arrangements benefit both employer and employee, stating that the most common benefit is increased employee productivity which evidently leads to increased organization profitability. Employees that are offered the opportunity to use flexible working arrangements are able to juggled both work life and personal life, having a balance of the two worlds which is very important for employee wellbeing. Therefore, flexible working arrangements help employees focus not only on their careers but also on their family and their social life.

From the bibliography available it is obvious that flexible working arrangements are not only beneficial to the employees but also to the employers. Organizations are willing to provide for flexible working arrangements in order to “*attract, recruit, and retain highly qualified staff*”. By allowing for such an advantage or benefit, employees will be less likely to search for other employment, therefore decreasing employee turnover. Employee turnover is important to any company. It stipulates an employee’s outlook of departing from an organization, or an employee’s readiness to permanently give up working from a company (Hossam, 2014). Employee turnover is a phenomenon that must be controlled due to the disadvantages and weaknesses it brings to a company, it is a critical affair, particularly within the scope of human resources management as it can be very costly for an organization (Abbas & Hollman, 2008). Specifically, when an employee departs from an organization, the ability of the remaining employees to complete their duties will likely be affected (Adkin & Coldwell, 2014).

The fact that an organization offers its employees flexible working arrangements may be seen as the employer is someone that cares about his employee’s wellbeing and wants his employees to

lead a healthy balanced work – personal life. When an employee is satisfied this in turn allows him to be more committed to the organization and therefore if one is more committed, he is able to be more productive.

As mentioned about, flexible working arrangements are beneficial to both employees as well as to employers. With regards to employees, it was taken in the past, before the shift of ideological beliefs was made, that flexible working arrangements were used mostly by women and not so by men, as per S. Lewis and A. L. Humbert, in their 2010 article on “Flexible Working Policies and the Gendered Organization, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.” Nowadays, ideological beliefs are changing and therefore flexible working arrangements are also being used by men as well.

From the bibliography available with regards this topic, it is evident that most believe that flexible working arrangements provide substantial benefits to employees and insinuate that such flexible working arrangements enable a healthy work-life balance, reducing the work-life conflict increasing the choice of employee’s flexibility to work requirements (Kattenbach et al., 2010).

Specifically, employees that are given the opportunity to work from home have reduced travel time to and from the work premises and therefore can use the time that they would have used to commute, for their own personal activities, ie. exercise, resting, taking children to school, even sleeping longer which in turn decreases work burnout and stress in employees.

Impact of flexible forms of work on employee work performance

This section will focus on the future of employees in teleworking as well as how communication and employee productivity may be affected due to this new norm of work.

The future of employees in Teleworking

When looking at the changes brought about due to the COVID-19 pandemic one may argue that the future of businesses will be adopting a hybrid working model, whereby, remote work is combined with employees working at the normal work premises. This model in Cyprus, was applied to more businesses during the pandemic and is considered a “new model”. From the

literature above, we notice that a large percentage of employees feel more productive but conversely, there is also a percentage of employees that feel exhausted and stressed with such hybrid working models (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014).

Why did some employees feel exhausted and stressed? Research carried out by Andrea Alexander (McKinsey partner), highlighted the views of employees with regards to the future of employment as well as whether employees prefer hybrid working models (McKinsey, 2020). This research illustrated the reasons why employees did not feel productive through hybrid working models. Many employees stated that the lack of information from their employer with regards hybrid working models was a reason that created stress, whereas organizations with established policies and approaches as and with what frequency information and communication even for projects where they may not have been designed entirely, offers prosperity to both employees and for future work environment and therefore leads to increased productivity (McKinsey, 2020).

Communication-productivity chart

Both productivity and employee well-being are improved due to good communication between the employee and the employer. The employees feel more relaxed when they are aware of the particulars of company policies and the way things are done within an organization. When employees feel that the employer recognizes their position and informs them in a timely manner with regards to any issues that may affect them, in other words, understand the employee and no ambiguity is present we seem to have increased productivity. Updates from employers on even minor issues builds a relationship between the employer and the employee with underlying understanding (McKinsey, 2020).

Chart of communication

The abovementioned research stresses that it was extremely important to communicate to the employees the vision of such a hybrid working model and how this model will be imposed after the pandemic. According to the survey, 40% of respondents stated that they did not understand the vision of the hybrid working model whereas only 28% stated that they understood the vision after the pandemic (McKinsey, 2020).

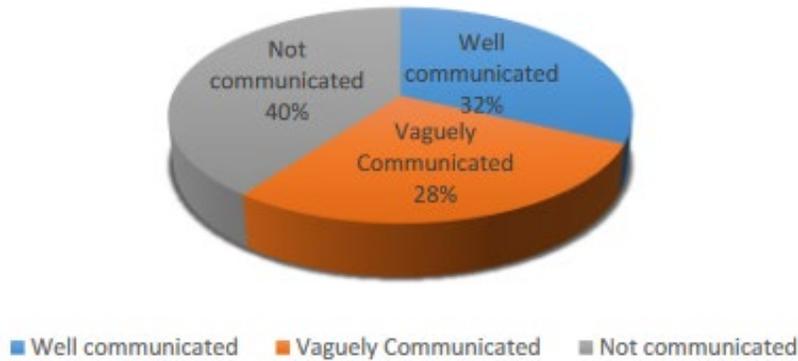


Chart 1. Employees that understood what the vision of the company would be after the pandemic

Flexibility

Employees were asked whether they prefer flexibility in the workplace in order to reduce exhaustion. 52% of employees stated that they would prefer that their organizations adopt flexible working arrangements even after the pandemic.

Furthermore, employees were asked whether they would prefer to work from home at least three days a week. 50% of employees stated “yes” they would rather work from home at least three times a week as this would help them balance work and personal life (McKinsey, 2020).

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

In order for me to examine whether or not flexible working arrangements play a role in employee productivity and satisfaction I will use interviews as my research methodology. Interviews will play an important part of this research, as they these shall provide me with the opportunity for an in-depth investigation and a method of data collection which may not be possible when using other methods of research methodology.

An interview is the process by which a researcher engages in a discussion by asking questions, which are built into the research being conducted on the participant's thoughts, views, opinions or experiences. According to Lofland and Lofland, 1994, the interview is a “*guided discussion*”, the “*aim of which is to draw from the researcher as rich and detailed material as possible that can be used in the analysis.*” Dexter, 1970 argues that the interview is a discussion between two people focused on the subject of research.

Even though there is no “*ideal*” number of participants to carry out the interviews, my aim is to conduct an interview consisting of all sexes, around 20 or so persons from any area of business, from both managerial and non-managerial levels and of all ages. In order for these interviews to be successful, as Aaker et al, 2001 stated, three key factors must be achieved:

- I must try to create a relationship of sympathy and understanding between myself and the interviewee;
- I will ask for clarifications on interesting elements of the interviewee’s answers, but without bias; and
- I will try to properly guide the discussion between myself and the interviewee so as to bring the discussion back to the topic back if and when it escapes.

I expect that each interview should last for around 45 minutes. I would like to conduct face to face interviews but due to COVID-19, I may need to conduct them through other means such as Skype or Teams where I will still be able to grasp the interviewees opinions, feelings and perceptions on the subject matter.

I also conducted smaller interviews with the CEO of the company as well as the Executive Directors which are all shareholders (six in total) in order to see what their views are with regards to the provision of flexible working arrangements. I wanted to see whether there is a difference between how employees see flexible working arrangements and how owners perceive such arrangements.

I believe that there are various advantages to conducting interviews, rather than other forms of surveys. In my opinion, if interviews are structured properly, they may cover wider ranges of subtopics which arise from the structured questions and the motivations of the respondents are examined in depth and with greater ease as their answers are immediate therefore do not have time to think but to merely express their feelings on the subject matter more truthfully. On the other hand, in order to conduct a correct and effective interview, one may need to have some experience so as to identify subtopics brought up when the respondent replies to the structured questions asked. Interviews also take a vast amount of time and both the interviewer and interviewee may “rush” the whole procedure in order to get along with the other tasks which they have. Furthermore, an effective interview may only be provided if the interviewee is open, responsive and willing to clarifications when asked.

According to Kvale, 1996, conducting an interview consists of seven stages:

1. Thematizing;
2. Design;
3. Interview;
4. Recording;
5. Analysis;
6. Verification; and
7. Reporting.

More specifically, Kvale, 1996 (pg. 88) briefly explains the 7 strategies as follows:

1. Thematising: whereby the goals of the interview considered. Here, we will look at “why” and “what” we are trying to determine with the interview.
2. Designing: list of questions is prepared and the goal of what the interviewer wishes to achieve as well as the topics which the interviewer wishes to consider determined. According to the answers given, the direction may change if needed but the design of the interview will assist the interviewer in keeping the interview on topic helping also the interviewer from ensuring that all topics are covered.
3. Interviewing: before the interview takes place, both interviewer and interviewee meet up and the interviewer will brief the interviewee on what the interview will be about. I will not be recording the interview but shall be writing down all answers.
4. Transcribing: I will re-read the answers provided once the interview has been conducted in order to recall what was mentioned.
5. Analyzing: I will then identify the most important parts of the interview in order to gain the answers which I wanted for this research.
6. Verification: Here I must ascertain the generalization, reliability and validity of the interview findings.
7. Reporting: Once all the above stages have been carried out, I will then communicate my finding and the methods applied.

Whyte, 1984 mentions that there are two types of interview questions:

1. Descriptive questions; and
2. Evaluation questions.

Descriptive questions are a call for the respondent to recount something that happened at a particular time, event, or series of events, whereas evaluation questions are intended to describe how the respondent feels about a particular event. In my case I will ask each respondent to recount the time which restrictions were imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the working from home regime that was adopted and how they felt about this.

Data Collection Method

The interviews took place mostly during lunchtime sessions at work and a couple took place after hours during Skype calls due to the fact that these interviewees were at home due to their contamination.

The interview consisted of 17 questions covering demographical data such as gender, age, marital status, children, educational, service, years of work experience, position in company, annual income. I also covered questions regarding how the interviewees perceived flexible working arrangements, and whether in their view they felt such arrangements increased or not employee satisfaction and productivity. Some replied by a simple answer whereas others would go more into depth regarding their views on these topics.

The last segment of the interview focused on whether the interviewee felt that flexible working arrangements should become somewhat of a norm in the company. Hereto, some would go into depth about their views.

I explain above in the Introduction of this Chapter, the reasons why I preferred this method over any other method.

Population of Research

The population for the interview conducted consists of only Cypriot employees working in Cyprus. According to Eurostat, *“employment rate in Cyprus remained unchanged at 72.30 percent in the fourth quarter of 2021 from 72.30 percent in the third quarter of 2021.”*

Statistical Techniques

After the completion of the interviews, I inserted the answers on Microsoft Excel and made charts explaining my findings. Statistical analysis was performed with percentages, means and standard deviations.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Results

You will see below the presentation of the results of the interviews conducted. As mentioned hereto above, 20 interviews had been conducted. I tried to have a balance of both males and females and a balance of interviews conducted amongst Managerial and Non-Managerial staff, even though this was not possible.

Lastly, the results with regards to the interviews conducted with the CEO and Executive Directors will be summarized.

You will also see a last section briefly discussing the results I found when I conducted 2 interviews (one Managerial and one Non-Managerial) in another construction company. I will see whether the results are similar to the results carried out in the first set of interviews.

Part A: Demographic data

Part A of the interview looked at the Demographic data of the sample of the interviewees:

Gender

- i) 10 male employees representing 50% of the participants
- ii) 10 female employees representing 50% of the participants

We had a balance here with regards to gender, therefore we can say that males and females are represented equally within the company. I stress within the company as it is not within Cyprus as a whole but only within a specific company within the construction sector.

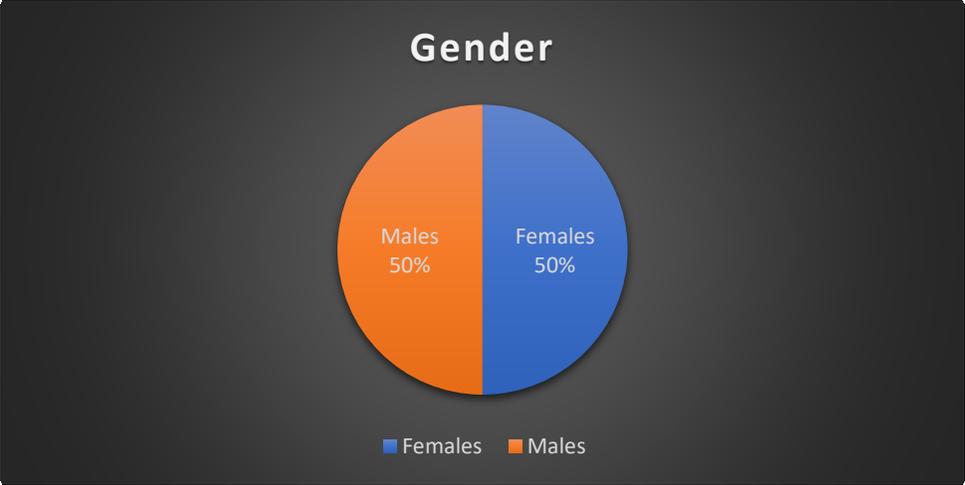


Diagram 1. Gender of Interviewees

Position in Company



Diagram 2. Position in Company

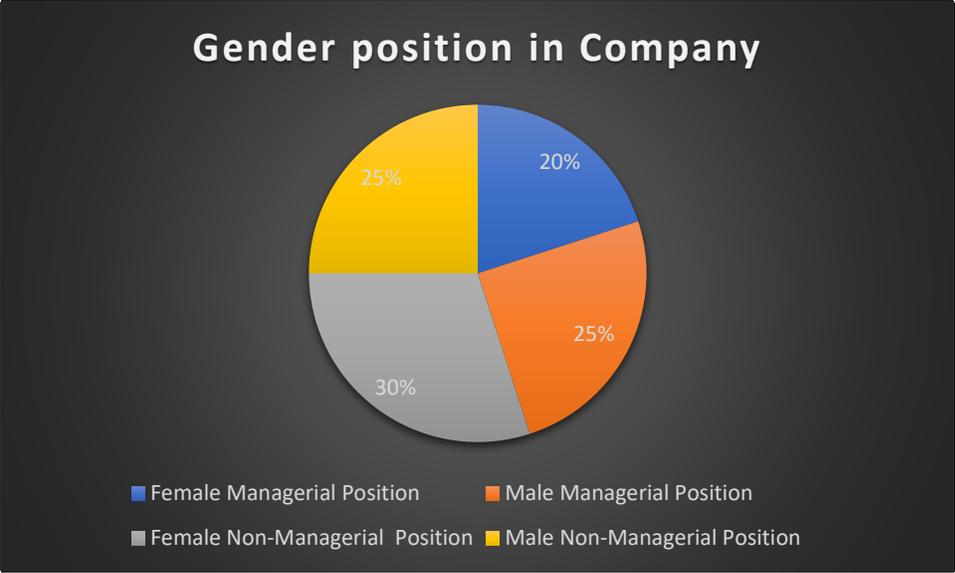


Diagram 3. Gender position in Company

Age and Position of Interviewees

The main age group of those which I interviewed was 41-50 years of age representing the 50% of the interviews carried out. I believe that age is important to this Master’s Dissertation as we should take this age group’s views and opinion into extra consideration as this builds up most of the Company’s workforce and it is at this age that one most probably tries to stabilize their employment therefore will be looking for satisfaction and reasons to stay at a Company or leave. It is where the transition from Non-Managerial to Managerial positions take place within this specific Company, as can be seen in Diagram 5 below.

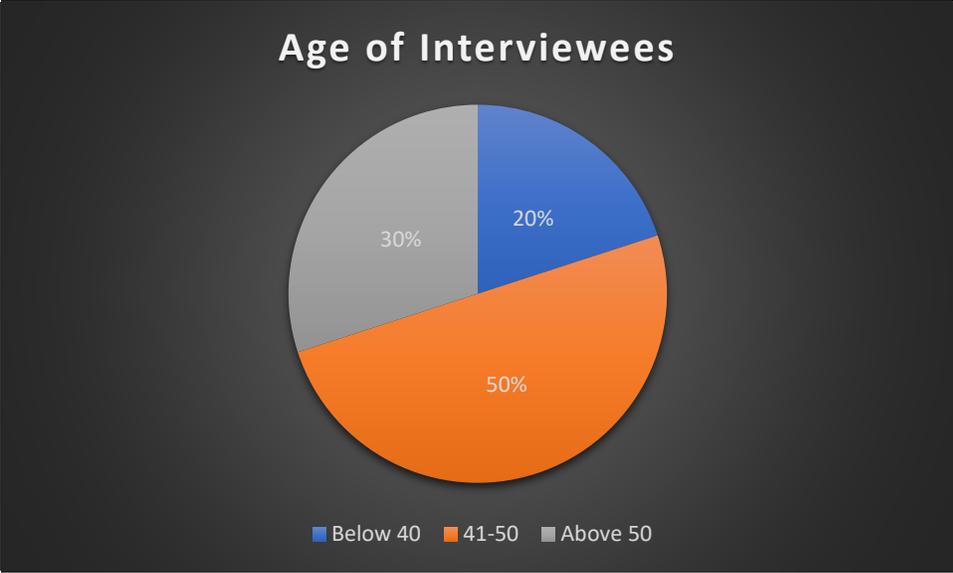


Diagram 4. Age of Interviewees

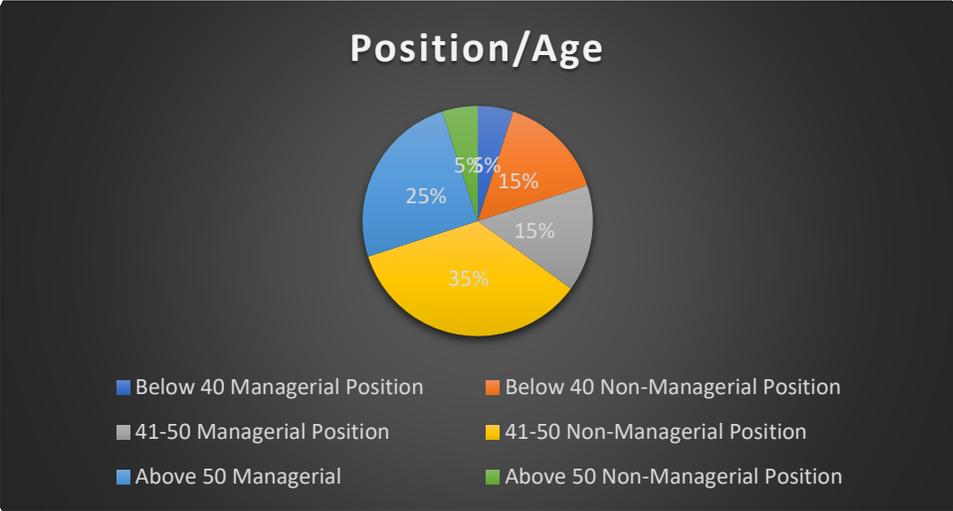


Diagram 5. Position / Age Percentage

Family

Marital Status:

- i) 18 are married, representing 90% of the participants
- ii) 1 is single, representing 5% of the participants
- iii) 1 is divorced, representing 5% of the participants

The difference between the number of married and single/other participants is 10% percent which is considered insignificant and immaterial to the results of this survey.

Children:

- i) 19 participants have children, representing 95% of the participants
- ii) 1 only does not have a child, representing 5% of the participants

The most common answer was that 13 out of the 20 participants have 2 children, representing 65% of the total. I asked this question in order to see whether having children and working from home affects in any way the effectiveness and efficiency in carrying out one's job.

Indeed, I noticed from the feedback which I received as most (women in particular) participants elaborated on this that having a family does affect effectiveness. We see that from traditional Cypriot families which put children first.

Part B: Overview of Research Results

1. 100% of the participants stated that the company did not provide flexible working arrangements before the pandemic.
2. All participants stated in their own words that due to the situation which the world is still facing due to COVID-19, the Company was forced to change the way of thinking and provide this as an option, ONLY IF, the employees are positive to COVID-19 or must stay home to look after their children due to the children being positive or close cases. I noticed from the respondents answers a frustration in most (women in particular) voices as they explained to me that in any other cases they are not allowed to work from home.
3. The chart below indicates that most agreed that flexible working arrangements do increase employee productivity but most women did stress the fact that they were working outside working hours due to the fact that they had to juggle working from home, doing normal household chores, picking up the children from school and cooking and then taking them to private lessons.

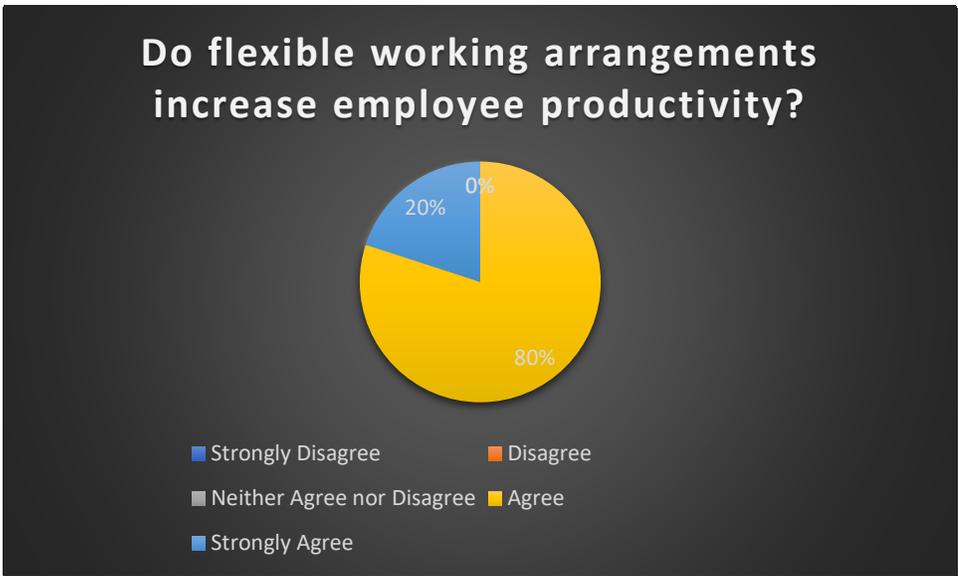


Diagram 6. Do flexible working arrangements increase employee productivity?

4. 100% of the respondents stated that they believe that by providing such flexible working arrangements this allows employees to carry out their job but to also carry out their personal and social responsibilities and therefore evidently this increases employee satisfaction. A few comments which intrigued me where from a fellow colleague that stated that he likes working out at 8am in the morning but due to the fact that the Company has standard working hours and he has to be at work by 8am, this is not possible. He stated that after work he is too tired to work-out and this causes him distress as he wants to look after his health but has not got the time to do so.

Furthermore, another comment, from a female colleague was the fact that she feels she has to rely on other people every day due to the fact that she cannot pick up the children from school and then take them to after school classes. Whereas, if she were given the flexibility to work around her schedule, she would be more focused on work and not stress about who would be available to pick her children up.

- Only 1 male employee holding a Managerial Position answered that he believes that Companies cannot “supervise” employees who work under flexible working arrangements. When I asked him to elaborate on why he believes this he stated that he is in favour of such working arrangements but he believes that when one is in the office, he is more alert as the boss may pop-up and check on his work at any given time, whereas if he is working from home or elsewhere this is more difficult.

Of the respondents that stated that they believe that Companies can still “supervise” employees who work under flexible working arrangements, most commented on the fact that if someone wants to «γελάσει» the boss then he can do it wherever he is even in the work premises, he can act like he is working when in fact he is on social media or taking with other colleagues, etc.

- The diagram below highlights the percentage of respondents which would consider leaving a job if they found another company offering flexible working arrangements.

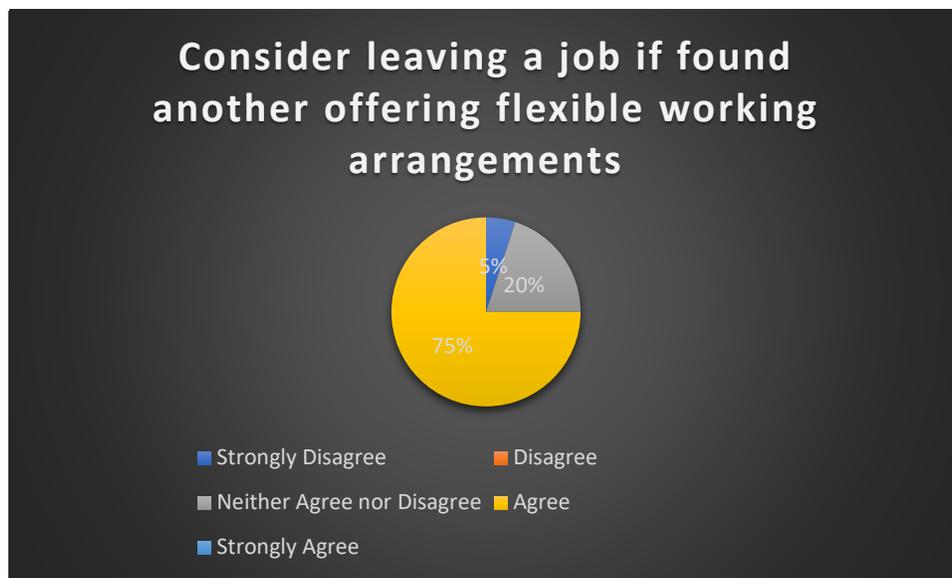


Diagram 7. Would you consider leaving your job if you found another job offering flexible working arrangements?

As you can see, 75% stated that they would consider leaving their current job. Out of these 75%, 100% of females agreed, all commenting on the fact that a job that provided for flexible working arrangements would surely intrigue them due to the fact that in Cyprus at least, it is the women that are mainly responsible for the household and raising the children and flexibility would assist.

20% (all males) neither agreed nor disagreed. They stated that they would consider many factors and maybe even this but they wouldn't just leave a job to pursue a job offering flexible working arrangements.

5% (1 male, the same male that believed that employees working from home cannot be supervised) stated that he wouldn't leave for this reason. It should be stated here that this male respondent is treated in a more flexible manner than other employees of the company as he has been working there for over 40 years. I believe this makes him quite bias and therefore may not reply to questions truthfully as he is already provided with such flexibility (some annual leave not recorded, sick days not taken as sick days and he is paid normally, works from home if something comes up, etc).

7. With regards to whether or not the respondents believe that flexible working arrangements may lead to lack of significant communication with colleagues in order to carry out their roles efficiently/effectively, only 10% (2 respondents) stated that they agreed with this statement and justified their view. They said they find it easier to go up to a colleague and request things or discuss something in person than through the telephone or through other methods.

90% of the respondents (18) stated that they were able to communicate with colleagues when they were working from home and were also able to get their job done if they needed the input of others.

8. 100% of the respondents informed me that the Company provided them with all the necessary equipment at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some joked about not having the right chairs and hurting their neck but none thought this was important. This is another topic which needs further discussion.
9. 70% of the respondents specified that they found that it was difficult to concentrate/carry out work from home and they did face difficulty due to various factors such as children, household chores, etc. Saying this, they emphasized the fact that even if they faced some difficulty at the beginning as this was something new to them, after a week or so they got used to this new norm and had figured out a programme that was suitable to them.

It is important to note that 100% of the females answered “yes” to this question. This in my view is important as it highlights women’s role in society, not only are they responsible for children and the household but also must live up to expectations with regards their professional environment.

Presentation of results from CEO and Executive Directors

Now, we will look at the results from the other side of the coin, that of the CEO and Executive Directors to see whether they view this subject matter in the same way as do their employees.

Part A: Demographic data

Part A of the interview looked at the Demographic data of the sample of the interviewees:

Gender: 100% are males 10 female employees representing 50% of the participants

Age: 2 are over 65 years old representing 33 %

1 is 41-65 years old representing 17 %

3 are between 30-40 years old representing 50 %

Marital status: 100% married with children

Children: 2 have 3 children representing 33.3 %

2 have 2 children representing 33.3 %

2 have 1 child representing 33.3 %

We cannot see a clear overview of opinions here as all are males with stay-at-home wives that look after the household and children therefore, I do not think the results are representative of the population in general. For this reason, I wanted to listen to their opinion on providing such flexible working arrangements and to my surprise, all had similar opinions despite age differences.

Part B: Research Questions

Through my interview with the CEO and Executive Directors I wanted to see whether they too, like their employees are for the provision of flexible working arrangements. I noticed all were hesitant. The CEO stated that *“this is an interesting topic and would be good if employees do not abuse such flexibility”*.

The general attitude which I got from the interviews was that flexible working arrangements cannot be provided without difficulties as they all prefer to have face-to-face communication with their employees and to feel that if something should arise out of the blue, then they can resolve in there and then, no telephone calls, no skype videos, just solve things as they arise and they feel that this is restricted when employees are working from home.

They also commented on the fact that they cannot “control” or “check-up on” employees. Therefore, I would stress that a relationship of trust is of extreme importance when you provide such flexible working arrangements or else you cannot be at ease that employees will carry out their job properly.

Comparison of results with results from other companies in Cyprus

As my survey was based on qualitative research techniques, I decided to carry out a couple of interviews with employees of another construction company in Nicosia as well as a multi-asset broker in Limassol which has a department dealing with Real Estate and Construction.

The first company (Nicosia) states that it “supports its workforce by providing a desirable working environment...” therefore I wanted to see whether this company has taken up flexible working arrangements.

As mentioned previously, I only had access to interview two people from another construction company, one of which was an Executive Director (Male) and the other Non-Managerial staff (Female). Only the female has a family and is slightly older than the Executive Director, but both fall in the range of 30-40 years old.

Our interview lasted around 20 minutes and was conducted via telephone. The general comments which I received was that this company has been providing flexible working arrangements prior to the pandemic but from the beginning of the pandemic hybrid working conditions are now used more often and are staff are even “forced” to stay at home and work.

The female explained that the company has provided all necessary equipment in order for the employees to feel comfortable working from home. Some of these include chairs, printers, paper, headphones.

Another general comment mentioned by both respondents is the fact that lately, due to the increase in petrol prices, electricity and standard of living, the company prefers for employees to work from home which in turn limits the expenses of the company. The Company has saved money on the electricity bills, on weekly groceries (coffee, tea, milk, toilet paper, etc) and also saved money on petrol as most employees either have a corporate vehicle or are reimbursed for travel expenses.

Both respondents highlighted the fact that they feel that employee productivity has increased after the hybrid model was made mandatory and the Executive Director even commented on the fact that he feels that the stress levels and negativity amongst staff has decreased. They both strongly agreed that this type of model has helped with work-life balance.

I was intrigued by the comment from the Executive Director which was made just before we closed the phone. He stated that the company looks at results not the time spent by employees on the computer and at the work premises.

Having the above in mind I can strongly say that this construction company (Nicosia) has made flexible working arrangements a norm and promotes it much more freely and willingly than the first construction company. The Executive Directors of the first company is not so eager to apply such arrangements and even feels that employees will abuse the flexibility if given to them whereas the second company does not see it in a negative way and is promoting flexibility. I think that the different attitude is due to the fact that the Executive Director is younger than that of the first construction company.

The next set of interviews which I carried out was with employees of the multi-asset broker with head offices in Limassol and which has a Real Estate and Construction Department. I carried out four interviews. One with the Head of Legal, one with the Legal Team Leader for the specific department, one interview with the Legal Counsel of that department, one with the General Contracts Manager of that department and one with the administrator of that department.

On a general note, this company is considered as an employer by choice, meaning that employees wish to be recruited by this company and the employees feel positive about their experience at such a company. This company allows its employees to choose from where they can carry out their work, either from the office, from home, or even enjoy a hybrid type of work experience. All employees commented on the fact that they are very happy with the flexibility provided by the company and believe that someday it is more effective to work from home than to wake up, lose an hour or so in traffic and come to work.

The CEO has commented in interviews that the company cares about their “peoples health and want to prevent burnout...”

The general feedback I received was very positive. All commented on the flexibility, the benefits, the assistance provided if one is to work from home. They even informed me that they may request from the IT Department anything which may be necessary for them to use while working from home, desks, office chairs, printers, scanners, monitors, even allowance to purchase glasses which help due to the rays of the laptop. All were very proud to be part of the company and stated that

such flexible arrangements were available even before the COVID-19 pandemic but of course due to the pandemic they are now part of the company's policies. The body language of all respondents was very laid back which was something that I did not experience in any of the other interviews carried out.

When I asked the General Contracts Manager whether he believes that the employees are more effective due to this flexibility, he laughed and said that the goal for 2022 was reached before the end of the 1st quarter of 2022 therefore there is no doubt about it that due to the fact that employees are happy with this work-life balance and flexible working arrangements they have more zeal to work harder and even surpass goals which have been set out.

I asked the Head of Legal whether she feels there is lack of communication due to this flexibility and she said "certainly not!" On the contrary she stated that the company uses many platforms in order to not lose this connection and everyone is just a message away from each other.

The Legal Team leader was very optimistic and stated that she trusts the Legal Counsel to carry out work from wherever she is situated and when there is an issue, she is just a message or a telephone away. The Legal Counsel agreed.

At this point I must state that I have accepted a job offer at the multi-asset broker and will be honest to say that the fact that I am permitted to work from home three times a week really did make my decision easy to accept the offer and leave a company which I have been cooperating with since late 2016. This multi-asset broker has won, amongst others, the award for Best Workplace in Cyprus in 2021. One of the main principles of this multi-asset broker has been adopt moral work culture that gives emphasis on the employees first. As per the Article in Kathimerini dated 09/11/2022, during COVID-19, this company allowed more than eight-hundred employees to work from home, offering food delivery, psychological aid, assistance for young families, fitness equipment, as well as finding work spaces for those who were not able to work from their homes. Apart from the abovementioned award, the multi-asset company has also won the EU good practice award "Teleworking during COVID-19 Pandemic".

Chapter 5

Conclusions

This Master's Dissertation examined and investigated both theoretical concepts of flexible working arrangements as well as explained whether flexible working arrangements increase employee productivity and satisfaction. More specifically, my aim was to examine whether my current employer should consider providing flexible working arrangements to employees even after the end of the pandemic.

I examined the existing articles and bibliography surrounding this topic and observed that flexible working arrangements have been around for a long time – even though in Cyprus these types of arrangements have somewhat been introduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

From my review of the articles, I realized that there are many advantages that can derive from providing employees with such flexible working arrangements but also that if a company wishes to provide for such arrangements, they should do so with a clear vision so as to limit confusion and stress of the employees which must understand how such arrangements should be activated.

I tried to be specific with the interviews conducted as they took into account one construction company as well as another with briefer interview questions and also a company that has a Real Estate and Construction department. The interviews and results I would say, do not look at the general population of employees in Cyprus and therefore do not provide precision as to what people working in Cyprus believe. For the second interviews which I conducted they were through a telephone conversation and was only conducted by two people. The interviews contained demographical questions and them continued with research questions where the respondents could reply freely and develop their answers in accordance to their personal views. The third set of interviews were conducted during my induction day while drinking coffee and was more of a laid-back conversation than an interview.

With regards to the interviews conducted, I would generally say that I would have liked to have completed even more interviews from the first construction company and would have also liked to have interviewed the employers to see their views on the topic of my Master's Thesis but unfortunately, due to their hectic schedule, was not able, therefore I decided to break down the interviewees into two major categories, in other words, Managerial staff and Non-Managerial staff to see whether the results were different between these two categories.

The second set of interviews lacked respondents so I wouldn't say I received a spherical analysis on the views of flexible working arrangements. The third interview with the Limassol based company was very laid-back and intriguing. I believe this company has a lot to offer and teach many Cypriot companies which lack trust between employer and employees.

Moreover, I believe the sample of interviews conducted is extremely small in comparison to the population mentioned hereto above under "Population of Research" and also the fact that I concentrated only on employees of the construction industry would mean that the assumptions made cannot guarantee that the sample and data are statistically significant. I would have liked to have conducted random sampling. Random sampling is "a subset of individuals randomly selected by researchers to represent an entire group as a whole. The goal is to get a sample of people that is representative of the larger population."

This questionnaire focused on the following main questions:

1. How do employers perceive flexible working arrangements versus how employees perceive this? Is there a difference?
2. Are such arrangements beneficial for organizations in terms of employee productivity?
3. Should organizations incorporate such flexible arrangements even after the pandemic has faded away?

The outcomes of the research displayed that the majority of the participants (95%) agreed that flexible working arrangements should be applied in the company. This view is in my opinion in line with the uncertainty that was faced by businesses and the urgent need to establish changes in order to accommodate for the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that companies had to adapt and provide for flexible working arrangements if such arrangements were not already in place.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more companies strived to adopt flexible forms of employment either due to measures imposed by the Government or as a way of limiting exposure amongst their employees. It is noted that employee priorities have become clearer after the passing of the pandemic whereby there is a growing desire for flexible working arrangements in order for employees to have more flexibility in order to manage both professional priorities as well as personal time in order to promote better quality of life.

One cannot argue that there are no benefits to providing for flexible working arrangements. There are many factors that affect the provision of such arrangements, such as age, if the choice is voluntary, the labor rights, development prospects, nature of work, frequency, training. From the literature it is evident that young people perceive such arrangements positively as they are able to combine work with studies. The division of work life and personal life is of principal value and this is one reason why flexible working arrangements seem attractive to prospective candidates.

Even companies themselves can benefit from providing such arrangements as they are able to, for example, employ part-timer employees if they believe that the needs of the company do not justify full-time workers and in this sense, companies can easily plan the production and operation of the company enabling the companies to adapt to market demand, to face a large workload if needed, which may lower costs.

Another portion of employees which I noticed are routing for such working arrangements are women. This is based on the fact that women are mostly the ones that deal with children and household issues therefore such arrangements will mean that they are able to deal with both family life and their professional life without having to give up one or the other.

As with all things, there are both advantages and disadvantages. Here too, we must look at any disadvantages which were recognized. If we are talking about part-time employees a disadvantage highlighted is the fact that when you work on a part-time basis this means your remuneration is decreased therefore will it be enough for you to sustain satisfactory quality of life or will you need to pursue another job? In the case of employees working from home, do they have the right resources? As for women employees, if they are offered part-time employment then they will not attempt to dedicate themselves to the professional arena therefore, will they ever be able to strive for professional evolution.

What were the main limitations of this Master's Dissertation? It was the fact that my research concerned only a small sample of employees and therefore it is not possible to generalize the results of the research for the entire population. Also, the research looked only at a specific company and industry which flexible working arrangements may not be so easy to apply but saying this, this does not deny the fact that the opinions and feedback I received were very useful, due to the fact that my aim was to go back to the CEO and HR Manager and present the opinions of the employees and discuss whether there are ways which we can slowly start offering flexible working arrangements to the employees.

The results of my research reveal that the advantages of providing flexible working arrangements outweighs the disadvantages if applied correctly. After the feedback I received from both employees and CEO and Executive Directors we can now address all issues and concerns raised by both and tackle these if we want to start providing for such flexible working arrangements. I believe that this Master's Dissertation has assisted me in understanding the needs of both employees and employers in the company I work for. I understand what is important to employee needs and what concerns are raised by the employers therefore now, we can address both needs and concerns and find a solution that will suit both parties and build a positive environment with employees that are committed to their role and do not seek to find other jobs in order to cover their personal needs.

In the future I would like to focus on a larger sample and look at the employment industry as a whole and not just one sector of employment. I would also like to carry out research on a company that already has in place such flexible working arrangements to see how the employees and employers feel, to see the employee turnover rate and generally to see whether it has been successful.

Finally, I would like to provide my personal point of view with regards the topic I have chosen to examine. I believe that hybrid working arrangements are the most effective working arrangements. I could not work remotely and never feel that I have an office and "structure" in my work life. I want to be given the opportunity to work remotely though when I believe that it is more convenient to do so. I believe (and have had the opportunity to prove it throughout these 3 years during the pandemic) that I am as effective working from home as I am working from the office. I noticed that when I am working from the office there are days when I am not so productive and could be

fidgiting and speaking to colleagues instead of working. It was easier to balance work and life. I would see my son more whilst at home and even though at the beginning it was difficult as it was something new to me, we all got the hang of it and allowed each other to carry on me with work and my son with games or reading whilst I was working from home. I have heard people state that it was “lifegiving” to work from home.

Companies should strive to allow such hybrid options of working to their employees. Fear-based management should slowly be reduced. Employers should learn to trust employees and, in my opinion, if they do not trust them, they should not have them in their team. Companies must embrace evolution and they should empower their people and equip them to be able to work remotely if necessary. I am of the opinion that hybrid models help improve employee work-life balance and at the same time help promote healthy relationships between colleagues. Apart from the noticeable advantages for the employees, there are advantages which the companies themselves gain. I will definitely be suggesting hybrid model of employment to my previous employer! The fact that awards have been won by the multi-asset broker for allowing such models of employment, to me proves that this is a model that is here to stay!!

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Appendix A

Questionnaire provided to the participants

Part A: Demographic Questions

1. Gender:

1. Male
2. Female

2. Age:

1. Below 40
2. 41-50
3. Above 50

3. Education:

1. High School
2. Diploma
3. Degree
4. Master
5. PhD
6. None of the above

4. Marital status:

1. Married
2. Single
3. Other

5. Children:

1. 0
2. 1
3. 2
4. 3
5. 4
6. More than 4

6. Position in the company:

1. Managerial
2. Non-Managerial

7. Annual Income:

1. Below €24,000
2. €24,001 - €30,000
3. €30,001 - €40,000
4. €40,001 - €50,000
5. Above €50,000

Part B: Research Questions

8. Did the company provide flexible working arrangements before the pandemic?

1. Yes
2. No

9. Does the company provide flexible working arrangements now-after the decrease in COVID-19 incidents?

1. Yes
2. No

10. Flexible working arrangements increase employee productivity.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

11. Flexible working arrangements increase employee satisfaction.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

12. Companies cannot “supervise” employees who work with flexible working arrangements.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

13. I would consider leaving a job if I found another job which offered flexible working arrangements.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

14. Flexible working arrangements may lead to lack of significant communication with colleagues in order to carry out their roles efficiently/effectively.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

15. If flexible working arrangements were provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, did you have all the necessary equipment at home?

1. Yes
2. No

16. If flexible working arrangements were provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, was it difficult to concentrate/carry out work from home?

1. Yes
2. No

WORD COUNT WITHOUT REFERENCES: 12,864

WORD COUNT WITH REFERENCES: 13,779