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Employee perceptions of flexible working agreements

An investigation of the dark sides of teleworking

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ABSTRACT:

An increasing amount of work these days can be done digitally. Furthermore, employees are increasingly working as part of virtual teams where their coworkers can be in a different city or even in a different country. These things are among the many drivers that have made an increasing number of workers and companies to start using flexible working agreements to give employees some autonomy to choose when and where they work.

There has been much research about the positive effects of flexible work both for the employee and the organization. However, one can already see that extensive digital communication and 24/7 connection to social media have had some negative effects on people's lives. It is likely that these negative effects can manifest themselves in peoples' working life as employees are moving away from the workplace to more autonomous and increasingly digital workspaces. The aim of this thesis is to explore the negative outcomes, sometimes referred to as 'the dark outcomes', of flexible work. The thesis first explores the pros and cons of flexible work for the employee and organization as identified in previous literature. The empirical part of the research focuses on employee perceptions of flexible work, and on shedding light on employees' experiences of potential negative effects of teleworking.

This is a qualitative study. The empirical data was collected by interviewing ten employees who had various types of FWA contracts with an option or requirement for telework. The interviews were structured, with everyone being asked the same questions. The sample consists of people working in China and Finland, and the respondents/interviewees are engaged in white collar work. The results were analyzed against the theory regarding FWAs.

All of the individuals interviewed for this study felt rather positive about their FWAs and would not want to decrease the amount of flexibility their organization allows for them. However, some negative consequences were discovered, such as difficulties of switching off from work as one was technically "on call" even outside of traditional office hours. Employees also felt that it was sometimes easier to explain or discuss topics when they were face to face with their colleagues in the office, rather than working digitally from their home or some other non-traditional working space. Finally, many employees in this study had experienced technical difficulties when trying to connect to their employer networks remotely and had lost working hours or even days due to the fact of the internet or digital tools not working correctly when they were teleworking.

KEY WORDS: Flexible working agreement, dark outcomes, telework, employee perception

1. INTRODUCTION

A growing number of employees have grown up during the internet age and are now entering the workforce as so called “digital natives” who are used to communicating and working with the help of information technology (Colbert & Yee & Geroge, 2016). Furthermore, the same study notes that in 2015, 64% of the American adults were constantly connected to the internet with their smartphones. Technologies such as faster internet connections, video calls and better data sharing have made it possible to transfer an increasing amount of work outside the office, with 20% of workers globally doing some or all their work at home (Greenfield, 2017). Flexible working is a very relevant topic, especially in the Nordic countries that have been in the forefront of implementing flexibility in working schedules. According to an OECD study Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway were among the top five EU countries in the amount of flexible work offered to employees by their employers, with around 60% of the workforce having some or total control of their daily working hours (OECD, 2016).

There has been a lot of research regarding the positive effect of flexible working agreements (FWAs). Studies have found that workers feel more satisfied when they feel that they have more control over their working hours and that the company cares for their wellbeing (McNall & Masuda & Nicklin, 2010). In many cases FWAs have also been linked to a decrease in turnover (Caillier, 2016; Thomson, 2008; Stavrou & Kilaniotis, 2010). However, most complex issues are multifaceted. Research on the topic of FWAs has already identified several dark outcomes of FWA usage which range from professional isolation to stifled career advancement (Bloom at al. 2015; Davis & Cates, 2013). However, one should avoid making generalizable claims just based on one study and context. There are several things which affect both the employee and the employer when implementing FWAs. This paper aims to further research on these dark outcomes by looking at the employee perceptions towards telework and its possible hazards.

A study examining the variance between employer and employee centered FWAs across 21 EU countries found that the Nordic countries use both types extensively (Chung &

Tijdens, 2012) Therefore, it is important to recognize if there are any negative outcomes that stem from this shift towards more flexible work in the Nordic countries.

Colbert, Yee & George (2016) have argued that more research needs to be done on how digitally mediated communication influences the empathy, communication and relationship quality in the modern workplace where an increasing amount of communication is being done digitally. FWAs are among the drivers of this change where people have a decreasing amount of actual face time. Sias (2005) has identified that workers who have weak ties to their peer network at the workplace, are at an information disadvantage, which in turn has a negative effect on knowledge sharing. This makes it important to consider how FWAs affect the workplace dynamics and friend networks within the workplace. Tech giant companies such as IBM and Yahoo have begun rolling back their liberal FWA policies as they have observed that FWAs, which limit fact to face interaction have a negative effect on the collaboration and innovation (Spector, 2017). Digital communication tools have made it possible to connect with almost anyone at any time around the world. Despite these advancements in digital communication there are cases where workers feel more lonely and isolated from their peers in the workplace. For example, in the US in 1985, 50% workers reported that they had a friend in their workplace, and in 2004 the number had fallen to 30% (Grant, 2015). However, digitalization also brings new possibilities for forming social ties over long distances, and it is possible that workers have a greater number of virtual friends than ever before. It seems that even though we are more connected than ever at work we are also at a higher risk of feeling isolated from our immediate surroundings.

Organizations need to be able to balance the benefits FWAs can give to the individual with the possible dark outcomes that they might have on the collective work force and the individual employee. Research has identified that strong ties between employees have a positive effect on job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Lee et al. 2017). A meta-analysis of the telework literature by Gajendran & Harrison (2007) argued that telecommuting has no negative effect on workplace relationships unless the telecommuting is extensive and the worker spends more than 2,5 days a week outside of the workplace. In the case of high intensity teleworking where the worker spent more

than half of their day outside of the workplace deterioration of the peer to peer relationship of workers was observed. Furthermore, the same study stated that the positive effects of teleworking, including perceived autonomy and the feeling of having control over one's work life balance did not increase when moving from low intensity telework to high intensity telework.

FWAs have been studied extensively as tools to improve work life balance. The results of these studies are mixed as workers do feel that FWA's help them balance their work and personal life (McNall & Masuda & Nicklin, 2010; Leigh, 2000) but simultaneously feel that FWA's bring the work home and blurring the line between work and free time (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006; Peetz & Allan, 2005, Noonan & Glass, 2012). A study comparing the amount of control men and women of different social classes have over their work and home found that both men and women middle level employees, as well as low level male employees, were at greater risk for depression when they had a low control over their work (Griffin et al. 2002).

This paper will examine how employees in various companies perceive FWAs, focusing on potential negative effects that FWA usage causes for themselves or the working environment.

The main research question for this paper is formulated as follows:

- (1) What are potential dark outcomes of FWA usage for a) the organization and b) the employee?

There are several types of employment forms that fall under the term "flexible working agreement". The broad definition by Catalyst (1997) defines an FWA as a negotiated contract between the employee and employer over the time/and or place of work. Typical FWA types include telework, part-time employment, compressed work week and flexi-time (Timms et al. 2015). The definitions of these FWA types are included in table 2 (*see page 11*).

A World Economic Forum report (2016) predict that in the next five years 7.1 million jobs will be lost world wide mostly in the white-collar industries due to redundancy, automation or disintermediation. Therefore, it is important to study people affected by this change, and technology that both allows more FWA usage, and is driving this change. This research will focus on the possible dark effects of flexible work that is done outside of the traditional working space/time ie. office or co-working space. In this type of flexible work, the employees have a certain degree of freedom to choose when and where they work, and they have the chance to work fully remotely at least part of the week. Most of this type of flexible work falls under teleworking which will be the focus of the empirical part of this research.

Finally, this research has been partly done in Finland where the word FWA is often translated as “etätyösopimus”, or which directly translates as “distance work agreement”. This word has the implication that the work is being done somewhere outside of the traditional working space. However, it is equally important that FWA and especially teleworking break the notion of “working time”. FWAs not only concerns *where* you work but also *when* you work. Many of the dark outcomes resulting from FWA usage are related to the fact that people are not able to separate work from their free time (Ojala & Pyörälä, 2013; Smith & Karavattuveetil, 2004). On the flip side the companies can benefit from having their workers on call outside the traditional office hours.

Next the paper will go on to discuss previous research on flexible working agreements. The first part of the theory looks at why flexible working agreements are used from the employer/employee point of view. The later part of the theory will examine the literature on the negative effects of FWAs. Following that the paper presents the methods and findings of this study and the paper continues by comparing the findings of the qualitative interviews to the exiting theory. Finally, the paper lists some of the limitations of the study and give suggestions to future research on this topic.

2. FLEXIBLE WORKING AGREEMENTS

This part of the thesis explores previous/existing research on why flexible working agreements are used and what dark outcomes of flexible work have been identified. As previously mentioned there are several flexible working agreement types. Furthermore, some FWAs are not part of just a single category but a hybrid between two are several FWA types. The following FWA definitions are from the research of Timms et al. (2015).

Flexitime	Flexitime refers to an arrangement where the employee can choose the start and finish time of their work. For example, a person who likes to work in the mornings could come to the office very early and be able to leave earlier.
Compressed work week	Compressed work week refers to an arrangement where the employee chooses to work their allocated working hours in four or less days leaving them more free days in a week than the traditional Saturday and Sunday.
Telecommuting/telework/teleworking	This is an agreement where the employee does some or all their work in a different place than their office. Sometimes, this work can also be done outside of the traditional office hours. In this kind of agreement there is a lot of variability between agreements and it hard to define a typical telecommuting agreement. Telecommuting most commonly refers to work that one does from home by using their computer, tele-

	phone and other electronic tools.
Part-time work	Part-time work refers to the employee having less working hours than a full-time employee. The definition of part-time work varies but according to International Labour Organization (ILO) it is when an individual works less than 35-30h per week (Messenger, 2018)

Table 1 – Flexible working agreement types

2.2 Flexible working agreements and why are they used

Organizations are offering FWAs over for several reasons, some of which the reasons are employer driven and others are employee driven. This part of the paper begins by examining the former, employer driven reasons for FWA usage, these reasons include decreased turnover, increased productivity, decreased costs on office space and increased unpaid overtime work.

2.2.1. Employer driven reasons for FWAs

The history of the modern FWA began in the 1970 in the US as a way for companies to limit the travel of their employees between work and the office, which would cut down the car emissions that were then plaguing many US cities. As electronic communication tools improved, companies could in the 1990s start saving money on the office costs by renting smaller spaces and saving on utility costs, as the workforce present at the workplace would be decreased by FWAs. In the 21st century flexible work has increasingly become a job perk that can be offered to entice or retain employees in the so called “war for talent” that many companies must engage in. (Greenfield, 2017)

As the use of FWA become more prevalent in the western world, studies began to emerge stating that FWAs could decrease turnover (Thomson, 2008 ; McNall, Masuda & Nicklin, 2010 ; Caillier, 2016). There are two types of turnover, voluntary- and invol-

untary turnover. In voluntary turnover, the employee leaves because he/she chooses to do so for financial, career, personal or any other reason. Involuntary turnover is indicated by the employer for performance, financial or other reasons (Stavrou & Kilaniotis, 2010). Companies with skilled employees are always trying to decrease voluntary turnover since employee turnover is a significant cost for a company. Stavrou (2005) estimates that a loss of an employee costs 150% of his/her annual salary for a company. Employee turnover is calculated by examining the rate of attrition a company has during a year. The link between FWA usage and turnover is a complicated one. Research seems to indicate that just offering workers the option to use FWAs does not decrease turnover (McNall, Masuda & Nicklin, 2010 ; Timms et al, 2015). However, turnover is reduced if the FWA program is delivered in a manner that makes the employee feel that the employer cares for the satisfaction and well-being of the employee (Caillier, 2016).

Companies are always searching for ways to get more out of their employees as increasing productivity can be the difference between making a profit or suffering a loss. Flexible working agreements have been linked to increased productivity by several studies (Ruth & Chaudhry, 2008 ; Bloom et al., 2015 ; Pyöriä, 2011). However, a meta-analysis on the FWA performance literature reveals that many of the studies rely on self-reported performance which can be argued to be a bad proxy for actual performance (Shin, Sheng & Higa, 2000). Employees tend to overestimate their own performance by up to 40% compared to their actual performance (Cascio, 1998). Fortunately, recent increases in FWA usage have made it easier to acquire large datasets on worker performance. These datasets and the studies made from them provide a more scientific view on FWA use in relation to performance. In a 10 month, longitudinal study by Bloom et al. (2015), Chinese call centre workers were divided into two groups with one group working in the office and the other working from home. The comparison of productivity between groups showed that the employees working from home were 13% more productive than their peers at the office. Furthermore, the employees who worked from home reported on average higher satisfaction to their job than the office bound workers. A similar randomized study conducted in the US echoes these findings. Phyllis Moan & Erin L. Kelly divided 867 information technology workers from an US fortune 500 company into two groups. The experiment group was given training and freedom to arrange their work in a

manner that was more suitable for them personally, and they could heavily rely on flexible working agreements such as teleworking and electric communication. The managers of this experiment group were trained to support their subordinates in their family/personal life and professional development. The control group was using the pre-existing policies of the company. The studies (Moen et al. 2016; Kelly et al. 2014) produced from this dataset which was gathered for one year observing these two groups, found that the experiment group of employees were more productive than the control group because flexible employees had less instances of burnout, stress and psychological distress, which lead to lower rates of absenteeism and presentism according to the study. Furthermore, the employees in the experiment group reported being more satisfied with their work than the workers in the control group. The finding from these two experiments seem to indicate that offering workers more flexibility can increase productivity (American Sociological Association, 2016).

As flexible work has become more common so have open and multipurpose offices without assigned working stations (Jezard, 2017). Flexible work has been shown to increase worker satisfaction and productivity of workers who work in these kinds of environments (van der Voodt, 2004). This is mainly due to open offices can being noisy and distracting places, with a lack of privacy needed for some tasks (Kim & Dear, 2013) and employees who have the ability to work outside the office can find work spaces with privacy on low noise levels. Furthermore, permeant offices and their upkeep is a significant cost for employers and flexible working agreements can be used mitigate these costs. For example, some companies are renting smaller office spaces and expecting that a part of their workforce is always teleworking which results in lower office costs (Petch, 2017).

Finally, there is a certain time dimension that FWAs touch. The increased use of FWA's such as teleworking have not only changed where we work but also when we work. Many employees can free up certain parts of the day for their personal time and finish their work when it is convenient for them. This is often a selling point which companies use when recommending flexible working agreements to their employees. However, there is also a benefit for the employer. Flexible working agreements can be a way to

extend the working time of the employees which would benefit the organization, especially as this can often be done without having to pay for overtime work. A study examining the difference between employer and employee initiated flexible work in Germany found that the employer has more leverage in deciding the job role and the amount of unpaid overtime work an employee with a FWA does (Zapf & Weber, 2017)

2.2.2. Employee driven reasons for FWAs

FWA have been observed to have a positive effect on worker satisfaction. However, unlike productivity, satisfaction cannot be quantifiably measured in a reliable way. In the FWA employee satisfaction literature one must rely on the feelings and perceptions of employees to evaluate the success of a FWA policy. Furthermore, it seems like the type of FWA and how/why it is implemented plays a role in the perception of satisfaction employees feel. Especially policies which are designed and implemented in a way which make the worker perceive that they are valuable and that the employer cares for the employee's wellbeing. For this "being cared for" effect to occur, both the formal and informal policies and signalling inside the company need to be in line with the intent of the FWA policy (Timms et al, 2015). Some of the current FWA research tends to be against sweeping top down initiated FWA policies which treat every employee as the same (Stavrou & Kilaniotis, 2010). Stavrou & Kilaniotis found that the same FWA policies had an opposite effect on different GLOBE cultural dimensions. More work flexibility increased turnover in the Anglo cluster but decreased turnover in the Nordic cluster.

Another major reason why employees want more flexibility in their work is the conflict that work has with one's family and free time. For example, many organizations offer FWAs to improve the work-life balance of their employees (Galinsky, Bond & Sakai, 2008; OECD, 2016). Furthermore, Shockley and Allen (2007) have identified that FWA reduce the stress which employees sometimes experience when they try to balance their work and their family life. This is especially true when examining the conflict that exist between work and one's children. A FWA helps one to better schedule their work around the requirements of childcare (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001). However, even people

without children benefit from FWAs in the form of increased free time and more time to run errands and the increased possibility attend non-work-related events (Sharpe & Hermsen & Billings, 2002). However, a meta-analysis by Allen et al. (2013) work-family conflict and flexible work literature argues that the effect of flexible working agreements on the work family interference are less than assumed by prior research and that workplace and supervisor work-family support has twice the effect as FWAs do in reducing work family conflict. What the finding of Allen et al. (2013) seem to indicate is that just like in the case of employee satisfaction, the intent and implementation of the FWA program matters in how workers see experience it. This interpretation is supported by Mcnall, Masuda & Nicklin (2010) who argue that the availability of FWA practices signal to the worker that the organization cares about to employee which in turn positively influences the work life balance of the employees.

Lastly as touched upon in the previous paragraph flexible work can be a benefit for parents to cope with the demands of balancing work childcare. A US study found that organisations were more willing to offer flexitime and flexplace contracts because of mother- and fatherhood than other reasons (Munsch, 2016). The same study observed a so called “fatherhood bonus” which made men appear more “respectable, likeable, and committed” when they were using flexible working agreements to balance work and childcare. The same bonus did not appear to impact mother using flexible working agreements possible because there are still different expectations to men and women regarding childcare.

As ICT technology has become increasingly prevalent the old limitations that tied one to their working place have in many cases disappeared. Furthermore, the new generation of employees that have grown up during the age of constant internet access and mass internet communication have very different views and needs than their parents. An Ernst & Young study (2015) found that 33% of millennials found balancing their work and life increasingly difficult and many of them would like more flexibility in their work hours. This result is echoed by various studies predicting the future of work which indicate that the line between work and free time will become increasingly blurred

(Pedersen & Lewis, 2012). As this transformation of work continues to happen new policies to regulate when and where people work must be adapted by companies.

2.3 Disadvantages of flexible working agreements

Looking at the advantages of flexible working agreements one could argue that companies should start implement more flexibility to capture all the benefits ranging from improved productivity to more satisfied workers. However, workplaces and networks between people are complex systems with several interconnected variables. Changing the way and place people work can have many unintended negative consequences for both the employer and the employee. Philosopher Nassim Taleb (2018) has argued that it is impossible to predict how a complex system behaves when you add to it. A FWA policy that works in one organization can fail in a different organization. This part of the thesis explores the so called “dark outcomes” of flexible work that have been observed from both the employer and the employee point of view. The majority of research on FWA’s tends to focus on the positive effects of FWAs but it is important to be aware of the possible negative consequences implementing FWA can have.

As with some positive effects of FWAs such as improved employee satisfaction, some negative effects fall into the realm of perception which can be hard to measure accurately. An interesting piece of research done by Maruyama & Tietze (2012) compared the expectations and the actual outcomes of 394 teleworkers and found that employees tended to overestimate the negative outcomes and underestimate the positive outcomes. However, the employee’s role in the organization played a part in how they felt about, in this case, telework. For example, sales and marketing employees who switched to teleworking were reporting loss of visibility in the workplace and slower career development.

Similarly, to the part about positive FWA affects, we begin by first analysing the theory for any negative effects that can affect an employer who is providing FWAs to their workforce. The explored dark outcomes are decreased productivity and decreased knowledge transfer. After which the same was done from the employee point of view by

exploring possible dark outcomes in stifled career growth, workplace isolation and loss of work/life balance that can result from FWA usage.

2.3.1 Negative effects for the employer

Decreased productivity

One might be surprised to find that FWAs can have both a positive and a negative effect on productivity. If this is indeed the case as some research seems to indicate it would strengthen the hypothesis of Timms et al. (2015) which states that it is not the policy itself that solely determines the success of the initiative but also how you implement it and what kind of signaling the organization gives to its employees. Furthermore, the FWA policy can influence the productivity of the employees who themselves are not using FWAs but are working with people who do. A study examining how formal and informal flexible working practices affect productivity found that FWA policies that are only ceremonially adopted, and which are not available for all employees had a negative effect on the productivity of employees who were left out of the FWA program. (Yang & Zhang, 2011). This effect was mitigated when FWA practices were more informal and available for all employees. Another study compared the physical resources one had at the office and at home and found that workers who were forced to work from home without the needed resources were less productive than at the office (Fan Ng, 2010). Companies can control in what kind of environment their on-site workers work in, but once their employees can or have to choose where they work outside of the office the possibilities of working environments are limitless. Studies have shown that complex tasks which require a lot of concentration are best done in a silent and peaceful environment (Mark, 2008 ; H. Jahncke et al. 2013). The same is true for work that requires privacy such as talking on the phone. These environmental factors are not available for every employee at home or outside of the office. Therefore, it is hard to argue that FWAs increase the productivity of every employee type in every situation.

Another issue that FWA employees face regarding productivity is that in order for remote employees to access secure company networks, an employee might need an en-

encrypted company laptop/phone (Stevens, 2008). According to Stevens cybersecurity is an increasingly important issue for corporations and having employees handling confidential data with their home computers is a liability. However, providing one's employees with the sufficient ICT tools to protect their data is an expensive option which is not financially feasible for most organizations. In 2006 in the US the Veteran Affairs Department of government banned telework after personal information on 26,5 million active and retired military personnel were stolen from a remote employee's home office (Ricucci & Naff, 2007). This is not a single case example for workers losing something valuable. Apple has lost two prototype iPhone when worker have been working on them in public areas (Sandoval & McCullagh, 2011) and several prominent MNC such as Home depot, Pfizer and AOL have had to pay damages to workers and/or customers whose information were leaked due to carelessness with company laptops, USBs and cell phones (Vance, 2008). From these examples one can see that remote work introduces some new challenges that have the possibility to create in some cases massive harm to the organization. Furthermore, the impact of these remote communication tools that let workers access their work systems from home did not have any effect on the perceived productivity of flexible employees when compared to the employees who work in the office (Staples, 2001). As a caveat to the finding by Staples, one must keep in mind that perceived productivity is not the same as actual productivity and more empirical research needs to be done how the increasing use of IT to communicate and work effect productivity.

Along the same lines there seem to be cases where too much flexibility with working time/place can have a negative effect on the efficiency of a company. A German study examining the efficiency of flexible work in private German firms between 1999-2003 found that while moderate flexibility increased firm level efficiency, highly flexible working hours had a negative effect on the efficiency of firms (Wolf & Beblo, 2004). This would be in line with the finding of Gajendran & Harrison (2007) who argue that the negative effect of telework manifest as the days spent outside the workplace increase over half of the workweek. However, Wolf & Beblo (2004) are careful to draw causality from their results and remind readers that the data may be skewed, since struggling firm have a tendency to increase flexible work as a cost saving device.

Some literature on FWA effect on productivity has found that task performance can suffer from inconsistency in cases where two part-time time workers are sharing a task (Stennett, 1993). However, one can argue that when two people or a group are sharing a task there always exists a possibility of “free riding” regardless of where the work is being done. Interestingly, a Swiss study on telecommuter productivity found that telework did not increase free riding, instead free riding was strongly tied to the employee’s perception of their teammates productivity (Dutcher & Sarel, 2012). In other words, employees will only work as hard as they see their peers working. Dutcher & Sarel (2012) argue that managers need to be selective who they allow to telework, and they need to ensure that the team members of teleworkers perceive that the teleworker is working as hard as the office employee to ensure that productivity remains the same after teleworking is introduced as a job option.

Decreased knowledge transfer

For years tech giant companies in the US have been in the forefront of implementing flexible working agreements but in recent years a growing trend among the Silicon Valley giants such as Google and Yahoo is to limit how much work their employees can do outside of the office. A senior executive at Google, Dr. Vint Cerf has emphasized the that it is important for co-workers to have frequent opportunities to have casual interaction with one another (Crabtree, 2014). Dr. Cerf argues that the benefits of remote work taper off at a certain point similarly to what research by Gajendran & Harrison (2007) suggests. Cerf also points out that many creative ideas come up while workers are informally engaging with one another. According to him companies must find a balance between the advantages online communication and telework bring and the need for face to face interaction that boosts cohesion at the workplace. The research data by “State of the American Workplace report” backs up this claim, 28% employees who never remotely work are engaged with their work compared to the 35% of employees who spend up to 20% of their time outside of the workplace. However, the engagement level of employees who work remotely drops below their office bound peers as the time spent outside of the workplace increases (Crabtree, 2014). Google along with its tech compa-

ny peers works in the creative industry which brings a unique set of challenges when examining the effect flexible work has on their performance. There are some interesting research findings on the topic of virtual vs face to face communication in relation to creative performance. Wu et al. (2016) found that for workers who were emotionally closer to one another were more likely to use virtual tools to creatively work together but more emotionally distant peers needed face to face contact to effectively work together. This makes intuitive sense as almost everyone under the age of 60 is sharing their life with their friends using social media and we are used to communicating with friends by electronic means on a 24/7 basis. Wu et al. (2016) findings seem to indicate that this same phenomenon is present at the workplace and that we are more likely to collaborate and share knowledge the closer we emotionally. Furthermore, higher degrees of media richness such as face to face interaction are preferable when sharing complex and new knowledge (Klitmoller & Luring, 2013). However, the same study found that for mundane and repetitive tasks lower degrees of media rich communication performed as well as their rich counterpart in delivering the required information. This all would indicate that the complexity of the task performed by the flexible worker has an impact on how well it can be done remotely. For creative and complex work which requires knowledge sharing a certain degree of face to face interaction is required to achieve the best result.

2.3.2 Dark outcomes for the employee

This section of the paper examines the possible dark outcome that that the employee can suffer from using FWAs. The dark outcomes are stifled career growth, workplace isolation and loss of work/life balance. These variables were chosen as they were appearing commonly in the literature describing the possible negative effects of FWAs.

Career implications of FWA's

Similarly, to many other aspects of FWAs career advancement remains a contentious issue among researchers. In an extensive study examine the promotions of 249 call centre workers it was observed that while workers working from home were 9% more pro-

ductive they had a lower chance of being promoted than their peer at the office (Bloom et al. 2015). The researcher's suspected that there is a so called "out of sight, out of mind." bias against employees who spend extensive time out of the workplace. Interestingly, when asked about why employees chose not to work from home the most common answers were loneliness of telework and the lack of opportunity to socialize with their colleagues during and after work. Studies indicate that workplace relationships influence career advancement (Colbert, Bono, and Purvanova, 2016), Cultivating these relationships from outside the workplace might be difficult to some employees using FWAs which might result in the loss of work advancement opportunities.

Conversely, there is also research that disputes the claim that FWAs have a negative effect on career advancement. McCloskey & Igarria (2003) examined 225 professional employees and managers in the US and found that telecommuting had no effect on the career advancement of these employees. A noteworthy fact about this study is that only 6% of the sample worked more 2 days a week outside of the office. Gajendran & Harrison (2007) have argued that the negative effects of FWA start to manifest when the time outside the office becomes more than half of the time per week. Both of these studies argue that telework can be done at a certain level without harming the career advancement prospects of an employee.

Studies looking at the perception of career advancement in regard to FWA usage have found that managers as well as employees are often reluctant towards telework because they believe it has a negative impact on career advancement (McCloskey & Igarria, 2003; Bridgeford, 2007). Bridgeford (2007) looked at the perceptions senior executives have towards telework and 61% of them believed that teleworkers are less likely to advance in their career than traditional workers. The same study noted that three fourths of the same executives believed that teleworkers are equally or more productive than their none teleworking counterparts. Again, it seems that the social aspect of being seen and interacting with the work community is possibly a requirement in career advancement.

In many organisations office politics play a significant role in career advancement. Employees who spend significant time out of the office have an increased chance to

miss opportunities to advance in their careers (IOMA, 2005). Furthermore, many managers and organizations are not trained, or they do not have the capability to monitor the employees outside the office. This can possibly result in the often-false assumption of managers that the employees who is not in the office is somehow “slacking off” which will have a negative effect on how that employee is seen by the managers, hampering his or her career advancement (IOMA, 2005).

Motherhood can be a hurdle for career advancement and FWA practises are often believed to help parents to balance their work and childcare responsibilities. However, this seems not always be the case and there is research arguing that mothers using FWAs can suffer some harm to their career development. A US study examining the perception of career harm of 441 mothers who use FWAs have found that one fifth of the mothers perceived their career was harmed by FWA usage (Crowley & Kolenikov, 2014). The study found that women who work in jobs where most of their co-workers are men, are more likely to feel that motherhood related FWAs had a negative impact on their career. Interestingly, there was a significant drop in career harm perception as the percentage of women workers at the job went over 75%. One of the interesting discussion points of the study was while FWA do provide mothers a way to balance their work and family life, mother using FWAs felt that the job was equally demanding and stressful regardless of doing it in or outside of the workplace. The job requirements remained the same so workers naturally they are entitled to the same career advancement opportunities as fixed time workers. Furthermore, when mothers were using time-off from work they perceived much lower rates of career harm than mother who were using FWAs. It is possible that from the employees point of view the perceived “toughness” of work has an impact on how much money, promotions and good job evaluations they deserve.

FWA usage among fathers has also been linked to perceptions of career harm (Brandth & Kvande, 2001). The study done in Norway found that fathers were apprehensive in using their voluntary flexible working options because of the fear of it having a negative impact on their career. If flexible work is individual option, the employer taking these options has an increased risk of becoming marginalized and seen as someone who does

not “put in the same time” as the rest of the workers (Epstein et al. 1999). From a deeper psychological point of view, people are highly susceptible to social mirroring and it can be very difficult for workers be the only one who is using their parental leave when others are not.

FWAs can also be seen as a form of signalling for organizational commitment which has an impact on career success. Managers perceive FWAs user differently depending on the policy of the corporation. If the corporation implements FWAs to increase productivity FWA usage has no negative career implications but if the company implements FWAs for greater work family balance they do negatively affect how managers see their users, which has a negative impact of worker career success (Leslie et al. 2012). This is an important thing to note when examining FWA usage in corporations. The same FWA policies can be seen by managers either as forms of low or high work commitment depending on the policy and culture of the corporation (Leslie et al. 2012). Productivity is something which effect the bottom line of the corporation and it is easily quantifiable. Work life balance is more subjectivity and the benefits of that can be hard to directly observe on the financial report of the corporation. However, the authors of this study note that this is not universally the case and there is variance across studied corporations. FWA usage is only one of the things that explains how a manager perceives their employee and one needs to be careful not to make too large conclusion on weather FWA usage alone will harm someone career growth.

Workplace isolation

From a psychological point of view isolation is one of the worst things one can do to a person. Social isolation has been shown to increase stress hormone levels, compromise one’s quality of sleep, weaken the immune system and facilitate cognitive decline (McAndrew, 2016). These are extreme examples but for many, the social ties they have at work constitute a major share of the time spent with other people. As flexible working agreements become more common this time spent with one’s peers decrease which can be a negative development for some workers. In a UK study 60% of teleworkers named social isolation as the biggest problem with telework (Huws, 1984). Further-

more, workplace isolation is not only bad for the individual but for the whole organization. A study found that loneliness at work resulted in weaker task, team role and relational performance (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2011).

FWAs, especially virtual work, have been linked to workplace isolation. (Marshall et al. 2007; Mulki & Jaramillo, 2011). A study examining the effects of team virtuality and task virtuality found that task virtuality was a better predictor of workplace social isolation than team virtuality is (Orhan et al. 2016). The same study found that face-to-face interaction with people is not by itself an explaining factor in feeling of social isolation. Instead, it was the face to face interaction with people who have an impact on one's performance and who give input that is required to perform any given task which influenced the social, physical, and informational isolation at work (Orhan et al. 2016). Furthermore, the social stress remote employees suffer from being excluded from the social interactions and banter of the office leads to mental ill health in some FWA users (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003). Most people need face to face interaction in order to maintain good mental health which would speak against extensive telework.

A study examining the workplace isolation of 227 virtually working pharmaceutical sales representatives found that self-efficacy was a significant mitigating factor in the feeling of workplace isolation (Munir et al. 2016). The study argues that self-efficacious employees are better able to cope with the stress of having less organizational and supervisor support than a traditional office employee who has face to face support from their peers and managers. The findings of this study indicate that virtual work does not fit every personality type and people who require more support in their work will feel a high degree of workplace isolation when pushed to work virtually. Similarly, Cartwright & Cooper (2009) point out that extroverted people who like human contact will likely become bored by telework and the lack of human contact. Chatting in the office at work is an important source of social contact for many people. Many people spend more time at work with their colleagues than they do with their family and friends. Losing this time or changing it to electronic communication can be a negative change to some people. The same phenomenon was observed in telework study conducted in China. Some employees in the telework research group had to discontinue the experiment and return

to the workplace because they felt bored and missed social contact with their colleagues (Bloom et al. 2015).

Managers of teleworkers and the teleworkers themselves are often undertrained by the organizations for telework which may cause misunderstandings and miscommunication. (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). The duration and frequency of telework significantly increases the feeling of workplace isolation (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). Moreover, a study about the teleworker perceptions found that some teleworkers believe that they get less feedback from their supervisors because they are not present at the office (McNaughton et al. 2013). The study cited cases where teleworkers would work days without getting any emails or calls from their employer which had a negative effect on the employee. Furthermore, according to the study it was harder for teleworkers to attend the informal work gathering such as having beer after work with colleagues, which made them feel isolated.

Loss of work life balance

FWA's are often implemented with the idea that they will increase the work life balance of the employees that use them. However, FWAs have been shown to blur the line between work and free time and it is not uncommon that the flexible worker ends up working more than their traditional counterpart (Ojala & Pyörälä, 2013). Studies have shown that when working at home it is hard to decouple work from one's own time (Smith & Karavattuveetil, 2004). The same study states that for many employees it is important to separate work and home activities. The link also works in the other direction as flexible workers are more likely to bring their home problems to work (Takiya & Archbold & Berge, 2005). The mindset transformation one has when moving between work and home does not occur in the same manner when doing flexible work. The commute between one's home and office can actually serve as an important function which primes a person to a certain mindset (Lyons & Chatterjee, 2008).

Flexible work has also been linked to difficulties leave work. Employees working remotely have a danger of "being on call" on a constant basis. Workers may end up work-

ing increasingly outside of the traditional office hours which can have a damaging effect on one's social and family life (Hope, 1997). However, this is not only a problem regarding flexible work but work in general. As more and more of our work is being done electronically, there is nothing stopping us from answering a few more emails at home after our day at the office. That said, workers using FWAs are at an increased risk of this behaviour since without traditional working hours they are never "done" with their day and the barrier between one work and free time is more muddled. Ojala & Pyörälä (2013) argue that in order for flexible employees to avoid feelings of "being short of time" and work stress, it remains the organisations responsibility to ensure that the same working hours are being used regardless of where to work is done.

Flexible work also requires far more self-management from an employee that can be an added stress factor some. Employees have themselves set up boundaries when work starts and ends. This is not possible for every employee as we all differ in our capacity to manage ourselves. There is class of employee who will be unable to work effectively without the structure and discipline of a traditional workplace environment (Smith & Karavattuveetil, 2004). Furthermore, employees will not be able to automatically balance their job when moving to use FWAs, they still need organizational and managerial input to work and manage their time effectively (O'brien & Hayden, 2008).

In some cases, FWAs have also been shown to increase family stress. (Ojala & Nätti & Anttila, 2013) found that working at home was a strong predictor of feelings that home life is being neglected due to work demands. Furthermore, the same study found that spouses of teleworkers suffer from telework. The effect was stronger on men as teleworking women did not receive as much criticism for their spouse as teleworking men did. The negative effect on the spouses increased as job demands went up. A possible psychological explanation why the family suffers from telework could be the WYSIATI "What you see is all there is" bias that Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky discovered. When one's family members sees, that teleworker is not engaged at home due to work they are more likely to draw a conclusion that the teleworker is choosing work over family. Employees cannot simultaneously do effective paid work and engage with the family even if they are working at home (Mirchandani, 2000). Furthermore, proxim-

ity of ones paid work and housework is especially problematic for women who sometimes end up doing these two things at the same time (Mirchandani, 2000). The same study stats that men won't engage in more housework even if their time spent at home increases.

2.4 Summary of the theory

To summarize one can see from the theory that it is very hard to draw simple cause and effect conclusions when implementing FWAs. As more and more employees have the opportunity to use FWAs while simultaneously the different kinds of work one can do remotely have increased, it is increasingly complicated to evaluate how to best implement flexibility in a certain organization. There are many gains to me made if an organization manages to implement flexibility correctly. Studies have shown that for organizations it is possible to decrease turnover, increase productivity and even cut costs from salaries, work related travel and office overheads when they implement flexible working policies. Flexible work also has been shown to be a great benefit to the employee who seem to be more satisfied, less stressed, more able to take care of their offspring.

However, there are numerous possible negative consequence regarding flexible work for both the organization and the individual. For the organization, the productivity might suffer which naturally sound confusing since other studies argue that it should increase. This is just one of the examples which shows implementing FWAs seems to be context specific and just giving one's workers more freedom without any afterthought how one is going to manage it can prove to have an adverse effect than the desired one. Furthermore, we seem to be quite far from the futuristic sci-fi society where most work is done remotely. Many studies have shown that workplace flexibility seems to follow a law of diminishing returns meaning initially as workers gain more flexibility one can quickly catch the positive effects for FWAs but as flexibly increases and the worker spends less time at the office and face to face interacting with their colleagues the dark outcomes start to rear their ugly head. Also, flexible work has been linked to some challenges such as sluggish carrier advancement mainly due to "out of sight out of mind bias",

worse knowledge transfer as face to face communication carries some advantages, workplace isolation and lastly the increase difficulty to separate work and personal time.

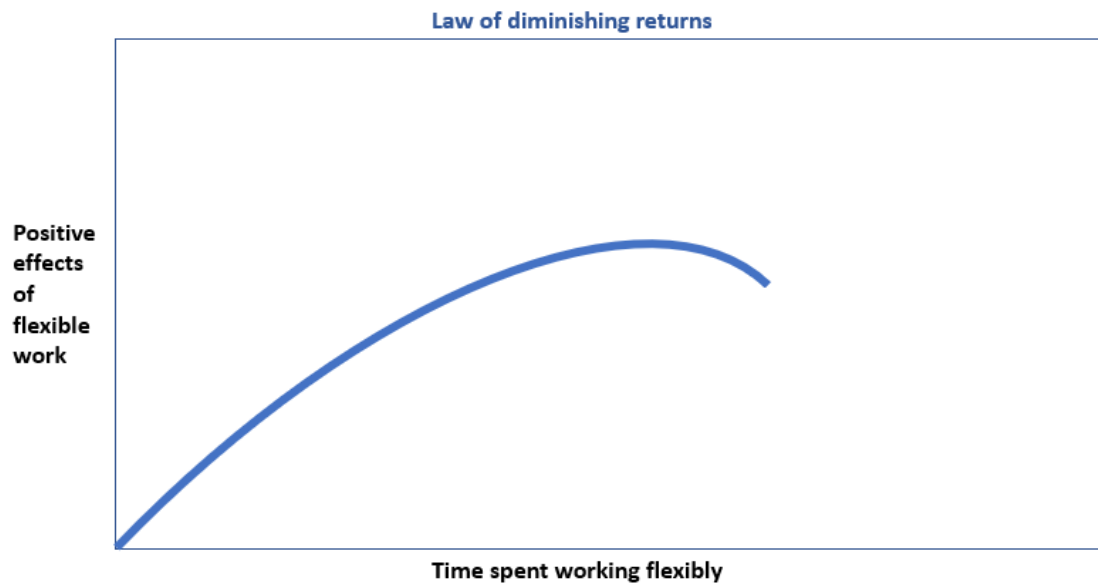


Figure 1 - Law of diminishing returns

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Research can be defined as a scientific and systematic search of knowledge about a certain topic (Kothari, 2004). It is important to choose the appropriate methodology to ensure the objectivity and validity of one's study. This research is a qualitative study. Qualitative methods are appropriate when the research is trying to examine the why and how of decision making. Qualitative studies are well suited for exploratory research where the aim is to uncover what is happening and gain some new insights. Qualitative research methods are often used for exploring human behaviour for example why do people think in a certain way (Kothari, 2004). Qualitative studies are well suited to explore the experience, meaning and perspective from the study individuals/groups own viewpoint (Hammarberg & Kirkman & Lacey, 2016), therefore for this study, which explores the perceptions of FWA users, this method is suitable. Based on the finding of qualitative studies more specific research problems can be identified and studied with various other methods including quantitative studies which are better suited to exploring the truth of a certain hypothesis (Kothari, 2004)

3.1 Method

The method of collecting data for this study will be structured interviews that will be recorded and fully transcribed. Qualitative research interviews are used in cases where meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships are hard to observe (Rossetto, 2014). Structured interviews are often used for descriptive studies as they are economical, provide results that are easily generalizable and do not require a skilful interviewer (Kothari, 2004). The participants were interviewed individually since it will allow them to be more candid about what they think about their FWA and the possible negative effects of them. Individual interviews are the appropriate choice when the research is trying to uncover the individual experiences and feelings of the research subjects (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). This research is especially interested in any dark outcomes of FWA's and the interviews were conducted in a way that the participants are willing to share them if there indeed are any. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and English depending on which language it is easier for the participant to express their full views of the topic.

3.2 Sample

To ensure the validity of one's research the sample should be chosen in a way that it accurately represents the "population" that the research is attempting to study. Bias in selecting the sample and other sampling errors might increase or decrease the number of certain observations from the true rate that they appear in the population (Kothari, 2004). The sample of this study consists of people who are using an FWA and who are working in an environment where their colleagues are using them. Employees who work remotely full time and had no office did not qualify for this research as they would not have the same contrast between remote work and work at the office. The study is limited to white collar work as FWAs are more common for white collar employees and they have the possibility to do most if not all their work remotely. The sample consists of 10 individuals working in different jobs. Five of the respondents were women and five of them were men. Two of them worked abroad in China and the rest work in Finland. Two of the eight people working in Finland are expats.

Nationality	Gender	Type of work	Type of FWA	FWA time
Finnish	Male	Software tester	Custom. One applies to work remotely from the manager.	3 years
Finnish	Male	IT developer	Standard. 2 days per week	1,5 years
Finnish	Male	Tax authority	Standard. 2 days per week	1 year
Finnish	Male	Medical PhD researcher	Custom. Free to do the work wherever. Home or office.	2,5 years
Finnish	Female	Government researcher	Standard. Full time FWA, employee has full control over place and time of work.	3 years
Finnish	Female	Customer relations	Custom. 1 compulsory day per week at the office.	10 months

Chinese	Female	VAD manager	Standard. Full time FWA	6 months
Chinese	Female	Customer service	Standard. Full time FWA	6 months
Chinese	Female	Business PhD researcher	Custom. Free to do the work wherever. Home or office.	9 months
South African / Finnish	Male	Global marketing	Standard. Hour's not counted, you can leave when the work is done, there also is a "etäpäivä" (teleworking) option.	2,5 years

Table 2 – Interview sample

The word *standard* in the "type of FWA" column refers to the fact that the FWA is a standard contract that is issued to several employees in the same organization. The *days per week* refers to the amount of days one is allowed to telework per week. In the case of *custom*, the employee has orally agreed with their manager or by themselves decided the time they must be at the office and the time they are allowed to work remotely. FWA time refers to the duration the employee has had the current FWA contract.

3.3 Interviews and interview design

Before each interview the respondents were informed that the interview will be recorded, and their answers will be kept anonymous from their employer to ensure that they could freely speak their mind. It is important to put the interviewee at ease so that they can be frank with their answers (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). There is a tendency for an interview to follow the lines of an everyday conversation and the interviewee limiting their answers to things which they consider relevant information (Grice, 1975). Considering this fact, the interviewees were informed that there are no so to speak "right or wrong answers" and that they should answer from their own point of view and perception to the posed questions. However, psychological research has shown that even in the cases where people are informed beforehand about the free form of the interview, any leading questions will sway their answers to some direction (Swann & Guiliano &

Wegner, 1982). Furthermore, there was a discussion about the interviewees general views of the topic of work and FWAs and some idle talk about their life before starting to ask the interview questions. The interviewer sometimes needs to ask clarifying questions or further probe the reasoning of a specific answer since there is always a risk that the interview might only provide surface level knowledge with little or no scientific interest. The interviews were around 15-25 minutes long and there were 9 questions that were asked from every participant. Depending on the answer further questions were asked to clarify or inquire about their answer and view on a said question. The questions for the interview were chosen based on the theoretical part of this thesis. Furthermore, there were two questions where the sample were asked to describe their job and FWA type to provide distinguishing variables between the respondents. The aim of the questions was to get answers that would provide a view to the perception the FWA users have on the possible dark sides of their FWA use if there indeed were any.

3.4 Analysis of the data

The collected data was analysed against the theory. The same six variables that were examined in the theory on dark FWA outcomes were examined based on the interview answers and the themes which were present in the interview answers. These six variables are career advancement, working hours, productivity, workplace isolation, knowledge transfer and work life balance.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This part of the paper examines the perceptions the study group had about the five commonly identified negative effects of FWAs that were examined in the theoretical part of this study. They are stifled career advancement, loss of work/life balance, loss of productivity, workplace isolation and decreased knowledge transfer. The empirical part of this study features quotes from the interview transcripts which best illustrate the perceptions said employees have about these FWA issues. The quotes are mirrored against the existing literature on the topic of FWAs. Although the focus of this paper is to identify any negative perception employees have about their FWAs, this part also includes some of the positive perception that the study group expressed in their interview answers.

4.1 FWAs and career advancement

None of ten interviewed employees thought that their use of FWA would cause serious if any career harm. On the contrary, it was more common that the sample believed that FWA can actually help them in career advancement, since they could show that they are working hard wherever they are. Furthermore, many people felt that they would not want to move to a new position if it would not have the same flexible benefits as the old one. Here is a translated quote from the software tester (ST) and VAD manager (VM) when asked if they see FWA's having an effect on their career development:

ST: I don't really see it having an effect, perhaps it nonetheless good that you do it (telework) so that you know how it feels because you could someday get a work opportunity that is 100% telework, in that case you know better if it fits you or not.

VM: Career development... Umm. Yeah. Yes, I think in my next job or my coming career, flexible working agreement will be one of the factors that impact me to choose that job or not.

These answers bring up a larger point which is that once workers get a taste of “freedom” in the form of an FWA it can be hard to make them work regular hours again without damaging the moral of the worker. The so-called endowment effect is well documented in psychology and behavioural economics, it states people will put extra value on things which they own (Thaler, 2015). This means that the equation whether to allow or disallow flexible work is not a balanced one. In plain speak the employee seems to suffer more from the loss of their flexible work than the benefit they gain from getting to work flexibly. As Greenfield (2017) states organizations are competing against each other to attract the best talent by using FWAs as an incentive to make their workplace stand out. The data from the interviews support the claim of Greenfield (2017) as it seems it is hard to fit a flexible worker back to a more structured eight hour office day once they have tasted the freedom FWAs offer.

4.2 How FWAs effect working hours

Most of the interviewees worked the same hours regardless of if they were at the office or working remotely from home. However, in the case of three people they felt that they could not effectively leave work and they were expected to be “on call” even after the traditional office hours. Interestingly all three of these employees worked for private multinational companies and they had a working agreement that did not count the working hours effectively removing the concept of overtime work or any possibility of acquiring so called plus hours that could be used to extend vacations in the future. Here is a quote from the VAD manager (VM) interview.

VM: “One more thing, If I have a flexible working agreement, I don’t know in other countries but in China that means no extra payment for overtime. Nothing is described as overtime in our working agreement, because you work flexibly. When duty calls, you have to respond”

This would indicate that FWAs are a considerable cost cutting device for companies as they can be used to eliminate overtime payments as well as decrease the duration of vacations the employees can keep. Furthermore, it seems that the large multinationals are

also using FWA in this manner and not just small struggling firms like the research of Wolf & Beblo (2004) argues. The employees themselves see it as a double-edged sword as the FWA's give them more flexibility to do other things along with their work but the time "total freedom" where one has no responsibility over work decreases. The following quote is from the global marketing (GM) employee

GM: "Yep, because in the past when we were counting hours you could make up extra hours, so you could actually extend your vacations by a week at least every now and then. But now that that's away it is not that nice but then again it gives you a little bit more freedom to do other things. If you really need too, you can be away from the office for a while."

From the employee perspective, this could be kind of a "raw deal" as the amount of work they do, especially after hours increases and on the flip side the amount of vacation they have each year decreases. Furthermore, all three of the employees with this kind of FWA reported that they regularly must answer work related calls and do assignment late at night. However, all three employees who had this kind of an FWA were happy with their current arrangement. Every one of them responded that their satisfaction towards their work would decrease, if they were not allowed to work flexibly, two of the three also said that the FWA helped them to take care of their family at the same time as they worked. In this way one can argue that the FWA contract which does not count the hours of the worker and lets the worker him/herself decide where they work is a "win-win" where both the company and the employee benefit.

For the rest of the seven interviewees the amount they worked in or outside of the office was more standardized. For example, the 4 of the 6 Finns interviewed followed the same office hours even when they were working at home. For one it was due to habit but for three of them it was due to the fact that it was company policy to enforce the same working hours regardless of place of work, furthermore as these three people sometimes require team input to achieve their goals it is only natural to enforce that people work at the same time. Here is a translated quote from the tax authority (TA):

TA: *Yes, one should try to, when working at home to always do a full working day as it is a policy of the organisation. You naturally can't use the flexible starting and ending times ("liukuma" in Finnish) when working at home, however it could be that sometimes you take longer breaks or a longer lunch but then again, the coffee pauses can be longer in the office when you are talking with colleagues.*

Many of the interviewees felt that they were working the same number of hours regardless of if they were at the office or working from home. However, as (Cascio, 1998) notes, workers are very poor at estimating their own performance and it would be advisable to objectively verify these claims before trusting the self-evaluation of flexible workers. That being said, from the interviews one could observe that in the case of three employees who worked for MNC's the FWA's made them work more hours as they had to work at night and while they were traveling.

4.3 FWAs and productivity

As predicted by Stavrou & Kilaniotis (2010) the Finnish (Nordic) workers felt benefited from the flexible work. All of them felt they were either equally or more productive when working at home. What is noteworthy that many interviewees mentioned that it was easier to focus at home because there were less distractions. Here are translated quotes from the tax authority (TA) and IT developer (ID) when asked about productivity at home:

TA: *Yes, I think that that I can get as much done at home maybe even more depending on the task I'm doing and how challenging the tasks are. If it's something that requires a lot of concentration it might be even better to do it at home.*

ID: *...At the workplace there are two colleagues very close, pretty much in the same table so at the workplace you tend to talk about all kind of things, also none work related things as you work. Also, you at the same time you need to sometimes help your colleagues in some work-related things, so you own concentration breaks more often at the*

office than at home where you can put on noise cancelling earphones and focus on your own tasks more effectively. So, I see myself being more effective at home.

The quietness of home came up in several interviews as a positive thing regarding flexible work. Many of the respondents felt that they were more relaxed at home and could perform better on tasks, especially difficult tasks that require concentration. This is consistent with the findings of Mark (2008) and H. Jahncke et al. (2013) who argue that silence is something that makes performing complex cognitive tasks easier. Furthermore, many respondents reviled that their workspace was a so called “avokonttori” open-plan office where it was hard to be totally in peace from the passive noise of the office. Just like van der Vooft, (2004) argued, flexible work seemed to be a good solution to workers who do not have the possibility to work uninterrupted and in silence in the office.

Continuing this point, silence is not the only thing respondents mentioned as a positive aspect of flexible work regarding productivity. For some respondents, the work commute was a considerable “waste” of time and they felt working from home they could use the commute time to work which effectively gave them more free time and gave them an opportunity to sleep more. Sleep is often undervalued in our society and studies show that well slept employees perform better in almost every aspect of work than one’s that have not got enough sleep (Saari, 2015). However, flexible work does not guarantee more sleep as people might just go to sleep later as they know they can afford to wake up later when working from home. This being said, flexible working lets the employees avoid the often-tedious process of getting up and commuting to work early in the morning. Here is what the VAD manager (VM) and software taster (ST) had to say about how flexible work affect their commute and how they start work.

VM: Yes Yes, I can, like I said, if I need to get to the new office from my old apartment by nine, I need to get up at six to prepare and be in the car at seven to be on time. But you see I waste two, three hours to get ready to work. But if I work at home, that three hours totally, I can use it at work

ST: Not really, I work pretty much the same way. Mostly it (flexible work) only effect when I start and stop working, because when I go to the office I need to pack up early in the morning. But when I'm working from home I usually turn on my computer one minute before working time and then at the evening if I'm in the office it sometimes goes long but at home mostly when the clock hits 16 I just turn off my computer.

According to Duke professor Dan Ariely, most people only have two productive hours in a day and for most, they are in the morning (Ariely, 2017). Not “wasting time” on the commute and other working rituals like getting dressed and putting on make up to work can be a partial explanation why many respondents of this of this study felt they were more productive at home. The results echo the finding of Moen et al. (2016) and Kelly et al. (2014) which found that productivity increased as flexible workers were able to customize their schedule to fit their own life situation and way of working.

However, there were some issues that the interviewed flexible workers faced in regard to their productivity, especially when it came to technical problems or the lack of work resources at home. Many respondents had stories of sometimes having problems connecting to the workplace networks which made working from home effectively impossible. This was especially true in the case of the two study respondents who work in mainland China where companies need to use VPN (Virtual private network) connections to connect to their company network and access foreign websites In China the internet connectivity is not very good or fast, especially for private individuals, so working from home was not always convenient to those respondents as evidenced by these quotes about the issues regarding flexible work:

*VM: Poor network... Yeah, so far it is. Because I have many many times that when I call in but the network connection is bad and.. you know that video conference, when you call in it will say “***** has joined the conference” yeah that will tell everybody that ***** is “in” and (laughs) if I lost my connection the system will just say “***** has left the conference” and sometimes that is just really really bad, it will become like “***** has joined, *****has left...” Pretty annoying.*

CS: *(Laughing) the big problem is the internet... I think if they don't need to use VPN maybe it's almost the same but if you use VPN it's fucking bad.*

It would be recommendable to access the network situation of the flexible workers especially in countries where the private networks can be unstable. It is of course also possible that the company networks fail in which case it is not possible to work regardless of where one is located but that seems to be a rare case. The network issues were also raised up by the Finnish tax authority in whose case the lack of information regarding the network problem proved to be a frustrating problem when working from home:

TA: *It (the day) goes pretty much to waste especially because when you get an error message that there is some problem with the network and they are now fixing it, you don't really know when it will be fixed etc. Then after an hour you get a new message that the same problem is continuing and you don't know if it will work or not. So yeah, in those cases it's frustrating but it's very rarely something like this happens.*

From the tax authority quote we can see what Fan Ng (2010) argued about the work resources sometimes being inadequate at home. The same issue was raised by the software tester (ST) who preferred to work as much as possible in the office because the work ergonomics and the computer screens were better at the office than at home. Here is a translated quote from him:

ST: *So for me it is the location, in which kind of apartment I live, is perhaps the biggest reason why I don't particularly want to work from home. I don't have a worktable, so I have to create space on my own table, so I can fit my work laptop there, or then I can work from the sofa but that is not really good, and the ergonomics are not great. Also, another thing is that all the coffee pauses and other things are done alone at home.*

So just like in most cases regarding FWA usage we can observe positive and negative effects on productivity. Yet again one has stress the fact that self-evaluated productivity is not always accurate. However, it seems that there is some positive effect on productivity especially in cases where the home or some other place outside the office can be

used as a quiet/private space where one can work in silence and uninterrupted. On the flip side, it seems that the so called “home office” is more susceptible to bad connection and the worker not having the right tools to work effectively.

4.4 FWAs and workplace isolation

Only three of the then respondents of this study had the possibility to totally control their workweek meaning that they could spend a whole week or more at home if the desired. The seven others had certain amount of days they were required to be at the office per week, possible making it less likely they would suffer from workplace isolation due to flexible work and being away from their work community. Several respondents mentioned that when working at home they missed the so-called coffee table talk that they would regularly have at the office as predicted by the study of Mann & Holdsworth (2003). Furthermore, when asked none of the respondents would want to be totally without a physical office where they can go to meet colleagues. The respondents often argued that some aspects of their work require face to face communication and seeing the other persons non verbal cues that can be missed when using lower levels of media richness in communication. Face to face communication was mentioned as a tool to build trust and solve problem as evidenced by these quotes from the business PhD research (BPR) and customer relations (CR) persons when asked about not having an office and just working from home.

BPR: Yeah that would be bad because face to face communication is very important. Yes, it can build trust and you can fix some problems very efficiently, so we need this

CR: So it's just that all the information which you get at the office does not reach the teleworker and also the team spirit and the unity of the work environment is something that one misses in my opinion if one does a lot of telework

The respondents commonly reported that there was a higher threshold to contact your colleagues when working from home and one only did it regarding work and not to socialize. However, some respondents had weekly or even daily video or audio confer-

ences with their team or workplace where the worker had a chance to interact with their team and supervisors. According to Mulki & Jaramillo (2011) frequent contact with the supervisor when teleworking was a factor that mitigated the feeling of workplace isolation. This seemed to hold true regarding the subjects of this study, although many subjects told that they prefer face to face meeting to virtual ones and that one subject even admitted that she was sometimes just pretending to listen the virtual conference and doing something else at the same time.

Some of the respondents could also see telework possible harming the “sense of community” of the workplace if done extensively. They felt electronic communication does not give the same feeling as talking with someone face to face. Here are two translated quotes from the tax authority (TA) and IT developer (ID) when asked about negative aspects of telework.

TA: I guess one possible thing is that the sense of community suffers if all the people always are teleworking, I or we of course have the restriction at our workplace of being able to only telework two days per week that of course mitigates this problem, but it could be possible to experience this...

ID: I'm personally of the opinion that people become a bit more distant when you can't spend time face to face and like I just said you cannot really communicate with someone effectively by phone if you are only acquaintances. Communication is somehow more deep and easier when you are doing it face to face. That is one thing I think.

The comment from the IT developer would support the finding of Wu et al. (2016) which states that employees who are emotionally closer to one another are better able to collaborate with the use of electronic communication. The interviewed employees commonly could use Skype for business, Whatsapp and Microsoft Teams to contact colleagues in their workplace while they were teleworking. Naturally the same tools are used even at the workplace, for example the software tester said that because most of their work is best done in silence people often send chat messages instead of talking even though they are physically in the same room.

4.5 FWAs and knowledge transfer

Many respondents of this study reported that when working from home they sometimes missed the interaction they had with colleagues. Furthermore, it was common that respondents said that there was a bigger threshold to call or contact someone when you were working from home. When people did call someone while teleworking the calls were work related and thought out beforehand rather than spontaneous decision just to talk to someone. Here are translated quotes from the medical PhD researcher (MPR) and customer representative (CR) about communication while teleworking:

MPR: Maybe there is that, that for your co-workers there is a bigger threshold to contact you although you are easily available, but because there is this threshold, people tend to think about their problems more by themselves and they might find the solution before trying to contact someone.

CR: Certainly, if you are physically in the office and you have anything to ask from you supervisor or they have something to tell you, that happens instantly. Then when you are working from home it might be through email or phone and I would say it feels easier to go ask something face to face, just bother them quickly compared to calling them because there is a bigger threshold to call because you feel like you are bothering the other person with making them answer a phone call etc.

From these quotes one could imagine that FWAs, especially telework could influence knowledge transfer. Form many members of the millennial generation making a phone call can be an anxious experience. For example, in the UK 25% of smart phone users never make calls with their device (Buchanan, 2016). If an increasing number of workers are teleworking and they have this similar mindset that making a phone call is a chore the amount of contact between co-workers will decrees.

For some of the respondents, it was difficult to explain problems or questions while calling and the needed to be face to face with their counterpart to effectively communi-

cate what they wanted. As predicted by Klitmoller & Lauring (2013) workers had some complex problems or parts of their work they wished to do face to face with their colleagues. For example, the medical PhD researcher who is trying to create a new way to assess the health of the human knee using spectrometry said that the complex parts of the research were hard to explain by phone or some other electronic communication. Furthermore, the two people interviews working with computer code said that when one works in the office one often asks their colleagues “hey, what do you think about this?”, but when one is alone at home one tends to just get their task done without asking other people’s help or opinion. This lack of casual interactions between employees can have a detrimental effect on idea creation as argued by Google executive Dr. Vint Cerf (Crabtree, 2014) when defending the idea of limiting the amount so called “creative” people can telework. However, at least the subjects of this study had an intuitive sense that they needed to do some things face to face and they would not want all of their work to be remote.

4.6 FWAs and work life balance

All ten respondents felt that FWA helped them in balancing their work and personal life. Furthermore, all of them reported that their satisfaction towards their current job would go down if they were not allowed to telework. There was various reason why flexible work helped the respondents depending on their life situation and age. Especially for the older respondents FWAs proved a valuable asset in balancing their life and work as evidenced by these two quotes from the global marketing (GM) employee and government researcher (GR) when asked how FWAs help them to balance their work and personal life.

GM: I think it helps it a lot actually. Cause the fact is, OK I’m studying with you (at the University) I’m in the office the whole day, I’m a single dad I have kids running around so it gives me that freedom being able to say “Ok I can go pick up the kids from school”, I don’t have to be in the office exactly the time that is allocated I can, if things happen I can have a “etäpäivä” and work from home . So those types of things make it very flexible and easier for me to handle and work things out in my personal life.

GR: *...you don't need to dress up for work and if you are not 100% healthy you don't need to go to the office, but you still can be working from home. So, if I didn't have flexibility I would probably have more sick leave now during my old age.*

From these quotes, we can see FWAs working as intended helping people to balance the needs of childcare and helping elder employees extend their careers by making work less “demanding” on one’s health. Many of the respondents said that working from home was more relaxing than being in the office. Furthermore, even respondents without children or a spouse were able to give examples of FWAs giving them more time for their personal life and many reported that they multitask while working at home. Some would run random errands such as going to the bank or dentist and others would take care of the house while working. It seems like employees have many ways they use their flexibility. Stavrou & Kilaniotis, (2010) argued against FWA practices that treat every employee as the same. However, most respondents had a standard FWA contract that was issued by the organization they worked for which had no room for negotiation of the terms. Regardless of this fact the respondents were happy with their contracts possible partly due to the fact that even if they had a standard contract they could themselves decide how to best implement the extra freedom they had.

There were also negative aspects associated with FWAs regarding work life balance. Two of the most common “dark outcomes” were the blurring line of work and home and the distraction that work at night brought to one’s personal life. For the first point of blurring the line between home and work some of the respondents argued that working at home could be too relaxing and one would end up doing less as evidenced by these translated quotes from the medical PhD researcher (MPD) and the tax authority (TA):

TA: *...Of course there is that if one takes their home environment too relaxed so that the line between work and free time gets muddled one probably won't get so much things done, and it probably does not fit everyone.*

MPD: *...The employee needs to have a certain amount of self-discipline when working from home so that the work doesn't become just assing around ...Maybe it becomes a bit blurred that is actual work time and what isn't so one ends up working just the required amount to always reach the set targets.*

Interestingly both of these responses imply that flexible work does not fit everyone, and workers need to take more responsibility of their own work and getting things done when working from home. Just as Smith & Karavattuvelil (2004) argued it can be difficult for some employees to know where the line of work and free time is when working from home. Some employees, especially the three who worked in large multinational corporations also felt that work sometimes followed them home and they had to be on call even after hours. The often had to answer work related calls or do assignments on their "free time" although as their contracts were flexible it could be hard to classify a part of the day as "work time" or "free time". Here are two quotes from the global marketing (GM) and VAD manager (VM) regarding this issue:

GM: *I don't know. Ok the one thing maybe is that if you have flexible hours there is a different expectation of you and deadlines might be different because now you... It's basically about when the job is getting done and not so much on how much hours you are spending, so in that sense, you know you could get a call or you could get some kind of assignment that you need to work through the night or in the evening to get something done for the next day. Where if you had the other hours (regular working hours) the hours which... then you wouldn't have to do that, you could do that when you are at the office. So in a way I think that you know the productiveness of flexible is better than the productiveness of fixed hour in my opinion.*

VM: *...(laughs) So far it is the network is the biggest problem otherwise it's OK but... Ah, one more thing. I need to pay attention to my phone, my email all the time... All the time, I need to check it all the time.... Yeah, it's kind of a distraction when I was cooking or doing something else. That is a... Nah I can't say my job is a distraction. That's not right (laughs)*

What must be addressed is that this is not only a problem regarding flexible work agreements. It is also possible that a worker who has regular working hours at the office brings some of his work back home. However, as the quote from the global marketing manager illustrates some flexible workers may have a tendency to work more than their office bound counterparts as the research of Ojala & Pyörälä, (2013) argues. Interestingly Ojala & Pyörälä, (2013) argued that it is the organizations responsibility to make sure that the regular working hours are followed even while working from home. The respondents whose organization did this and enforced the same office hours while teleworking, did not seem to suffer the same way from the distraction of work during their personal time. The three MNC employees whose organizations were not providing any guidelines when to switch off one's work computer and phone were also the ones who ended up working the most outside the traditional office hours. a few qualitative interviews are not enough to draw any generalizable conclusion but, in the future, it might be worth studying if the work culture of MNC's exposes their workers to a higher degree of work distracting their personal life.

Only two of the ten interviewed employees had something to say about FWA's and their effect to their family life. For both the FWA's were a positive thing that helped one respondent to take care of their kids and for the other respondents it let her visit her parents who lived far way more often, as she could keep working remotely while she was in another city visiting her parents. As a caveat one has to add that only one respondent had young kids which naturally limits the chance to get responses regarding child rearing and FWA usage in this study. However, there is research that indicates that employees perceive that they are better at taking care of their family needs if they are working flexibly (Doble & Supriya, 2010) that would be in line with the perception the two respondents of this study had.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to uncover some of the possible negative perceptions employees had about flexible work as well uncover if there are some dark outcomes which can affect the organization. The findings were mostly in line with the theory although none of the workers felt that flexible work has an impact on their career development opposite to what Bloom et al. (2015) argued. Instead many of the interviewed employees felt that as they advance in their career, the amount of telework they do will increase. None of the ten interviewed would want to return to a work contract that did not offer flexible working options, and many said that they want their next job to also have a FWA. The sample size of this study is not large enough to make any sweeping generalizations but it is possible that due to the increase of advanced IT solutions and subsequent teleworking, employee and manager attitudes towards FWA's have changed towards more positive ones.

The link between FWAs and an employee work life balance is a complex one. In this study, there were some contradictions to the previous theory. For example, in the case of negative effect to work/life balance (Hope, 1997) argued that FWAs can make employees work outside the traditional office hours and sacrifice time with their family. However, some of the employees of this study used FWA's to increase the time they can spend with their family by for example visiting their parents or taking care of their kids at home while they telework. However, many of the same respondents said that they often must work late at night on their work projects. This is in line with the findings of (Ojala & Pyörälä, 2013; Smith & Karavattuveetil, 2004) that FWAs increase the time spent working outside traditional office hours. However, it is possible that people who overwork extensively at the cost of their family time would do this despite having no FWA. More research on this topic would be needed, especially on the point how much FWAs affect or change employees' behaviour.

The interviewed employees had experience of both increased and decreased productivity. The study participants reported that they perceived they were more productive at home teleworking because they could focus uninterrupted on their task. This is con-

sistent with the findings of van der Vooft (2004). The decreased productivity while teleworking happened, according to the study individuals, due to poor electronic connections, inability to reach or work with colleagues needed for the task or being distracted by something none work related. As Timms et al. (2015) argues, FWAs do not seem to guarantee an increase or decrease of productivity. As the responses of this study show, there are multiple factors that effect on how productive the employees perceive their working time.

Workplace isolation was a feeling that none of the participants felt but all of them recognized, that if they would not visit the office and have face to face interaction with their colleagues, they would not enjoy their work as much. Furthermore, the participants of this study wanted to have a face to face relationship with at least some of their colleagues and they missed interacting with their colleagues while teleworking just like the research of Mann & Holdsworth (2003) predicts. Just as the participants were not willing give up their possibility to telework, they also did not want to give up the chance to go to the office to meet and talk with their colleagues.

Problems effectively sharing knowledge were relatively common in the study group, especially when doing complex tasks that require teamwork. As Klitmoller & Lauring (2013) argues, it is easier to for people to work on complex task when they are physically in the same space. Some of the individuals of this study reported that one reason why it is hard to teamwork while teleworking is the “time aspect” meaning when one sends an email it can take some time until you get a response. Naturally modern teleworkers have multiple tools to connect with their colleagues such as Skype, shared digital workspaces and mobile messaging apps but the barrier to start an electronic conversation is higher than starting a normal one in an office according to the employees interviewed in this study. Furthermore, some of the respondents reported that telework lacks the spontaneous conversations which happen at the office that can lead to new or different solutions to task and problems. Incidentally, this is the same reason why many major tech companies such as Google and Yahoo want to limit teleworking and encourage their workers to sit and discuss things together face to face (Crabtree, 2014). Interestingly, sometimes employees wanted to be alone to focus on their complex tasks uninterrupted

and other times they wanted to work on them with their colleagues. Companies should take into consideration which kinds of tasks their teleworkers will be performing and monitor if there is any change or challenges in knowledge transfer between employees when implementing FWAs.

Although this research was set out to examine the negative perceptions employees by in large had more positive than negative things to say about their FWAs. For most of the people interviewed it seemed to be easier to think of the positive aspects of flexible work and it was difficult for some to think about many dark outcomes. One possible explanation to this is that when workers are given FWA they are often reminded about all the pros of flexible work as organizations rarely want to stress the negative aspects of their policies. The same bias is also present in science where a quick google search on 16.7.2018 on google scholar finds out 4,7 times more articles with the search word “flexible work advantages” compared to “flexible work disadvantage”. However, one cannot forget that for many workers the increased flexibility is a positive change and it is advisable to try to find policies and way to mitigate the negative effects of flexible work rather than trying to do away with FWAs altogether.

5.1 Practical implication

This thesis set out to find dark outcomes regarding flexible work. The findings from the empirical part are in line with the research of Gajendran & Harrison (2007) which speaks against extended period of work outside of the office. All participants of the study were happy that had a physical office and a work environment where they could meet colleagues and work face to face with people. Furthermore, for some of the participants the office proved to be a better place to work than home due to the fact that they had access to better ergonomics, tools and the knowledge/advice of their peers at the office. The barrier to talk with one’s peers was much lower at the office and it was quicker than at home where one had to call their peers or contact them with some other electronic communication tool. At the office, there was also more discussion about how to creatively solve problems whereas at home people were more task oriented and tried to complete the given tasks by themselves. These finding would speak against efforts to

do away with the office all together. Participants also felt that without the office and face to face communication with their peers some parts of the “team spirit” that coworkers share would be lost.

Some current organizational trends are moving towards flexible offices which have areas for both socializing and group work as well as private quiet areas and which let workers choose if they work from home or come to the office (Borzykowski, 2018). The word “choose” is very important as employees seem to feel happy about having a choice to work from home even if they do not use it often. None of the ten respondents of this study would want to give up their flexibility and all reported that not having it, would impact the view they had about their current job negatively. Seemingly the best way to set up flexible work would be to have an office and then let workers choose whether they want to work there or at home. However, the difficult part is to decide how much freedom one should give to the flexible worker. People vary in the degree how much they can take responsibility of their own work. Although most participants of this study reported that they are more productive at home, most could give example how working from home could turn to be too relaxed and how flexible work, especially telework does not fit every personality type. The type of work also plays a role in the equation of control vs freedom.

The best way to try to get the benefits from both the office and the flexibility would be to give the employees a limited choice where they themselves could then choose how they use it, for example 2 days per week were on can decide where they work. The research by Gajendran & Harrison (2007) would suggest that more than half of the work-week should be spent at the office to avoid most dark outcomes. However as mentioned previously the type of work plays a role in the amount of face to face contact is needed. It might be counterproductive to force people to an office if they do not have peers with whom to mingle with. Furthermore, from the organizations point of view, if they wish to do away with overtime as a cost it might be wise to move to so called flexible work where both the hours at home and the office are considered a flexible choice. Seemingly, many employees will often choose to come to the office, even though they have the choice to work from home, meaning there is little drawback from the organization using

this strategy. The three employees of this study whose organizations were using this strategy felt that the benefits outweighed the cons, meaning they were content to sacrifice some money and vacation time to gain more flexibility in their job. Similar results have been found in experiments conducted in the Netherlands and Belgium where employees do not have regular required working hours or place but instead they are just responsible to get their tasks done (Vpro, 2015). Seemingly there is little benefit to make modern white collar workers sit in their office the same hours which were originally designed for blue collar factory work more than a hundred years ago. Flexibility should be an option for most white-collar work but organization need to monitor that their employees have adequate resources such as good internet, the right tools and stable communication tools to effectively work remotely.

5.2 Limitations and suggested future research

Firstly, as with every qualitative research that relies on interviews we are limited by the sample size and the randomness that comes along with this kind of small sample sizes. Furthermore, most of the interviews of this study were relatively young with only two being over 35 years old, which possibly could affect how they perceive flexible work.

Secondly, as two of the employees interviewed were working in mainland China, in multinational corporations, they were more likely to experience problems with their internet connections while teleworking. The Chinese internet is heavily controlled and international workers need to use Virtual Private Network (VPN) connections to access the internet outside of China (Zheng, 2017). However, these VPN connections are unreliable and many Chinese employees often suffer from connection problems when trying to access foreign website and servers. These kind of issues, will either increase or decrease in the sample depending on which country the teleworkers are selected from. This is something multinational corporations need to consider when implementing companywide teleworking practices. Telework research data from Finland where internet data is cheap and the connection are good might not translate to other markets where digitalization still lags behind the Nordic nations.

Thirdly, when asked nine out of ten respondents could indeed cite some dark outcomes regarding their own experiences of flexible work but it is sometimes hard to accurately classify whether this problem is a small nuisance or is it something that effect the happiness and the performance of the said worker. As with all research that studies perceptions one must keep in mind that the thoughts and experiences of the respondents are highly personal and a different person in the same situation might perceive it differently. According to the noble winning behavioural economist Richard Thaler small qualitative data sets should be used for making hypothesis that then are tested with large quantitative data sets (Thaler, 2015). This means one should avoid making any general claims just based on the results of this study.

One interesting point of future study would be the fact that workers seemed to be happy about flexibility even when they lost the ability to earn more money and vacations with overtime work. It would be interesting to study what happens to overtime work and work hours in general when organizations no longer compensate for it. Is the tendency for people to work overtime perhaps innate in some individuals? Compensation for work done at home and after hours is a field which warrants more study although naturally for organization there is a possible interest to keep compensations for overtime as low as possible.

Another issue that warrants further quantitative verification would be the claim by many flexible workers of this study which is that they are more productive at working out of the office than in the office. The study of Cascio (1998) argues that workers are not accurate at intuitively self-evaluating so there will need to be further objective quantitative research on this topic this study along with many other studies have found that workers feel more productive at home due to various reason, in the case of this study mainly the silence and peace one experiences at home compared to the often-busier environment of the office. However, more verification is needed if employees by in large are significantly more productive when working outside of the office.

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APPENDIX 1. Structured interview questions

1. Could you tell me a little bit about your currently work? (Company, position, work tasks.)
2. Could you tell me what kind of FWA agreement do you have? Did you negotiate it yourself or is it a companywide policy, also how long have you been doing flexible work?
3. Could you tell me if there is any difference in the way you work at home compared to the way you work in the office?
4. Could you tell me about the differences in communication when working at home compared to the working at the office.
5. Do you think using Flexible working agreements will have any effect on your career development?
6. What challenges do you perceive with teleworking?
7. How do flexible working agreements affect the balance between your work and personal life?
8. Would your feeling of your current job change if you were not allowed to work flexibly?
9. Could you give some examples of negative experiences regarding flexible work.

Finnish version:

1. Kerro vähän nykyisestä työpaikastasi ja mitä työnkuvaasi kuuluu.
2. Kertoisitko, millainen etätyösopimus sinulla on? Onko se sinun itsesi neuvottelema vai työpaikan vakiosopimus, kuinka kauan olet tehnyt etätöitä?
3. Onko sinun työtavoissa joitain eroja kotona työskennellessä työpaikalla työskenteleeseen verrattuna?
4. Voitko kertoa miten kommunikaatio eroaa etätöissä vs työpaikalla?
5. Luuletko, että etätyöllä on vaikutusta sinun uralla etenemiseen?
6. Minkälaisia haittoja luulet etätyön aiheuttavan?
7. Miten etätyö vaikuttaa sinun työn ja vapaa-ajan tasapainottamiseen?
8. Muuttuisiko mielipiteesi sinun nykyisestä työstä, jos et saisi enää tehdä etätöitä?
9. Voitko antaa joitain esimerkkejä etätyön negatiivisista puolista?